



dance music theater

Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY



SchoolTime 06/07

## Study Guide

### Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Thursday, March 1, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.

Friday, March 2, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.

Zellerbach Hall



## About Cal Performances and *SchoolTime*

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrated 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. Teachers have come to rely on *SchoolTime* as an integral and important part of the academic year.



### Cal Performances Education and Community Programs Sponsors

Cal Performances' Education and Community Programs are supported by Berkeley Community Fund, California Arts Council, California Savings Bank, Citigroup Foundation, City of Berkeley Civic Arts Program, East Bay Community Foundation, Robert J. and Helen H. Glaser Family Foundation, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, McKesson Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The San Francisco Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, Western States Arts Federation, and The Zellerbach Family Foundation.

# Welcome

February 6, 2007

Dear Educators and Students,

Welcome to *SchoolTime*! On **Thursday, March 1, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.** or **Friday, March 2, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.**, you will attend the *SchoolTime* performance of **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** at Zellerbach Hall on the UC Berkeley campus.

This study guide will help you prepare your students for their experience in the theater and give you a framework for how to integrate the performing arts into your curriculum. Targeted questions and activities will help students understand the context for Alvin Ailey's world renowned dance work, *Revelations* and provide an introduction to the art form of modern dance.

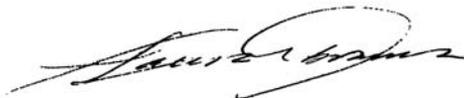
Please feel free to copy any portion of this study guide for your students. Study guides are also available online at [http://cpinfo.berkeley.edu/information/education/study\\_guides.php](http://cpinfo.berkeley.edu/information/education/study_guides.php).

Your students can actively participate at the performance by:

- OBSERVING the physical and mental discipline demonstrated by the dancers.
- LISTENING attentively to the music and lyrics of the songs chosen to accompany the dance.
- THINKING ABOUT how music, costumes and lighting contribute to the overall effect of the performance.
- REFLECTING on what they experienced at the theater after the performance.

We look forward to seeing you at *SchoolTime*!

Sincerely,



Laura Abrams  
Director  
Education & Community Programs



Rica Anderson  
Education Programs Administrator

# Table of Contents



1. Theater Etiquette	1
2. About the Performance	2
3. About the Artists	3
4. About the Art Form	7
5. About the Music	10
6. Reading Excerpt	15
7. Learning Activities	17
8. California State Standards	21



# 1 Theater Etiquette

**Be prepared and arrive early.** Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, and plan to be in your seats at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

**Be aware and remain quiet.** The theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. The international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

**Show appreciation by applauding.** Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

**Participate by responding to the action onstage.** Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

**Concentrate to help the performers.** These artists use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, they feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!

**Please note:** *Backpacks and lunches are not permitted in the theater. Bags will be provided for lobby storage in the event that you bring these with you. There is absolutely no food or drink permitted in the seating areas. Recording devices of any kind, including cameras, cannot be used during performances. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.*



# 2

## About the Performance

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**  
Judith Jamison, Artistic Director  
Masazumi Chaya, Associate Artistic Director

***Night Creature*** *(excerpts)*  
1974

Choreography by Alvin Ailey  
Music: Duke Ellington ("Night Creature")  
Original Costumes by Jane Greenwood  
Costume Designs Recreated by: Barbara Forbes  
Lighting by: Chenault Spence

***Revelations***  
1960

Choreography: Alvin Ailey  
Music: Traditional  
Decor and Costumes: Ves Harper  
Costume redesign for "Rocka-My-Soul" by Barbara Forbes  
Lighting: Nicola Cernovitch

**Pilgrim of Sorrow**

"I Been 'Buked" arranged by Hall Johnson  
"Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel"\* arranged by James Miller  
"Fix Me, Jesus" arranged by Hall Johnson

**Take Me to the Water**

"Processional / Honor, Honor" arranged by Howard A. Roberts  
"Wade in the Water" adapted by Howard A. Roberts / sequence by Ella Jenkins  
"A Man Went Down to the River" composed by Ella Jenkins  
"I Wanna Be Ready" arranged by James Miller

**Move, Members, Move**

"Sinner Man" arranged by Howard A. Roberts  
"The Day Is Past and Gone" arranged by Howard A. Roberts and John Sellers  
"You May Run On" arranged by Howard A. Roberts and John Sellers  
"Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham" arranged by Howard A. Roberts

*All performances of Revelations are permanently endowed by a generous gift from Donald L. Jonas in celebration of the birthday of his wife Barbara and her deep commitment to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.*

