

A Celebration of Judith Jamison in her Final Year as Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater



Judith Jamison
Photo by Andrew Eccelles

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 2010-2011 New York City Center Season and 20-City US Tour will mark the renowned Judith Jamison's final year as Artistic Director. Over the past two decades, her visionary leadership has carried the Ailey organization to new and profound heights.

Originally from Philadelphia, Judith Jamison was discovered by Agnes de Mille and made her New York debut with American Ballet Theatre in 1964. Beginning in 1965, she danced with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater for 15 years to great acclaim. Recognizing her extraordinary talent, Mr. Ailey created some of his most enduring roles for her, most notably the tour de force solo, *Cry*, and *Pas de Duke*, a spirited duet with Mikhail Baryshnikov to the music of Duke Ellington. Judith Jamison broke through racial barriers in the 1970s to become internationally recognized in the dance world and was the first female African-American artist to appear on the cover of *Dance Magazine*.

After leaving the Company in 1980, Ms. Jamison appeared as a guest artist with ballet companies around the world, starred in the hit Broadway musical *Sophisticated Ladies*, and founded her own company, The Jamison Project. Judith Jamison was invited by Mr. Ailey to lead the Company before his untimely death in 1989, and she became one of only a handful of women in the world to direct a major dance company.

One of the most renowned figures in modern dance and a cultural icon, she has guided the Ailey organization into a permanent home in New York City - the nation's largest building for dance - and to groundbreaking performances during two Olympics, at President Clinton's inauguration and in unprecedented engagements in South Africa, Russia and Paris.



Dance Magazine Archives



The Alvin Ailey
Barbie Doll @Collector Pink

Ms. Jamison recently led the Company on a 50-city global tour celebrating AAADT's 50th anniversary with a year-long series of special performances, collaborations (including Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Center and Sweet Honey In The Rock), events, projects and commemorative merchandise such as Ailey Hallmark Cards, Ailey Movado Timepiece, *Ailey Ascending* photographic art book and an Ailey Barbie Doll by Mattel (designed by Ms. Jamison, it was the first Barbie inspired by a dance company).

In her 20 years as Artistic Director, Judith Jamison has choreographed 10 ballets, commissioned 20 Company premieres, 32 new productions and 38 world premieres by choreographers including Ronald K. Brown, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Dwight Rhoden, Alonzo King, Robert Battle, among many others. *The New York Times* proclaimed, "The America we see in the Ailey repertory is a 'Yes we can' vision ..." and noted that "applause levels are always high."

Ms. Jamison is an author whose autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, was edited by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and published by Doubleday in 1993. Dedicated to asserting the prominence of the arts in our culture, Ms. Jamison is a 2009 TIME 100 Honoree and a recipient of a primetime Emmy Award, a Bessie Award, the 2009 BET Honors for Education, Capezio Award, Dance Magazine Award and the Kennedy Center Honors, in recognition of her lifetime contributions to American culture through the performing arts. She has received honorary degrees from, among many others, Brown, Columbia, Howard, The Julliard School and Yale.

In 2001, Ms. Jamison and the Ailey organization were recipients of the National Medal of Arts. AAADT was the first dance company to be so honored, and this was the first occasion when an arts organization and its artistic director were recognized independently with this prestigious award in the same year. In 2009, *The New York Times* declared that she is "surely the most stellar and admired artistic director of any repertory dance company in America."



Ailey Ascending: A Portrait in
Motion (Chronicle Books,
2009).

JUDITH JAMISON

Highlights of Special Honors, Appearances & Achievements

1965 – Judith Jamison joins Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and becomes recognized internationally as a performer and as an exceptional choreographer.

1967 – AAADT embarks on a two and a half month, 10-country African Tour for the State Department.

1970 – AAADT’s second State Department-sponsored tour of North Africa and Europe and a six-week tour of USSR – the first for an American modern dance company since the days of Isadora Duncan. *The Washington Post* reports that the Company was kept onstage for 20 minutes of curtain calls after a sold-out opening night performance at Moscow’s Variety Theater.

1971 – Alvin Ailey choreographs *Cry* for Judith Jamison as a birthday present to his mother. *Cry* becomes an instant hit, bringing even more popularity to Alvin Ailey as a brilliant choreographer and Judith Jamison as an extraordinary dancer.



