

## Dancing with the pros at The Ailey Extension

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by Jeanie Casison, [NY City Guide Examiner](#)



After a successful season in New York City, [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#) (AADT) is taking its 50-year Anniversary activities on the road with a global tour that includes stops to 26 cities across the United States. The famed company, originally founded in 1958 by legendary choreographer Alvin Ailey, continues a rich tradition of promoting modern dance performance and preserving African-American culture under the guidance of Artistic Director Judith Jamison. Audiences who are fortunate to witness the impressive repertory—including *Go In Grace* a new collaboration with the Grammy Award-winning capella musical group Sweet Honey in the Rock and the beloved works *Blues Suite* and *Revelations*--should hold on to their ticket stub because it entitles them to one free class at [The Ailey Extension](#), located at [The Joan Weill Center for Dance](#) (405 W. 55<sup>th</sup> Street at Ninth Avenue).

Beginners are welcome as movement for the masses is a central focus of [The Ailey Extension](#). Since opening in 2005, more than 20,000 students of all levels have taken part in dance and fitness classes ranging from Ballet, Hip Hop and Jazz to Samba, West African and Zumba.

"The Ailey Extension is a way of giving dance back to the people. It was the last program created to further Alvin Ailey's mission of making dance accessible to more people. 'Extension' means classes for adults. You don't have to audition. You can just drop in. Our students are from all over the world, from New York City and as far away as South Africa," says Yvette Campbell, director of The Ailey Extension.

The timid can leave their feelings of intimidation outside Ninth Avenue. At The Ailey Extension, supportive staffers are known for providing encouragement in a non-competitive learning environment.

"All of the instructors are chosen based on their experience and ability to teach and reach people. It is one thing to show movement. It is another to inspire people to move who didn't have the training before. In the summer, some of the Company members teach classes when they are home. They love working with the adult students," Campbell says. "We are an open studio and welcome people from all walks of life. People tell us the energy is so amazing that they feel they can do anything here."

Classes at The Ailey Extension range in price from \$12 to \$16. A complete schedule is available online.