

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



## VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL 2023

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater	3	Ailey's Masterpiece: <i>Revelations</i>	10
Who Was Alvin Ailey?	4-5	The Music of <i>Revelations</i> : Spirituals	11-12
What Is Modern Dance?	6	Modern Dance Movement Glossary	13
More Movers in Modern Dance	7	Got Rhythm?	14
Cakewalk to Moonwalk: A History of African American Dance	8-9	Resources	15



# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS AND THESE SPONSORS OF VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## CORPORATE SPONSORS



AT&T Clark Nexsen

Dominion Energy

Enterprise Holdings Foundation

## FOUNDATIONS



D. Baker Ames Charitable Foundation  
Hampton Roads Community Foundation  
Leah S. Wohl Musical Arts Fund of the  
Hampton Roads Community Foundation  
ODU Hixon Community Engagement Fund  
Sentara Optima Health Virginia Premier  
Tidewater Children's Foundation

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT



The following cities and/or their Arts and Humanities Commissions:  
Chesapeake, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach,  
and Williamsburg.



Robert Battle, Matthew Rushing, Ronni Favors, and members of the Company. Photo by Dario Calmese.

## ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater grew from a now legendary performance in March 1958 at the 92nd Street Young Men’s Hebrew Association in New York. Led by Alvin Ailey and a group of young African American modern dancers, that performance forever changed the perception of American dance. Ailey’s choreography was a dynamic and vibrant mix that grew from his previous training in ballet, modern dance, jazz, and African dance techniques. Ailey insisted upon a complete theatrical experience, including costumes, lighting, and makeup. A work of intense emotional appeal expressing the pain and anger of African Americans, *Blues Suite*, was an instant success and defined Ailey’s style.

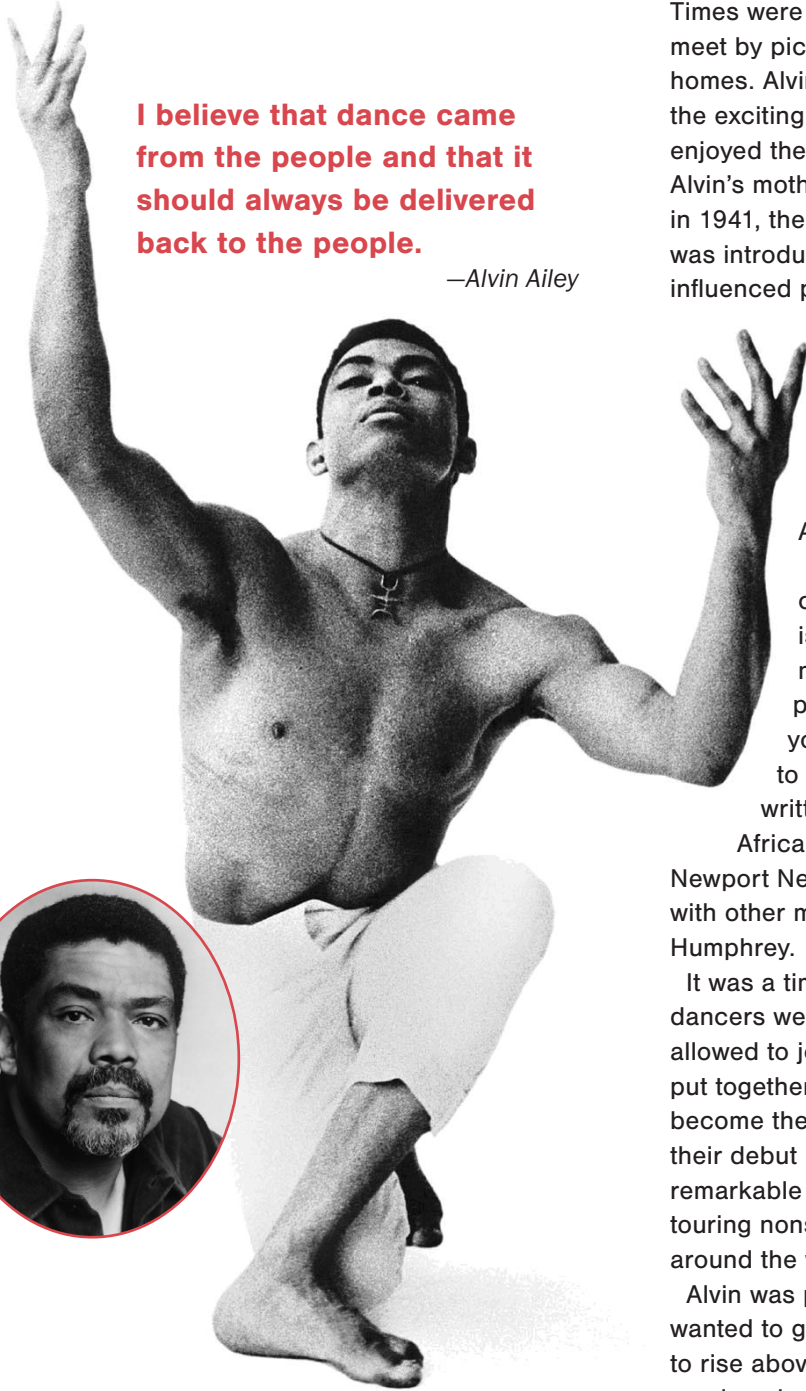
Today, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has performed for an estimated 25 million people in 48 states and in 71 countries on 6 continents, plus millions more online and through television broadcasts. The company has earned a reputation as one of the most acclaimed international ambassadors of American culture, promoting the uniqueness of the African American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage.

