



dance music theater  
**Cal Performances**  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

2008-2009 Season

# *SchoolTime Study Guide*



Photo: JUDITH JAMISON  
1976 Photograph © Jack Mitchell

## **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**

Thursday, March 5 and Friday, March 6, 2009 at 11 a.m.  
Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley

# Welcome to *SchoolTime!*

On **Thursday, March 5** or **Friday, March 6** at **11am**, your class will attend a performance of **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**.

Celebrating 50 years as an electrifying international presence, this world renowned company is committed to promoting dance as a medium for honoring the past, celebrating the present, and fearlessly reaching into the future. The company's spectacular repertoire ranges from cutting-edge modern choreography to spirituals, hip-hop, jazz, Afro-Caribbean rhythms, and rhythm and blues.

## Using This Study Guide

You can use these materials to engage your students and enrich their field trip to Zellerbach Hall. Before coming to the performance, we encourage you to:

- Copy the student resource sheet on **page 2 & 3** and give it to your students several days before the show.
- Discuss the information on **pages 4-7** about the performance and the artists with your students.
- Read to your students from the About the Art Form on **page 8** and About the Music sections on **page 10**.
- Engage your students in two or more of the activities on **pages 13-15**.
- Reflect with your students by asking them guiding questions, which you can find on **pages 2, 4, 8 & 10**.
- Immerse students further into the art form by using the glossary and resource sections on **pages 16-17**.

## At the performance:

Your students can actively participate during the performance by:

- **OBSERVING** how the dancers express emotions and ideas through their movements
- **LISTENING** to how the music and lyrics add to the meaning and emotional quality of the dance
- **THINKING ABOUT** how music, costumes and lighting contribute to the overall effect of the performance
- **MARVELLING** at the physical and mental discipline of the dancers
- **REFLECTING** on the sounds, sights, and performance skills experienced at the theater

We look forward to seeing you at *SchoolTime!*

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# 1 Theater Etiquette

**Be prepared and arrive early.** Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, and plan to be in your seats at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

**Be aware and remain quiet.** The theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. The international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

**Show appreciation by applauding.** Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

**Participate by responding to the action onstage.** Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

**Concentrate to help the performers.** These artists use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, they feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!

**Please note:** *Backpacks and lunches are not permitted in the theater. Bags will be provided for lobby storage in the event that you bring these with you. There is absolutely no food or drink permitted in the seating areas. Recording devices of any kind, including cameras, cannot be used during performances. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.*



# 2 Student Resource Sheet

Adapted from The Kennedy Center's *Cuesheet*.

## Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

### Questions to Think About During the Performance

- What does the Ailey company offer besides performances?
- What influenced Ailey's choreography?
- What was the role of spirituals?

### What You'll See

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will perform two different *SchoolTime* programs.

#### **Thursday, March 5**

Highlights from the company's 50th anniversary celebration, including *Opus McShann*, *Road of the Pheobe Snow*, *Three Black Kings* and *Revelations* (in full).

#### **Friday, March 6**

Excerpts from *Night Creature* and *Revelations* (in full).

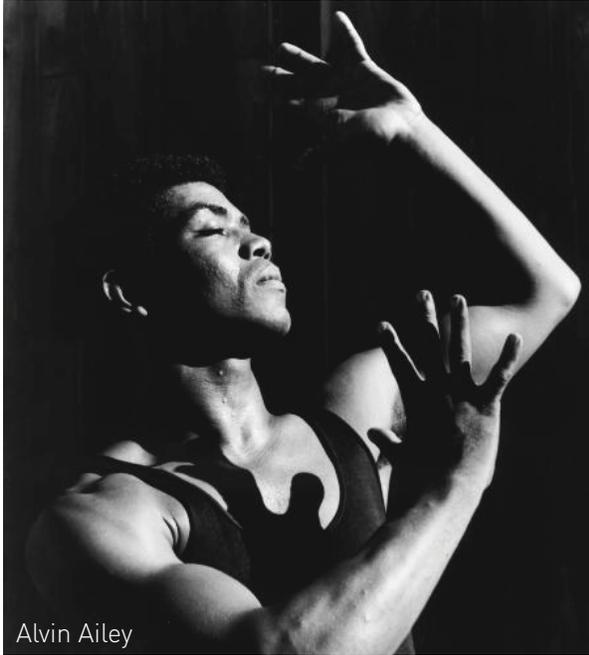
The company's most popular piece, *Revelations*, is based on Alvin Ailey's childhood memories of worshipping at his Baptist church in Texas and uses African American religious music, or spirituals. The other works showcase a range of modern choreography (arrangement of dance movements) that include elements of hip-hop, jazz, Afro-Cuban rhythms and rhythm and blues.