Judith Jamison in *Cry*.
Photo by R. Faligan

1972 – Judith Jamison receives the distinguished Dance Magazine award and becomes a presidential appointee to the NEA.

1977 - AAADT performs for Jimmy Carter inaugural gala and at opening night of Studio 54.

1983 – AAADT celebrates its 25th anniversary with an anniversary benefit *The New York Times* calls “the biggest celebration of all” and further proclaims that “The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is not just a company, it is a school of thought.”



The Cosby Show.
Judith Jamison guest appearance

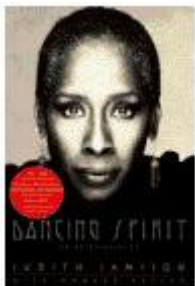
1988 – 30th Anniversary Gala with Bill Cosby is recorded as a special tribute to Alvin Ailey entitled “*Cosby Salutes Ailey*,” which later airs on NBC.

1989 – Upon Alvin Ailey’s death and at his request, **Judith Jamison is named Artistic Director. Under her leadership, the company flourishes, building an unparalleled reputation for performance, education, and innovation.**

1991 – AileyCamp is established in New York City. This program is currently implemented in 10 cities nationwide and continues to inspire thousands of inner-city youth.

1993 – AAADT celebrates its 35th Anniversary with a gala that includes Maya Angelou, Jessye Norman, Anna Deavere Smith, Denzel Washington, Al Jarreau and Dionne Warwick.

Historic Annie Liebovitz photo shoot of Judith Jamison’s ballet “Hymn” produces poster image that becomes a classic.



Judith Jamison’s autobiography:
Dancing Spirit,
(Doubleday, 1993)

AAADT performs at the televised inaugural gala for President Bill Clinton, seen by 80 million viewers, and was featured on The Phil Donahue Show, reaching 18 million viewers.

Judith Jamison’s autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, edited by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, is published by Doubleday.

Ailey in the Park attracts 30,000 spectators, who congregate in New York City’s Central Park to see the live performance.



President Bill Clinton and Judith Jamison. White house photo.

[1995](#) – **Judith Jamison and the Company** are featured in a very successful American Express ad campaign. Advertising Age calls it “the campaign of the decade.”

[1996](#) – AAADT performs at the Olympics Arts Festival in Atlanta, GA.

[1997](#) – **Historic AAADT residency in South Africa**, signaling the end to a long cultural boycott of the old apartheid regime by the world performing arts community. The event is covered by *Time Magazine* and *The New York Times*.

[1998](#) – AAADT celebrates its 40th Anniversary. A two CD box set, containing the music of *Revelations* and other Ailey favorites, is released through V2 Records.

The Ailey organization pioneers its new B.F.A. program – a joint venture between the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center and Fordham University, which offers students a unique opportunity to receive both superb dance training and a superior liberal arts education.

Judith Jamison is the youngest person ever to receive the Dance USA Award during the Spoleto Festival USA – as well as the New York State Governor’s Arts Award.

AAADT performs at *Time Magazine’s* 75th Anniversary gala

[1999](#) – **Judith Jamison receives The Kennedy Center Honors** for Lifetime Contributions to American Culture through the Performing Arts—the nation’s highest distinction for creative artists.

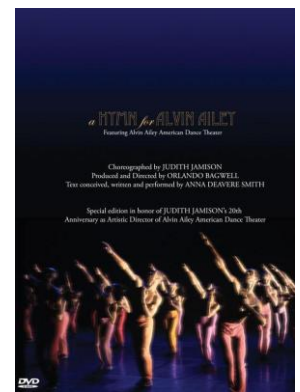
Orlando Bagwell’s documentary “*A Hymn for Alvin Ailey*” is broadcast nationally on PBS’ Great Performances and **Judith Jamison wins Prime Time Emmy Award** in the category of Outstanding Choreography.

[2001](#) – Members of AAADT and students from The Ailey School perform on Sesame Street

[2002](#) – **President Bush awards both Judith Jamison and the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation the 2001 National Medal of Arts.** The Foundation is the first dance organization in history to be given this prestigious award and it is the first time ever than an arts organization and its artistic director have been recognized independently for this honor.

