

# Sacramento Press

## Rachael McLaren Talks About Dancing With Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

March 29, 2011

By Bill Burgua



Rachael McLaren in Alvin Ailey's Blues Suite.

The excitement of dancing with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater just pours out of Rachael McLaren. SacPress reached McLaren by phone recently while she waited for another flight on the current Alvin Ailey North American tour. She will be dancing with Alvin Ailey in Jackson Hall at the Mondavi Center April 5th and 6th.

McLaren began by talking about dance. "Dance comes from the people."

"(It is) human connections-celebrating together."

Rachael McLaren started dancing when she was five years old. She was always all about movement, bouncing around the house. She grew up watching her hometown, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, where she would eventually go on to study. At first, it was all about ballet and classical piano. She eventually discovered high school musical theater and contemporary dance as well.

Upon graduating from high school, she was off to the big city of Toronto where she was cast in the long running production of the Broadway musical "Mamma Mia!"

Jackie Davidson, McLaren's Creative Movement & Ballet teacher at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, sent her to New York to check out the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater program. McLaren was in the school for one year before she was selected, not auditioned, to join the Ailey II Company of 12 members, under the direction of Sylvia Waters. The Alvin Ailey website describes the company's makeup: "Ailey II combines the best young modern dancers with outstanding emerging choreographers."

While she was being recruited, McLaren was also in discussion with Ron Cunningham of The Sacramento Ballet. Although she feels she could have enjoyed working and living in Sacramento, McLaren had already talked about living and working in New York. The cultural experiences available there had been her lifetime dream.



Rachael McLaren in Camille A. Brown's The Evolution Of A Secured Feminine



Rachael McLaren has now been dancing with the Alvin Ailey first company for three years, and is rightly proud to be dancing with Alvin Ailey. The company is well known for its technical skills and for being an ambassador to the world for the United States. Ailey founded the company in New York in 1958, when he was just 27 years old. The company has been under the leadership of artistic director Judith Jamison since Ailey's death in 1968. When Jamison retires on June 1st, Robert Battle will take over as artistic director.

The company's best known and signature work is "Revelations" (1960) which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. According to McLaren, the work is so important that it is performed at every company performance. "Revelations" will be performed in the second half of the program following a film short, "Celebrating 'Revelations' at 50."



Alvin Ailey, Judith Jamison and Robert Battle.