

School Time 05/06



dance music theater

Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

1906  
Centennial Season  
2006



# Study Guide

## Alvin Ailey

### American Dance Theater

Thursday, March 2, 2006, at 11:00 am

Zellerbach Hall

# Welcome



February 23, 2006

Dear Educator and Students,

Welcome to *SchoolTime*! On **Thursday, March 2, at 11:00 a.m.**, you will attend the *SchoolTime* performance of **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**.

This study guide will help you prepare your students for their experience in the theater and give you a framework for how to integrate the performing arts into your curriculum. Targeted questions and activities will help students understand the context for Alvin Ailey's world renowned dance work, *Revelations* and provide an introduction to the art form of modern dance.

Please feel free to copy any portion of this study guide. Study guides are also available online at [http://cpinfo.berkeley.edu/information/education/study\\_guides.php](http://cpinfo.berkeley.edu/information/education/study_guides.php).

Your students can actively participate at the performance by:

- OBSERVING the physical and mental discipline demonstrated by the dancers
- LISTENING attentively to the music and lyrics of the songs chosen to accompany the dance
- THINKING ABOUT how music, costumes and lighting contribute to the overall effect of the performance
- REFLECTING on what they experienced at the theater after the performance

We look forward to seeing you at the theater!

Sincerely,

Laura Abrams  
Director  
Education & Community Programs

Rachel Davidman  
Education Programs Administrator



## 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 and producer 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. A deep commitment to excellence in service, facilities, staff and volunteer leadership provides a unique environment where artists flourish and where the community is enriched through programs of innovation and diversity.

In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrates 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus. Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation and understanding for 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.

### Sponsors of Cal Performances Education and Community Programs

Cal Performances' Education and Community Programs are supported by California Arts Council, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, National Endowment for the Arts, The Wallace Foundation, The Zellerbach Family. Additional support is provided by Berkeley Community Fund, California Savings Bank, Citibank, East Bay Community Foundation, Robert J. and Helen H. Glaser Family Foundation, McKesson Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation and Union Bank of California.

# *SchoolTime* Study Guide



***Alvin Ailey***

***American Dance Theater***

Thursday, March 2, 2006 at 11:00 am

Zellerbach Hall

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

# 2 Setting the Stage

## Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about choreographer, Alvin Ailey's inspiration for his masterpiece, *Revelations*.
- Students will gain an understanding of the history of spirituals.
- Students will learn about Alvin Ailey and his contributions as an African American artist.

## Pre-Performance Activities

Engaging in at least one of these pre-performance activities will give your students a framework for their field trip experience and will allow them to better understand what they will see on stage.

- View an Alvin Ailey video
- Read the excerpt from Alvin Ailey's autobiography (Page 17)
- Read and discuss the lyrics of the music for *Revelations*. What are some of the themes?

## Questions to Think About While at the Performance

Reviewing these questions with your students prior to the performance will help them prepare for *SchoolTime*. Students who are familiar with the vocabulary, concepts, and themes they will encounter on stage are much more likely to enjoy and understand the performance.



- What elements, besides dance, are part of this performance?
- How is African American culture represented in this performance?
- How do the costumes help communicate the message of the dances?

# 3 About the *SchoolTime* Performance

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**  
Judith Jamison, Artistic Director  
Masazumi Chaya, Associate Artistic Director

## ***Love Stories (Excerpts)*** (2004)

*Choreography by Judith Jamison with Robert Battle and Rennie Harris*  
*Assistant to Rennie Harris: Nina Flagg*  
*Music: Stevie Wonder*  
*Original Composition Composed and Produced by Darrin Ross*  
*Costumes by Susan Hilferty*  
*Costume Assistant: Maiko Matsushima*  
*Lighting & Visual Design by Al Crawford*

## ***Revelations*** (1960)

Choreography: Alvin Ailey  
Music: Traditional  
Decor and Costumes: Ves Harper  
Costume redesign for "Rocka-My-Soul" by Barbara Forbes  
Lighting: Nicola Cernovitch

## **Pilgrim of Sorrow**

"I Been 'Buked" arranged by Hall Johnson  
"Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel"\* arranged by James Miller  
"Fix Me, Jesus" arranged by Hall Johnson

