

## Celebrating the return of Alvin Ailey and 'Revelations' to Seattle

By Carole Carmichael



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater visits Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre on March 25-27, celebrating the 50th anniversary of "Revelations" and bringing new works.

8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, 5th Avenue Theatre, 1308 Fifth Ave, Seattle; \$30-\$75 (206-625-1900 or [www.stgprepresents.org](http://www.stgprepresents.org))

Over 50 years, on six continents, millions of people in more than 71 countries have been emotionally moved by the dance, the music, the sorrow and the electricity of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's "Revelations."

With the first strains of the spiritual, "I've been 'buked and I've been scorned," and the dancers' depiction of that pain and grief, every heart sitting witness is snatched up into the sting of our most vulnerable human condition. Tightly held through three movements of the ballet, your heart is finally soothed with joy and hope through exuberant dance done to the refrain: "Rock-a my soul in the bosom of Abraham."

"Revelations" was first performed Jan. 31, 1960, in New York City, and is three suites that tell the story of African Americans' journey from slavery to freedom, and the role that faith plays in their saga.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns to Seattle on Friday to begin a three-day run at the 5th Avenue Theatre, and audiences will have another opportunity to witness this soul-stirring work as the troupe celebrates the staying power of "Revelations." (A short film will be shown before the work at every performance. Also on the bill: "Anointed," "The Hunt" and "The Evolution of a Secured Feminine.")

"I first saw 'Revelations' as a teenager on television and knew I had to become a dancer because the people looked like me, the music was so beautiful and it was my story," said Kabby Mitchell III, a former principal dancer with Pacific Northwest Ballet who's in the midst of choreographing "Porgy and Bess" for Seattle Opera.

Prior to the works developed by Alvin Ailey, "Giselle," the Romantic ballet composed in 1841, was the standard by which all dancers were judged.

"If you were a dancer, you had to dance 'Giselle,' this classical European ballet," said Mitchell, a dance faculty member at The Evergreen State College. "African Americans and other people of color were excluded from the canon, and their forms of dance were often considered primitive. Mr. Ailey changed this when he created three signature pieces — 'Revelations,' 'Blues Suite' and 'Cry.' "



These ballets have given African-American and other dancers of color access to signature works that are now considered classics.

"Mr. Ailey said it best when he said, 'I'm taking dance from the people and bringing it back to the people,' as 'Revelations' was taken from this experiences being raised in the black church in Texas; 'Blues Suite,' was inspired from the juke joints of his youth; and 'Cry' was a celebration of black women he dedicated to his mom as a birthday present."

Sharing this work, and the fervor it creates within you and that spreads across the audience, is transformative, and in my 30 years of viewing it, I've introduced it to many family members and friends.

Ellen Wallach, vice president of the board of the UW World Series performance program, used the occasion of her 50th birthday several years ago to share an Ailey performance with 1,200 school-age Seattle children who did not have the means to attend a performance.

"I felt it was a time to give back, and I sent a letter to my friends asking them to make donations to help me underwrite this performance," said Wallach. "Everybody wants to see this again and again. It's uplifting and very soulful."

To watch video click: [here](#)