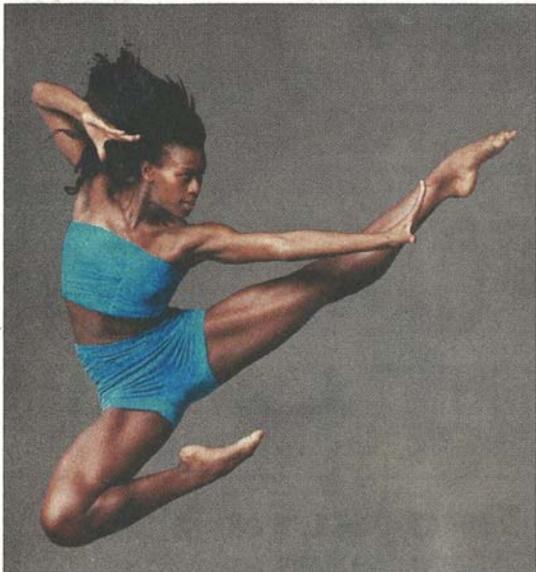


# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

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## Much To Celebrate: Alvin Ailey Returns to BAM

For Some, Performing in Brooklyn Means Home



Rachel McLaren, Park Slope resident and dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Photo by Andrew Eccles

FORT GREENE — This week Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns to BAM for its longest engagement there to date. The company will present two programs in more than 10 performances at BAM, beginning yesterday, June 10 — the culmination of a 20-city U.S. tour celebrating the 20th and final year of leadership by Ailey's legendary artistic director Judith Jamison. Her successor, Robert Battle, was recently announced.

Two programs, "Ailey Spirit" and "By Popular Demand," will

conclude with Ailey's masterpiece, "Revelations."

Shortly after it was founded by Ailey in 1958, the company began touring widely and was named by Congress as a U.S. Cultural Ambassador to the World. Ailey established the eponymously named school in 1969, the same year that the company moved to BAM for a year before returning to Manhattan. Ailey died in late 1989 and Jamison took up the post of artistic director.

Several members of the com-

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pany are residents of Brooklyn. The *Eagle* spoke with a few of them about their own excitement for the milestone event in their home turf. For more information, visit [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org).

**Matthew Rushing**, a longtime Ailey dancer who lives in Ditmas Park, began his dance training at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. He trained at The Ailey School, and joined the company in 1992. During his career he has performed as a guest artist for galas in France, Russia, Canada and Hungary and performed for former president Bill Clinton's inauguration.

"The Ailey company's season at BAM is extremely important to me because the Ailey company is once again reaching a broader audience," says Rushing. "Brooklyn and BAM are well known for having a highly educated and culturally diverse audience, and this creates a perfect setting for Ailey to share its spirit!"

Park Slope resident **Rachel McLaren** began her formal dance training at the Royal Winnipeg Bal-

let School. Originally from Manitoba, Canada, she joined the Toronto cast of *Mamma Mia!* after graduating high school. McLaren moved to New York to study at The Ailey School as a fellowship student and joined the company in 2008.

"As a Brooklyn resident, I feel a sense of excitement, and honor to be performing in Brooklyn, at BAM," she says. "BAM has such a rich and important artistic history, and its dedication to supporting progressive art and making art accessible to Brooklyn residents is awe-inspiring. I am so vocal with my high opinion about Brooklyn because I've realized that I feel so much more relaxed and connected with Brooklyn than I ever did in Manhattan."

Brooklyn native **Olivia Bowman Jackson** grew up in Starrett City, attended Mark Twain Junior High for the Gifted and Talented and graduated from LaGuardia High School of the Performing Arts. She received scholarships from North Carolina School of the Arts and was a fellowship student at The Ailey School. She joined Ailey in 2001 and now

lives in Harlem with her husband.

"I am filled with excitement and honor to be performing at BAM," she says. "When I was a child, I definitely looked up to the people that I saw on that stage and hoped to be up there one day."

She recollects some favorites from Brooklyn: "As an adult, I used to love going to the Buttercup Lounge on DeKalb Avenue, which later turned into a great vegetarian restaurant called Red Bamboo. I'd get my hair braided at Sowein's Natural Hair Salon on Nostrand Avenue, which has the most talented Senegalese women doing hair in New York. I danced away a Sunday summer afternoon or two in Prospect Park's 'Body and Soul' house music party.

"And now I'm so blessed to be back in Brooklyn performing at BAM, a theater that holds so many fond memories for me."

**Amos J. Machanic Jr.**, a Prospect-Lefferts Gardens resident originally from Miami, studied dance at the New World School of the Arts and continued his training at The Ailey School, where he was a fellowship recipient. He joined

the company in 1996.

"As a Brooklyn resident, it is such a wonderful experience performing at BAM. First of all my commute is only 10 minutes to BAM, as opposed to my daily 40-minute commute to Manhattan. Second of all, it is especially wonderful when people who live in my apartment building tell me they had a chance to come see the company at BAM."

**Clifton Brown**, a resident of Prospect Heights originally from Arizona, trained at various schools including Take 5 Dance Academy, Ballet Arizona, New School for the Arts and The Ailey School. Brown is a recipient of a Donna Wood Foundation Award, a Level 1 ARTS award given by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts. He joined the company in 1999.

"Performing at BAM means being home 10 minutes after the final curtain; it feels like quite a luxury," he says. "I love the area I live in. I am close to the Brooklyn Museum, the Botanical Gardens and Prospect Park."

— Caitlin McNamara  
*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*