### About the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

When Ailey created his dance company in 1958, he wanted to make new and expressive modern dance works that showed African-American culture and heritage. He wanted the company's repertory (selection of works) to be varied so he included pieces by new and established choreographers. In its 50-year history, the company has performed for almost 20 million people worldwide, and earned a reputation as one of the most popular American dance companies.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Center was founded in 1969 and today over 3,500 students from every part of the world receive training there. In 1989, AileyCamp was started. This unique





national program invites students aged 11-14 to attend a free summer day camp featuring dance, personal development and creative writing classes. Cal Performances hosts the Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp for six weeks every year.

After Ailey's death in 1989, Judith Jamison, one of Ailey's leading dancers, became the company's director. Today, Jamison continues Ailey's commitment to bringing dance to all people.

### About Modern Dance and Ailey's Choreography

Modern dance was developed in America nearly 100 years ago as a reaction against the rules and structure of ballet. While ballet dancers try to appear weightless and perform elegant steps that were created hundreds of years ago, modern dancers embrace gravity and create choreography from everyday movements like walking, skipping, running, and falling.

To create his unique dance style, Ailey carefully observed ordinary people as they moved, then chose movements that had the most meaning for him and put them together in a dance. His style was also heavily influenced by three modern choreographers—Lester Horton, Katherine Dunham and Martha Graham.

- **Lester Horton** wanted his dancers to use as much space as possible while turning, bending, and jumping across large distances.

- **Katherine Dunham** incorporated Caribbean, African and American cultural dance styles to create a unique movement.

- **Martha Graham's** dance technique was built on contraction (becoming smaller and more pressed together) and release—movements that imitate the act of breathing. In a contraction, the dancer exhales and curves the spine; in a release, the dancer inhales and lifts the chest.

### About Spirituals

The songs used in *Revelations* are called spirituals. Spirituals are folk songs that describe personal religious experiences. When Africans were brought to America as slaves, their traditional music, as well as their freedom, was taken from them. However, they added African chants, rhythms and harmonies to the Christian songs they learned and created spirituals. Even today, people sing spirituals to raise their spirits, strengthen their courage and faith and create a sense of community. There are two kinds of spirituals:

- **Sorrow songs** are sung slowly and sadly and tell of the heavy burden of slavery and the belief that better days are coming.

- **Jubilees** are faster, upbeat songs based on Bible stories celebrating victory and joy

Spirituals came to serve many purposes for the slaves:

- **Work**—Singing spirituals made work less boring and set a rhythm for actions like picking or digging. Slave owners liked the singing because it made the slaves more productive.

- **Worship**—At night, after the owners were asleep, the slaves would go out into the woods (their invisible church) and worship. Spirituals were a big part of their religious ceremony.

- **Entertainment**—At the end of a long day, slaves would often sing spirituals for relaxation.

- **Code Songs**—Slaves communicated with each other through spirituals, often helping others escape. For example, the song "Deep River" had a hidden message that there would be a meeting at the river. Singing "Wade in the Water" would warn an escaped slave to go into the river so bloodhounds couldn't follow his scent.

# 3 About the Performance & Artists

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

## Guiding Questions:

- ◆ What are some of Alvin Ailey's achievements?
- ◆ What factors inspired Alvin Ailey to create *Revelations*?
- ◆ What are some of the Ailey companies' programs for young people?

## Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

JUDITH JAMISON,  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Masazumi Chaya,  
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

### Thursday, March 5

*Opus McShann* (excerpts)  
Choreography by Alvin Ailey, 1988  
Music by Jay McShann and others  
Costumes by Randy Barcelo  
Lighting by Timothy Hunter

*Road of the Phoebe Snow* (excerpts)  
Choreography by Talley Beatty, 1959  
Restaged by Masazumi Chaya  
Music by Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn  
Costumes by Normand Maxon  
Lighting by Chenault Spence

*Three Black Kings* (excerpts)  
Choreography by Alvin Ailey, 1976  
Music by Duke and Mercer Ellington  
Decor by Irving Milton Duke  
Costumes by Normand Maxon  
Lighting by William Burd

*Revelations*  
Choreography by Alvin Ailey, 1960  
Music: African American Spirituals  
Decor and Costumes by Ves Harper  
Costume redesign by Barbara Forbes  
Lighting by Nicola Cernovitch

### Friday, March 6

*Night Creature* (excerpts)  
Choreography by Alvin Ailey, 1974  
Music: Duke Ellington's "Night Creature"  
Costume by Barbara Forbes  
Lighting by Chenault Spence

*Revelations*  
Choreography by Alvin Ailey, 1960  
Music: African American Spirituals  
Decor and Costumes by Ves Harper  
Costume redesign by Barbara Forbes  
Lighting by Nicola Cernovitch

# CULTURAL AMBASSADOR TO THE WORLD

# ALVIN AILEY. AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



This season the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater marks its 50th anniversary, and a glorious achievement of bringing African-American cultural expression and the American modern dance tradition to the world's stages.

