Dancing Forward Campaign

“We celebrate the fact that we have not just survived but thrived. That is what this Company has always done in times of tumult. We meet the moment; we transcend place and time and circumstance.” — Robert Battle, Artistic Director

Despite the pandemic, Ailey continued to make progress with initiatives outlined in its five-year Strategic Plan.

- The Alvin Ailey Choreographic Legacy Project aims to preserve Alvin Ailey’s legacy through the creation of digital capsules that encompass all relevant information to restage the founder’s ballets. Following a successful pilot year encapsulating Ailey’s Masekela Langage, the Project made significant progress on developing its second dance capsule, for Alvin Ailey’s Memoria.

- As the Ailey organization recognizes the ongoing gender gap in the field, The Ailey School continued its prioritization of male student recruitment and scholarships for its Professional Division.

- Jamar Roberts’ role as Resident Choreographer continued for a third year, supporting the creation of two new works for the season.

- Adapting to the times, the Ailey organization launched a new digital membership program, Ailey Worldwide.

- Another archival initiative, Portrait of Ailey preserves Mr. Ailey’s voice through an episodic documentary that portrays his artistic development through a linear storyline. The project moved forward, with the seven-part series production reaching completion.

Building off the desire to ensure that relationships between all divisions of the organization are equitable and synergetic, Ailey added two new senior positions, welcoming Ines Aslan as Chief External Affairs Officer and Chontel Simmons as Senior Director of People, Equity, and Inclusion.

Ailey is grateful to all who have made pledges to the Dancing Forward Campaign to support these initiatives and others in the Plan.
The 2021-2022 season marked Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s triumphant return to the stage for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

August 17-21
BAAND Together Dance Festival

The Company participated in Lincoln Center’s first annual BAAND Together Dance Festival, a celebration of dance that joined together Ballet Hispánico, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem to share the spotlight for the first time. Approximately 8,000 people attended the festival free of charge.

December 1-19
Winter Season at New York City Center

On December 1, Ailey kicked off its Winter Season with the Opening Night Gala, honoring our audience that is our inspiration and raising over $1.7 million. The shortened three-week engagement at New York City Center hosted nearly 20,000 audience members. Unfortunately, due to rising cases of COVID-19, the season was halted on December 15 to protect the health of our audiences, artists, and staff, cancelling the remaining five performances.

140,000
AUDIENCE MEMBERS

3
WORLD PREMIERES

4
NEW PRODUCTIONS

20
OUTREACH ACTIVITIES REACHING 5,100
January 28 – May 8
North American Tour

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s North American Tour reached over 100,000 individuals, the first travel the Company embarked upon since the shutdowns in March 2020. Ailey’s annual engagement in Washington, D.C. included a special gala performance on February 2 at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Due to health and safety concerns, the gala party was postponed until early May and held outdoors for a limited number of attendees at The Pavilions at Wolf Trap, raising over $500,000. For the health and safety of the dancers, Company-led outreach efforts were limited throughout the tour, although the Arts In Education & Community Programs team continued to offer targeted educational programs in select cities.

National Tour destinations included 19 cities –

June 15-19
Spring Season at Lincoln Center

Ailey returned to Lincoln Center’s David H. Koch Theater for its one-week Spring Season with more than 10,000 audience members. The Ailey Spirit Gala on June 16 honored Verizon and raised over $830,000.
“...Though Jamar Roberts’s “Holding Space” and Robert Battle’s “For Four” are quite different in aim and format... Both pieces are provocative and powerful, visually and viscerally...” — The Washington Post
Ailey All Access continued throughout the season, with 19 pre-recorded ballets streamed free of charge for audiences across the globe and reaching over 1 million viewers in the 2021-2022 year.

- 203 videos posted online to date
- Reached approximately 50.5 million people to date
- Viewed by about 14.5 million people to date on our YouTube, Instagram, Facebook
- Received 1 million + reactions
- Were shared more than 248,000 times
- Generated 70,000 comments

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s curtain call following Alvin Ailey’s Revelations at NJPAC. Photo by Andrew Eccles.
After a hiatus year during COVID-19, Ailey welcomed back Ailey II in the fall of 2021.

Following a thorough search, Ailey II identified its third Artistic Director, Francesca Harper. An accomplished dancer, choreographer, and dance educator whose roots are in the Ailey organization, Ms. Harper is now curating and overseeing all aspects of the company’s artistic and educational initiatives while honoring the traditions, legacy, and creative spirit of Alvin Ailey.

February 14 – April 12
Winter/Spring U.S. Tour

The second company resumed its outreach activities in partnership with New York City Center during the winter season, reaching 2,862 students in New York City Public Schools. Outreach efforts on the domestic tour were limited due to COVID-19 restrictions with 6 master classes and 2 mini performances for 665 youths. Performances took place in 9 cities, reaching 6,235 audience members.

March 23 – April 3
New York City Season

Ailey II returned to the Ailey Citigroup Theater, reaching 1,854 attendees. The season featured the World Premiere of Francesca Harper’s Freedom Series and Company Premieres of Robert Battle’s Searchlight and Alleluia (Excerpt), as well as William Forsythe’s Enemy in the Figure.
The Ailey School returned to primarily in-person learning for an expanded student body during the 2021-2022 academic year, enrolling over 300 Junior Division and Professional Division students. Additionally, the School resumed activities with the Professional Performing Arts High School and The Actors Studio. As performance experience is a critical component of professional training, The Ailey School was proud to increase those opportunities following the pandemic with 23 student performances, 17 of which were in-person.

