

teacher resource guide

# schooltime performance series



Photo by Dario Calmese

alvin ailey  
american dance  
theater

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.

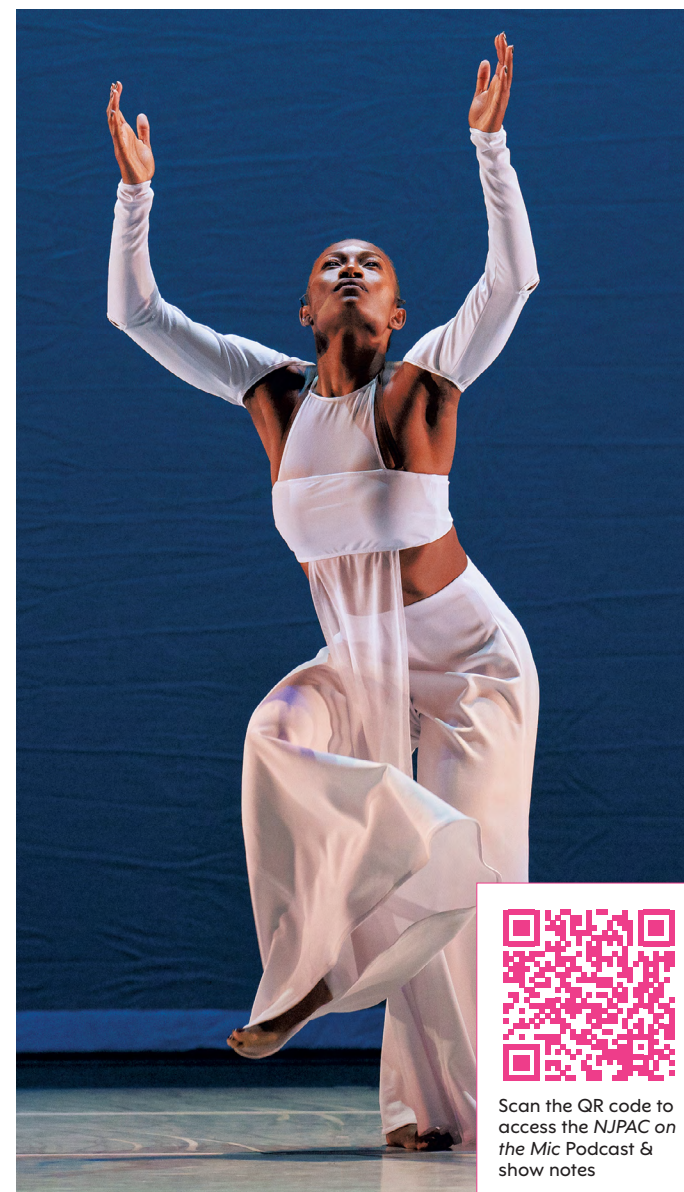
The Company's early days were spent traveling on what Alvin Ailey called "the station wagon tours," where dancers were transported from performance to performance in a station wagon driven by one of Ailey's friends. From these modest beginnings, Ailey has grown to be one of the foremost modern dance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



Jacquelin Harris. Photo by Dario Calmes

## njpac on the mic podcast

with Nasha Thomas  
& Christopher Taylor



Coral Dolphin. Photo by Paul Konik

**How to listen to this episode of NJPAC On the Mic**  
Scan the QR code or visit [njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources](https://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

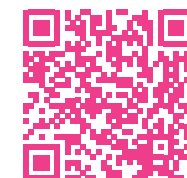
**Includes:** Reflection questions, a look at the life of Alvin Ailey

**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

### 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 2024 – 2025 SchoolTime Performances series.

### 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



inspired ideas in the classroom

P

Prepare for the performance

Have the students listen to ***NJPAC On the Mic: About.***

Introduce the students to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater by explaining that it was created to allow African American dancers to display their talents and to express their experiences and heritage.

Play **this video** about Alvin Ailey’s life. After the video, facilitate a class discussion by asking students the following questions:

1. What were the realities of being born Black during the Jim Crow era (1870s – 1965) or The Great Depression (1929 – 1939) in the American South?
2. What were the two pivotal moments in Ailey’s life that inspired him to pursue the stage and why?
3. What are the moments that have inspired significant change in your life?

Play **this performance** clip of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s *Revelations*. After watching the clip, have students share their observations about the music, movement and anything else that catches their attention in the video.

E

Experience the performance

Have students watch the following videos: **The Black Church | The Role of Music, The Black Church (History), Wade in The Water performed by The Spirituals**

Ask students to note artistic choices during the performances, such as recurring motifs, musical style, costume choices, lighting, etc. If necessary, review the vocabulary list before attending the show. Remind students about the importance of theater etiquette. Encourage them to relax and enjoy the show.

R

Reflect, respond and read

**Reflect:** Have the students listen to ***NJPAC On the Mic: Connect.*** Allow students to share their answers to the questions from the podcast. Continue the discussion with the questions in the student section.