Mr. Ailey founded the company in 1958 and in the next 10 years he created approximately 20 ballets, among them *Revelations* (1960). He ensured that the company's repertory also included works by dance pioneers and emerging choreographers. Over the past 50 years, the company has produced more than 180 works by 77 choreographers. Performing for an estimated 19 million people in 48 states, 68 countries and on six continents, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has earned a reputation as one of the most popular international ambassadors of American culture.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Center was founded in 1969 with an initial enrollment of 125 students. Today, over 3,500 dance students from every part of the world receive training there. This diverse group of students contributes to a multicultural richness that is unique among dance schools.

The company has a long-standing involvement in arts education, including a unique national program called AileyCamp. AileyCamp brings underserved youngsters to a full-scholarship summer day camp that combines dance classes with personal development, creative writing classes and field trips. Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp is now in its eighth year at Cal Performances.

## Alvin Ailey (1931-1989)

Born in Rogers, Texas, on January 5, 1931, Alvin Ailey spent his formative years going to Sunday School and participating in the Baptist Young Peoples Union – experiences that later inspired *Revelations*.

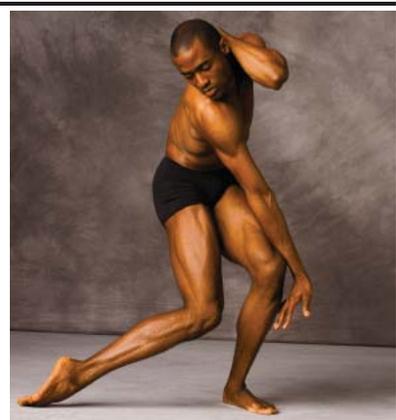
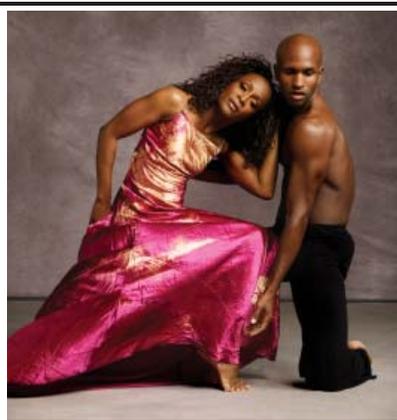
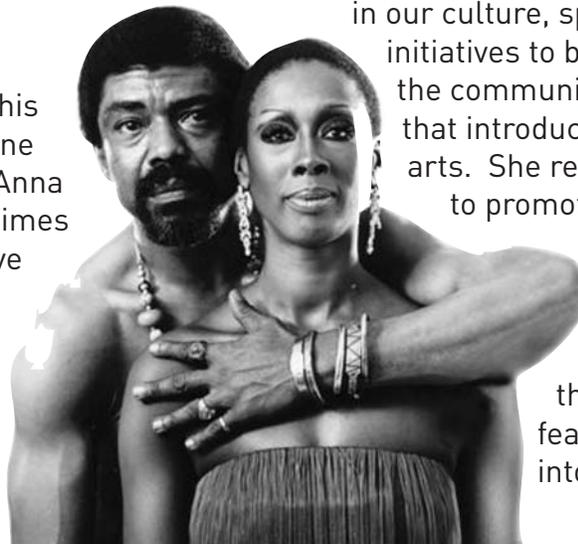
Ailey began his formal dance training in Los Angeles motivated by performances of the Katherine Dunham Dance Company and classes with Lester Horton. Horton, the founder of the first racially integrated dance company in the United States, was a catalyst for Ailey's career. After Horton's death in 1953, Ailey became the director of the Horton Dance Theater and began to choreograph his own works. Soon after he began the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Alvin Ailey died on December 1, 1989, and with his death American dance lost one of its most luminous stars. Anna Kisselgoff of The New York Times wrote "You didn't need to have known Alvin personally to have been touched by his humanity, enthusiasm and exuberance and his courageous stand for multiracial brotherhood."

## Artistic Director, Judith Jamison

A native of Philadelphia, Judith Jamison became a member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965 and danced with the company for 15 years to great acclaim. She was appointed Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in December 1989 at the request of her mentor, Alvin Ailey. When named Artistic Director of the Company, she said "I view this appointment as the course to take to continue my vision and keep Mr. Ailey's vision alive."

Today, Jamison presides over a renewed organization, artistically and fiscally energized. Following Alvin Ailey's ideals, Jamison is dedicated to asserting the prominence of the arts in our culture, spearheading initiatives to bring dance into the community and programs that introduce children to the arts. She remains committed to promoting the Ailey legacy—dance as a medium for honoring the past, celebrating the present and fearlessly reaching into the future.