# 3

## About the Artists

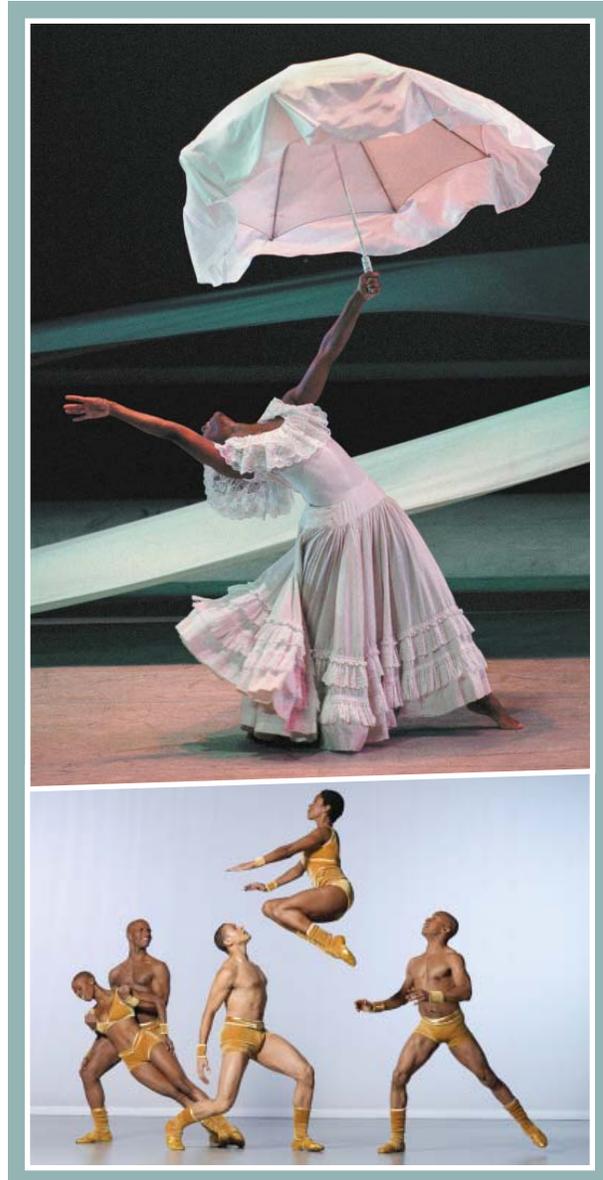
### Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

In 1958, Ailey founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater with the vision of creating a company dedicated to enriching American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of black cultural expression. In the company's first decade, Ailey created approximately 20 ballets, among them *Revelations* (1960).

Although he completed some 79 ballets, Ailey ensured that the Company's varied repertory also included works by dance pioneers and emerging choreographers. In its 49-year history, the Company has produced more than 180 works by 77 choreographers. Performing for an estimated 19 million people in 48 states, 68 countries and on six continents, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has earned a reputation as one of the most popular international ambassadors of American culture.

In 1965, Ailey discovered dancer Judith Jamison. Her brilliant movement and creative style provided the inspiration for a number of his works, including *Cry*, his best-known solo piece. Ailey created *Cry* as a tribute to his mother and dedicated the piece to "All Black women everywhere – especially our mothers."

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Center was founded in 1969, with an initial enrollment of 125 students. Today, under the direction of Denise Jefferson, over 3,500 dance students from every part of the world receive training there. This diverse group of students contributes to a multicultural richness that is unique among dance schools.



The school offers classes from beginning through professional levels and a comprehensive curriculum that includes Horton, Dunham, and Graham-based modern dance techniques, ballet, jazz, West African dance, Spanish dance, classical Indian dance, tap and yoga classes. Several performers in the

current Alley company attended the Ailey school, went on to perform with Ailey II, and have now become company members.

To help talented students make the leap from studio to stage, Ailey formed the Repertory Ensemble, now called Ailey II, in 1974. Under the artistic direction of former Ailey dancer Sylvia Waters, Ailey II has emerged as an acclaimed professional company in its own right.

The company has a longstanding involvement in arts education programs, including free performances, mini-performances for school children, lecture/demonstrations, workshops and master classes. AileyCamp, a unique national program, brings underserved youngsters to a full-scholarship summer day camp that combines dance classes with personal development and creative writing classes and field trips. Currently there are AileyCamps in Kansas City; Missouri and Kansas City; Kansas; New York; Philadelphia; Boston; Chicago; Bridgeport; Connecticut; and the Berkeley/Oakland Ailey Camp at Cal Performances.

### **Alvin Ailey (1931-1989)**

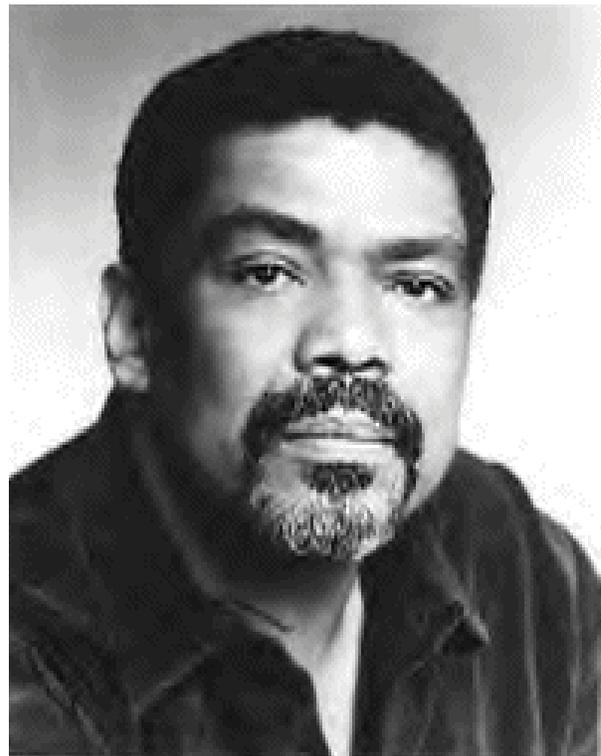
Born in Rogers, Texas, on January 5, 1931, Alvin Ailey spent his formative years going to Sunday School and participating in The Baptist Young Peoples Union – experiences that later inspired some of his most memorable works, including *Revelations*. At age 12, he moved to Los Angeles and, on a junior high class field trip to the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, fell in love with concert dance.