Source: Adapted from [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org).

## WHO WAS ALVIN AILEY?

**I believe that dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people.**

—Alvin Ailey



Alvin Ailey. Photo by Normand Maxo.  
Inset: Alvin Ailey. Photo by Kenn Duncan.

Alvin Ailey was born in Rogers, Texas, on January 5, 1931. Times were hard in segregated Texas. Alvin's mother made ends meet by picking cotton and doing housework in white people's homes. Alvin found inspiration at their Texas church; he loved the exciting gospel music and theatrical worship. He also enjoyed the music of local dance halls where adults socialized. Alvin's mother wanted a better life for her son and herself. So in 1941, the two moved to Los Angeles, California. There, Alvin was introduced to dance. He saw the Caribbean- and African-influenced performances of the Katherine Dunham Dance Company and the classical ballet of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Intrigued by this self-expression through movement, he began visiting the studio of noted dance teacher Lester Horton. Soon he was dancing with Lester Horton's modern dance company, the first multiracial dance troupe in America.

When Horton died in 1953, Alvin took over the company and began choreographing. Choreography is the art of creating dances by arranging dancers' movements, steps, and patterns. Broadway producers in New York City heard of the talented young dancer and choreographer. They invited Alvin to appear in their musicals, like *House of Flowers*, written by author Truman Capote and starring popular African American singer Pearl Bailey (who grew up in Newport News). While dancing in New York, Alvin also trained with other modern dance giants, like Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey.

It was a time of great creativity in the dance world, but Black dancers were still being discriminated against. They weren't allowed to join established dance companies. Alvin decided to put together his own group of dancers—what would eventually become the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. They made their debut in 1958. The company's fame grew with every remarkable performance. Before long, Alvin's dancers were touring nonstop, bringing their eclectic performances to stages around the world.

Alvin was proud that his company was multiracial. While he wanted to give opportunities to Black dancers, he also wanted to rise above issues of racial identity. His company has always employed artists based solely on artistic talent and integrity, regardless of their race.

When Alvin created dances, he drew upon his "blood memories" of Texas for inspiration, which included music like the blues, spirituals, and gospel. That inspiration resulted in his





AAADT in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*.  
Photo Tony Powell.

most popular and critically acclaimed work, *Revelations*, which premiered in 1960. The piece became a cultural treasure through its powerful storytelling and soul-stirring music, evoking timeless themes of determination and hope.

Blues music was important to Alvin, and he frequently incorporated it into his choreography. Blues is a style of music that originated in African American communities, primarily in the Deep South, at the end of the nineteenth century. Blues influences include spirituals; work songs; field hollers, shouts, and chants; and rhymed storytelling ballads.

Alvin Ailey was unique in that he did not train his dancers in a specific technique before they performed his choreography. He approached his dancers more in the manner of a jazz musician, requiring them to infuse his choreography with a personal style that best suited their individual talents. Ailey's dancers came to his company with training in a variety of other styles, from ballet to modern, jazz, and, later, hip-hop.

Although Alvin created 79 pieces before his death in 1989, he maintained that his company was not exclusively a storehouse for his own work. Today, the company continues Alvin's mission by presenting important works of the past and commissioning new ones. In all, more than 235 works by more than 90 choreographers are part of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater repertoire.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Alvin Ailey didn't create a specific dance technique. Rather, he blended elements of modern dance, ballet, jazz, hip-hop, and other styles. His dancers reflect this dance diversity in their varied training and talents. What do you think might be the strengths of this approach? The weaknesses? How do you think the dancers' different backgrounds might affect the performance? Write down your thoughts or discuss them in class.

Source: Adapted from [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org).

