

# AILEY II

## Study Guide



Ailey II's Jessica Amber Pinkett. Photo by Kyle Froman.

## ALL ABOUT AILEY



Photo by Jack Mitchell

### Alvin Ailey, Founder

Alvin Ailey was born on January 5, 1931, in Rogers, Texas. His experiences of life in the rural South would later inspire some of his most memorable works. He was introduced to dance in Los Angeles by performances of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, and his formal dance training began with an introduction to Lester Horton's classes by his friend Carmen de Lavallade. Horton, the founder of one of the first racially-integrated dance companies in the United States, became a mentor for Mr. Ailey as he embarked on his professional career. After Horton's death in 1953, Mr. Ailey became director of the Lester Horton Dance Theater and began to choreograph his own works. In the 1950s and 60s, Mr. Ailey performed in four Broadway shows, including *House of Flowers* and *Jamaica*. In 1958 he founded Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to carry out his vision of a company dedicated to enriching the American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience. He established the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center (now The Ailey School) in 1969 and formed the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble (now Ailey II) in 1974. Mr. Ailey was a pioneer of programs promoting arts in education, particularly those benefiting underserved communities. Throughout his lifetime he was awarded numerous distinctions, including the Kennedy Center Honor in 1988 in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to American culture. In 2014 he posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor, in recognition of his contributions and commitment to civil rights and dance in America. When Mr. Ailey died on December 1, 1989, *The New York Times* said of him, "you didn't need to have known [him] personally to have been touched by his humanity, enthusiasm, and exuberance and his courageous stand for multi-racial brotherhood."

# AILEY II

**Troy Powell, Artistic Director**

Sylvia Waters, Artistic Director Emerita

**Company Members**

Tara Bellardini, Antuan Byers, Khalia Campbell, Yazzmeen Laidler,  
Kyle H. Martin, Corrin Rachelle Mitchell, Adrien Picaut, Jessica Amber Pinkett,  
Martell Ruffin, Arianna Salerno, Marcus Williams, Christopher R. Wilson

Fana Fraser, Rehearsal Director

**Robert Battle, Artistic Advisor**

**Bennett Rink, Executive Director**

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## AILEY II COMPANY STORY



Artistic Director Troy Powell and Rehearsal Director Fana Fraser with Ailey II. Photo by Kyle Froman.

For more than forty years, Ailey II has merged the spirit and energy of the country's best young dance talent with the passion and creative vision of today's most outstanding emerging choreographers. Started in 1974 as the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, Ailey II embodies Alvin Ailey's pioneering mission to establish an extended cultural community that provides dance performances, training and community programs for all people. Mr. Ailey personally selected the veteran dancer Sylvia Waters to lead this junior company, and as its Artistic Director for 38 years, she developed Ailey II into one of America's most popular dance companies. In June 2012, Ms. Waters retired and named her longtime associate Troy Powell as the new Artistic Director. With Mr. Powell at the helm, Ailey II continues to thrive as he brings a fresh dimension to this beloved company.

The critically-acclaimed Ailey II has a distinctive repertory that has included works by dance masters Alvin Ailey, Talley Beatty, Donald Byrd, Ulysses Dove, George W. Faison, Lar Lubovitch, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Artistic Director Robert Battle and Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison. The company has also performed innovative works by rising choreographers such as Kyle Abraham, Jennifer Archibald, and Ray Mercer. Touring throughout the United States and abroad, Ailey II will reach dozens of cities during its 2017-18 tour.

"Off-the-charts energy." – *The New Yorker*

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **TROY POWELL, Artistic Director**

On July 1, 2012, Troy Powell became only the second person to lead Ailey II since its inception in 1974. A native New Yorker, Mr. Powell began his dance training at the age of nine as a scholarship student at The Ailey School. Following his graduation from The High School of Performing Arts, he became a member of Ailey II and then joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1991. He toured throughout the United States, South America, Europe, and South Africa for ten years with the Company before becoming a master teacher at The Ailey School and resident choreographer of Ailey II. Mr. Powell has choreographed ballets for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, The Ailey School, Dallas Black Dance Theater, National Dance Company of the Bahamas, and Alaska Dance Theater, as well as three episodes of "Sesame Street." His guest artist credits include performing with companies including Batsheva, Dallas Black Dance Theater, and Complexions. Mr. Powell has been featured in an American Express commercial with the Ailey company and has also appeared on television in George C. Wolfe's *The Colored Museum*, the PBS Great Performances: Dance in America special *A Hymn for Alvin Ailey*, choreographed by Judith Jamison, "America's Next Top Model," and most recently the Polish version of "So You Think You Can Dance."