Ailey began his formal dance training in Los Angeles motivated by performances of the Katherine Dunham Dance Company and classes with Lester Horton that his friend, Carmen de Lavallade, urged him

to take. Horton, the founder of the first racially integrated dance company in the United States, was a catalyst for Ailey's career. After Horton's death in 1953, Ailey became the director of the Horton Dance Theater and began to choreograph his own works. In 1954, he and Carmen de Lavallade were invited to New York to dance in *House of Flowers* by Truman Capote.

In New York, Ailey studied with many dance artists, including Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Hanya Holm and Karel Shook, and took acting classes with Stella Adler. He won a number of acting roles while continuing to choreograph and dance professionally.

Alvin Ailey received recognition for his achievements during his lifetime. He was awarded numerous honorary doctoral degrees, including one from Princeton University. In 1976, the NAACP awarded him the Springer Medal and in 1982 he received the United Nations Peace Medal.



From the world of dance, he received the 1975 Dance Magazine Award, the Capezio Award (1979) and modern dance's most prestigious prize, the Samuel H. Scripps American Festival Award in 1987. In 1988, Ailey was honored by the Kennedy Center for his extraordinary contribution to American culture.

Alvin Ailey died on December 1, 1989, and with his death American dance lost one of its most luminous stars. Anna Kisselgoff of *The New York Times* wrote "You didn't need to have known Alvin personally to have been touched by his humanity, enthusiasm and exuberance and his courageous stand for multiracial brotherhood."

### **Artistic Director, Judith Jamison**

Judith Jamison was appointed Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in December 1989 at the request of her mentor, Alvin Ailey. When named Artistic Director of the Company,



she said "Mr. Ailey's spiritual and moral support served as a constant inspiration to me as an artist. He was my spiritual walker, my mentor and support. He gave me legs until I could stand on my own, as a dancer and choreographer. I view this appointment as the course to take to continue my vision and keep Mr. Ailey's vision alive."

A native of Philadelphia, Ms. Jamison studied with Marion Cuyjet, was discovered by Agnes de Mille and made her New York debut with American Ballet Theatre in 1964. She became a member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965 and danced with the company for 15 years to great acclaim.

Ms. Jamison left the company in 1980, appearing as a guest artist with ballet companies all over the world. She starred in the hit Broadway musical *Sophisticated Ladies*, and in 1988, she formed her own company, The Jamison Project. A PBS special depicting her creative process, *Judith Jamison: The Dancemaker*, aired nationally the same year. Her autobiography is titled *Dancing Spirit*.

She is recipient of many awards and honorary degrees. In 2001, Ms. Jamison received a National Medal of Arts, the most prestigious award for artists in the United States. She carried the Olympic torch at the opening ceremonies in Salt Lake City in 2002. In 2003, she received the "Making a Difference" Award by the NAACP ACT-SO and the Paul Robeson award from the Actors' Equity Association in recognition for her contribution to the performing arts and commitment to the right of all people to live in dignity and peace.

Today, Judith Jamison presides over a renewed organization, artistically and fiscally energized. Her presence has propelled the organization in new directions—the development of the Women’s Choreography Initiative; performances at the 1996 Atlanta Games and the 2002 Cultural Olympiad; two unprecedented engagements in South Africa. and a recent performance tour of mainland China. Ms. Jamison has continued Mr. Ailey’s practice of showcasing the talents of emerging choreographers from within the ranks of the Company. As Artistic Director of The Ailey School, she helped implement a multicultural curriculum which includes

salsa and the dances of West Africa and South India. Following Alvin Ailey’s ideals, Ms. Jamison is dedicated to asserting the prominence of the arts in our culture, spearheading initiatives to bring dance into the community and programs that introduce children to the arts. She remains committed to promoting the Ailey legacy—dance as a medium for honoring the past, celebrating the present and fearlessly reaching into the future.



# 4

## About the Art Form

### Modern Dance

#### Guiding Questions:

- ◆ What are the characteristic elements of modern dance?
- ◆ What types of dance influenced Alvin Ailey's choreography?
- ◆ What qualities are special in the Horton technique?