## Excerpts from the autobiography of Alvin Ailey

### The Inspiration for *Revelations*

*Revelations* began with the music. As early as I can remember I was enthralled by the music played and sung in the small black churches in every small Texas town my mother and I lived in. No matter where we were during those nomadic years, Sunday was always a church-going day.

With profound feeling, with faith, hope, joy and sometimes sadness, the choirs, congregations, deacons, preachers, and ushers would sing black spirituals and gospel songs. They sang and played the music with such fervor that even as a small child I could not only hear it but almost see it. I tried to put all of that feeling into *Revelations*.

### Creating the Dance

The opening part of *Revelations* was about trying to get up out of the ground. The costumes and set would be colored brown and earth color, for coming out of the earth, for going into the earth. The second part was something that was very close to me—the baptismal, the purification rite. Its colors would be white and pale blue. Then there would be the section surrounding the gospel church, the holy rollers, and all that church happiness. Its colors would be earth tones, yellow, and black.

The first version of *Revelations* was quite long, an hour and five minutes, and it had three sections. The first was called “Pilgrim of Sorrow.” I took all the songs dealing with black people’s sorrow and put them in this section. The middle section was to be wading in the water. Songs such as “Honor, Honor” had all the extraordinary words. I was moved by what spirituals say as words, as metaphors. So I found these short songs for the middle section.

There were quite a few songs for the last section, “Move, Members, Move.” The whole ballet was a gigantic suite of spirituals. I poured in just about everything, every beautiful spiritual I had ever heard.



# 5 About the Art Form

## Modern Dance

### Guiding Questions:

- ◆ What types of dance influenced Alvin Ailey’s choreography?
- ◆ What qualities are special in the Horton technique?
- ◆ What are the characteristic elements of modern dance?

Created in America about 100 years ago, modern dance is a much younger art form than ballet or folk dance. Ballet began in France in the 1500s and 1600s, and for almost 500 years ballet dancers have performed classical ballet’s traditional steps and movements. Ballet choreography emphasizes symmetry and repeating patterns, and dancers hold their bodies straight and try to give the illusion of weightlessness.

Modern dance developed in the 20th century, primarily in the United States and Germany, as a rebellious response to the traditional rigidity of classical ballet. Known for its invention, independent, avant-garde attitude and “modern” sensibility, modern dance’s vocabulary pushed the boundaries set by traditional schools of dance, expanding the standardized movements of ballet to include everyday actions like walking, running and falling.

Modern dance pioneers like Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Rudolf von Laben each sought to inspire audiences to a new awareness of how the body could move and express emotion. Each modern dance company has its own style and unique movement vocabulary according to the artistic director’s creative talents.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs dances by different choreographers, including many by its founder Alvin Ailey. Ailey developed his unique style of choreography through his knowledge and use of several modern dance techniques including those of Lester Horton, Martha Graham, as well as utilizing African dance, ballet, jazz and the observed “pedestrian” movement of everyday people. He combined all the movements he found most engaging.



Whatever the particulars, all dances contain the principles of choreography: putting movements together artfully in interesting, thought-provoking or inspiring ways. Even when there is no “story” with characters or a beginning, middle and end, dance expresses many emotions, ideas and moods.

## Dance Techniques

### Horton

Created by Lester Horton, this is a technique that explores how many different ways the body can move. Horton named these movements “studies.” Some of the studies are for balance, some for strengthening and some for working on the swinging action of the body. A Horton dancer uses as much space as possible: turning, bending and jumping sideways, backwards and even upside-down. The shapes created are clear and linear. The Horton technique gives a feeling of strength and energy.

### Dunham

Created by Katherine Dunham, this technique blends Caribbean, West African and African American folk patterns of movement and rhythms. The original dance patterns have been preserved, but the dances have been slightly modified in keeping with modern dance form. The technique also employs the styles of ballet, modern dance, jazz and basic folk patterns.

### Graham

A dance technique created by Martha Graham that is based on the principle of contraction and release, movement that is similar to the act of breathing, creating a current of energy through the body. The back appears rounded in a contraction and the chest is lifted in a release. Movement itself is dramatic and expressive.



Martha Graham



Katherine Dunham

# 6 About the Music

## African American Spirituals

### Guiding Questions:

- ◆ What are spirituals?
- ◆ Why were spirituals important to slaves?
- ◆ What are common themes in spirituals?

### Slave Songs

When Africans were brought to America as slaves in the 1700s and 1800s, they entered a frightening and dangerous world. However, one thing gave slaves comfort in spite of the many hardships they endured: music, especially singing. When slaves sang together, they created a feeling of community.