**Read:** Ask students to read **Alvin Ailey’s biography**. Students can learn more about Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater by listening to an interview with Nasha Thomas, national director of AileyCamp, and Christopher Taylor, a member of Ailey’s first company in ***NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight.***

**Respond:** Ask students to share their responses to the following question: Do you think that the role of the church is just as foundational to the African American community today as it was during Ailey’s early life (1931 – 1956)? Why?

O

Originate

Have students watch **this video** about the Horton technique. Encourage them to refer to **this performance clip** for additional reference.

Ask students to select at least one Horton-inspired movement from the performance to use in their presentation. Have them complete **Activity Sheet 2** to guide them through their creative process.

R

Rehearse

Give your students time to finalize and rehearse their presentations. Encourage them to revisit **Activity Sheet 2** as they rehearse. Allow students to offer feedback on each other’s presentations.

M

Make magic

Have each group share their presentation with the class. Remind students to be respectful audience members. After each presentation, allow enough time for questions.

Student Activity

Listen to ***NJPAC On the Mic: About.***

Learn about Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and its original mission to give African American dancers opportunities to display their talents and express their experiences and heritage.

Watch **a video** about Alvin Ailey’s life. Share your thoughts in a class discussion based on the following questions:

1. What were the realities of being born Black during the Jim Crow era (1870s – 1965) or The Great Depression (1929 – 1939) in the American South?
2. What were the two pivotal moments in Ailey’s life that inspired him to pursue the stage and why?
3. What are the moments that have inspired significant change in your life?

Watch a performance clip of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre’s *Revelations*. Share your observations about the music, movement and anything else that catches your attention in the video.

Have students watch the following videos: **The Black Church | The Role of Music, The Black Church (History), Wade in The Water performed by The Spirituals**

During the performance, note artistic choices on stage, such as recurring motifs, musical style, costume choices, lighting, etc). Review the importance of theater etiquette. Relax and enjoy the show.

**Reflect:** Listen to ***NJPAC On the Mic: Connect.*** Share your answers to the questions from the podcast. Continue the discussion by answering the questions below:

1. Which motifs did you observe in the performance? What do you think is the meaning behind these motif(s)?
2. What changes did you notice in the music throughout the performance?
3. What did you notice about the costumes?
4. What moods were created by the lighting choices throughout the performance?

**Read:** Read Alvin Ailey’s biography. Learn more about Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater by listening to an interview with Nasha Thomas, national director of AileyCamp, and Christopher Taylor, a member of Ailey’s first company in ***NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight.***

**Respond:** Share your answers to the following question: Do you think that the role of the church is just as foundational to the African American community today as it was during Ailey’s early life (1931 – 1956)? Why?

Break into groups to complete **Activity Sheet 1**, which is preparation for a short dance presentation narrating an individual or shared experience.

Watch **this video** about the Horton technique. For additional assistance, refer to **this performance clip**.

Select at least one Horton-inspired movement from the performance to use in your presentation. Complete **Activity Sheet 2** to guide you through your creative process.

Finalize and rehearse your presentation with your group. Revisit **Activity Sheet 2** as you rehearse. Offer feedback to the other groups on their presentations.

Share your presentation with the class! Remember to be a respectful audience member. Participate in a Q&A session after each presentation.

NJ Student Learning Standards

**Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills**  
**19.4.8.GCA.2**

**English Language Arts**  
**NJSLSA.R7., NJSLSA.SL1.**

**Social Studies**  
**NJSLS-SS 6.1.2.Geo.HE.2**

**World Languages**  
**7.1.NH.IPRET.6.**

**Visual & Performing Arts**  
**Anchor Standard 7, 8, 9**

**English Language Arts**  
**NJSLSA.R7., NJSLSA.SL1.**

**Social Studies**  
**NJSLS-SS 6.1.2.Geo.HE.2**

**World Languages**  
**7.1.NH.IPRET.6.**

**Visual & Performing Arts**  
**Anchor Standard 7, 8, 9**

**Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills**  
**9.4.8.GCA.2, 9.4.12.CI.1**

**English Language Arts**  
**NJSLSA.SL1., NJSLSA.SL2.**

**Social-Emotional Learning**  
**Relationship Skills Sub Competency 16**

**English Language Arts**  
**NJSLSA.SL1, 9.4.12.CI.1**

**Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills**  
**19.4.8.IML.7**

**Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills**  
**9.4.12.CI.1**

**Comprehensive Health & Physical Education**  
**2.2.8.MSC.3, 2.2.12.MSC.3**

**Social-Emotional Learning**  
**Relationship Skills Sub Competency 16**

**Visual & Performing Arts**  
**Anchor Standard 1, 2, 6, 10**

**Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills**  
**9.4.12.CI.1**

**Comprehensive Health & Physical Education**  
**2.2.8.MSC.3, 2.2.12.MSC.3**

**Social-Emotional Learning**  
**Relationship Skills Sub Competency 16**

**Visual & Performing Arts**  
**Anchor Standard 1, 2, 3, 6, 10**

**English Language Arts**  
**NJSLSA.R7., NJSLSA.SL1.**

**Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills**  
**9.4.12.CI.1**

**Comprehensive Health & Physical Education**  
**2.2.8.MSC.3, 2.2.12.MSC.3**

**Visual & Performing Arts**  
**Anchor Standard 6**





## 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.
- 10:** Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.

## common core state standards

### Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills

#### 9.4.8.GCA.2

Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives through active discussions to achieve a group goal.