### **SYLVIA WATERS, Artistic Director Emerita**

Sylvia Waters was personally selected by Alvin Ailey in 1974 as Artistic Director of Ailey II and led the company for 38 years. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Ms. Waters earned a B.S. in Dance prior to moving to Paris, where she appeared regularly on television. She has also performed in Brussels and at the Summer Olympics in Mexico City. In 1968, Ms. Waters joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and toured with the Company until assuming leadership of Ailey II. In 1997, she received an honorary doctorate from the State University of New York at Oswego, and she has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. Ms. Waters is a recipient of the Legacy Award as part of the 20th Annual IABD Festival, Syracuse University's Women of Distinction Award, a *Dance Magazine* Award, and a "Bessie" Award. Currently, Ms. Waters leads The Ailey Legacy Residency, a lecture, technique and repertory program for college-level students that looks definitively into the history and creative heritage of Alvin Ailey.

### **FANA FRASER, Rehearsal Director**

Fana Fraser (Port-of-Spain, Trinidad) began her dance training at Caribbean School of Dancing. An honors graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in Dance, she has performed with Camille A. Brown & Dancers, Sidra Bell Dance New York, The Francesca Harper Project, The Metropolitan Opera, Andrea Miller for Hermès, Ryan McNamara for Performa 13, Art Basel, and Works & Process at the Guggenheim. She has appeared in digital commercials for Google and Twitter. Ms. Fraser was also a member of Ailey II. As a choreographer, her works have been presented at Emerging Artists Theatre, BAAD! (Bronx Academy of Arts & Dance) and Trinidad Theatre Workshop. She was a selected artist-in-residence at the Dance & Performance Institute in Trinidad & Tobago and at Open Call – a project partnership between BAAD! and Pepatián. Ms. Fraser has served as a teaching artist with Purelements and Notes in Motion Teaching Ensemble, and as a rehearsal assistant to choreographer Darrell Grand Moultrie. She is also a certified Gyrotonic® trainer. Most recently, Ms. Fraser became a Movement Research 2017 Artist-in-Residence Van Lier Fellow.

## AILEY II WHO'S WHO

**TARA BELLARDINI** (Mine Hill, NJ) trained with East Coast Movement under the direction of Billy Larson. She graduated from Morris County School of Visual and Performing Arts and is a graduate of The Ailey School Certificate Program. Ms. Bellardini has trained in summer intensives at Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet and performed in the 2013 Cedar Lake Installation *Chess*. She danced in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* during Ailey's 2014 and 2015 New York City Center (NYCC) seasons and has worked with choreographers Adam Barruch, Norbert De La Cruz III, Ray Mercer, and Alexandra Damiani. During Ailey's 2016 NYCC season, Ms. Bellardini performed in Hope Boykin's *r-Evolution, Dream*. with The Company. This is her second season with Ailey II.

**ANTUAN BYERS** (Dallas, TX) is a graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in Dance and is an alumnus of Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. He was a scholarship student at Dallas Black Dance Theatre and Dallas Ballet Center, and attended summer programs including Northwest Dance Project, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Jacob's Pillow. Mr. Byers also danced for recording artists Erykah Badu, Jennifer Holliday, The Skins, and D.R.A.M. Prior to joining Ailey II, he performed in many productions with The Metropolitan Opera Ballet. Mr. Byers has performed works by choreographers including Kyle Abraham, Kim Brandstrup, Johan Inger, Jiří Kylián, Alexei Ratmansky, Hofesh Shechter, Christopher Wheeldon. This is his first season with Ailey II.

**KHALIA CAMPBELL** (Bronx, NY) is a graduate of Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. She began her formal dance training at Uptown Dance Academy. She also studied at Dance Theatre of Harlem and as a scholarship student at The Ailey School. In 2012, Ms. Campbell was a part of the international tour of *Aida*. She has performed with Kymera Dance, Dance Iquail, and in the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Wiz* at SummerStage. Ms. Campbell also danced as a guest artist with Richard Siegal's Ballet of Difference. In 2016, she was featured in the Christian Dior commercial for the fragrance Poison. This is her second season with Ailey II.