## **Take Me to the Water**

"Processional / Honor, Honor" arranged by Howard A. Roberts  
"Wade in the Water" adapted by Howard A. Roberts / sequence by Ella Jenkins  
"A Man Went Down to the River" composed by Ella Jenkins  
"I Wanna Be Ready" arranged by James Miller

## **Move, Members, Move**

"Sinner Man" arranged by Howard A. Roberts  
"The Day Is Past and Gone" arranged by Howard A. Roberts and John Sellers  
"You May Run On" arranged by Howard A. Roberts and John Sellers  
"Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham" arranged by Howard A. Roberts

*All performances of Revelations are permanently endowed by a generous gift from Donald L. Jonas in celebration of the birthday of his wife Barbara and her deep commitment to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.*

# 4 About the Artists:

## *Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater*

In 1958, Ailey founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which made its debut at the 92 Street Y in New York. Ailey's vision was to create a company dedicated to enriching American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of black cultural expression. Ailey created approximately 20 ballets in the first decade, among them *Revelations* (1960).

Although he created some 79 ballets, Ailey maintained that the company was not a repository for his work exclusively. The Company's varied repertory includes works by dance pioneers as well as emerging, young choreographers. More than 180 works by 77 choreographers have been performed by the Company in its 45-year history. Since its

inception, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has performed for an estimated 19 million people in 48 states, 68 countries and on six continents, earning the Company a reputation as one of the most popular international ambassadors of American culture.

In 1965, Ailey discovered a talented young dancer named Judith Jamison, whose brilliant dancing and creative style provided the inspiration for a number of his works, including *Cry*, his best-known solo piece. *Cry* was created as a tribute to Ailey's mother and was dedicated to "All Black women everywhere – especially our mothers." Ailey's ballets have appeared in the repertories of major dance companies, including American Ballet Theatre, The Joffrey Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Paris Opera Ballet and La Scala Ballet.

In 1969, Ailey founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, with an initial enrollment of 125 students. Today, under the direction of Denise Jefferson, a prestigious faculty trains over 3,500 dance students annually from every part of the world, who contribute to a multicultural richness that is unique among dance schools.

The school offers classes from beginning through professional levels and a comprehensive curriculum that includes Horton, Dunham, and Graham-based modern dance techniques, ballet, jazz, West African dance, Spanish dance, classical Indian dance, tap and yoga classes.



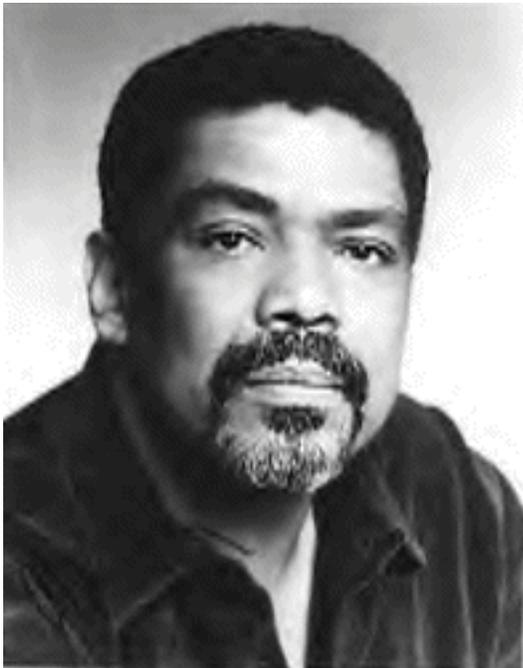
To help talented students make the leap from studio to stage, Ailey formed the Repertory Ensemble, now called Ailey II, in 1974. Under the artistic direction of former Ailey dancer Sylvia Waters, Ailey II has emerged as an acclaimed professional company in its own right. It has won critical praise for its national tours and residencies at major colleges and universities, as well as its visits to public schools across the country.