## WHAT IS MODERN DANCE?

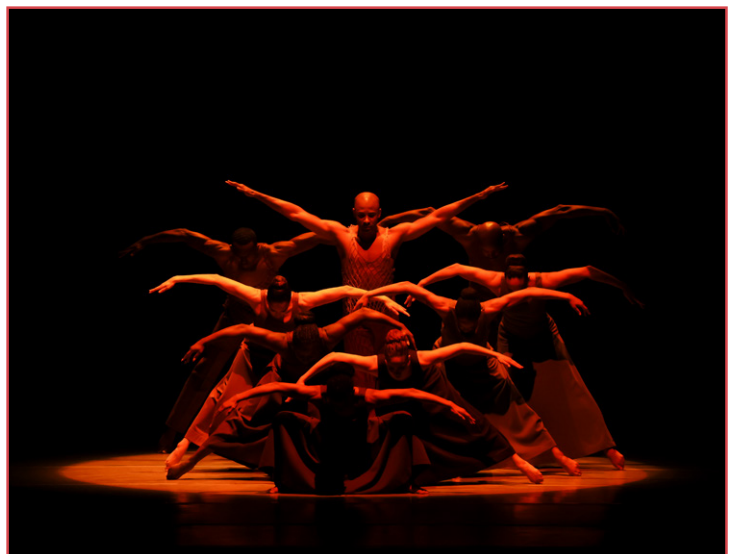
Modern dance is a style of theatrical dance that developed in the United States and Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It grew as a few pioneering dancers began to use dance as a form of personal expression. Their works often emphasized emotion and took on contemporary, or modern, subjects. This type of dancing was very different from classical ballet, which came from the courts of European royalty and often told fairy-tale stories of princesses, princes, and enchanted creatures.

Though modern dance frequently uses movements found in ballet, each of the modern dance trailblazers created his or her own movement vocabulary. Some drew from folk or ethnic dancing of other cultures, or religious dance traditions. Others explored how dancers can work with and against gravity, or how body movements can represent musical rhythms.

In contrast to the formal steps, costumes, and shoes of ballet, modern dance pioneers preferred a freer style of dancing. Modern dancers often create their own steps and choreography by interpreting their moods and feelings into movement. Modern dancers regularly perform in bare feet and costumes that don't constrict or mask the body.

As each new generation of modern dance has inspired another, the genre has been redefined. Though it clearly isn't ballet, it often uses balletic movements. And though it may include elements of other dance forms, it can also examine just one simple aspect of movement, such as the body's fall through space or the contraction of the torso.

Today, modern dance continues to grow and develop as new choreographers add their unique contributions to the field.



Top: AAADT's Yannick Lebrun James Gilmer and Constance Stamatou. Photo by Dario Calmese. Bottom: AAADT in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. Photo by Dario Calmese.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

For centuries, ballet was the dominant form of theatrical dance. Classical ballet typically told fanciful, fairy-tale stories using traditional dance technique, footwear, and costumes. Why would modern times require a new, modern approach to theatrical dance? Write down your thoughts or discuss them in class.

Source: Adapted from *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In modern dance, movement is used to express emotion, mood, or feeling. What movements might you make when you're feeling happy? Sad? Angry? Surprised? Can you choreograph—or create—a short sequence using that mood's movements? See if your classmates can guess what emotion you're expressing.

## MORE MOVERS IN MODERN DANCE

**Isadora Duncan** (1877-1927) Duncan rejected ballet's structure for more natural, expressive movement. Duncan found inspiration in Greek mythology; she danced barefoot and in a Greek tunic.

**Ruth St. Denis** (1879-1968) Inspired by Asian dance styles, St. Denis believed dance should be spiritual, not just entertaining or technically skillful. With her husband, Ted Shawn, she founded the Denishawn company, which trained other important modern dance pioneers like Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey.

**Martha Graham** (1894-1991) Graham's emphasis on muscular contraction and release and jagged, angular body positions became central to modern dance technique. Graham was the first modern dance choreographer to collaborate with modern artists in other genres, such as sculpture, to create works that express human emotion.

**Doris Humphrey** (1895-1958) Humphrey made dramatic use of gravity, creating a technique based on a dancer's motions of fall and recovery. She was interested in the idea that movement creates its own meaning.

**Lester Horton** (1906-1953) Horton learned dances and chants from Native American performers. These he incorporated into his teaching and choreographic style, which emphasized improvisation and unusual, exaggerated movements. Horton formed the first racially integrated American dance company, which included Alvin Ailey.

**Erick Hawkins** (1909-1994) Hawkins was the first man to dance with Martha Graham's company, after an esteemed ballet career. He founded the Erick Hawkins Dance Company to explore his theory of body movement that focused on simple, natural, unforced motions.