**YAZZMEEN LAIDLER** (Miami, FL) trained at New World School of the Arts and at Mrs. Traci Young-Bryon's Young Contemporary Dance Theatre. Ms. Laidler received her BFA from University of the Arts and was a company member of Eleone Dance Theatre. She has worked with choreographers including Christopher Huggins, Dwight Rhoden, Doug Varone , Peter London, Anthony Burrell, and Tommie Waheed-Evans. This is her second season with Ailey II.

**KYLE H. MARTIN** (Montclair, NJ) began his dance training at Sharron Miller's Academy for the Performing Arts in New Jersey. He continued his training at The Ailey School where he trained in the Junior Division and he is currently a student in the Professional Division's Certificate Program. Mr. Martin performed in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* during Ailey's 2015 and 2016 New York City Center seasons. He has worked with choreographers Hope Boykin, Christopher L. Huggins, Carlos dos Santos, Amy Hall Garner, Ray Mercer, Freddie Moore, Frederick Earl Mosley, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Pascal Rioult, Pedro Ruiz, Matthew Rushing, Christian von Howard, Bradley Shelver, Winston Dynamite Brown, and Robert Battle. This is his first season with Ailey II.

**CORRIN RACHELLE MITCHELL** (Baltimore, MD) began her dance training in her hometown at LeRe's Performing Arts Center, owned by her mother and father. She attended Baltimore School for the Arts where she trained with Norma Pera, Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell, and Barry Hughson. Ms. Mitchell graduated from Point Park University with a BFA in Dance and worked with choreographers Troy Powell, Gary Jeter, Garfield Lemonius, and Debbie Allen. In 2016, she was an Ailey II apprentice. This is her first season with the company.

**ADRIEN PICAUT** (Chaumontel, France) started dancing at Takadanser dance school in Lamorlaye and went on to train at the Institut de Formation Professionnelle de Rick Odums (IFPRO) in Paris. He is a two-time gold medal winner of the French Federation of Dance and has attended summer intensives at New York City Ballet and Jacob's Pillow Dance. Mr. Picaut trained at The Ailey School as a scholarship students and performed in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* during Ailey's 2016 New York City Center season. He also danced with ZEST Collective. Mr. Picaut has worked with choreographers including Matthew Rushing, Kyle Abraham, Emily Molnar, Clifton Brown, and Matjash Mrozewski. This is his first season with Ailey II.

**JESSICA AMBER PINKETT** (Randallstown, MD) began her dance training at Baltimore Dance Tech. She trained in summer intensives at Dance Theatre of Harlem and The Ailey School as a scholarship student. Awards she has received include a bronze medal in the national ACT-SO competition and several scholarships. Ms. Pinkett has worked with choreographers including Ray Mercer, Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Marcus Jarrell Willis and others. In 2017, she performed on "Good Morning America" with Ailey II and with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater for the 2017 Logo's *Trailblazer Honors* tribute to Alvin Ailey. From Towson University, she graduated with honors and earned a BFA in Dance Performance and Choreography. This is her second season with Ailey II.

**MARTELL RUFFIN** (Chicago, IL) began his formal dance training at the Joffrey Ballet in Chicago in 2009. He attended Chicago High School for the Arts under, then director, Lisa Johnson-Willingham, former dancer of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Mr. Ruffin has attended dance intensives at Joffrey Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Complexions, and received first place in the all-city NAACP ACT-SO Competition 2011. Mr. Ruffin trained at The Ailey School as a scholarship student and has performed works by Lisa Johnson-Willingham, Earl Mosley, George Faison, Darrell Grand Moultrie, and Matthew Rushing. This is his second season with Ailey II.

**ARIANNA SALERNO** (San Diego, CA) began her formal dance training at the California Ballet School under the direction of Maxine Mahon. She is a graduate of Chula Vista High School where she majored in dance. Ms. Salerno trained at The Ailey School summer intensive as a scholarship student and recently completed her final year in the Certificate Program. She has performed works by choreographers Christian von Howard, Ray Mercer, Brice Mousset, Matthew Rushing, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Robert Battle, and danced in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* during Ailey's 2015 and 2016 New York City Center seasons. This is her first season with Ailey II.

**MARCUS WILLIAMS** (Dallas, TX) began his dance training at age 17 at American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in California. He also studied at Debbie Allen Dance Academy where he worked with choreographers Debbie Allen, Terry Beeman, Madame Dellas, and Otis Salid. Mr. Williams continued his dance training at The Ailey School as a scholarship student. He performed in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* during Ailey's 2015 and 2016 New York City Center seasons and has danced as a guest artist with ZEST Collective and Cross Performance, Inc. Mr. Williams was an Ailey II apprentice in 2016. This is his first season with the company.