The Ailey School remained committed to providing financial support for its most deserving students with more than 220 financial aid awards totaling over $900,000. 79% of financial awards went to students of color. Providing critical financial support to students has proved to be one of the best ways to attract and retain a diverse student body, especially male students.

The New Directions Choreography Lab celebrated its 10th anniversary, although due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions there were no formal residencies. Instead, the program hosted workshops with alumni choreographers for the School, Ailey Extension, and Arts In Education & Community Programs, as well as a panel discussion. Ailey Students Ailey Professionals (ASAP) Mentoring Program continued to pair advanced students with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancers, offering mentorship and guidance. Parent observations and year-end class showings were offered virtually for the Junior Division and in-person for the Professional Division.
All camps took place over the course of five weeks, serving 332 middle school-age students during the summer of 2021. AileyCamp Too! was also virtual for campers in Newark and New York City, with a continuation of lessons learned during the summer taking place in the fall on select Saturdays from October to December, 2021.

AileyDance Kids held 87 in-person residencies at 72 schools in New York City and virtual residencies at 8 schools in Newark, and 19 individual workshops, reaching over 6,700 children in the greater New York-area during the 2021-2022 academic year. Students learned various dance techniques, including Modern, West African, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Ballet, Afro-Fusion, and Musical Theater, as well as the special ballet-based curricula Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach and Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance. Residencies spanned 8 weeks to the entire school year and catered to students’ specific interests and abilities.

AileyDance for Active Aging conducted 19 residencies for 285 participants aged 50+ this season, with in-person activities in older adult centers and residence homes throughout New York City. The program emphasized the importance of strength training and mobility through movement and provided an outlet for artistic expression for elderly populations. Participants were empowered to reclaim their physicality, as well as to engage with their memory through personal storytelling.
The Ailey Extension resumed in-person classes in September 2021, the first time since the beginning of the pandemic.

The Extension offered 50 classes per week, reaching approximately **10,000 participants**. The Kids and Teens program returned with five in-person and seven virtual classes on Sundays.

Both in-person and virtual workshops were held throughout the year as well. The Extension also participated in the **Summer Dance Series** that offered free, outdoor classes in Times Square on Fridays, May 6-June 17.

Ailey in Atlanta

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returned to the **Fox Theatre** for its annual engagement from February 10-13, reaching **over 10,500 audience members** through five performances. Week-long Arts In Education residencies in public schools and AileyDance for Active Aging workshops resumed in the city as well.

Ailey also returned to the **ELEVATE Festival**, with a screening of the **AILEY** documentary and public programs with **AREA**, the National Center for Civil & Human Rights, the High Museum, Moving in the Spirit, and Dance Canvas.
Honors and Other News at Ailey

Ailey Artistic Director Robert Battle received the 2021 Dance Magazine Award, celebrating his demonstrated artistry, integrity, and resiliency. The ceremony took place at the Guggenheim Museum.

Ailey was a feature of NYC Homecoming Week, a citywide celebration from August 14-22, 2021, with live concerts, free movie screenings, cultural activities, iconic events, public art, and more. Jamila Wignot’s AILEY documentary screened in Walter Gladwin Park in the Bronx.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s Khalia Campbell and Ashley Kaylynn Green were named 2021 Princess Grace Award winners.

Former Ailey II Rehearsal Director Fana Fraser was awarded a 2021-2022 Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship. Ms. Fraser is a graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program and was previously a member of Ailey II (2008-2010).

The national television broadcast premiere of Director Jamila Wignot’s acclaimed AILEY documentary opened the 36th season of PBS American Masters.

The Tamron Hall Show spoke with Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison about the AILEY documentary, her career with the legendary choreographer, and the 50th anniversary of the beloved Cry as part of this program focusing on “uplifting stories of heart, soul, and determination to inspire us all in 2022.”

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater welcomed four new dancers: Ashley Mayeaux, Caroline T. Dartey, Lloyd A. Boyd III, and Ashley Kaylynn Green.

Jamar Roberts retired as a dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater but remained the Company’s Resident Choreographer throughout the 2021-2022 season. Ailey also bid a fond farewell to dancer Jacqueline Green, who joined The Dance Artist Prep as Co-Director.
The Ailey organization is deeply grateful to the many individuals, government agencies, and corporate and foundation partners whose dedication helped bring the incomparable spirit of Ailey to communities in New York, across the country, and around the world. We are delighted to share highlights of Ailey’s achievements during our 2021-2022 season.

Robert Battle
Artistic Director

Bennett Rink
Executive Director

Matthew Rushing
Associate Artistic Director

Francesca Harper
Artistic Director, Ailey II

Tracy Inman
Director, The Ailey School

Melanie Person
Director, The Ailey School

Cathryn Williams
Director, Arts In Education & Community Programs

Lisa Johnson-Willingham
Director, Ailey Extension

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Edna Kane Williams
DeJuan V. Wilson
Gillian Wynn
Jean-Rene Zetrenne
Pamela D. Zilly

James Gilmer in The River.
Photo by Dario Calmese.