**Katherine Dunham** (1909-2006) One of the first African American women to attend the University of Chicago, Dunham earned a doctoral degree in anthropology before launching her dance career. Her influential technique blended African and Caribbean dance forms.

**Merce Cunningham** (1919-2009) Cunningham danced with Martha Graham's company before forming his own, in which he often collaborated with avant-garde composer John Cage. Cunningham created "chance" choreography, where dancers study movement combinations

without music, then learn how the combinations should be put together just before the performance.

**Paul Taylor** (1930-2018) Taylor went to college on a swimming scholarship, but soon discovered dance, which became his passion. He founded his own company to explore his choreographic ideas that blend basic, everyday movements with more traditional technique.

**Trisha Brown** (1936-2017) Brown used a geometric yet fluid style for her experimental pieces. Her early works used equipment like harnesses to support the dancers; were site-specific, with dancers performing on rooftops; or included media like film and photography.

**Garth Fagan** (1940-) Jamaican-born Fagan studied with Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey. His inventive choreography blends Afro-Caribbean, ballet, and social dance.

**Twyla Tharp** (1941-) A student of Merce Cunningham and former member of Paul Taylor's company, Tharp is known for her creative, witty, technically precise style. She blends different movement forms—such as ballet, boxing, and more—to expand the boundaries of modern dance.

**Mark Morris** (1956-) Once known as the "bad boy of modern dance" for his outrageous humor and more creative pieces, Morris is now considered one of the world's leading modern dance choreographers. His works showcase his strong musicality and technical ingenuity.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Modern dance continues to evolve as young choreographers learn from their mentors, then expand on what they've learned to create their own signature style. View videos of works by both a modern dance teacher and student, like Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham, Lester Horton and Alvin Ailey, and Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. How are the dances similar? How are they different? What did the student learn from the teacher? How did the student expand on what was learned from the teacher? Write down your ideas in an essay, capture them in a chart, or present them orally in class.



## CAKEWALK TO MOONWALK: A History of African American Dance

From the era of slavery to 1920s Harlem to the Bronx streets of the '80s, African Americans have developed and defined dance styles through the ages, forms that have been embraced the world over. Popular social dances like the Charleston, Lindy Hop, Jitterbug, and Twist all have roots in African American dance traditions.

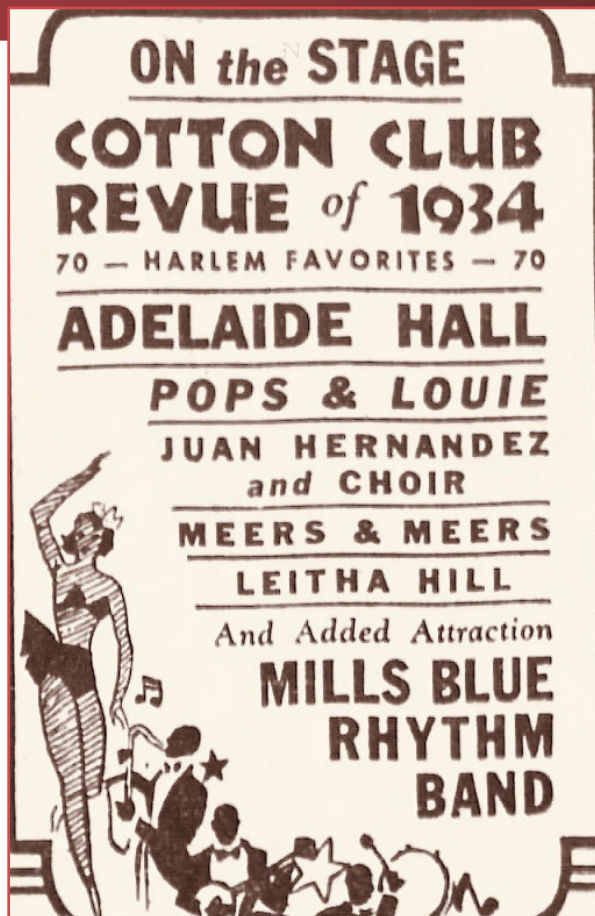
Before enslavement, Africans used dance as a celebration and affirmation of life. They danced for special occasions, like a wedding or birth, and as part of their everyday activities. Starting in the 1500s, Africans were brought to North and South America and the Caribbean islands as slave labor, and their dance traditions came with them. In the Americas, dance helped enslaved Africans feel connected to their homeland and gave them hope for the future.

Many plantation owners in North America, however, didn't allow slaves to dance. The slaves worked around that. Since lifting the feet was considered dancing to slave owners, slaves developed different movements, like shuffling the feet—an early form of tap dancing—and movement of the hip and torso. Plantation dances included the Ring Shout, where dancers move in a circle to handclaps or the beat of a stick on a wooden surface. A stick was used because slaves were forbidden to have drums.