Another component of Ailey's commitment to education has been the company's longstanding involvement in arts in education programs, including free performances, mini-performances for school children, lecture/demonstrations, workshops and master classes in communities in the United States and throughout the world. AileyCamp, a unique national program, brings underserved youngsters to a full-scholarship summer day camp that combines dance classes with personal development and creative writing classes and field trips. Currently there are AileyCamps in Kansas City; Missouri and Kansas City; Kansas; New York; Philadelphia; Boston; Chicago; Bridgeport; Connecticut; and the Berkeley/Oakland Ailey Camp 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 would later inspire some of his most memorable works, including *Revelations*. At age 12, he moved to Los Angeles and, on a junior high class field trip to the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, fell in love with concert dance.

Ailey began his formal dance training in Los Angeles inspired by performances of the Katherine Dunham Dance Company and classes with Lester Horton that his friend, Carmen de Lavallade, urged him to take. Horton, the founder of the first racially integrated dance company in the United States, was a catalyst for Ailey as the young dancer embarked on his career. After Horton's death in 1953, Ailey became the director of the Horton Dance Theater and began to choreograph his own works. In 1954, he and Carmen de Lavallade were invited to New York to dance in *House of Flowers* by Truman Capote.



In New York, Ailey studied with many dance artists, including Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Hanya Holm and Karel Shook, and took acting classes with Stella Adler. A versatile performer, he won a number of acting roles while continuing to choreograph and dance professionally.

Throughout his lifetime, Alvin Ailey received recognition for his achievements. He was awarded numerous honorary doctoral degrees, including one from Princeton University. In 1976, the NAACP awarded Ailey the Springer Medal and in 1982 he received the United Nations Peace Medal. From the world of dance, he received the 1975 Dance Magazine Award, the Capezio Award (1979) and modern dance's most prestigious prize, the Samuel H. Scripps



American Festival Award in 1987. In 1988, Ailey was honored by the Kennedy Center for his extraordinary contribution to American culture and his achievement in the performing arts.

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 of Ailey, "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."

Judith Jamison, when named Artistic Director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on December 20, 1989, said of Ailey, "Mr. Ailey's spiritual and moral support served as a constant inspiration to me as an artist. He was my spiritual walker, my mentor and

support. He gave me legs until I could stand on my own, as a dancer and choreographer. I view this appointment as the course to take to continue my vision and keep Mr. Ailey's vision alive."

## Artistic Director, Judith Jamison

Judith Jamison was appointed Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in December 1989 at the request of her mentor, Alvin Ailey. A native of Philadelphia, she studied with Marion Cuyjet, was discovered by Agnes de Mille and made her New York debut with American Ballet Theatre in 1964. She became a member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965 and danced with the company for 15 years to great acclaim. Mr. Ailey created some of his most enduring roles for her, most notably the tour de force solo, *Cry*.



After leaving the company in 1980, Ms. Jamison appeared as a guest artist with ballet companies all over the world and starred in the hit Broadway musical *Sophisticated Ladies*. In 1988, she formed her own company, The Jamison Project; a PBS special depicting her creative process, *Judith Jamison: The Dancemaker*, aired nationally the same year.

Ms. Jamison is a master teacher, lecturer and author. Her autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, was edited by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and published by Doubleday in 1993. She is the recipient of many awards and honorary degrees, including a prime time Emmy



Award and an American Choreography Award for Outstanding Choreography in the PBS special *Great Performances: Dance in America, A Hymn for Alvin Ailey*, and an honorary doctorate from Howard University. In December 1999, Ms. Jamison was presented with the Kennedy Center Honor. In 2001, she received a National Medal of Arts, the most prestigious award presented to artists in the United States. She carried the Olympic torch at the opening ceremonies in Salt Lake City in 2002. In 2003, she received the “Making a Difference” Award by the NAACP ACT-SO and the Paul Robeson award from the Actors’ Equity Association in recognition for her outstanding contribution to the performing arts and commitment to the right of all people to live in dignity and peace.