#### 9.4.8.IML.7

Use information from a variety of sources, contexts, disciplines, and cultures for a specific purpose.

#### 9.4.12.CI.1

Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas.

### Comprehensive Health and Physical Education

#### 2.2.8.MSC.3

Create and demonstrate planned movement sequences, individually and with others, based on tempo, beat, rhythm, music, and physical activities (e.g., creative, cultural, social, aerobics dance, fitness)

#### 2.2.12.MSC.3

Design, lead and critique rhythmic and physical activity that includes variations in time, space, force, flow, and relationships (e.g., creative, cultural, social, aerobics dance, fitness).

### FIND THE STANDARDS

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:

NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

[corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy](https://corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy)

NATIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

[socialstudies.org/standards](https://socialstudies.org/standards)

NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

[nationalartsstandards.org](https://nationalartsstandards.org)

### English Language Arts

#### NJSLSA.R.7.

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.

#### 9.4.12.CI.1

Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas.

### Social-Emotional Learning

#### Relationship Skills Sub Competency 16

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

### Social Studies

#### NJSLS-SS 6.1.2.Geo.HE.2

Describe how human activities affect the culture and environmental characteristics of places or regions.



# 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

## Ensemble

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

## Jim Crow

A term used to describe the laws, customs and practices that enforced racial segregation and discrimination in the United States from the 1880s to the 1960s. The term comes from a minstrel show character that popularized harmful stereotypes of African Americans. These laws affected almost every aspect of daily life with the goal of socially and economically burdening as well as criminalizing African Americans

## Modern dance

A highly expressive dance style that challenges classical ballet's structured dance technique. Modern dance focuses on expression, freeform, and fluidity; 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 theater 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 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, which means “living picture.” A tableau is a representation of a dramatic scene by a person or group posing silently without moving

## The Great Depression

A period of severe global economic downturn that occurred from 1929 to 1939. It was characterized by high rates of unemployment and poverty, drastic reductions in industrial production and trade, and widespread bank and business failures around the world

## 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](http://njpac.org/about)

NJPAC's Arts Education programs  
[njpac.org/arts-education](http://njpac.org/arts-education)

NJPAC's David G. Berger Master Class Series  
[njpac.org/berger](http://njpac.org/berger)

NJPAC Resources | Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater  
[njpac.org/education-program/alvin-ailey-resources](http://njpac.org/education-program/alvin-ailey-resources)

## Website

Alvin Ailey Bio  
[ailey.org/people/alvin-ailey](http://ailey.org/people/alvin-ailey)

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater  
[ailey.org](http://ailey.org)

Revelations Photos  
[pressroom.alvinailey.org/album?p=24&c=25089&s=order&page=2&t=photo](http://pressroom.alvinailey.org/album?p=24&c=25089&s=order&page=2&t=photo)

Feelings Wheel: A Genius Chart for Better Communication  
[thechalkboardmag.com/the-feelings-circle-chart-emotional-communication](http://thechalkboardmag.com/the-feelings-circle-chart-emotional-communication)

## Revelations

[ailey.org/repertory/revelations](http://ailey.org/repertory/revelations)

## Blues Suite

[ailey.org/repertory/blues-suite](http://ailey.org/repertory/blues-suite)

History | Jim Crow Laws  
[history.com/articles/jim-crow-laws](http://history.com/articles/jim-crow-laws)

History | Great Depression History  
[history.com/articles/great-depression-history](http://history.com/articles/great-depression-history)

## Videos

Alvin Ailey + Revelations  
[youtube.com/watch?v=tNqaixKbrjs](https://youtube.com/watch?v=tNqaixKbrjs)

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

Beginner-Friendly Modern Dance Tutorial  
[youtube.com/watch?v=J0oNlleexgl](https://youtube.com/watch?v=J0oNlleexgl)

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

PBS | The Black Church: The Role of Music  
[youtube.com/watch?v=IgvXwLAtnYw](https://youtube.com/watch?v=IgvXwLAtnYw)

The Black Church  
[youtube.com/watch?v=SwWqkk4Ha70](https://youtube.com/watch?v=SwWqkk4Ha70)

Wade in the Water performed by The Spirituals  
[youtube.com/watch?v=fxZ4H-gq\\_lc](https://youtube.com/watch?v=fxZ4H-gq_lc)

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

## Books

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

## njpac staff

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### Kendall Lipham

*Coordinator,  
Programming & Performances*

### Josef Woodson

*Creative Lead, On-Site Programs*

### 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](mailto:artseducation@njpac.org). Or visit [njpac.org/education](http://njpac.org/education)**

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**M&T Bank**



**Turrell Fund**



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+ deceased

## study the arts at njpac

**Saturday Programs:** NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

**Summer Programs:** Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.