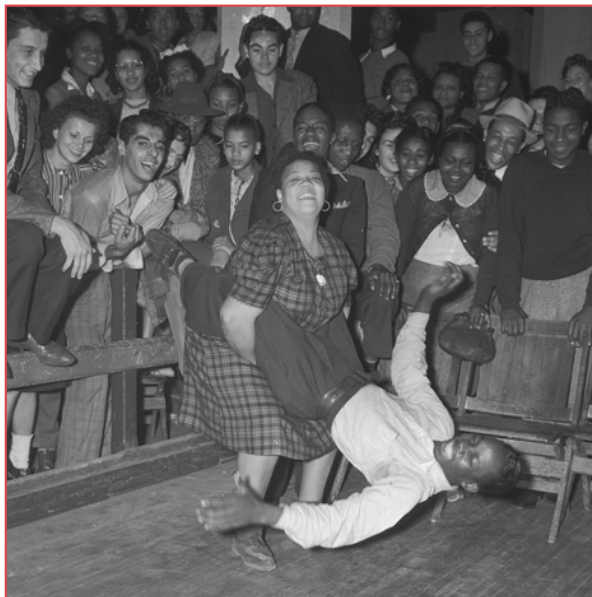
A new musical revue that made its debut in 1890 changed the way that Black Americans were portrayed and affected modern entertainment for generations. Titled *The Creole Show*, the program featured an all-Black cast and showcased for the first time African Americans in a dignified way. For a quarter of a century following the Civil War, free or freed African American entertainers had been limited to playing demeaning, stereotyped parts in minstrel shows, but this new style of show offered opportunities to many Black entertainers and gave birth to a series of all-Black shows.

By the 1900s, minstrelsy was in decline due to changing attitudes about race and the rise of vaudeville entertainment. Vaudeville expanded the minstrel show by adding acrobats, magicians, and other theatrical performers to a single stage. Tap dancing, a mainstay of the minstrel show, took the spotlight during the age of vaudeville.

The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s saw an explosion of African American literature, music, theater, and dance. In jazz venues like the Cotton Club and Savoy Ballroom, Black dancers showcased new styles of couples dancing like the Charleston, Lindy Hop, and Jitterbug.



Adelaide Hall starring in the Cotton Club Revue of 1934 at the Loew's Metropolitan Theater, Brooklyn, commencing on 7 September 1934 (advertisement). 10 July 2019, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 6 September 1934,



Dancing the jitterbug; Los Angeles Times photographic archive, UCLA Library.



The 1930s and '40s saw the emergence of African Americans in ballet and modern dance. White choreographers began incorporating African American themes and dance styles into their work and hired Black dancers to perform them. Black dancers and choreographers—Katherine Dunham, Lester Horton, Alvin Ailey, Garth Fagan—went on to start their own modern dance companies, while others rose to prominence in other dance forms.

In 1960, African American rock and roll singer Chubby Checker popularized the Twist with his hit single of the same name. The '70s television show Soul Train brought Black dance moves into living rooms across America. During the 1980s, break dancing emerged as part of the hip-hop culture that began in the Bronx borough of New York City. Michael Jackson popularized the Moonwalk, part of the “electric boogie” dance movement vocabulary.

Today, Black performers dance in or lead companies in a wide variety of dance forms. In 2015, ballerina Misty Copeland made history by becoming the first African American female principal dancer with the prestigious American Ballet Theatre.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Choose an African American dance form and research both the dance and the time period it came from. Why was the dance popular? Did the dance have particular meaning to people of that era? How did the dance reflect or record the history or culture of the time? Present your research to the class. View videos of the dance and try to learn it yourself. Can you teach it to your classmates?



Top: Original swing-era professional Lindy Hop dancers Willa Mae Ricker and Leon James in iconic composite photograph from “Life” article on the dance. Bottom: Breakdancer. Out ‘n about in Faneuil Hall, Sunday, September 11, 2005; Chris Kirkman.

## AILEY'S MASTERPIECE: *Revelations*

Alvin Ailey created 79 ballets over his lifetime, but his most celebrated piece is *Revelations*, first performed in 1960. It's estimated that more than 23 million people in 71 countries have seen Ailey's signature masterpiece—more than any other modern dance work.

To create *Revelations*, Ailey tapped into what he called “blood memories” of his childhood in rural, segregated Texas, recollections so powerful he felt they were as much a part of him as the blood running through his veins. He started with the music. As a boy, Ailey was enthralled by the music played in and around the tiny churches he and his mother attended every Sunday. It was “some of the most glorious singing to be heard anywhere in the world,” he recalled. The choirs, congregations, and preachers would sing spirituals “with such fervor that even as a small child I could not only hear it but almost see it.” He added other traditional African American musical styles, like blues and gospel, and “tried to put all of that feeling”—faith, hope, joy, sometimes sadness—into *Revelations*.

