

teacher resource guide

**schooltime
performance
series**



**alvin ailey
american dance
theater**

Photo by Paul Kolnik

**arts
education
njpac**

about the performance

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is a uniquely American modern dance company known for its vibrant blend of modern, ballet and other dance styles. Audience members will be treated to a captivating experience that will touch their hearts and inspire a greater appreciation for dance and the arts.

In the 1950s, dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey envisioned a company where African American dancers could display their talents and skills and express their experiences and heritage. He gathered a group of young African American modern dancers, and they premiered their first performance in March 1958 at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. That now-fabled performance forever changed the perception of American dance with its expressiveness, technical prowess and influences from African American culture.

The Company's early days were spent traveling on what Alvin Ailey called "the station wagon tours," where dancers were transported from performance to performance in a station wagon driven by one of Ailey's friends. From these modest beginnings, Ailey has grown to be one of the foremost modern dance companies in the world. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is NJPAC's principal resident dance affiliate.



S. Daley Perdomo, K. Campbell, S. Figgins. Photo by Dario Calmese

njpac on the mic podcast

with Nasha Thomas & Christopher Taylor



Caroline T. Darney. Photo by Dario Calmese

How to listen to this episode of NJPAC On the Mic
Scan the QR code or visit njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources to access the podcast and the following show notes:

Part 1: About | Pre-show audio, 7 minutes

Includes: An introduction to the performance, artists, venue and welcome message

Welcome message voiced by Nasha Thomas, National Director of AileyCamp/Spokesperson & Master Teacher for Arts In Education

Part 2: Connect | Post-show audio, 10 minutes

Includes: Reflection questions, a look at the life of Alvin Ailey

Opening question voiced by Christopher Taylor, member of the Ailey Company

Part 3: Spotlight | Post-show audio, 10 minutes

Includes: An exclusive interview with the national director of AileyCamp and a member of Ailey's first company

Interview guest: Nasha Thomas and Christopher Taylor



Scan the QR code to access the NJPAC on the Mic Podcast & show notes

Additional Episode Credits

Series producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos

Written and hosted by Dania Ramos

Additional writing by Sharon Adarlo and the team behind Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Theme and outro music: NJPAC's Hip Hop Arts and Culture Program

Additional music from Epidemic Sound

Sound editing, sound design and voiceover by Michael Aquino

About NJPAC On the Mic

NJPAC On the Mic allows students to engage their listening skills and deepen their understanding of creative content. This installment features three exclusive, curriculum standard-aligned episodes that supplement Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, presented as part of NJPAC's 2023-2024 *SchoolTime Performances* series.

inspired ideas in the classroom

Teacher Focus

Student Activity

NJ Student Learning Standards

P

Prepare for the performance

For younger audiences:
Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: About*. Play **the clip** of *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey and discuss the following questions:
1. What did you observe about the performance in the video?
2. Do the songs or movements in *Revelations* remind you of anything else you've experienced? If so, what does it remind you of?
3. Is this form of dance and storytelling different from ballet, hip hop or jazz? If so, how?

For older audiences:
Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: About*. Play **the clip** of *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey, listen to the song used, "**Wade in the Water**," and watch the **HBO video** on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Discuss the following questions and make a list of qualities that make this dance company unique:
1. What does Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater offer audiences and performers?
2. How might elements like history, costuming, set design, storytelling, representation, music choice or identity represent the values of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater?

For younger audiences:
Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: About*. Then watch **a video** of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and discuss your connections to the music and dance form.

For older audiences:
Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: About*. Then watch videos about the dances, songs and philosophies used by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Discuss what makes the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater unique.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills
9.4.5.GCA.1
English Language Arts
NJLSA.R7., NJLSA.SL1.
NJLSA.SL2.
Dance
1.1.5.Re7b

E

Experience the performance

Before visiting the theater, prepare the students by asking them to note dance movements that stand out to them during the performance and consider how they do or don't connect to the music. Encourage them to notice if any movements capture specific feelings for them.

As you watch the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performance, pay close attention to how the dancers and the music express various emotions without using dialogue. Which movements stand out to you the most? What emotions do you experience as you watch the piece? How are these emotions connected to the dancers' movement?

English Language Arts
NJLSA.R7., NJLSA.SL1.
NJLSA.SL2.
Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 7, 8, 9, 11
Social-Emotional Learning
Self-Awareness sub-competency 1

R

Reflect, respond and read

Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Connect*. As a class, read the Kennedy Center article "**Alvin Ailey + Revelations**" and then discuss the following questions:

For younger students:
1. How did the performance impact you emotionally or physically?
2. What is identity? How did *Revelations* reflect Alvin Ailey's identity?
3. What dance motifs (or repeated motions) would you use to reflect your identity?

