

# THE AILEY SCHOOL

OFFICIAL SCHOOL OF ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

**Tracy Inman & Melanie Person, Directors**

**Robert Battle, Artistic Director, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**

## **THE AILEY SCHOOL PRODUCTION HANDBOOK**

B.F.A. Program, Certificate Program, Independent Study Program,  
Scholarship Program and Summer Intensive Program

Bennett Rink, Executive Director, Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation



Ailey School Professional Division Photo by Nir Arieli

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## **PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

The Ailey School offers several opportunities for performance to its full-time Professional Division students. These are meant to give students valuable performance experience, as well as prepare them for all aspects of the professional dance world. Students should treat performances as an opportunity to practice professionalism and respect for their fellow performers, their choreographers, and for the production staff, which includes the Production Administrator, the Costume Coordinator, and the theater crew.

Artist-In-Residence (AIR) Repertory Workshops are offered to give The Ailey School's intermediate and advanced students rehearsal and performance experience. These workshops are by audition and culminate in performances four times a year: BFA Fall Concert, January Explosion, Spring Concert, and Summer Sizzler.

The BFA Program Senior Choreography Concert is a student-produced performance. This concert takes place in the Studio LLC.

Ailey/Fordham Student Dancers (AFSD) and the Ailey Student Performance Group (ASPG) are two student performance groups that perform as part of their program curriculum. Although performances often take place at outside venues, all rehearsals other than tech and dress take place at The Ailey School.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's (AAADT) performances of Mr. Ailey's ballet *Memoria* give an opportunity for the most advanced students to perform with the AAADT at New York City Center. Select students are invited to audition. If chosen to perform, those students will be asked to sign separate agreements which have additional stipulations outlining their commitment.

## **AUDITIONS**

For most repertory workshops, minimum technique levels are established in ballet, Horton, and Graham-based modern as audition parameters. The Ailey School Co-Directors reserve the right to grant special audition permission to selected students who may not meet all required levels. Students should carefully read the audition announcements prior to attending an audition, as only those who meet the technique level criteria will be allowed to audition. Elective workshops that take place during the summer are open to all students and do not have minimum technique level requirements.

## **CASTING**

With input from The Ailey School Co-Directors, the AIR choreographers choose students from auditions to participate in each Repertory Workshop. The Co-Directors reserve the right to change casting at their discretion. Students who are on probation or who are not making satisfactory progress may not be allowed to participate in a workshop without permission of The Ailey School Co-Directors.

## **STUDENT PRODUCED PERFORMANCES: (BFA Senior Choreography Concert)**

Several performances of student choreographed works take place throughout the year. These performances are produced entirely by students with guidance from The Ailey School Co-Directors, Faculty Advisors, and Program Directors. In addition to acting as choreographers, students are responsible for holding auditions, casting their pieces, scheduling/running rehearsals, choosing music, lighting, and costume design, among other things. Student choreographers are expected to maintain good attendance in their regularly scheduled technique and academic classes throughout this process, therefore, excellent time management skills are essential. The Ailey School views these performances as an opportunity for students to hone their choreographic skills and develop a personal artistic language. The utmost professionalism is expected of all student choreographers. The Ailey School Co-Directors reserve the right to cancel or remove a student piece from a performance program for non-compliance with the guidelines set forth in this handbook and in The Ailey School student handbook and/or if they believe the work does not meet the artistic and professional standards of The Ailey School.

## **RESERVING REHEARSAL SPACE**

Students may reserve free studio space for rehearsals for an Ailey related activity such as approved internal Ailey School rehearsals, comp class assignments, BFA Senior Solos or BFA Senior Choreography Concert. Students who wish to rent studio space for a non-Ailey rehearsal may do so at the Ailey Family rate. Because studio space is scarce at Ailey, especially when the AAADT and/or Ailey II are in residence, a strict cancellation policy is enforced.