Slaves were made to convert to Christianity and spirituals were born from the mingling of Protestant hymns with African musical traditions. The songs are easy to learn and to sing – “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore,” “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Go Down, Moses” are examples of spirituals.

Originally, spirituals were created for a type of religious worship called a camp meeting. People would go to the woods and fields, camp out in tents and attend worship services for several days at a time. There they took part in the dances and song rituals of their homeland, and sang Christian songs of faith, hope and pain. Camp meetings were a way for people who lived far from a church to get together and worship.

Since most of the people coming to camp meetings could not read or write, the songs they sang had to be easy to remember. Therefore, spirituals often use repetition and have a chorus—a part

of the song that repeats after each verse. That way, people could sing them without needing a book. Call and response also made written music unnecessary – a leader would begin the song (the call), and everyone else would answer (the response).

As these songs were passed on through oral tradition they didn’t always have a set number of verses or even specific words. Leaders often made up verses so that the spiritual reflected the lives and emotions of the community. As a result, every performance of a spiritual was unique.



## The Function of Spirituals

Spirituals spread from camp meetings to plantations, becoming part of the everyday lives of slaves until the Civil War. These were functional songs, meaning that they had a specific purpose in society. For example:

1. **WORK.** Singing spirituals made work less boring and set a rhythm for repetitive work like picking or digging. Slave owners liked this because it made the slaves more productive.
2. **WORSHIP.** Even though some owners didn't allow their slaves to worship on the plantation, slaves found ways to make their own "invisible church." At night, after the owners were asleep, the slaves would go into the woods (their invisible church) and worship, where no one could see or hear them. Spirituals were an important part of this worship.
3. **ENTERTAINMENT.** At the end of a long day, or during time off on a Sunday, slaves would often sing spirituals for relaxation.
4. **CODE SONGS.** One important function of spirituals was their use in helping slaves escape. Code songs are songs that have hidden messages. The spiritual, "Deep River," for example, was sung to announce a meeting at the river:

*Deep river  
My home is over Jordan, yes  
Deep river, Lord,  
I want to cross over into camp ground*

When a slave had run away and the master had discovered his absence, the other slaves on the plantation might sing "Wade in the Water." Slaves on neighboring plantations would hear the song and take it up, and the runaway, wherever he was, would know that he should take to the river so the bloodhounds would not be able to follow his scent.

## Performance of Spirituals

There are two kinds of spirituals:

- **Sorrow songs** are sung slowly and mournfully, and told of the heavy burden of slavery and the belief that a better day was coming.

- **Jubilees** are up-tempo songs celebrating victory and joy through reference to biblical figures like Samson or David who overcame tremendous hardships.

## The Music of *Revelations*

*Revelations* is a dance in three sections, each choreographed to a selection of spirituals. The following pages include the lyrics to a sampling of the music from *Revelations*.

### 1. Pilgrim of Sorrow

"I Been 'Buked"

"Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel"

"Fix Me, Jesus"

### 2. Take Me to the Water

"Wade in the Water"

"A Man Went Down to the River"

"I Want to Be Ready"

### 3. Move Members Move

"Sinner Man"

"The Day Is Past and Gone"

"You May Run On"

"Rocka-My-Soul"

## Section 1: Pilgrim of Sorrow

### I've Been 'Buked

I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned, Yes,  
I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned,  
Children  
I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned,  
I've been talked about sho's you' born.  
Dere is trouble all over dis worl', Yes,  
Dere is trouble all over dis worl', Children.  
Dere is trouble all over dis worl'  
Dere is trouble all over dis worl'  
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down, No,  
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down, Children.  
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down,  
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down.  
I've been 'buked I've been scorned, Yes  
I've been 'buked I've been scorned, Children.  
I've been 'buked I've been scorned.  
I've been talked about sho's you' born.

### Fix Me Jesus

Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me.  
Hm—— Hm——  
Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Hm—— Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me,  
Oh, fix me. Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Fix me for my long, white robe.  
Hm—— Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Fix me for my starry crown.  
Hm—— Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me.  
Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Hm—— Fix me, Jesus, fix me.  
Fix me for my dyin' bed.  
Hm—— Fix me Jesus, fix me.  
Hm—— Fix me Jesus, fix me.  
Fix me for my journey home.  
Hm—— Fix me Jesus, fix me.  
Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me, Oh, fix me, Lord.  
Oh, fix me, Oh,  
Fix me, Jesus, fix me. Hm——  
Fix me, oh, fix me. Fix me, Jesus, fix me.

