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## 2009 Ailey/Fordham Graduates Excel in Job Hunt

The job market may be grim for most college graduates, but for recent graduates of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater/Fordham University BFA program, the future could not be brighter. Of the 16 graduates in the class of 2009, 13—or 80 percent—have signed contracts to dance with companies nationwide this fall.

Ana Marie Forsythe, administrator of the program, noted that the average graduating class is traditionally 20 students, but the percentage of those who land contracts right after graduation averages only 65 to 70 percent.



Fordham BFA student Demetia Hopkins in Alvin Ailey's *Quintet*  
Photo by Eduardo Patino, NYC

"It was a small class, but they made up for it in talent," she said.

The class of 2009 is also distinct for the variety of jobs its members have embraced. They include contracts with the Hubbard Street Dance in Chicago, the Brooklyn-based Ronald K. Brown Evidence Dance Company and a touring production of *The Lion King*.

"It is a very eclectic group of companies and venues," Forsythe said. "Some dancers are doing Broadway-type work. Some dancers are doing Ailey II, of course, and some are doing companies that we've never before had dancers asked to join."

Forsythe credited the success rate to the talent of the dancers, coupled with the program's artistic and technical training, and intense networking with choreographers around the country.

That certainly was the case for Sarah Daley, who worked as an apprentice with Ailey II while attending Fordham. Ailey II is a junior company made up of the Ailey School's most-gifted graduates.

With three others from her graduating class, she was offered contracts with the company this fall. Daley said the apprenticeship was particularly helpful in preparing her for life after college.

setting," she said. "It was great to be around a company environment, learning the ins and outs of what they do on tour."

Landing the job was important for Daley, who hails from South Elgin, Ill. because it enables her to stay in New York City, where there are more dance opportunities.

"It's pretty cool that in Ailey II next year, there will be four from the graduating class," she said. "It's exciting for us, because our class was very close and we like to work together."

Samar Haddad King, founder of Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre and a 2006 Ailey/Fordham graduate, recruited one of the class of 2009, Sara Genoves-Sylvan, to dance for the company she founded not long after graduating with a concentration in choreography.

Haddad King said it was natural to gravitate toward dancers from her alma mater since there's an inherent familiarity that makes it easier to work with them. It is also important for a young dance company to recruit performers who are willing to help out with all aspects of a production, from writing proposals to helping with music and theatrical elements of shows.

"They're all so well rounded and brilliant, and I do think they were drawn to the Ailey/Fordham program because they weren't in a bubble and in one form of art."

Founded in 1841, Fordham is the Jesuit University of New York, offering exceptional education distinguished by the Jesuit tradition to approximately 14,700 students in its four undergraduate colleges and its six graduate and professional schools. It has residential campuses in the Bronx and Manhattan, a campus in Westchester, and the Louis Calder Center Biological Field Station in Armonk, N.Y.

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Fordham BFA student Fana Fraser in Sidra Bell's *Valse* Photo by Eduardo Patino, NYC