In order to reserve free studio rehearsal space, students must submit a request form via the website **only** at <https://www.theaileyschool.edu/request-student-studio-space>. Requests must be at least 48 hours in advance of the requested rehearsal date. If there are questions or an issue with the website request form, please email Michela Boschetto at [mboschetto@alvinailey.org](mailto:mboschetto@alvinailey.org). Requests will be filled in the order they are received and **no** requests will be responded to outside of office hours: Monday-Friday from 11:00am – 4:30pm. Non-Ailey related rental reservations can be made through Ailey Rentals Department at [www.aileyrentals.com](http://www.aileyrentals.com). The Rentals Department and/or The Ailey Extension reserves the right to alter or remove a free student rehearsal reservation at any time to accommodate a paying workshop, rental, or private class at their discretion. An email will be sent to the student who has reserved the free student rehearsal space with instructions to submit a new request.

### **BFA PROGRAM STUDENTS:**

Students in the BFA program are entitled to a certain number of hours per semester based on their year in order to complete rehearsals for comp class projects and specific performances (BFA Senior Choreography Concert & BFA Senior Solos)

- BFA Senior Choreography Concert: 25 hours maximum (for Fall & Spring combined)
- BFA Senior Solo Concert: 25 hours maximum (for Spring ONLY)
- BFA Composition Class: 16 hours maximum per semester

### **CERTIFICATE, INDEPENDENT STUDY AND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM STUDENTS:**

Students in these programs are eligible for student rehearsal space hours based on their enrollment in Composition class.

- Certificate Composition Class: 16 hours maximum per semester

\*Unused hours **DO NOT** roll over from the previous semester. If you are in other projects, hours **CANNOT** pull or borrowed.

## **THE CHOREOGRAPHER TECHNICAL QUESTIONNAIRE**

The Ailey School Production Administrator, Kaitlyn Miller, will distribute an online Choreographer Technical Questionnaires to all student choreographers. This questionnaire provides the Production Administrator with important information about your piece which is needed to schedule technical rehearsals, create performance programs, etc. This form will only be accepted if it is filled out completely. This means, among other things, spelling the names of your cast members correctly, deciding on and sticking to a title for your piece, providing the correct composer/music credits, and listing any other credits that should be mentioned in the printed performance program (i.e. costume designer, etc.). You must also indicate any special technical requests. Never assume the theater has exactly what you need, even if you attended another performance when the element was used. Always ask Kaitlyn Miller as far as in advance as possible. Last minute requests at tech time for these things will not be accommodated. Keep in mind that most furniture is NOT approved for rehearsals i.e. folding chairs, studio chairs; if you are using chairs or other furniture in your piece you must see Kaitlyn Miller first, who will help you find safe and appropriate items.

## **COPIES OF YOUR MUSIC**

Student choreographers must submit the music for all of their dance pieces in advance via DropBox.com or wetransfer.com to the Theater Technical Director, Mr. Joel Wilhelmi. If you are using more than one piece of music for any single choreographed work, the music must be mixed and in its final form (i.e. the way you want it to sound when the piece is performed). DO NOT bring uncut or unmixed music to the Production Administrator or Theater Technical Director. Please provide accurate music credits as indicated on the Technical Questionnaire. Please do NOT send a website link to your song. You must send the actual mp3 or mp4 file.

## **COSTUMES / WARDROBE / HAIR / MAKEUP**

Kelly Grabowski is The Ailey School Costume Coordinator and in charge of supervising all aspects of costuming for non-student produced performances. This includes maintaining The Ailey School costume collection & coordinating costumes for productions from both the Professional and Junior Divisions in addition to The Ailey School's 2 performance groups: the Ailey School Performance Group and the Ailey Fordham Student Dancers.

Costumes are provided from The Ailey School costume collection inventory. Occasionally costumes are provided outside the school, this includes costumes from personal choreographer/company collections, newly commissioned costumes, or costumes that are furnished by a company which a piece is being licensed from. Regardless of where the costumes are from, always treat them with care and respect.

Email is the primary mode of communication. Make sure your email is up to date and that you regularly check it. You may be asked to take a costume survey. Common survey questions include: How tall are you? What size do you wear in a leotard? What size jeans do you buy?