Ailey divided *Revelations* into three sections, each including several dances representing different aspects of African American faith and persistence. “Pilgrim of Sorrow,” the first section of the work, “was about trying to get up out of the ground.” “Take Me to the Water,” the second section, depicts a baptism or purification rite at a river's edge. “Move, Members, Move,” the third section, brings the church to life, depicting “the holy rollers, and all that church happiness.” Along with dance movement and music, Ailey carefully thought through other elements of a theatrical production—like costumes, lighting, and props—as he created *Revelations*. Each section has its own specific look and feel.

As you watch a section of *Revelations*, pay close attention to the creative choices Ailey made in these areas:

- **Movement:** What shapes do the dancers' bodies make? What is the quality of movement—weighted, light? Do the movements expand (become larger) or contract (become smaller)?
- **Music:** What is the music's tempo, or speed—slow, fast, or both? What are the music's dynamics (loud or quiet?) What is the music's mood—sorrowful (sad) or celebratory (happy)?



AAADT in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.

- **Costume/props:** What colors are the dancer's costumes? Are the costumes simple or elaborate? What props do the dancers use, and what do they do with them?
- **Lighting:** Is the lighting a certain color? Is it dim or bright? Does it change?

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Think about a section of *Revelations*. Who are the characters dancing in it? What are they doing? What is the music like? Does this scene remind you of anything you may have experienced in your own life?

How do Ailey's creative choices convey meaning in his work—how do they help illustrate the African American experience in the segregated Deep South? Do they symbolize or represent certain ideas, events, or emotions? Make a chart to capture your conclusions about one section of *Revelations*. Column headings might include Creative Aspect (the four mentioned above), Ailey's Choices, and Meaning. Search YouTube for videos if you need to refresh your memory of *Revelations*.

Source: Ailey quotes from *Revelations: The Autobiography of Alvin Ailey* by Alvin Ailey and A. Peter Bailey (Birch Lane Press, 1995).



## THE MUSIC OF REVELATIONS: Spirituals

Alvin Ailey's best known work, *Revelations*, uses as its musical backbone a type of song called a "spiritual." Spirituals are religious folk songs with roots in the culture of African people enslaved in the American South. Sung both in church and informally outside of the church, spirituals typically describe events in the Bible or personal religious experiences. Many spirituals have become part of America's common social and musical language, such as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Come by Here (Kumbaya)."

Spirituals trace their origins to Africa, and although they have evolved over time, many have remained unchanged for centuries. Beginning in the 1600s, Africans were brought to the American colonies on slave ships, bringing their musical traditions with them. African chants, drums, and rhythms have deeply influenced the growth of American music.

In the Americas, most Africans were forced to abandon their native religions and convert to the Christianity practiced by their white enslavers. Many embraced the new religion, which promised a better place—heaven—after this life on earth. Since Christian congregations allowed singing in their services, the slaves could incorporate their own song traditions into their newfound faith.

Out of this mingling of slave and Christian cultures came the songs called "spirituals." Spirituals were a way for the slave community to express its new faith, as well as its hopes and sorrows.

African Americans in this era learned to give double meaning to the religious songs they sang. Many Negro spirituals contain messages that white slave masters did not know about.

