



**The Ailey II dance company will perform at the Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center on March 1.**

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By Traci Brigdes

**FLORENCE, SC** – Life is about to change for Sylvia Waters. In June, the artistic director for the Ailey II Dance Company will retire from the company of young dancers she has led for nearly four decades. “Mr. Ailey gave me the greatest gift imaginable when he created a second company and asked me to take charge of it,” Waters said.

“I have spent the past 37 years living with the energies and enthusiasms, the hopes and hurts, of some of the world’s best young dancers and choreographers – memories I will always cherish. I’m excited to continue coaching, teaching master classes and conducting The Ailey Legacy Residency, and I can’t wait to see all the new ways that Ailey II will flourish with Troy Powell’s inspired leadership.”



Luckily, Pee Dee residents have one last opportunity to see Waters’ work before she leaves her post. On March 1, Ailey II will bring its exceptional dancers to the Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center.

Ailey II dancers are the most talented of their generation, captivating audiences and translating their strength, agility and grace of body and soul into stirring, powerful performances. The critically-acclaimed company presents dazzling performances and innovative community programs across the country and internationally. The Ailey spirit shines as these artists perform an exhilarating and diverse repertoire that includes Alvin Ailey’s timeless classics and thrilling new works by today’s most outstanding choreographers.

Chosen by Alvin Ailey to guide and develop Ailey II, following seven years as a lead dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Waters has trained generations of outstanding professional dancers, opened the door for many of today’s most vital choreographers (including Robert Battle, now the Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater) and has brought Ailey II to prominence as one of the world’s most popular and acclaimed touring companies.

Ailey II dancers are chosen from the most promising scholarship students of The Ailey School and offers unique opportunities for these young artists to refine their technique while gaining invaluable performing and teaching experience during their tenure with the Company. Many Ailey II members have gone on to pursue successful careers as dancers, teachers and choreographers with other dance companies, on Broadway and in schools.

In recent years, Ailey II’s distinctive repertoire has included works by dance masters Alvin Ailey, Talley Beatty, Donald Byrd, Ulysses Dove, George W. Faison, Lar Lubovitch, Judith Jamison and Ailey’s Artistic Director Robert Battle. Ailey II has also performed innovative works by emerging choreographers, including Sidra Bell, Thang Dao, Carlos dos Santos and Christopher L. Huggins.

The Company’s current tour consists of performances in more than 30 cities across the United States and abroad. The company’s Florence performance is scheduled to include: Thang Dao’s Echoes which began as a depiction of haunting memories. But this poignant ballet has since taken on a life of its own, as the echoes of memories cascade into the distant past while pervading our awareness of the present.

The Corner by Kyle Abraham, which is an ensemble work that blends contemporary hip hop and post-modern movement sensibilities with several nods to classical ballet, in an effort to reference an urban social interaction that recreates life on ‘the corner.’ This enduring classic is a tribute to that heritage and to Ailey’s genius. Using African-American religious music--spirituals, song-sermons, gospel songs and holy blues--this suite fervently explores the places of deepest grief and holiest joy in the soul.