Measurements and fittings will occur in a studio during one of your rehearsals. Kelly will arrange this with the choreographers. If you have missed measurements or a fitting, please reach out via email to reschedule:

[kgrabowski@alvinailey.org](mailto:kgrabowski@alvinailey.org)

Each dancer is responsible for having their own personal undergarments & shoes. Ladies should have a nude bra/sports bra in their skin tone and have a pair of nude boy shorts. Men should have both black and nude dance belts. Performers are responsible for the required undergarments for scheduled tech, dress rehearsal, and all performances. Shoes are not provided by the Ailey School. Dancers must acquire their own personal shoes & socks / tights if required by your choreographer. Dancers may be asked to supplement with pieces from their own wardrobe. Please bring these on your fitting day and then to tech, dress & all performances.

Your choreographer will provide directives for the styling of your hair, makeup & jewelry. Take their direction seriously, if any of these people ask you to make an edit to your styling do not take it personally, this is constructive and meant to make you, your ensemble, and The Ailey School look its best. Do not make any dramatic styling changes over the rehearsal and performance period. In general, to keep a cohesive group look, NO jewelry or watches, NO nail polish & all visible tattoos must be covered.

If you have any injuries or require specific care, please advise your choreographers and costuming staff *before* your tech (i.e. braces, special taping). Do not assume that you are cleared to wear medical gear and taping. Additionally, if you are injured or have Covid and are not performing, please let your choreographer & Kelly know asap.

## **COSTUMES: STUDENT RENTAL POLICY**

Student Choreographers and Senior Soloists will be allowed Open Closet Hours in the costume shop. They will be given access to the School's Costume Catalog and time with Kelly to talk through their look and pull costumes. Costume use will be based on availability. There will be a minimal amount of time available for minor alterations.

## **COSTUME/WARDROBE DURING PERFORMANCES**

Standards for etiquette apply to all branches of this organization: AAADT, Ailey II, The Ailey School etc. We maintain the highest production standards and expect that you uphold your responsibilities as a dancer. Tech, dress, and performances are all in full hair, makeup, and costume. Please allow for enough time to prepare for your performances, costumes will be on a rack in your holding studio, or the green room hallway. Dressing rooms (If available) should be considered changing rooms and should be used only to change in & out of your costume.

On the day of your tech, dress, and performances, your prepped costumes will be hanging on your piece's rack behind your

name. Racks are normally arranged alphabetically. Once you take your costume and if you take your hangers; they are your responsibility until you replace it back onto the rack as you found it. Please get in to costume when you are asked and notify Kelly asap if there are any issues. The sooner we detect these issues the sooner we can remedy them. After your piece is finished, please change directly out of your costume, and place it back on the rack to be refreshed. Costumes should never be worn in the lobby to greet guests or outside of the building. If you stain your costume in any way, please let me know asap. Note costumes are freshened, but not laundered between performances so please try to maintain good hygiene.

NO eating or drinking in costumes – only water permitted!

Unless specified by your Choreographer: NO jewelry or watches, NO nail polish & all visible tattoos must be covered. Masks are REQUIRED at all times when not performing (Masks will be left on a hallway table and retrieved directly after your piece.)

Always treat your costumes with care and respect. Any personal items found left behind after the performance will be placed in the lost & found on LL near the vending machines.

### **STUDIO REHEARSALS – Repertory Workshops**

Students should treat their scheduled rehearsals as they would any other technique or academic class. The attendance policy applies to workshop rehearsals and a student risks failure or being taken out of a workshop for excessive absences. Participation in a repertory workshop is a privilege and should be treated as such. Students must arrive on time, be in The Ailey School dress code, be fully warmed up and ready to dance "full out" for all rehearsals. Students who are unable to participate fully in a rehearsal because of an injury must communicate this with the choreographer and keep them apprised of their recovery and of their ability to participate fully in the final performance.