Judith Jamison carries the Olympic torch in Salt Lake City, UT prior to the opening ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics. AAADT performs Jamison’s *HERE...NOW*, commissioned by the Salt Lake Organizing Committee, at the Olympic Arts Festival.

[2003](#) – Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater celebrates its 45th Anniversary. *Alvin Ailey Dance Moves!*, an innovative approach to exercise and fitness, is published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang, followed by *Ailey Spirit: The Journey of an American Dance Company*, which is filled with stunning photographs from the world’s finest dance photographers. As part of its annual ranking of the 100 Best Charities in the country, *Worth* magazine recognizes Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation as one of the top arts organizations in the United States.



A Hymn for Alvin Ailey.
Photo by K.C. Bailey,
Courtesy of the National Black
Programming Consortium



The Joan Weill Center for Dance
(55th Street & 9th Avenue, NYC).
Photo ©archphoto

[2004](#) – **The United States Postal Service issues a first class postage stamp honoring Alvin Ailey** as part of the American Choreographers stamp series, which commemorates four visionary 20th century choreographers who left a profound mark on the language of dance.

Judith Jamison receives Actor’s Equity Association’s Paul Robeson Award.

[2005](#) – AAADT returns to Russia, becoming the only American company to perform in the Stars of the White Nights Festival and the first modern dance company presented at the legendary Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.

The Ailey organization celebrates the official opening and public dedication of its new home, The Joan Weill Center for Dance, the nation's largest building dedicated to dance.

The Ailey Extension – a new program of dance and fitness classes for the general public – is launched to further Ailey's mission of bringing dance to the people. Currently, over 31,000 people, including many adult beginners, have taken one of 70 dance classes offered every week to the general public.

Judith Jamison inducted into the 225th Class of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

[2006](#) – **The Library of Congress announces the donation of the Ailey archives to “the nation's library,”** which will preserve the materials, digitize them and make them more widely available to future generations. According to Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, it is “...a major achievement for the Library.”

Dance in America's *Beyond the Steps: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater*, which chronicles the 2005 tour to Russia, the Ailey organization's move into its new home and the creation of the acclaimed ballet *Love Stories*, premieres on PBS.

[2007](#) – **Judith Jamison is awarded a 2007 Bessie award** for her lifetime commitment to the preservation and development of dance and the arts. To add to the celebration, company member Clifton Brown is also presented with a Performance Bessie Award.

AAADT is featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show and the season opening of The Ellen DeGeneres Show.

New York City's West 55th Street and 9th Avenue is renamed Alvin Ailey Place.

[2008](#) – **Judith Jamison leads the Ailey organization in a 50th anniversary celebration,** announcing a year-long schedule of special performances, projects and events. AAADT is recognized by the United States Congress as America's vital “Cultural Ambassador to the World”.

[2009](#) – **Judith Jamison recognized as a 2009 TIME 100 Honoree in the magazine's annual list of the world's 100 most influential figures and receives France's Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters,** the highest rank of the Order of Arts and Letters, which recognizes eminent artists and writers, and those who have contributed significantly to furthering the arts in France and throughout the world.

[2010](#) – **Judith Jamison is recognized as the 2010 recipient of The Montblanc de la Culture Arts Patronage Award,** which honors outstanding art patrons whose personal commitment and achievements deserve wider recognition.

Most recently, **Judith Jamison received the 2010 Congressional Black Caucus' prestigious Phoenix Award and was honored at *The White House Dance Series: A Tribute to Judith Jamison*,** celebrating her outstanding career as an American dancer, choreographer and Artistic Director of the Company for the past 20 years, hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Recognized by U.S. Congress as a vital American “Cultural Ambassador to the World,” Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater includes 30 extraordinary dancers, among the most talented and versatile dancers in the world, who annually perform for over 400,000 people across the globe. Over the past fifty years, AAADT has performed more than 215 works by over 85 choreographers, creating one of the world's largest modern dance repertoires and inspiring people of all backgrounds in a universal celebration of the human spirit using the African-American cultural experience and the American modern dance tradition.