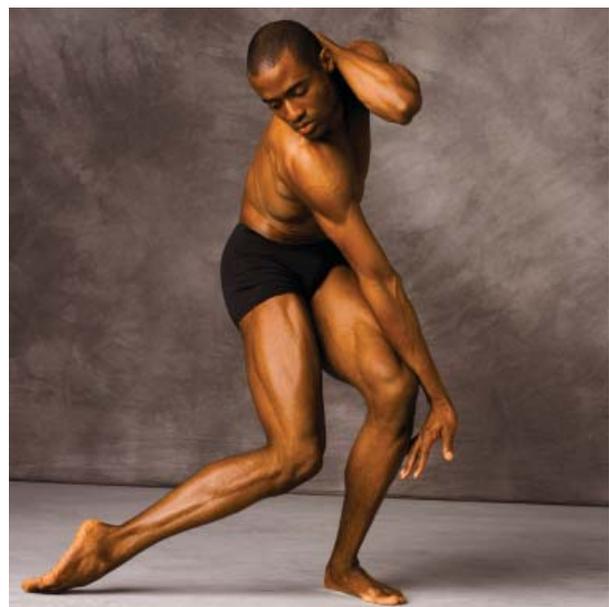
Created in America about 100 years ago, modern dance is a younger art form than ballet or folk dance. Ballet began primarily in France in the 1500s and 1600s and for almost 500 years ballet dancers have performed classical ballet's traditional steps and movements. Ballet choreography emphasizes symmetry and repeating patterns, and dancers hold their bodies straight and try to give the illusion of weightlessness.

Known for its invention and non-traditional attitude, modern dance developed in the 20th century. Its vocabulary expanded the standardized movements of ballet and included everyday actions like walking, running and falling. Each modern dance company has its own style and unique movement vocabulary according to the artistic director's creative talents.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is a repertory company, which means that it performs dances by different choreographers, including many by its founder. Ailey developed his unique style of choreography after observing movement of all kinds, then combining

the movements he found most engaging. Whatever the particulars, all dances contain the principles of choreography: putting movements together artfully in interesting, thought-provoking or inspiring ways.

Even when there is no "story" with characters or a beginning, middle and end, dance expresses many emotions, ideas and moods. As you watch *Revelations* and *Night Creature*, first experience them for your own pure reactions and pleasure. Then think about the artistic choices of the choreographer. Watch for movements listed in the dance glossary, observe the shapes the dancers make with their bodies and how they use the stage space; the kind of music and rhythms used; whether movement is slow, or fast; how many dancers are on stage at a time and why; and overall, if you think you understand what the choreographer is trying to say to you.



## Dance Glossary

### ***Horton Technique***

Created by Lester Horton, this is a technique that explores how many different ways the body can move. Horton named these movements “studies.” Some of the studies are for balance, some for strengthening and some for working on the swinging action of the body. In the Horton technique, the dancer uses as much space as possible: turning, bending and jumping sideways, backwards and even upside-down. The shapes created are clear and linear. The quality of the movement is lyrical and includes varied dynamics. The Horton technique gives a feeling of strength and energy.

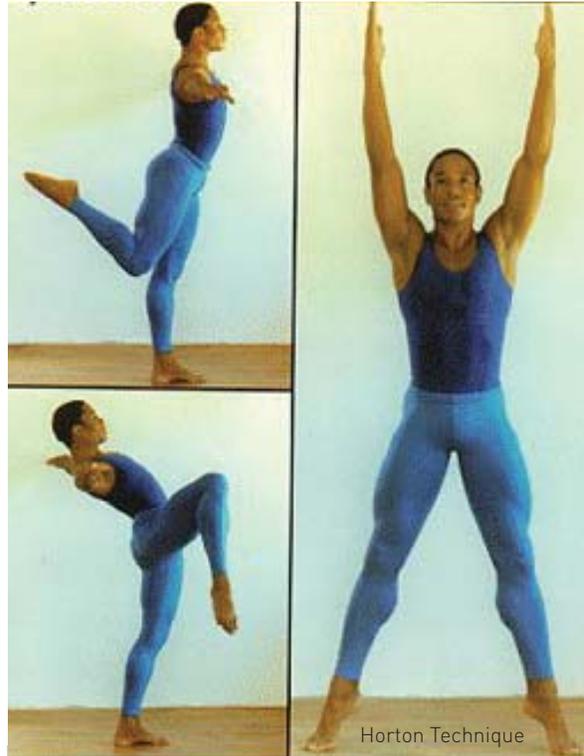
### ***Dunham Technique***

Created by Katherine Dunham, this technique is a blend of the Caribbean, West African and Afro-American folk patterns of movement and rhythms. The original dance patterns have been preserved, but the dances have been slightly modified in keeping with modern dance form. The technique also employs the styles of ballet, modern dance, jazz and basic folk patterns.

### ***Graham Technique***

A dance technique created by Martha Graham that is based on the principle of contraction and release, movement

that is similar to the act of breathing, creating a current of energy through the body. The back appears rounded in a contraction and the chest is lifted in a release. Movement itself is dramatic and expressive.



**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 the French language.

**Arabesque:** A ballet position where a dancer balances on one leg, raises and extends the other leg behind them, and stretches their arms forward

**Artistic director:** A person who has artistic control of a company's work. They will often choose a company's season and direct several works.