Today, Judith Jamison presides over a renewed organization, artistically and fiscally invigorated. Her presence has propelled the organization in new directions—the development of the Women’s Choreography Initiative; performances at the 1996 Atlanta Games and the 2002 Cultural Olympiad; and two unprecedented engagements in South Africa. She has recently led the Company on a tour of mainland China. Ms. Jamison has continued Mr. Ailey’s practice of showcasing the talents of emerging choreographers from within the ranks of the Company. As Artistic Director of The Ailey School, she has helped to implement a multicultural curriculum including salsa and the dances of West Africa and South India. She is an advocate for education in the arts and was a guiding force in establishing the B.F.A. program with The Ailey School and Fordham University, which offers a unique combination of world-class dance training and a superior liberal arts education. Following Alvin Ailey’s ideals, Ms. 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 significance of the Ailey legacy—dance as a medium for honoring the past, celebrating the present and fearlessly reaching into the future.

# 5 About the Art Form: *Modern Dance*

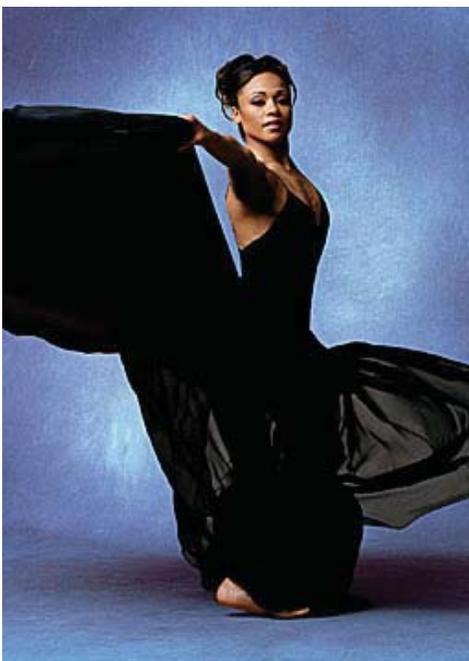
Modern dance is a younger art form than ballet, painting, classical music, and many kinds of folk music. Ballet, for example, began mostly in France in the 1500s and 1600s. The first known ballet, called the Balet comique de la Roynne, was performed in Paris in 1581. In ballet, there are steps and movements that dancers have been performing for almost 500 years, which are more standardized than those of modern dance.

Modern dance developed mostly in the 20th century. Its vocabulary of movement broke away from the standard movements of ballet. Modern dance is known for its independence, invention and non-traditional attitude, as well as its unique ability to relate to a “modern” audience. 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 is a repertory company, which means that it performs dances by different choreographers, including many by its founder, Alvin Ailey. Whatever the particulars, all dances contain the principles of choreography: putting movements together artfully in interesting, thought-provoking or inspiring ways.