**CHRISTOPHER R. WILSON** (Augusta, GA) is a graduate of John S. Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School and most recently, graduated cum laude from the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in Dance. Mr. Wilson has attended summer programs at Alonzo King LINES Ballet and The School at Jacob's Pillow, among others. He began his professional career with BH*dos*, the second company of Ballet Hispanico and has performed at The World Monument Fund's Hadrian Gala honoring Queen Sofía of Spain as well as the 2017 Essence Festival in New Orleans. He has performed works by choreographers Matthew Rushing, Kyle Abraham, Emily Molnar, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Eduardo Vilaro, Stefanie Batten Bland, and Nicholas Villeneuve. This is his second season with Ailey II.

## The Magic of Ailey Dance

Before Ailey II performs there is an important process that takes place.

### THE CREATIVE PROCESS

There are five fundamental elements in creating a dance. They are the foundation of the work that you see on stage. This process is a collaborative effort. The descriptions below should give you some insight into what is involved in the creation of a dance.

#### The Dance

The person who creates the dance, the sequence of steps and style of execution is the choreographer. The choreographer has ideas, concepts, images or emotions that he/she wants to convey to the audience. The choreographer makes all of the artistic decisions regarding what the work will consist of. Some choreographers create works that may include solos, duets, trios, quintets, or the entire company of dancers. For example, *Cry*, choreographed by Alvin Ailey, is a solo performed by a female; *Hymn*, choreographed by Judith Jamison uses the entire company. The choreographer consults the Artistic Director in casting the dancers into roles for each dance. The choreographer works with the dancers in rehearsal to teach the dance and to perfect the execution of the steps. Rehearsals range from two to eight weeks, so the dancers have to be very versatile, and must be able to adapt to many different techniques of dance.

#### The Music

Many choreographers commission a new piece of music from a composer. Sometimes, the choreographer selects an existing piece of music that inspires them or represents the images or concepts of the dance. Choreographers that have worked with Ailey II have used existing music as well as commissioned works. For *Revelations*, Mr. Ailey used traditional spirituals.

#### The Costumes

A costume designer creates the designs for the costumes. The designer works very closely with the choreographer to ensure that the choreographer's vision is reflected in the costumes. They choose the fabric, colors and the best method of construction that will allow the dancers to move easily. Once the designs are completed and the dancers are measured by the wardrobe staff, the measurements and designs are sent to a costume construction company for assembly.

## The Set

The set designer creates the designs for props and sets. Props and sets are used in a variety of ways in the dance. Most sets create the decor for the dance. Props are items that the dancers use in the dance. The props and sets should reflect the choreographer's vision and complement the choreography. Props can range from the umbrella, stools and fans in *Revelations* to the wooden bench used in *Mourner's Bench*.

## The Lighting

The lighting designer creates the design using lights, color and special effects. Most dances use many lights at once to create the mood on stage. This designer also works very closely with the choreographer and all the other designers to create an atmosphere that enhances the dance. The lighting designer has to ensure that his/her ideas will coincide with the choreographer's vision. Once the idea is developed, it has to be put into a written format: the lighting plot. This plot informs the lighting technicians where the lights should be hung and how they are wired.



Ailey II in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. Photo by Kyle Froman.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### DANCE TERMS

#### ***Modern dance***

-a means of expression that is different from ballet; uses the body with a wider range of motion, the legs turned parallel or turned in; feet can be flexed and the back rounded; head is not always held erect; there are many different modern dance techniques.

#### ***Horton***

-created by Lester Horton; a modern dance technique that explores how many different ways the body can move. He named these movements "studies." Some of the studies are for balance, some are to fortify (strengthen) and some are to work on the swinging action of the body. In the Horton technique, the dancer tries to use as much space as possible: turning, bending and jumping sideways, backward and even upside down. The shapes created are clear and linear. The quality of the movement is lyrical and includes varied dynamics. The Horton technique gives a feeling of strength and energy.

#### ***Graham-based***

#### ***Modern***

-created by Martha Graham; a dance technique that is based on the principle of contraction and release, movement which is similar to the act of breathing, creating a current of energy through the body; back appears rounded in a contraction and the chest is lifted in a release; movement itself is dramatic and expressive.

#### ***Dunham***

-a technique created by Katherine Dunham; the Dunham technique is a blend of the Caribbean, West African and Afro-American folk patterns of movement and rhythms. The technique has been devised to encompass the movements of the indigenous folk patterns of these cultures. The original dance patterns have been preserved. But the dances have been slightly altered in order to be more acceptable, choreographically speaking, to the modern dance concert and theater. The technique also employs the mediums of ballet, modern dance forms, jazz and basic folk patterns.