## Section 2: Take Me to the Water

### Wade in the Water

Wade in the water (4x).  
Wade in the water, children, wade in the water.  
God's a gonna trouble the water.  
God's a gonna trouble that band all dressed  
in white.  
God's gonna trouble the water.  
It look like the band of the Israelite.  
God's gonna trouble the water  
Wade in the water:  
Wade in the water children.  
Wade in the water:  
God's a gonna trouble the water.  
See that band all dressed in red.  
God's gonna trouble the water.  
Look like the band that Moses led.  
God's gonna trouble the water.

Wade in the water:  
Wade in the water children.  
Wade in the water:  
God's a gonna trouble the water.  
Didn't my Lord deliver Danuwell (Daniel)  
Danuwell Danuwell?  
Didn't my Lord deliver Danuwell and a why  
not a every man.  
Man went down to the river (2x)  
Lord, man went down to the river:  
He went down there to pray.  
Wash his sins away.  
He wash all day. He wash all night.  
He wash 'til his hand were sore. He wash  
all day.  
He wash all night 'til he couldn't wash em no  
more.  
Man went down to the river. He went down  
there to pray.  
Wash his sins away.  
Wade in the water. Wade in the water,  
Children wade in the water.  
God's a gonna trouble the water (x3)

### I Wanna Be Ready

I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I wanna  
be ready,  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe.  
Lord, I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I  
wanna be ready,  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe.  
I would not be a sinner, I'll tell you the reason  
why,  
'Cause if my Lord should call on me,  
Lord, I wouldn't be ready to die.  
I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I wanna  
be ready.  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe.  
Lord, I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I  
wanna be ready.  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe.  
I would not be a gambler, I'll tell you the  
reason why.  
'Cause if my Lord should call on me,  
Lord, I wouldn't be ready to die.  
I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, Lord, I  
wanna be ready,  
Lord, ready to put on my long white robe,  
Be ready to put on my long white robe,  
Jus' ready to put on my long white robe.

## Section 3: Move, Members, Move The Day Is Past and Gone

The day is past and gone.  
The evening shades appear.  
Oh may we all remember well that the night  
of death draws nigh.

### You May Run On

You may run on for a long time. Run on for a  
long time.  
You may run on for a long time.  
Let me tell you a God a mighty gonna cut you  
down.

Go tell that long-tongued liar, go tell that  
midnight rider.  
Tell the gambler, rambler back-biter.  
Tell him God a might gonna cut him down.  
My head got wet with the midnight dew.  
The mornin' star was a witness too,  
I never shall forget that day when Jesus  
washed my sins away.  
One day, one day, I was walkin' along heard a  
voice and saw no one.  
Voice I heard it sound so sweet made his love  
run down to my feet.  
Go tell that long-tongued liar, go tell that  
midnight rider.  
Tell the gambler, rambler back-biter.  
Tell him God a might gonna cut him down.  
You read about Samson from his birth,  
Strongest man whoever lived on earth.  
He lived way back in ancient time.  
Died and went to heaven in due time.  
Delilah footed Samson. Don't you know the  
Holy Bible tells you so.  
She came to Samson on her knees said,  
Tell me where your strength lies if you please.  
Delilah she looked so fair,  
Samson said, my strength lies in my hair.  
She shaved his head just as clean as your  
hand,  
Samson got weak as any other man.  
Go tell that long tongued liar, go tell that  
midnight rider.  
Tell the rambler, gambler back biter.  
Tell him God a mighty gonna cut him down.  
A for Adam man was named placed in the  
garden by God's command.  
God saw Adam in a lonely state.  
Put him to sleep and made him a mate.  
Now Adam bein' the father of the human race,  
Broke God's law and tried to hide his face.  
In the cool of the evenin' my Lord came down,  
Looked at Adam and began to frown.  
Adam! Adam! Where are you now?  
You must earn your bread by the sweat of your  
brow.  
Go tell that long tongued liar. Go tell that  
midnight rider.  
Tell the rambler, gambler back biter  
Tell him God a mighty gonna cut him down.  
Some people go to church for to signify,  
Tryin' to make a date with the neighbor's wife,  
But neighbor, let me tell you,  
Just as sure as you're born you better leave  
that woman,  
Better leave her alone, 'cause one of these  
days,  
Better mark my words, you'll think your  
neighbor has gone to work,  
You walk right up and knock on the door,  
That's all brother you'll knock no more.  
Go tell, tell that long tongued liar. Go tell that  
midnight rider  
Tell the gambler, rambler back biter.  
Tell him God a mighty gonna cut him down.

# 7 Learning Activities

## ***Pre-show Activities***

An effective way to engage your students in the performance and connect to literacy, social studies, arts and other classroom curriculum is to guide them through these standards-based activities before they come to the theater.