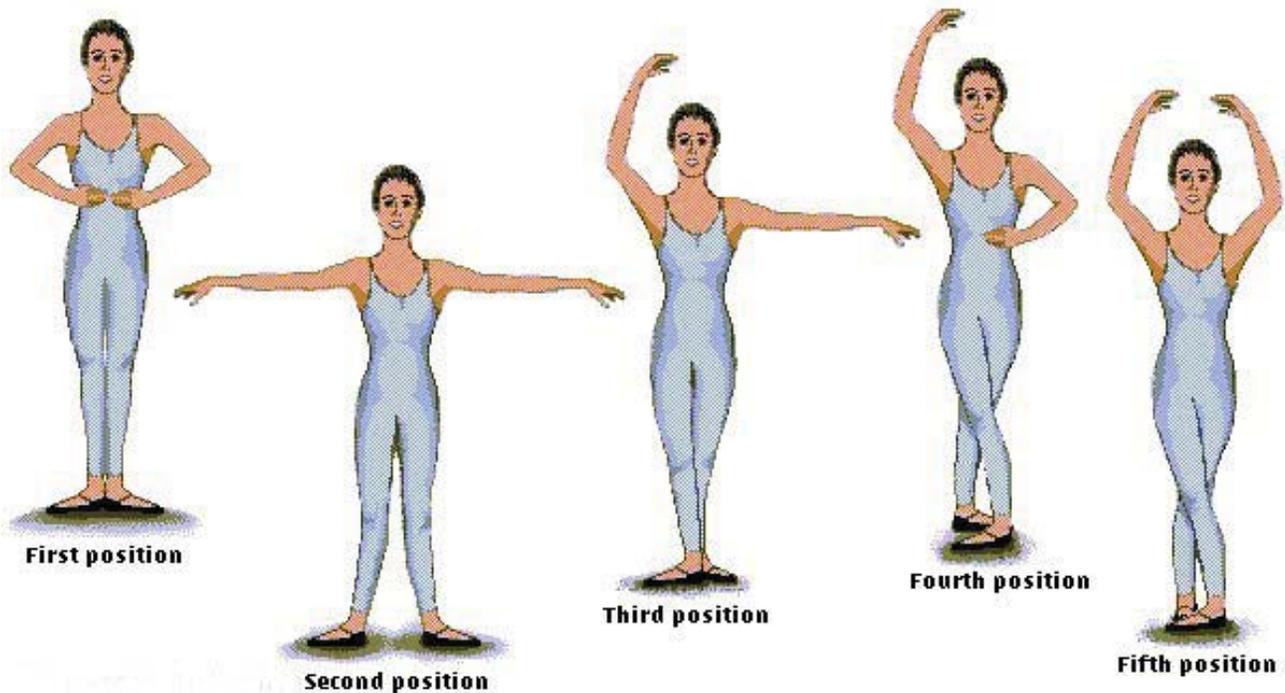
## **Choreography:**

Artfully 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 can express many emotions, ideas and moods. As you watch *Revelations* and the other dances, let yourself experience them for your own pure reactions and pleasure. But also try experiencing them critically, by observing the shapes the dancers make with their bodies; how the stage space is used; rhythms; the dancers’ ability to express feelings; the kind of music used; whether movement is slow, or fast; how many dancers are on stage at a time and why; and overall, if you think you understand what the choreographer is trying to say to you.



# Dance Glossary



## ***Horton Technique***

Created by Lester Horton, a modern dance technique that explores how many different ways the body can move. He named these movements “studies.” Some of the studies are for balance, some are to fortify (strengthen) and some are to work on the swinging action of the body. In the Horton technique, the dancer tries to use as much space as possible: turning, bending and jumping sideways, backwards and even upside-down. The shapes created are clear and linear. The quality of the movement is lyrical and includes varied dynamics. The Horton technique gives a feeling of strength and energy.

## ***Dunham Technique***

Created by Katherine Dunham, this technique is a blend of the Caribbean, West African and Afro-American folk patterns of movement and rhythms. The original dance patterns have been preserved, but the dances have been slightly altered in order to be more acceptable, choreographically speaking, to the modern dance concert and theater. The technique also employs the mediums of ballet, modern dance, jazz and basic folk patterns.

## ***Graham Technique***

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.

**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 the French language.

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

**Duet:** Any performance by two people

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

**Unitard:** Skintight, one-part garment worn by dancers

**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

**Solo:** Any performance by one person

**Work:** A word that dancers use to refer to a dance. Other words that are used in this manner are “piece,” “ballet” and “dance.”



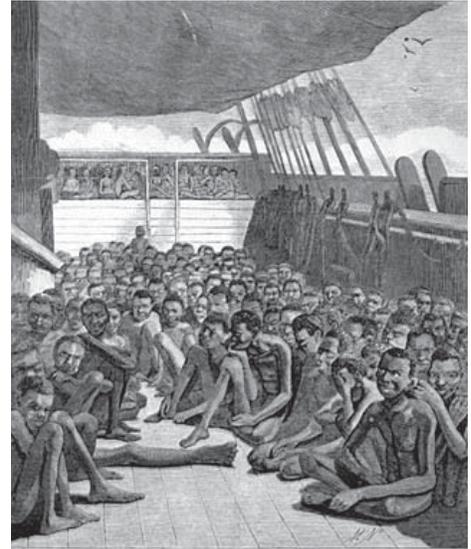
This pose from “*I Been ‘Buked*” is an example of Alvin Ailey’s use of the Horton technique in his choreography.

# 6 About the Music:

## *African American Spirituals*

Spirituals are folk songs that are sung both in church and informally outside of the church, to describe events in the bible or personal religious experiences. Some of you may have heard spirituals in church; others may know spirituals that have become part of America's common social and musical language.