**Boogie Woogie:** An upbeat style of blues music from the 1920's that became popular in social dancing

**Call and Response:** A style of singing in which the melody song by one singer is responded to or echoed

**Choreographer:** A person who composes dance works

**Duet:** Any performance by two people

**Ensemble:** The united performance of an entire group

**Movement Vocabulary:** dance movements that commonly appear in a choreographer's works

**Repertoire/Repertory:** The list of works that a company is prepared to perform

**Repertory Company:** A dance company that performs many types of works by many different choreographers

**Solo:** Any performance by one person

**Symmetry:** Regularity of form or arrangement in terms of similar, reciprocal, or corresponding parts

**Vignette:** A short scene or moment, as from a play

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



# 5

## About the Music

### African American Spirituals

Spirituals are folk songs sung both in church and informally outside of the church, to describe events in the bible or personal religious experiences. You may have heard spirituals in church, and you may also know spirituals that have become part of America's common social and musical language.

Spirituals trace their origins to Africa, and although they have evolved over time, many remain unchanged for over 300 years. Beginning in the 1700s, Africans were brought to the United States on slave ships, with profound results historically, culturally and musically. Many enslaved people left no record of their lives; however their music traveled across the continent, introducing African chants, drums and rhythms to America, where they have deeply influenced the growth of American music.

Most Africans were forced to abandon their native religions and convert to those practiced in the New World. Many embraced the new religions, which offered a better place—heaven—after this life on earth. In Louisiana, which was first settled by the Spanish and the French, slaves converted to Catholicism. In Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama and Georgia, settled first by the English, the Methodist and Baptist churches were strong. Since these congregations allowed singing in their services, the slaves were able to incorporate their own love of song into their newfound faiths. Out of this mingling of slave culture and Protestant culture came the songs called “**spirituals.**”



There is much evidence that slaves learned to give double meaning to the religious songs they sang. Quite a few Negro spirituals contain messages that white slave masters did not know about. These were often called “sorrow songs” because they expressed the deep suffering the slaves endured and their yearning for redemption and peace in heaven. Sorrow songs exist in other cultures as well.

Spirituals were also a way for the slaves to communicate with each other--to plan meetings, to help escaped slaves and to remind one another that there was hope for freedom. The spiritual “Deep River,” for example, was sung to announce a meeting at the river:

*Deep river  
My home is over Jordan, yes  
Deep river, Lord,  
I want to cross over into camp  
ground.*

When a slave ran away and the master discovered his absence, the other slaves on the plantation might sing “Wade in the Water.” Slaves on neighboring plantations would hear the song and take it up, and the runaway, wherever he was,

would know that he should take to the river so the bloodhounds would not be able to follow his scent:

*Wade in the water, wade in the water.*

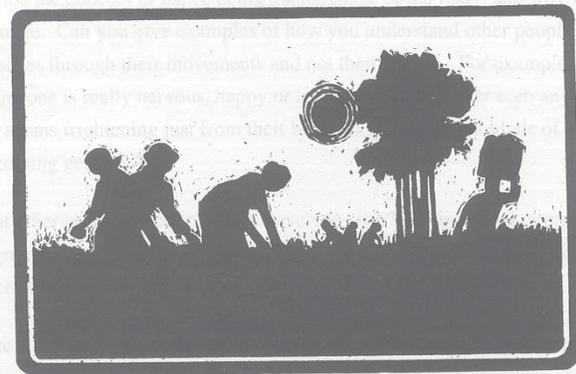
*Children, god going to trouble the water.*

It is no accident that after the Underground Railroad began, slaves in the south took to singing a spiritual called “The Gospel Train.” The Underground Railroad was a route from the south to Canada and freedom, a route marked by homes that would take in runaways and provide them with places to sleep, food, clothing and help in traveling to the next “station.” Part of the spiritual went,

*The gospel train is coming  
I hear it just at hand—  
I hear the car wheels moving,  
And—rumbling thro’ the land.  
Get on board, children,  
Get on board.*

While the slaves used their drums and drum-like sounds and songs to work against their masters and for their own freedom, they mostly made music to make life more bearable, to restore their spirits, to inspire courage, and to enjoy the little free time they had.

They sang work songs while they labored, creating songs about picking cotton, harvesting sugarcane, and loading



and unloading ships on the docks. In this they were not very different from other groups of workers who shared a tradition of music and singing. English and Irish sailors sang sea chanteys as they worked.

African slaves had a unique form of singing, known as call and response that allowed individuals to make up new verses that were then answered by the group, which acted like a chorus. This call-and-response form evolved and became a deep expression of joy and suffering which we now know as gospel music.



## The Music of Revelations

*Revelations* is a dance in three sections, each including a selection of music. The following pages include the lyrics to a sampling of songs from *Revelations*.

1. Pilgrim of Sorrow: “I Been ‘Buked”; “Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel”; and “Fix Me, Jesus”
2. Take Me to the Water: “Wade in the Water”; “A Man Went Down to the River”; and “I Want to Be Ready”
3. Move Members Move: “Sinner Man”; “The Day Is Past and Gone”; “You May Run On”; and “Rocka-My-Soul”

## Section 1: Pilgrim of Sorrow

### I've Been 'Buked

I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned,  
Yes,  
I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned,  
Children  
I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned,  
I've been talked about sho's you' born.  
Dere is trouble all over dis worl', Yes,  
Dere is trouble all over dis worl', Children.  
Dere is trouble all over dis worl'  
Dere is trouble all over dis worl'  
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down, No,  
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down, Children.  
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down,  
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down.  
I've been 'buked I've been scorned, Yes  
I've been 'buked I've been scorned,  
Children.  
I've been 'buked I've been scorned.  
I've been talked about sho's you' born.