## **Dance (Grades 3- 12)**

### ***Everyday Movement***

- 1) Ask students to brainstorm a list of everyday activities, for example; stretching when they wake up, walking the dog, skipping rope or jumping and throwing a basketball.
- 2) In groups of six, have students share their activity, show its movement, then have the other students repeat this movement.
- 3) After students have shared their movements, set the movements by having students go over them again, this time making sure each movement lasts for eight counts.
- 4) Then, ask students to create an order in which to perform all six, eight-count movements.
- 5) Next, ask students to think of the quality they would like for each movement. For example, do they want to do the movement slowly and fluidly or quickly and jerkily?
- 6) Finally, how much space should the movement take up—is the body stretched out with the legs taking large steps, or crunched into a little ball and hardly moving?
- 7) After repeating the movements in their chosen order several times, ask students to share their pieces.

## **Literacy & Visual Art (Grades 3-8)**

### ***Poems inspired by spirituals***

Remembering the spirituals he heard as a child, Alvin Ailey was inspired to create *Revelations*. Spirituals are still powerful today not only because of their historical and cultural significance, but because their messages are filled with strong human desires and emotions.

#### 1) Student Response:

- Play a recording of a spiritual for the class.
- Ask students to listen to the music once, just to hear it.
- Play the piece again, and ask students to write words describing the emotions the song makes them feel or think about.
- Ask students to share with a partner some of the words
- Repeat the song, and ask students to draw a picture inspired by the music.
- After posting the drawings, have students do a “gallery walk” around the room.

- Hand out small post-it notes to students and ask them to do another “gallery walk.” This time, ask students to suggest titles for drawings, which they can write on the post-it note and place near the drawing.  
(Set ground rules about acceptable and non-acceptable titles).
  - After students read the suggested titles, play the song again and ask them to write down words connected with the history and culture of spirituals that come to mind when they listen to the music.
- 2) Creating a poem inspired by the spiritual
- Ask students to choose up to five words from the ones they’ve written or received as title suggestions.
  - Ask students to create a short poem or haiku using these words.
  - Share some of the poems.
  - *Extension:* In groups, have students choose a poem and create gestures, poses and eventually large movements to express words or phrases in the poem.

### ***Post-show Activities***

Reflecting on the performance allows students to use their critical thinking skills as they analyze and evaluate what they observe during the performance. Student reflection also helps teachers assess what students are taking in, and what they aren’t noticing.

### **Dance (Grades K-12)**

#### ***Reflection on Revelations***

Immediately after seeing the performance of *Revelations*, ask students to remember movements and gestures. With the students arranged in a circle, ask each one to copy a movement they saw in the performance. Students can work in pairs, showing a movement from a duet. After seeing all the movements, ask students to share what they think some of these movements or gestures represent in terms of ideas or emotions. (Use the section *Movements to Watch for in Revelations* on page 16 to help with this discussion.)

#### ***Class Discussion***

- 1) What do you think the dance *Revelations* is about? How did movement, costume, music and lighting convey the meaning of the dance?
- 2) *Dance is the language of the body.* Discuss this statement. Would you consider dance a universal language? Can you give examples of how you understand other people’s intentions and messages through their movements? How can you tell if someone is really nervous, happy or angry? Have you seen anyone who seems frightening just from their body language? What kinds of movements are welcoming gestures?

## **Movements to Watch for In *Revelations***

*Revelations* is a suite of dances that tells the story of a community of people through vignettes composed of large and small groups, trios, duets and solos. Concepts such as oppression, dignity, hope and determination, and emotions like sorrow, anger, fear and joy, are embodied and expressed through human movement.

Below is a list of specific dance gestures from *Revelations*. See if you can recognize some of the following moments as you watch the performance and identify the emotions or themes. As everyone has a unique frame of reference, a particular moment may say something different to you than to other people. The dance is rich with imagery—the list here contains only a few of them. Have your students make note of which scenes particularly stand out to them in order to spark a class discussion following the performance.

1. **THE “BIRD” POSE.** How many times did you see it performed as a group in “I Been ‘Buked?” In various sections of *Revelations*, a similar movement is done. Look for the “bird” pose repeated throughout the dance.
2. **PRAYING MOVEMENTS:** Notice the number of different ways praying takes place in *Revelations*. Think about how it is portrayed and why and where it is done. Students can also share through movement or drawing.
3. **FALLING TO THE FLOOR IN GRIEF AND DESPAIR** happens in three different segments of the dance. When do they happen and what do you think they represent?
4. **RISING INTO THE AIR IN HOPE:** In “Fix Me,” one woman is so overcome with despair she faints twice, but in the end she ascends toward the sky as if on wings.
5. **LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO HIDE:** In the section “Sinner Man,” some of the dancers try to hide. Who do you think they represent? What feelings did you experience while watching the dance?
6. **A MAN AND A WOMAN CLEAR AWAY EVIL SPIRITS:** Why do you think they are doing this? What props do the dancers use to accomplish their task?
7. **THREE PEOPLE WALK INTO A RIVER:** How do you know they are in water?
8. **A MAN CRAWLS ON THE FLOOR IN DETERMINATION:** What do you notice about the way he moves? What else do his gestures convey?
9. **SEVERAL WOMEN CARRY ON STOOLS:** Where are they? What are they doing? What emotions are they showing at this time?
10. **THE WOMEN PLAYFULLY CHASTISE THE MEN:** What gestures do they use to do this?
11. **MEN CARRY THE STOOLS:** Why might they do this?
12. **THE COMPANY IS SWEEPED AWAY IN JOY:** Describe how the dancers portray this emotion.