Spirituals trace their origins to African music, and although they have evolved over time, many remain unchanged for over 300 years. People bring their culture with them wherever they go. So too, did the Africans who were brought to the United States on slave ships beginning in the 1700s. This event produced a powerful legacy, musical and otherwise. Many of the slaves left no record of their lives. In the south, it was not until around World War II that the birth of African Americans was recorded systematically, so many enslaved people left no record of their lives. Music, however, traveled across the continents, and African chants, drums and rhythms were transplanted to American soil.



Africans on deck of slave ship

Many Africans were forced to abandon their native religions and convert to those practiced in the New World. Many embraced the new religions, which offered a better place—heaven—after this life on earth. In Louisiana, which had first been settled by the Spanish and the French, they converted to Catholicism. In Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama and Georgia, settled first by the English, the Methodist and Baptist churches were strong, and since they allowed much singing in their services, the slaves were able to incorporate their own love of song into their newfound faiths. Out of this mingling of slave culture and Protestant culture came the songs called “**spirituals.**”

There is much evidence that slaves learned to give double meaning to the religious songs they sang. Quite a few Negro spirituals contain messages that white slave masters did not suspect and certainly did not anticipate. They were often called “sorrow songs,” because they expressed the deep suffering the slaves endured and their yearning for redemption and peace in heaven. Sorrow songs exist in other cultures as well.

Spirituals were also a way for the slaves to communicate with each other--to plan meetings, to help



African American church



escaped slaves and to remind one another that there was hope for freedom. 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 ran away and the master 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:

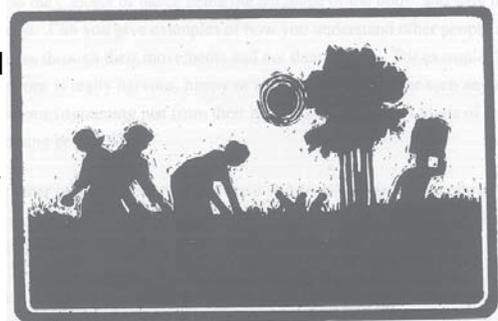
*Wade in the water, wade in the water.  
Children, god going to trouble the water.*

It is no accident that after the Underground Railroad began, slaves in the south took to singing a spiritual called “the gospel train.” The Underground Railroad was a route from the south to Canada and freedom, a route marked by homes that would take in runaways and provide them with places to sleep, food, clothing and help in traveling to the next “station.” Part of the spiritual went,

*The gospel train is coming  
I hear it just at hand—  
I hear the car wheels moving,  
And—rumbling thro’ the land.  
Get on board, children,  
Get on board.*

While the slaves used their drums and drum-like sounds and songs to work against their masters and for their own freedom, mostly slaves made music to make life more bearable, to restore their spirits, to inspire courage, and to enjoy the little free time they had.

They sang work songs while they labored; making made up songs about picking cotton, and harvesting sugarcane, and loading and unloading ships on the docks. In this they were not very different from other groups of workers who shared a tradition of music and singing. English and Irish sailors sang sea chanteys as they worked. African slaves had a special form of singing, known as the call-and-response form, that allowed individuals to make up new verses and then to be answered by the group. The group acted like a chorus. This call-and-response form evolved musically, and became a deep expression of joy and suffering which we now know as gospel music.



## The Music of *Revelations*

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

1. Pilgrim of Sorrow: “I Been ‘Buked”; “Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel”; and “Fix Me, Jesus”
2. Take Me to the Water: “Wade in the Water”; “A Man Went Down to the River”; and “I Want to Be Ready”
3. Move Members Move: “Sinner Man”; “The Day Is Past and Gone”; “You May Run On”; and “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.  
Wade in the water.  
Wade in the water.  
Wade in the water.  
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.  
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.  
Man went down to the river.  
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.  
God's a gonna trouble the water.  
God's a gonna trouble the water.

## ***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 fooled 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 Reading: Excerpt 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 churchgoing day. There we would absorb some of the most glorious singing to be heard anywhere in the world.

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 remember hearing “Wade in the Water” being sung during baptism and hearing the pastor’s wife sing “I Been ‘Buked, I Been Scorned” one Sunday during testifying time. I tried to put all of that feeling into *Revelations*.