For older students:
1. How did the performance impact you emotionally or physically?
2. What elements make *Revelations* a successful dance memoir that reflects Alvin Ailey's culture, personal history and Southern upbringing?
3. What themes in *Revelations* would you consider "universal?"

Break the class into small groups to complete **Activity Sheet 1** by interpreting and making connections between pairs of photos captured from *Revelations*. The original images may be found on the **dance company's website**.

Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Connect*. Then, **read more** about Alvin Ailey, the choreographer. Discuss how you connected to the performance. How does the performance connect to Ailey's past? Create your own story from the **performance photos**.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills
9.4.5.GCA.1
English Language Arts
NJLSA.R7., NJLSA.SL1.
Dance
1.1.5.Re7b
Social-Emotional Learning
Self-Awareness sub-competency 8
Relationship Skills Sub-competency 16

F

Focus

Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight*. Ask your students to focus on their own experiences through childhood memories, identity and culture. Is there a cultural story, family story or memory they can turn into art through writing, movement or visuals?

Give students 10 minutes to complete **Activity Sheet 2** to help them create a brainstorm plot that breaks down the imagery, themes, feelings and movements associated with their chosen memory. Students can use the **Feelings Circle** and the **Activity Sheet 2** example for reference. Encourage them to brainstorm beyond literal events and focus on themes or metaphorical ways of capturing their memories.

Listen to the podcast episode *NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight*. Think of one of your most powerful childhood memories — especially one that relates to your identity, family or culture. Use the graphic organizer to write or draw any words, movements or images that connect with your memory.

English Language Arts
NJLSA.W3.
Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 1, 2, 11
Social-Emotional Learning
Self-Awareness sub-competency 1

O

Originate

Alvin Ailey developed his work based on his memories. Ask students to create an artistic piece that captures some of the strongest feelings they associate with their chosen memory.

Have students think about which art form they wish to develop. Keep in mind the one-minute time limit.

Encourage them to integrate language, clothing or artistic practices that connect to their culture or family history. How can you utilize your body movement to share these memories? Ask them to limit the work so it can be displayed in under a minute, and let students know they will have the option to present this or submit it digitally.

Using your brainstorm plot, create an artistic piece representing your core memory. Determine your art form and think of how to integrate your culture, family history or identity into the piece. Be ready to share this with the class.

English Language Arts
NJLSA.SL2.
Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 1, 2, 3, 11
Social-Emotional Learning
Self-Management sub-competency 6

R

Rehearse

Encourage students to rehearse and to involve any music, costuming or other elements that might reflect the culture or memory connected to their story. Explain to students that their presentations do not have to be literal but can represent the overall theme of their memory. Have the students decide whether they would rather present their work in person or submit it digitally. Create a Padlet page where students can digitally post their work or pictures of their work once they are done. Give students time to refine the earlier draft of their piece. Give them the option of pairing up with a partner to receive feedback or to work alone.

Rehearse or refine your artistic memory piece. You can do this alone, in pairs or in groups. Bring any clothing, music or props you will need to effectively present your art. Determine whether you will be sharing your work digitally or in-person.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills
9.4.2.CT.3
Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 2, 3
Social-Emotional Learning
Self-Management sub-competency 6

M

Make magic

Give the students a deadline by which to finish their projects. Create a performance and/or digital screening area in your classroom and have the students take turns sharing their work. Give students opportunities to explain their inspiration and creative process. If time allows, continue a class discussion about the creative process.

Be ready to share your creative piece with your peers and other community members. Ask your audience for feedback and comments if you're comfortable. As audience members, give your attention, respect, and, of course — applause!

Visual & Performing Arts
Anchor Standard 6, 7, 8, 9
Social-Emotional Learning
Self-Management sub-competency 6



Isabel Wallace-Green, Christopher Wilson, Caroline Darney, Photo by Paul Kanik

curriculum standards

NJ Visual & Performing Arts Standards

- 1:** Generating and conceptualizing ideas.
- 2:** Organizing and developing ideas.
- 3:** Refining and completing work.
- 6:** Conveying meaning through art.
- 7:** Perceiving and analyzing products.
- 8:** Interpreting intent and meaning.
- 9:** Applying criteria to evaluate products.
- 11:** Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

FIND THE STANDARDS

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:
NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS
corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy
NATIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS
socialstudies.org/standards
NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS
nationalartsstandards.org

common core state standards

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

- 9.4.5.GCA.1**
Analyze how culture shapes individual and community perspectives and points of view. (5th grade benchmark)
- 9.4.2.CT.3**
Use a variety of types of thinking to solve problems.