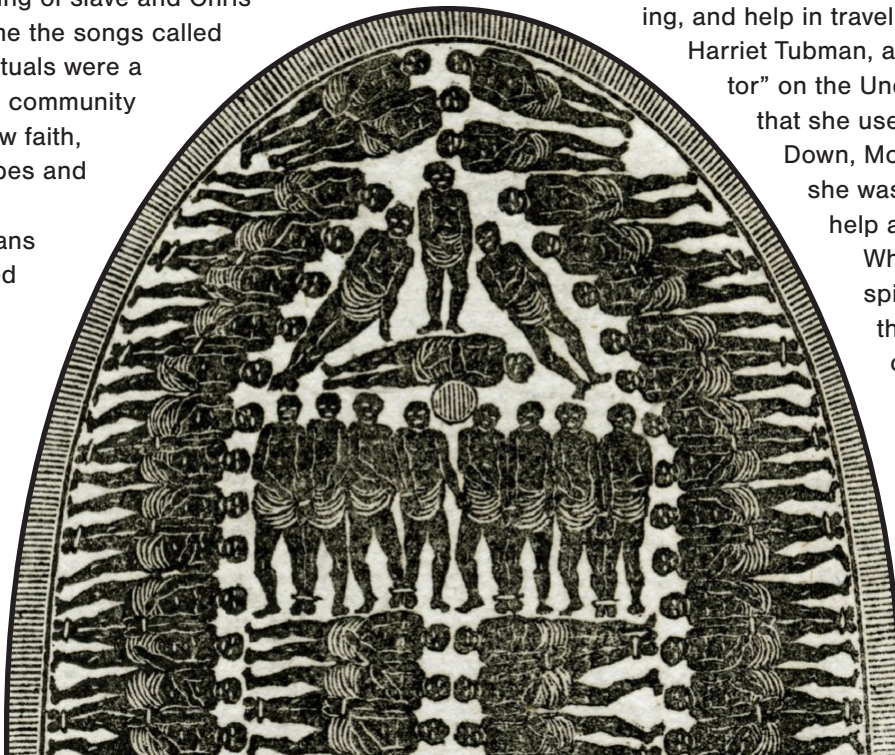


Spirituals became a way for the slaves to communicate with each other—to plan meetings, to help escaped slaves, and to remind each other that there was hope for freedom.

The spiritual "Deep River," for example, was sung to announce a meeting at the river. When a slave ran away and the master discovered his absence, the other slaves on the plantation might sing the spiritual "Wade in the Water." Slaves on neighboring plantations would hear the song, join in, and the escaped person, wherever he or she was, would know that he should take to the river so the slave catcher's bloodhounds couldn't follow his scent.

It's likely no accident that after the Underground Railroad began, slaves took to singing spirituals like "The Gospel Train" and "I Got My Ticket." The Underground Railroad was a secret route from the South to freedom in Canada, marked by homes that would take in escaped people on the run and provide places to sleep, plus food, clothing, and help in traveling to the next "station."

Harriet Tubman, a former slave and "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, said that she used spirituals such as "Go Down, Moses" to signal slaves that she was in the area and would help any who wanted to escape. While the slaves used spirituals to work against their masters and for their own freedom, they mostly made music to make life more bearable, restore their spirits, inspire courage, and enjoy the little free time they had. They also sang work songs while they toiled, creating tunes about picking cotton,



harvesting sugarcane, and loading and unloading ships on the docks. In this they weren't very different from other groups of workers who shared a tradition of music and singing, such as English and Irish sailors who sang sea chanteys as they labored.

Spirituals were typically sung in a call-and-response form, with a leader singing a line of text and a chorus of singers answering in unison, or together. The spirituals known as "sorrow songs" are usually slow and sad, describing the slaves' struggles and their identification with the suffering of some people from the Bible. Other spirituals are more joyful. Called "jubilees," they're fast and rhythmic. Alvin Ailey's use of both kinds of spirituals in *Revelations*—along with other types of songs—helps to make this important work even more powerful. As Ailey said, one of America's richest treasures is African American cultural heritage, which is "sometimes sorrowful, sometimes jubilant, but always hopeful."

## THINK ABOUT THIS

Spirituals are still sung today. Why do you think spirituals have remained popular for so long? Who might find spirituals the most appealing? Why? What other types of music do you think spirituals might have had a strong influence on? Why do you think that is? Discuss these questions in small groups, write down your answers, and share with the class.

Sources: Adapted from Cal Performances Alvin Ailey Study Guide, UC Berkeley, and "African American Spirituals," Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495>.



Harriet Tubman. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

Photos on previous page, top: *The Old Plantation* (Slaves Dancing on a South Carolina Plantation), ca. 1785-1795. watercolor on paper, attributed to John Rose, Beaufort County, South Carolina. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum, Williamsburg, Virginia, USA. Bottom: "Description of a slave ship" by an anonymous artist, wood engraving, 328 mm × 444 mm. "This is one of several prints produced from the same woodblocks showing plans and sections of the slave ship "Brookes" of Liverpool. A model of the ship was used by William Wilberforce in the House of Commons to demonstrate conditions on the Middle Passage. The woodcut was first produced in 1786 to illustrate various works by Thomas Clarkson, and was then distributed separately by abolitionists." Courtesy of the British Museum, London.



# MODERN DANCE MOVEMENT GLOSSARY

**Brush** Gliding the foot along the floor.

**Contraction** Forward curving of the spine, starting from the pelvis.

**Downward dog** Inverted V shape from the yoga tradition with both arms and legs supporting weight.

**Flat back** Suspending the torso horizontally in space so the back resembles a tabletop.

**Hanging over** Standing on two legs while creasing the body at the hip joints and letting the torso, arms, and head release to gravity.

**Inversion** Moving the body upside down in space while bearing weight with arms, hands, shoulders, or head.

**Isolation** Holding one part of the body still while moving another part.

**Leap** Transferring weight from one leg to the other, during which there is a suspended moment when both feet are off the ground.