### Creating the Dance

My plan was to make *Revelations* the second part of an all-black evening of dance. First would be the blues in *Blues Suite*, then spirituals in *Revelations*, then a section on Kansas City Jazz, then a section on contemporary music. The aim was to show the coming and the growth and reach of black culture.

I had also decided that I wanted to develop a black folk dance company that would combine the work of Katherine Dunham and a Filipino dance company I once saw. We would present a concert based on Black American material—songs from the Georgia Sea Islands, New Orleans songs with old blues singers, work songs, folk songs. I planned to do a suite of blues and then a suite of spirituals. *Blues Suite* would be the first part of that.

I did extensive research, listened to a lot of music, dug even deeper in to my early Texas memories, and came up with the piece that I would call *Revelations*. I phoned Hall Johnson, a wonderful man who also lived in New York, and said “We want to do this dance two to three months from now from all these spirituals. I would like you to sing.” He had a choir and led me to a lot of music, including “I Been ‘Buked, I Been Scorned,” which I





didn't know he had arranged. He decided not to do the concert, and I ended up with a group from the YMCA in Harlem. One way or another, I had to have live music; for me there was no other way.

I divided an hour of these pieces into three sections. First I did it chronologically, leading off with the opening part of *Revelations*, which was the earliest in time. It 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.

At the time I was very involved with the work of the sculptor Henry Moore. I liked



the way Moore's figures were abstracted, stretched, strained, and pulled. His work inspired the costumes made of jersey in the first part of *Revelations*. When the body moves, the jersey takes on extraordinary tensions.

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; at the time there were about five or six songs. 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. From the beginning I thought the first version of *Revelations* might be too long, but nobody ever complained about the length. The critics and audiences had nothing but the most delicious praise from the beginning. We did two concerts in 1960, when *Revelations* was premiered.

About 15 or 20 years ago, when we were setting out on a European Tour, I said, "I want to stop taking this piece to Europe." I made up my mind to leave *Revelations* at home. But after two performances the dancers and audiences were asking "Where's *Revelations*?" and of course we had to relent. It was so popular that it was dangerous to lead off a performance with it. Once we did it first on a program, everybody went home after it was over. Even after all these years, we still feel that our season in New York City Center,

where we play for four weeks, hasn't really begun until we do *Revelations*. If we open on a Wednesday and *Revelations* isn't presented until Sunday, the stage somehow hasn't yet been blessed.



# 8 Learning Activities

## Dance Exercise

Think about an activity in your life, such as visiting relatives, doing chores around the house, or maybe feeding pets or walking a dog. Then create a dance that describes this activity. Be imaginative! Think about how the audience will be able to “read” the story you are telling through your dance.

Teacher note: This activity is best done in small groups. When doing this activity be sure to give students parameters such as number of counts, acceptable themes and types of movement to include such as spins, reaching, locomotion etc.

## Map Exercise

Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations* has been seen all around the world. On a map or globe, find a few of these cities where it has been performed and create your own performance map for *Revelations*.

Athens

Paris

Moscow

Amsterdam

London

Berlin

Madrid

Rome

New York City

Los Angeles

Tokyo

Berkeley

## Draw a Picture!



- What did you see when you went to the theater?
- What do you remember about the artists, the stage, the lights, the costumes, the audience?
- Was there something that was particularly interesting to you?

This photograph shows movement by capturing a dancer, Guillermo Asca, in the air. How can you show movement in a drawing?

(CHALLENGE: How do you show movement in a drawing?  
We'd love to see it!)

## Writing Exercises

### Imaginative Essay

*Revelations* has been seen by more people around the world than probably any other 20th-century dance piece. Pretend that you live in another country and have no experience of African American history or culture. Now imagine that you go to a theater to see *Revelations*. Remember, the dance piece reveals an entirely new world to you. What does the music tell you about the culture? What can you learn about it from the dance? What would you understand if you spoke no English? Treat this as an adventure in seeing things from a new perspective.

### Review

Write a review of the performance you saw. Remember to tell your reader important details about the performance, such as when, where, who and what. Describe the costumes, lighting, music and dancing in detail so the reader can see it in his or her mind, and point out any especially important or impressive parts of the dance. Then give your opinion, and tell the reader exactly why you have come to this conclusion.