### **STUDIO REHEARSALS – Student Choreography**

Students presenting works in BFA Senior Choreography Concert or other performances are expected to run their rehearsals in a professional and respectful manner. Studio space is limited and The Ailey School will do their best to distribute space fairly to all students who request it. Once rehearsal space has been reserved, students must arrive on time and use the space for the entire time they have requested. Sharing or exchanging your studio reservations with another student is not allowed unless the change is communicated to the Rentals Department. Students who show up more than 15 minutes late to their reservation risk being refused space the next time they request it. Studios must be left in the condition in which they were found. No food or drinks other than water in plastic containers are allowed in the studios. Each student **must** be present for ANY reservation made under their name. That student is solely responsible for the entire group and if any rules of the studios are infringed upon, they will lose the right to reserve studio space for the remainder of the semester.

### **PRODUCTION SCHEDULE**

The Production Administrator, Kaitlyn Miller, will email a schedule of technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and performances approximately one week before each performance. Please check your email to confirm the time of your technical rehearsal and your call times for dress rehearsals and performances. There will also be information regarding ticket purchasing sent out prior to each performance. If you have any questions regarding the Production Schedule, please contact Kaitlyn Miller at [KMiller@alvinailey.org](mailto:KMiller@alvinailey.org).

### **TECHNICAL REHEARSALS**

Technical rehearsals are scheduled for all Ailey School performances, whether they take place in the Ailey Citigroup Theater or in Studio LLC. Technical rehearsals are scheduled and run by Kaitlyn Miller. Specific times are designated for each AIR repertory workshop, BFA performance, Certificate Program Graduation, and/or student choreography presentation.

### STUDENTS WHO ARE PERFORMING

- All performers must arrive 10 minutes early, warmed up and in full costume for technical rehearsals. Lateness, absences, and unpreparedness will not be tolerated. Tech time is very limited. Remember that you will need time to get into costume and warm up before the tech starts. You must be ready to start working the minute you are allowed on stage.
- Choreographers will give notes after technical rehearsals and students should not leave the theater until they have been dismissed by the choreographer and/or Kaitlyn Miller.

### STUDENTS WHO ARE CHOREOGRAPHING

- Choreographers must show up to their scheduled technical rehearsal 15 minutes early and with their full cast present. Student choreographers are responsible for communicating to their dancers the tech times and any other expectations and/or instructions for their rehearsal time.
- Choreographers must come prepared with a copy of their lighting instructions and any other tech notes for the production crew (which should have been previously communicated to the Production Administrator). Students who are unsure of lighting aspects are encouraged to contact Kaitlyn Miller or Alaric Hahn, Director of Studio & Theater Operations, prior to their technical rehearsal for advice, instruction, and guidance on lighting for dance performances. Remember to take into consideration the tone and setting of your piece, the music, and the costumes when deciding on lighting. Kaitlyn Miller and the theater production crew will assist student choreographers with any production-related questions or concerns they may have during tech rehearsals.
- Choreographers are responsible for managing and directing their dancers at tech and should be prepared to give them stage instructions as well as notes afterwards.
- Tech time will include spacing time; try to be as efficient as possible, and when possible save questions for after your tech time is finished.
- LLC will not always be available during technical rehearsals, but you can keep your belongings either in the dressing rooms, the green room hallway or in the seating section of the theater.

*\*Tech and Dress rehearsals for Memoria take place at New York City Center. Students must be on time and should bear in mind the walking distance from The Ailey School to New York City Center.*

### **DRESS REHEARSALS**

The same rules apply to dress rehearsals as technical rehearsals. Students should arrive at their holding studios/spaces well in advance of their call time in order to warm-up, get in costume and apply make-up. Dress rehearsals should be treated as *performances* as there will be staff, faculty, and musicians in the audience. Students will receive notes from their choreographers and production crew after dress rehearsal and are required to remain in the theater until the end of the dress rehearsal, regardless of when they finish performing.