**Release** Letting go of muscular tension.

**Upper back arch** Extending the upper body and head up and back.

**Weight shift** Transferring body weight from one leg to the other.

**Yield and push** Releasing body weight into the floor followed by an active pushing away from gravity.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

These are just some of the types of movements used in modern dance. At the performance, see if you can identify any of them. In the classroom or at home, give them a try. String several together to choreograph your own modern dance!



Top and middle: Members of AAADT. Photo by Dario Calmese. Bottom: Vernard Gilmore in Alvin Ailey's Revelations. Photo by Andrew Eccles.



AAADT in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*.  
Photo by Dario Calmese.

## GOT RHYTHM?

Rhythm is a strong, regular, repeated pattern of sound or movement. It's the "heartbeat" of both music and dance.

Humans have a deep connection to rhythm. Rhythm is everywhere, not just in music. Human movement is naturally rhythmic—we alternate activity and rest. Breathing is rhythmic—we inhale, then exhale; inhale, then exhale. Spoken word and conversation can have rhythm too.

Rhythmic patterns may be metered or free. Metered rhythms are regular and predictable. Think of the pulsing rhythm of your favorite song. You tap your foot at equal intervals to the song's metered rhythm. Free rhythms are not so predictable. Imagine tapping your foot to waves on the shore or to your teacher's lecture. Certainly, there are repeated sound patterns at the beach and in your classroom, but their rhythms are not as consistent.

The rhythm of dance movements is usually associated with the rhythm of the music accompanying the performance. Sometimes the dance movements occur in or echo the same rhythmic patterns as the music. Other times the dance movements have a rhythm all their own.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are some other examples of metered rhythms, either in sound or movement? What are examples of free rhythms? As you watch the performance, see if you can pick out metered and free rhythms in the dancers' movements and in the music. How does each type of rhythm make you feel? Write down your thoughts or discuss them in class.

At the performance, consider how the rhythm of the dancing works with the rhythm of the music. Are the dance movements performed with the music's rhythm? Or do they have their own rhythm? Why do you think the choreographer made those choices when creating the dance? How did the music enhance the dance performance? Write down your thoughts or discuss them in class.



## RESOURCES

### Virginia Standards of Learning

Dance: K.1, 3, 5-6, 11; 1.3-6, 11; 2.3-6, 18; 3.3-6; 4.3, 6; 5.3-7; 6.3-7, 11; 7.3, 5-7; 8.3, 6; DI.3-7; DII.3-4, 6; DIII.3-4, 6; DIV.3, 6

### Books

*Alvin Ailey* by Andrea Davis Pinkney (Disney-Hyperion, 1993). Picture-book biography for grades 2-4.

*Alvin Ailey: Celebrating African-American Culture in Dance* by Barbara C. Cruz (Enslow, 2004). Middle-grade biography for grades 6-12.

*A Young Dancer: The Life of an Ailey Student* by Valerie Gladstone (Henry Holt, 2009). Follows a teen dancer studying at the Ailey School, for grades 2-6.

*My Story, My Dance: Robert Battle's Journey to Alvin Ailey* by Lisa Cline-Ransome (Simon & Schuster, 2015). Picture-book biography of Robert Battle, current artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, for grades 2-5.

### Internet

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Company website providing in-depth information on the troupe, its dancers, repertoire, history, and the Ailey School. [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org)

Elements of Dance Online resource for dance educators and students, featuring activities and downloadable classroom materials. [www.elementsofdance.org](http://www.elementsofdance.org)

Cal Performances Alvin Ailey Study Guide Curriculum guide created by Cal Performances of University of California, Berkeley, featuring student information and activities, plus teacher resources. <http://calperformances.org/learn/k-12/pdf/2007/AileyStudyguide0708.pdf>



Top: AAADT's Jacquelin Harris. Photo by Dario Calmese. Middle and bottom: AAADT in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.

## FEEDBACK FORM

We need your feedback to make our Education Programs even better! Please take a moment to complete this form and either return it to the Virginia Arts Festival office at 440 Bank Street, Norfolk, VA 23510, fax it to (757) 605-3080, or e-mail your answers to [education@vafest.org](mailto:education@vafest.org).

Event: \_\_\_\_\_

How did your students respond to the performance?

How did you prepare your students for this performance? Did you use the Education Guide? If so, how?  
Did students enjoy the materials?

How did this performance contribute to experiential learning in your classroom?

What role do the arts play in your school? In your classroom?

If you could change one thing about this experience, what would it be?

Please include quotes and comments from your students as well!

(Optional)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be part of our database?  Yes  No