## Class Discussion

1. What were the dances, *Love Stories* and *Revelations* about?  
How did movement, costume, music and lighting convey the meaning of the dances?
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?

### The Picture Tells A Story



This photo is from the *Wade in the Water* section of Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. Remember the performance, and then tell the story. Who are the characters? What are they doing? Were there other characters in this section? What was the music like? Did this scene remind you of something in your own experience?

# What to Look for In the Dance

When watching dance, several things are happening. Paramount is the expression of an idea or emotion through movement. In some cases, the choreographer uses movement to tell a specific story, for example, Alvin Ailey's *For Bird with Love*, which tells the story of legendary saxophone player Charlie Parker. In other cases, the movements imply a story through movement phrases that evoke an "image" of some familiar aspect of life. Even when a choreographer makes an abstract dance, audience members interpret this abstractness to "make sense" in human terms. A human being watching a human being move equals a human experience of some kind. The audience does not necessarily have to have had the experience depicted in the dance nor understand it, but the image will resolve itself into something that we recognize as being generated from life.

*Revelations* is such a dance. It is a suite of dances that tells the story of a "community" of people through vignettes composed of large and small groups, trios, duets, solos, and various groupings of these dance forms. In *Revelations*, concepts such as oppression, dignity, hope and determination, and emotions like sorrow, anger, fear and joy, are embodied and expressed through combining moving human forms in isolation and in relationship with one another.

On the following page, you will find a list of specific dance gestures from *Revelations*. While watching the performance, see if you can recognize some of the following moments and identify the concepts or emotions being depicted. As everyone has a unique frame of reference, a particular moment may say something different things to different individuals. The dance is rich with imagery; the list here contains but 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.



# Twelve Things to Look for In *Revelations*

1. THE “BIRD” POSE happens in several places in *Revelations*. 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.

**Answer: Buked, Daniel, Fix Me, Procession, Wade, You May Run On, Rocka-My-Soul**

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.

**Answer: Throughout the dance. Have the students 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 they represent?

**Answer: ‘Buked, Daniel, Fix Me**

4. RISING INTO THE AIR IN HOPE: One woman is so overcome with despair she faints twice, but in the end she ascends toward the sky as if on wings. What is the name of this dance?

**Answer: Fix Me**

5. LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO HIDE: In one section of *Revelations*, some of the dancers try to hide. Who do they represent? What feelings did you experience while watching the dance?

**Answer: In “Sinner Man,” three men who have transgressed seek to hide from the consequences of their actions. They represent humankind, who at times will knowingly act in a counterproductive manner and then actively seek to avoid the consequences of their actions.**

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?

**Answer: A man and woman lead the Processional to cleanse the way for a couple on their way to be baptized. The man carries a twig and scarf, while the woman leads the party forward.**

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?

**Answer: He moves at times with great effort, deliberation, tentativeness, supplication and triumph.**

9. SEVERAL WOMEN CARRY ON STOOLS: Where are they? What are they doing? What emotions are they showing at this time?

**Answer: They are meeting at their church one hot summer evening, greeting each other and trading gossip. Languidness turns into energetic excitement as they gather and trade stories, then to stately decorum as they remember they are in a house of worship.**

10. THE WOMEN PLAYFULLY CHASTISE THE MEN: What gestures do they use to do this?

**Answer: Piercing looks, wagging and pointing fingers and fans.**

11. MEN CARRY THE STOOLS: Why do they do this?

**Answer: Very practical. To clear the stage for the dancers to move more freely.**

12. THE COMPANY IS SWEEP AWAY IN JOY: Describe how the dancers portray this emotion.

**Answer: In a crescendo of bodies, they repeatedly sweep one arm out and across their bodies, gather both arms into their bodies and then spread them wide to the heavens as they travel in a semicircle around themselves on the stage, ending in a tight contraction of the body into a breathtaking release.**

# 9 Connections to California State Standards

## California State Content Standards Dance Grades K-12

For the particulars to your grade level please visit  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/damain.asp>

### 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.



This Cal Performances *SchoolTime* Study Guide was written, edited and designed by Rachel Davidman, Laura Abrams, James Coleman, and Nicole Anthony

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