## Resources

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater  
<http://www.alvinailey.org/>

### Books:

Ailey, Alvin and A. Peter Bailey. *Revelations: The Autobiography of Alvin Ailey*. Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press, 1995.

Dunning, Jennifer. *Alvin Ailey: A Life in Dance*. New York, NY: DeCapo Press, 1998.

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Alvin Ailey*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children, 1993.

### DVD / Video:

Four by Ailey VHS. Director Thomas Grimm. Dance Horizons, 1986.

*Beyond the Steps: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater* DVD. Director Phil Bertelsen. Dance Philm, 2006. Order at: <http://www.aileyboutique.com/dvd/>

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=gWJzSP7irwM>

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=WefribGizyg&feature=related>

### CD / Tape:

*Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Revelations*. V2 Records 63881-27036-2, 1998.

Order at: <http://www.aileyboutique.com/dvd/>

### Podcasts:

NPR: *Alvin Ailey's Dance Troupe at 45*

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1912037>

### Websites:

Alvin Ailey at Cal Performances:

<http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu/presents/season/2007/dance/aaadt.php>

# 8 Glossary

**Ballet:** A dance form started in the royal courts of Europe. The body is held mostly upright and the legs are turned out from the hip. Ballet uses five basic positions of the feet. Ballet terms are always spoken in French.

**Arabesque:** A ballet position where a dancer balances on one leg, raises and extends the other leg behind them, and stretches their arms forward.

**Artistic director:** A person who has artistic control of a company's work. They will often choose a company's season and direct several works.

**Call and Response:** A style of singing in which the melody sung by one singer is responded to or echoed.

**Choreographer:** A person who composes dance works.

**Duet:** Any performance by two people.

**Dynamics:** Variation and gradation in the intensity of a movement or musical sound.

**Ensemble:** The united performance of an entire group.

**Folk Dance:** A style of dance that originates among the common people of a particular nation or region.

**Movement Vocabulary:** Dance movements that commonly appear in a choreographer's works.

**Repertoire/Repertory:** The list of works that a company is prepared to perform.

**Repertory Company:** A dance company that performs many types of works by many different choreographers.

**Salsa:** A lively, vigorous type of contemporary Latin American popular music that blends predominantly Cuban rhythms with elements of jazz, rock, and soul music.

**Solo:** Any performance by one person.

**Spirituals:** Religious songs created by African American slaves, the lyrics are often based on stories from the Bible.

**Symmetry:** An exact matching of form and arrangement of parts on opposite sides of a central point or axis.

**Tribute:** A gift, payment, declaration, or other acknowledgment of gratitude, respect, or admiration.

**Vignette:** A short scene or moment, as from a play.

**Work:** A word that dancers use to refer to a dance; other words that are used in this manner are "piece" and "ballet."

# 9 California State Standards

## Music Grades K-12

### 1.0 Artistic Perception

Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to music

Students listen to, analyze, and describe music and other aural information, using the terminology of music.

### 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Music

Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.

## Dance Grades K-12

### 1.0 Artistic Perception

Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to dance

Students perceive and respond, using the elements of dance. They demonstrate movement skills, process sensory information, and describe movement, using the vocabulary of dance.

### 2.0 Creative Expression

Creating, performing and participating in dance  
Students apply choreographic principles, processes, and skills to create and communicate meaning through the improvisation, composition, and performance of dance.

### 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

Understanding the historical contributions and cultural dimensions of dance

Students analyze the function and development of dance in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting human diversity as it relates to dance and dancers.

## 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Responding to, analyzing, and making judgments about works of dance

Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of dance, performance of dancers, and original works according to the elements of dance and aesthetic qualities.

### 5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Connecting and applying what is learned in dance to learning in other art forms and subject areas and to careers

Students apply what they learn in dance to learning across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to dance.



## About Cal Performances and *SchoolTime*

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrated 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. *SchoolTime* has become an integral part of the academic year for teachers and students throughout the Bay Area.



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