### Fix Me Jesus

Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me.  
Hm—— Hm——  
Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Hm—— Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me,  
Oh, fix me. Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Fix me for my long, white robe.  
Hm—— Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Fix me for my starry crown.  
Hm—— Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me, Oh fix me.  
Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Hm—— Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Fix me for my dyin' bed.  
Hm—— Fix me Jesus, fix me.  
Hm—— Fix me Jesus, fix me.  
Fix me for my journey home.  
Hm—— Fix me Jesus, fix me.  
Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me, Lord.  
Oh, fix me, Oh,  
Fix me, Jesus, fix me. Hm——  
Fix me, oh, fix me. Fix me, Jesus, fix me.

## Section 2: Take Me to the Water

### Wade in the Water

Wade in the water (4x).  
Wade in the water, children, wade in the  
water.  
God's a gonna trouble the water.  
God's a gonna trouble that band all  
dressed in white.  
God's gonna trouble the water.  
It look like the band of the Israelite.  
God's gonna trouble the water  
Wade in the water.  
Wade in the water children.  
Wade in the water.  
God's a gonna trouble the water.  
See that band all dressed in red.  
God's gonna trouble the water.  
Look like the band that Moses led.  
God's gonna trouble the water.  
Wade in the water.  
Wade in the water children.  
Wade in the water.  
God's a gonna trouble the water.  
Didn't my Lord deliver Danuwel (Daniel)  
Danuwel Danuwel?  
Didn't my Lord deliver Danuwel and a  
why not a every man.  
Man went down to the river (2x)  
Lord, man went down to the river.  
He went down there to pray.  
Wash his sins away.  
He wash all day. He wash all night.  
He wash 'til his hand were sore. He wash  
all day.  
He wash all night 'til he couldn't wash em  
no more.  
Man went down to the river. He went  
down there to pray.  
Wash his sins away.  
Wade in the water. Wade in the water,  
Children wade in the water.  
God's a gonna trouble the water (x3)

### ***I Wanna Be Ready***

I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I  
wanna be ready,  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe.  
Lord, I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I  
wanna be ready,  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe.  
I would not be a sinner, I'll tell you the  
reason why,  
'Cause if my Lord should call on me,  
Lord, I wouldn't be ready to die.  
I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I  
wanna be ready.  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe.  
Lord, I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I  
wanna be ready.  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe.  
I would not be a gambler, I'll tell you the  
reason why.  
'Cause if my Lord should call on me,  
Lord, I wouldn't be ready to die.  
I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, Lord, I  
wanna be ready,  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe,  
Be ready to put on my long white robe,  
Jus' ready to put on my long white robe.

### **Section 3: Move, Members, Move**

#### ***The Day Is Past and Gone***

The day is past and gone.  
The evening shades appear.  
Oh may we all remember well that the  
night of death draws nigh.

#### ***You May Run On***

You may run on for a long time. Run on  
for a long time.  
You may run on for a long time.  
Let me tell you a God a mighty gonna cut  
you down.  
Go tell that long-tongued liar, go tell that  
midnight rider.  
Tell the gambler, rambler back-biter.  
Tell him God a might gonna cut him down.  
My head got wet with the midnight dew.

The mornin' star was a witness too,  
I never shall forget that day when Jesus  
washed my sins away.  
One day, one day, I was walkin' along  
heard a voice and saw no one.  
Voice I heard it sound so sweet made his  
love run down to my feet.  
Go tell that long-tongued liar, go tell that  
midnight rider.  
Tell the gambler, rambler back-biter.  
Tell him God a might gonna cut him down.  
You read about Samson from his birth,  
Strongest man whoever lived on earth.  
He lived way back in ancient time.  
Died and went to heaven in due time.  
Delilah fooled Samson. Don't you know  
the Holy Bible tells you so.  
She came to Samson on her knees said,  
Tell me where your strength lies if you  
please.  
Delilah she looked so fair,  
Samson said, my strength lies in my hair.  
She shaved his head just as clean as your  
hand,  
Samson got weak as any other man.  
Go tell that long tongued liar, go tell that  
midnight rider.  
Tell the rambler, gambler back biter.  
Tell him God a mighty gonna cut him  
down.  
A for Adam man was named placed in the  
garden by God's command.  
God saw Adam in a lonely state.  
Put him to sleep and made him a mate.  
Now Adam bein' the father of the human  
race,  
Broke God's law and tried to hide his face.  
In the cool of the evenin' my Lord came  
down,  
Looked at Adam and began to frown.  
Adam! Adam! Where are you now?  
You must earn your bread by the sweat of  
your brow.  
Go tell that long tongued liar. Go tell that  
midnight rider.

Tell the rambler, gambler back biter  
Tell him God a mighty gonna cut him  
down.  
Some people go to church for to signify,  
Tryin' to make a date with the neighbor's  
wife,  
But neighbor, let me tell you,  
Just as sure as you're born you better  
leave that woman,  
Better leave her alone, 'cause one of these  
days,  
Better mark my words, you'll think your  
neighbor has gone to work,  
You walk right up and knock on the door,  
That's all brother you'll knock no more.  
Go tell, tell that long tongued liar. Go tell  
that midnight rider  
Tell the gambler, rambler back biter.  
Tell him God a mighty gonna cut him  
down.