Dance

- 1.1.5.Re7b**
Compare and contrast qualities and characteristics to another dance genre or culture. Use basic dance terminology and elements of dance to describe the qualities and characteristics

English Language Arts

- NJSLSA.R7.**
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- NJSLSA.SL1.**
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NJSLSA.SL2.

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

NJSLSA.W3.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

NJ Social-Emotional Learning

Relationship Skills Sub-competency #16

Utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.

Self-Awareness sub-competency #1

Recognize one's feelings and thoughts.

Social Awareness Sub-competency #8

Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others.

Self-Management sub-competency #6

Recognize the skills needed to establish and achieve personal and educational goals.

vocabulary

Ballet

A dance form started in the royal courts of Europe. The body is held mostly upright, and the legs are turned out from the hip. Ballet uses five basic positions of the feet. Ballet terms are always spoken in French

Choreographer

A person who composes dance works

Choreography

The sequence of steps and movements in dance or figure skating, especially in a ballet or other stage dance

Ensemble

A group of artists who perform together. Ensembles can be made up of dancers, musicians, or actors

Modern dance

A highly expressive style of dance that challenges the structured dance technique of classical ballet. The focus of modern dance is expression, freeform, and fluid; it's often inspired by other dance styles—like African dance, ballet, and folk dance. Modern dancers often perform barefoot in tight costumes that showcase the shapes of their bodies

Motif

A distinct repeating pattern that develops meaning throughout an artistic work, such as a pattern of movements in a dance, themes in a story, or notes in a song

Repertory company

A dance or theatre company that performs many types of works by many different choreographers

Revelation

1. A surprising and previously unknown fact, especially one that is made known in a dramatic way

2. The divine or supernatural disclosure of something relating to human existence or the world. Alvin Ailey's dance piece Revelations is a contemporary style dance that tells the story of African American faith and tenacity from slavery to freedom through a suite of dances set to spirituals and blues music

Solo

A performance by one person

Spirituals

Religious songs created by enslaved African Americans; the lyrics are often based on stories from the Bible

Tableau

Short for the French tableau vivant (tab-BLO vi-VAHNT), which means "living picture." A tableau is a representation of a dramatic scene by a person or group posing silently without moving

Work

A word dancers use to refer to a dance; other words used in this manner are "piece" and "ballet"

resources

NJPAC

About NJPAC
njpac.org/about

NJPAC's Arts Education Programs
njpac.org/arts-education

NJPAC Resources | Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre
njpac.org/education-program/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater-resources

Websites

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
alvinailey.org

Alvin Ailey Bio
alvinailey.org/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater/alvin-ailey

Nasha Thomas Bio
alvinailey.org/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater/nasha-thomas

Christopher Taylor Bio
alvinailey.org/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater/christopher-taylor

Katherine Dunham Bio
alvinailey.org/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater/katherine-dunham

Lester Horton Bio
alvinailey.org/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater/lester-horton

Revelations
alvinailey.org/performances/repertory/revelations

Blues Suite
alvinailey.org/performances/repertory/blues-suite

The Kennedy Center | *Alvin Ailey + Revelations*
kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/dance/alvin-ailey--revelations

Revelations Photos
pressroom.alvinailey.org/album?p=24&c=25089&s=order&page=2&t=photo

The Feelings Wheel:
A Genius Chart for Better Communication
thechalkboardmag.com/the-feelings-circle-chart-emotional-communication

Videos

Revelations by Alvin Ailey
[youtube.com/watch?v=tNqaiXKbrjs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNqaiXKbrjs)

Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Is Trying To Make Modern Dance "Pop" Again
[youtube.com/watch?v=ww5LhwdOoZ4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ww5LhwdOoZ4)

Caravans: Wade In The Water
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jicsxfAeQPE>

Beginner Friendly Modern Dance Tutorial
[youtube.com/watch?v=J0oNlIeexgl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0oNlIeexgl)

Horton Technique Class at MIU
[youtube.com/watch?v=4nMEhx-gcQE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nMEhx-gcQE)

The Life of Alvin Ailey
[youtube.com/watch?v=Uj_qoMzTgpY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj_qoMzTgpY)

Websites:

Books

Revelations: The Autobiography of Alvin Ailey
by Alvin Ailey and Peter A. Bailey. 1995



njpac staff

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NJPAC Arts Education performances team:

Rosa Hyde, Treasure Borde, and Kendall Lipham. On the Mic is an NJPAC Arts Education production, produced in partnership with CM Studios. CM Studios producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos. NJPAC and CM Studios are located in Essex County, New Jersey, situated on the traditional territory of the Leni Lenape people.

the arts in your school

In-School Residencies: NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development: Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at artseducation@njpac.org.
Or visit njpac.org/education

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+ deceased