- Do not leave the Dress Rehearsal after your piece is finished. Remain in the theater area until the end of the entire run through. Mr. Inman, Ms. Person, and choreographers will give notes after the dress. Please change out of your costumes and come into the theater after the last piece ends.
- Students who are in the performance may not watch the dress rehearsal from backstage, but they may be allowed to watch from the audience; check the production schedule posted for each performance for specific instructions. If they are allowed to watch, students may only enter or exit the theatre in the pauses between pieces to minimize disruption and they must sit in a seat; standing at the back is not permitted. Students may request permission from choreographers to view pieces during the technical rehearsal, if it does not conflict with class time. You will not be excused from class to watch a rehearsal. There is NO filming or photography allowed during dress or tech rehearsals.
- LLC is available as a general holding room for dress rehearsals and performances.

## **BACKSTAGE ETIQUETTE AND BEHAVIOR**

- Remember that sound from backstage, the green room, and Studio LLC carries all the way into the theater. Out of respect for your fellow performers, please be QUIET backstage. Although it may feel like you are very far removed from the stage, you are actually very close.
- No eating backstage and **NO eating in costume, period**. Water in a plastic bottle is permitted.
- For every dress rehearsal and performance make sure you remove all visible jewelry, cover all visible tattoos with makeup, and remove colored nail polish. Remember the audience can see these things and they can detract from intent of the piece and costume.
- Don't leave anything behind in the dressing rooms - clean up after yourself. Any warm ups, makeup or personal items are typically thrown away by the evening cleaning staff and the Production Staff will not be held responsible.
- Be respectful and follow the directions of the Costume Coordinator backstage. Please take off your costumes immediately after your piece to air them out. Hang your costumes properly and return them to their correct places on the costume rack when you are done. Do not roll up and hand your sweaty costume to Kelly Grabowski. Do not take anyone else's costume. Costumes are Ailey School property. Never remove costumes from the premises.
- Do not touch the props. Even if they belong to you, do not touch them until it's time to bring them onstage. When you are done with them, return them to their proper place on the prop table.
- Do not bring anything with you to the stage at any time, including technical and dress rehearsals, and certainly not during the performance. This includes water bottles. Leave everything in the green room area, or during tech, in the seating area. If you have a special circumstance (an inhaler, or if you feel that you absolutely will need to take a drink in the middle of the piece), let the Stage Manager know and he or she will help you find a safe place to put it. There is no space in the wings for anything other than the dancers' bodies.

## **NOTE ON THE STAGE AND BACKSTAGE AREAS**

- The first time you enter the theater, please take a moment to familiarize yourself with the **crossover**. The crossover is the area located BEHIND the cyclorama (cyc), NOT between the cyc and the black scrim. The cyc is the large white piece of fabric which is stretched the length of the stage from stage left to stage right and the scrim is the thinner piece of black fabric which hangs downstage of the cyc.
- Be aware of **sightlines**. Remember, if you can see the audience, the audience can see you. If there is no space for you to wait for your entrance out of sight, make sure you are standing in a neutral position. Do not fidget, adjust your costume, fix your hair, or talk to the person standing next to you. You are, for all intents and purposes, already on stage.
- Please be very aware of the **wings** and of the **lighting** booms. Do not touch or crash into either. The lighting instruments get very hot and could burn you, and if you move them they will no longer properly illuminate your fellow dancers. By disturbing the wings which are the long black hanging pieces of fabric, also known as "soft goods", can be extremely distracting to the audience as well as dangerous if hit due to the metal pipe which weighs the fabric down.
- Be very careful not to go past the **upstage spikes**. The **black scrim** can be hard to see when the stage lights are on, and those spikes are there to make sure you don't run into it and rip it. The fabric is very delicate and should be treated with care.