# 6

## Reading Excerpt

Autobiography of Alvin Ailey

### The Inspiration for *Revelations*

*Revelations* began with the music. As early as I can remember I was enthralled by the music played and sung in the small black churches in every small Texas town my mother and I lived in. No matter where we were during those nomadic years, Sunday was always a churchgoing day. There we would absorb some of the most glorious singing to be heard anywhere in the world.

With profound feeling, with faith, hope, joy and sometimes sadness, the choirs, congregations, deacons, preachers, and ushers would sing black spirituals and gospel songs. They sang and played the music with such fervor that even as a small child I could not only hear it but almost see it. I remember hearing “Wade in the Water” being sung during baptism and hearing the pastor’s wife sing “I Been ‘Buked, I Been Scorned” one Sunday during testifying time. I tried to put all of that feeling into *Revelations*.

### Creating the Dance

The opening part of *Revelations*... was about trying to get up out of the ground. The costumes and set would be colored brown, and earth color, for coming out of the earth, for going into the earth. The second part was something that was very close to me—the baptismal, the purification rite. Its colors would be white and pale blue. Then there would be the section surrounding the gospel church, the holy rollers, and all that church happiness. Its colors would be earth tones, yellow, and black.



The first version of *Revelations* was quite long, an hour and five minutes, and it had three sections. The first was called "Pilgrim of Sorrow." I took all the songs dealing with Black people's sorrow and put them in this section. The middle section was to be wading in the water. Songs such as "Honor, Honor" had all the extraordinary words. I was moved by what spirituals say as words, as metaphors. So I found these short songs for the middle section.

There were quite a few songs for the last section, "Move, Members, Move."

The whole ballet was a gigantic suite of spirituals. I poured in just about everything, every beautiful spiritual I had ever heard.

Even after all these years, we still feel that our season in New York City Center, where we play for four weeks, hasn't really begun until we do *Revelations*. If we open on a Wednesday and *Revelations* isn't presented until Sunday, the stage somehow hasn't yet been blessed.



# 7

## Learning Activities

### **Dance – Everyday Movement (Grades 3- 12)**

- 1) Ask students to brainstorm a list of everyday activities, for example; stretching when they wake up, walking the dog, skipping rope or jumping and throwing a basketball.
- 2) In groups of six, have students share their activity, show its movement, then have the other students repeat this movement.
- 3) After students have shared their movements, set the movements by having students go over them again, this time making sure each movement lasts for eight counts.
- 4) Then, ask students to create an order in which to perform all six, eight-count movements.
- 5) Next, ask students to think of the quality they would like for each movement. For example, do they want to do the movement slowly and fluidly or quickly and jerkily?
- 6) Finally, how much space should the movement take up – is the body stretched out with the legs taking large steps, or crunched into a little ball and hardly moving?
- 7) After repeating the movements in their chosen order several times, ask students to share their pieces.

### **Dance & Music – Call & Response (Grades K-12)**

- 1) Play some evocative music (preferably a spiritual from Revelations, or another type of folk or work song.)
- 2) Have students get into pairs; one student will be “A”, one student will be “B”.
- 3) Ask student “A” to make a movement without touching student “B”. Have student “B” respond to that movement physically. again without touching student “A”. (Ask them not to think about what to do, just trust their body to respond with a movement.)
- 4) Rotate leaders so that “B” leads and “A” responds. Ask students to experiment with different levels, energy, speed and duration of movements. After a while, students may also add sounds, words or vocalizations to their movements.

## Reflection on *Revelations* (Grades K-12)

Immediately after seeing the performance, ask students to remember movements and gestures. With the students arranged in a circle, ask each one to copy a movement they saw in the performance. Students can work in pairs, showing a movement from a duet. Additionally, students may draw movements they remember in abstract or representational form. After seeing all the movements, ask students to share what they think some of these movements or gestures represent in terms of ideas or emotions.

### Class Discussion

1. What do you think the dances *Night Creature* and *Revelations* were about? How did movement, costume, music and lighting convey the meaning of the dances?

2. DANCE IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE BODY. Discuss this statement. Would you consider dance a universal language? Can you give examples of how you understand other people's intentions and messages through their movements? How can you tell if someone is really nervous, happy, or angry? Have you seen anyone who seems frightening just from their body language? What kinds of movements are welcoming gestures?



### Draw a Picture!

What did you see when you went to the theater?

What do you remember about the artists, the stage, the lights, the costumes, the audience?

Was there something that was particularly interesting to you?

CHALLENGE: The photo on the right shows movement by capturing a dancer, Guillermo Asca, in the air. How can you show movement in a drawing? We'd love to see it!



### The Picture Tells A Story

This photo is from the "Wade in the Water" section of Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. Remember the performance, and then tell the story. Who are the characters? What are they doing? Were there other characters in this section? What was the music like? Did this scene remind you of something in your own experience?