#### ***Ballet***

-a dance form which started in the royal courts of Europe; the body is held mostly upright and the legs are turned out from the hip; uses five basic positions of the feet; uses French as its language.

#### ***Jazz***

- an American style of movement that grew out of American jazz music; uses the hips more freely than ballet or modern dance; there are many different kinds of jazz styles.

#### ***Tap***

-a type of dance characterized by the rapid tapping of the toes, and heel on the floor; generally done in shoes fitted with cleats or metal plates to emphasize the beats.

Glossary - continued

- Solo** -any performance by one person.
- Duet** -any performance by two people.
- Ensemble** -the united performance of an entire group.
- Leotard** -a skintight, one-piece garment worn by dancers.
- Repertoire** -the list of works that a company is prepared to perform.
- Work** -a word that dancers use to refer to a dance. Other words that are used in this manner are: "piece," "ballet," or "dance."
- Choreographer** -a person who composes dance works.
- Second-home city** -a location where a company tours every year and there is an organized support group there to assist the company.
- Repertory company** -a dance company that performs many types of works by many different choreographers.



Ailey II in Bridget L. Moore's *Sketches of Flames*. Photo by Kyle Froman.

## PRODUCTION / THEATRICAL TERMS

<b><i>balcony</i></b>	-an upper level seating platform in a theater.
<b><i>beams</i></b>	-position for lighting equipment in auditorium in front of the proscenium.
<b><i>booking representatives</i></b>	-paid agents that arrange bookings with presenters for the Company.
<b><i>borders</i></b>	-drapery that is hung horizontally across the top of the stage.
<b><i>call board</i></b>	-bulletin board used backstage to share important information to all staff involved with the production.
<b><i>commission</i></b>	-the request and purchase of a new art work for a specific group.
<b><i>contract</i></b>	-a legally binding agreement between two parties.
<b><i>cues</i></b>	-a verbal or technical signal used to inform a performer or technician to begin an action.
<b><i>cyclorama</i></b>	-stage backdrop, sometimes U-shaped; neutral or light color; used for sky effects.
<b><i>front of house</i></b>	-all areas in the theater outside of the performance auditorium i.e. lobby, box-office, etc.
<b><i>house</i></b>	-the auditorium in a theater with seating for viewing a performance.
<b><i>house lights</i></b>	-the overhead lights in the house.
<b><i>legs</i></b>	-set of draperies on the side of stage used to mask the backstage area from the audience.
<b><i>lighting board</i></b>	-a mechanism that can adjust and control the lighting.
<b><i>lighting plot</i></b>	-a technical grid which denotes the arrangements of a lighting design.
<b><i>load-in</i></b>	-the process of bringing into the theater and setting up all equipment and materials for a performance.
<b><i>load-out</i></b>	-the process of removing from the theater all equipment and materials.
<b><i>mezzanine</i></b>	-a low section between two main stories in a building.
<b><i>presenter</i></b>	-a group or theater that sponsors the performance financially and provides the space for performance or activity.
<b><i>print advertisements</i></b>	-promotional materials that are included in magazines, newspapers and journals.
<b><i>proscenium</i></b>	-the arch that separates the stage from the auditorium.

## Production / Theatrical Terms – Continued

<b>royalties</b>	-an agreed portion of the income from a work paid to its composer, choreographer, etc. each time the work is performed for the public.
<b>road boxes</b>	-boxes specifically designed to carry technical equipment.
<b>scrims</b>	- finely woven netting with a rectangular weave through which light may or may not be seen, depending on how it is lit. Sometimes it is hung as a backdrop or as a curtain between the audience and performers.
<b>sign-in sheet</b>	-the sheet on the call board used by the dancers and crew to sign-in to keep account for all the staff on tour.
<b>site visit</b>	-a review of a performance space prior to performance to acquire technical information on the space.
<b>special</b>	-a light focused for an effect exclusive to one work.
<b>strike</b>	-the breakdown of all equipment and materials that were assembled for the performance in preparation for load-out.
<b>tour</b>	-a long journey including performances in a number of places in sequence.
<b>wings</b>	-the unseen space on the left or right side of the stage produced by hanging draperies (legs) at the sides of the stage to mask off-stage area.



Ailey II in Ray Mercer's *Something Tangible*. Photo: Eduardo Patino, NYC.