## **PERFORMANCES**

- **BE ON TIME.** On time means at least 10 minutes early for your call time. Even if you are performing in the last piece on the program and you will not go on stage for an hour after the performance starts, you still need to be on time to your calls.
- **SIGN IN.** Please sign in as soon as you arrive at the Callboard which is located in the green room hallway next to the stage right entrance to the stage. Stage Managers will not have time to learn all of your names or which pieces you are in, so by signing in if a choreographer needs to speak to a cast or an announcement needs to be made to all participating dancers in regards to program changes, safety or on stage calls they know if everyone is present.
- **DO NOT LEAVE** the backstage area once you have signed in - it is the only way for the Stage Manager to know whether or not you are present. If you need to leave for any reason, let one of the Stage Managers know, and also alert him or her when you return.
- **LISTEN** to the Stage Managers and/or Assistant Stage Managers. They are not part of the regular Ailey School staff but they are professionals. They may do things a little differently than your teachers but they will never ask something of you without good reason. Please listen to them and cooperate with their requests. Asking questions respectfully is always fine, but keep in mind that they are busy and they might not have time to answer your questions at that moment. If you have questions that they are unable to answer, you may always consult with Kaitlyn Miller, the Production Administrator.
- **BOWS.** Remember, your bow is part of your piece. Enter and exit the stage quickly and quietly. Remember to exit all the way off stage to make room for the next piece to enter, and to avoid creating a traffic jam in the wings. Loud celebratory vocalizations or cheering are never appropriate backstage. Wait until you are outside the theater *after* the performance.
- **AFTER THE PERFORMANCE,** please arrange to meet with family and friends who wish to congratulate you outside of the building. There is not enough room on the Performance Entry Level (PE) to serve as a reception area. There is plenty of room outside the building to socialize with your fans.

## **DIGITAL COPIES OF REPERTORY WORKSHOPS and STUDENT CHOREOGRAPHY**

The Ailey School maintains an archive of recordings of all Ailey School performances. Students are allowed to request footage of performances they have participated in by filling out the [Ailey School Footage Request Form](#). However, because of the choreographer's copyrights, recorded copies of Ailey repertory works cannot be obtained under any circumstances. Please allow up to two weeks for the finished recording.

## **TICKETING**

The Production Administrator is in charge of ticketing for all Ailey School performances. Any questions regarding ticket purchases should be directed to her. Price and availability will vary based on each individual performance. Please direct family and friends to the "Performance Calendar" page on The Ailey School website for on-sale dates and specific purchasing instructions.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

The following is a list of staff members with whom you will interact during performance times. If you wish to meet with a staff member, please e-mail them to make an appointment

Tracy Inman and Melanie Person – The Ailey School Co-Directors

[tinman@alvinailey.org](mailto:tinman@alvinailey.org)

[mperson@alvinailey.org](mailto:mperson@alvinailey.org)

Jim Paulson – Director of School Business Operations

[jpaulson@alvinailey.org](mailto:jpaulson@alvinailey.org)

Selena Andino Lopez – School Scheduling Administrator

[Sandinolopez@alvinailey.org](mailto:Sandinolopez@alvinailey.org)

Kaitlyn Miller – Production Administrator

[kmiller@alvinailey.org](mailto:kmiller@alvinailey.org)

Kelly Grabowski – Costume Coordinator

[kgrabowski@alvinailey.org](mailto:kgrabowski@alvinailey.org)

Alaric Hahn – Director of Studio & Theater Operations

[ahahn@alvinailey.org](mailto:ahahn@alvinailey.org)

Joel Wilhelmi – Theater Technical Director

[jwilhelmi@alvinailey.org](mailto:jwilhelmi@alvinailey.org)

Kris Carr – Associate Director of Studio Operations

[kcarr@alvinailey.org](mailto:kcarr@alvinailey.org)

Freddie Moore – Ailey Student Performance Group & Ailey/Fordham Student Dancers Rehearsal Director

[fmoore@alvinailey.org](mailto:fmoore@alvinailey.org)

Emily Hein- B.F.A. Program Manager & Assistant to The Ailey School Co-Director Ms. Melanie Person

[eriehle@alvinailey.org](mailto:eriehle@alvinailey.org)

Michela Boschetto – Professional Division Program Administrator & Assistant to The Ailey School Co-Director Mr. Tracy Inman

[mboschetto@alvinailey.org](mailto:mboschetto@alvinailey.org)

*As of August 2022*