## What to Look for In the Dance

When watching dance, we often see ideas or emotions expressed through movement. In some cases, the choreographer uses movement to tell a specific story, for example, Alvin Ailey's *For Bird with Love*, tells the story of legendary saxophone player Charlie Parker. In other cases, a story, or fragments of story are suggested through movement phrases that evoke an "image" of some familiar aspect of life. Even when a choreographer makes an abstract dance, audience members will apply meaning to it, sometimes finding associations from their own experiences, sometimes making generalizations from our common human experience.

*Night Creature*, created by Ailey to explore the essence and excitement of nightlife, was inspired by jazz pianist Duke Ellington's music. Instead of following a storyline, the piece celebrates how jazz evokes moods and ideas. Ailey used three different dance styles to create the choreography for *Night Creature*. Watch for these influences in movements like slow jazz walks (modern dance,) boogie-woogie (social dancing,) and arabesque (classical ballet).

*Revelations* is a suite of dances that tells the story of a "community" of people through vignettes composed of large and small groups, trios, duets and solos. In *Revelations*, concepts such as oppression, dignity, hope and determination, and emotions like sorrow, anger, fear and joy, are embodied and expressed through combining moving human forms in isolation and in relationship with one another.

Below you will find a list of specific dance gestures from *Revelations*. See if you can recognize some of the following moments as you watch the performance and identify the emotions or themes. As everyone has a unique frame of reference, a particular moment may say something different to you than to other people. The dance is rich with imagery; the list here contains only a few of them. Have your students make note of which scenes particularly stand out to them in order to spark a class discussion following the performance.

### Movements to Watch for In *Revelations*

1. THE "BIRD" POSE happens in several places in *Revelations*. How many times did you see it performed as a group in "I Been 'Buked?" In various sections of *Revelations*, a similar movement is done. Look for the "bird" pose repeated throughout the dance.
2. PRAYING MOVEMENTS: Notice the number of different ways praying takes place in *Revelations*. Think about how it is portrayed and why and where it is done. Students can also share through movement or drawing.
3. FALLING TO THE FLOOR IN GRIEF AND DESPAIR happens in three different segments of the dance. When do they happen and what do you think they represent?
4. RISING INTO THE AIR IN HOPE: In "Fix Me," one woman is so overcome with despair she faints twice, but in the end she ascends toward the sky as if on wings.

5. LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO HIDE: In the section "Sinner Man," some of the dancers try to hide. Who do you think they represent? What feelings did you experience while watching the dance?
6. A MAN AND A WOMAN CLEAR AWAY EVIL SPIRITS: Why do you think they are doing this? What props do the dancers use to accomplish their task?
7. THREE PEOPLE WALK INTO A RIVER: How do you know they are in water?
8. A MAN CRAWLS ON THE FLOOR IN DETERMINATION: What do you notice about the way he moves? What else do his gestures convey?
9. SEVERAL WOMEN CARRY ON STOOLS: Where are they? What are they doing? What emotions are they showing at this time?
10. THE WOMEN PLAYFULLY CHASTISE THE MEN: What gestures do they use to do this?
11. MEN CARRY THE STOOLS: Why might they do this?
12. THE COMPANY IS SWEEPED AWAY IN JOY: Describe how the dancers portray this emotion.

## Resources

### Books:

- Ailey, Alvin and A. Peter Bailey. *Revelations: The Autobiography of Alvin Ailey*. Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press, 1995.
- Dunning, Jennifer. *Alvin Ailey: A Life in Dance*. New York, NY: DeCapo Press, 1998.
- Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Alvin Ailey*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children, 1993.

### DVD / Video:

- Four by Ailey VHS. Director Thomas Grimm. Dance Horizons, 1986.
- Beyond the Steps: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater* DVD. Director Phil Bertelsen. Dance Philm, 2006. Order at: <http://www.aileyboutique.com/dvd/>

### CD / Tape:

- Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Revelations*. V2 Records 63881-27036-2, 1998. Order at: <http://www.aileyboutique.com/dvd/>

### Podcasts:

- NPR: *Alvin Ailey's Dance Troupe at 45*  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1912037>

### Websites:

- Alvin Ailey Web site: <http://alvinailey.org/>  
 Alvin Ailey at Cal Performances: [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu/presents/season/2006/dance/aaadt.php](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu/presents/season/2006/dance/aaadt.php)

# 8

## California State Standards

### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to dance

Students perceive and respond, using the elements of dance. They demonstrate movement skills, process sensory information, and describe movement, using the vocabulary of dance.

### 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Creating, performing and participating in dance

Students apply choreographic principles, processes, and skills to create and communicate meaning through the improvisation, composition, and performance of dance.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Understanding the historical contributions and cultural dimensions of dance

Students analyze the function and development of dance in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting human diversity as it relates to dance and dancers.

### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Responding to, analyzing, and making judgments about works of dance

Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of dance, performance of dancers, and original works according to the elements of dance and aesthetic qualities.

### 5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

Connecting and applying what is learned in dance to learning in other art forms and subject areas and to careers

Students apply what they learn in dance to learning across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to dance.



This Cal Performances *SchoolTime* Study Guide was written, edited and designed by Laura Abrams, Rica Anderson and Nicole Anthony. Copyright © 2007 Cal Performances