



Contact: Joe Martin
530.754.5428

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For immediate release:

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Brings Dynamic African-American Dance to the Mondavi Center

[date], Davis, California—Fifty years ago, on a small stage at the 92nd Street Young Men’s Hebrew Association in Manhattan, a young **Alvin Ailey** changed the world of American dance forever. With works such as the classic *Revelations*, Ailey and his fledgling dance company introduced a new, distinctly African American style of choreography firmly grounded in the rhythms of jazz, blues, and gospel music and saturated with an intensity both athletic and spiritual. Today, his company, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** (AADT) is one of the most successful and influential in the world, having performed for an estimated 21 million people in 48 states and in 71 countries on six continents. Next month, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will visit the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts at UC Davis** for two performances.

The events will begin at 8 pm on March 25 and 26 in the Mondavi Center’s Jackson Hall on the UC Davis campus. Tickets are available from the Mondavi Center Ticket Office at 530.754.ARTS (2787) or online at MondaviArts.org. The events are presented as part of the Mondavi Center’s **Dance Series**. There will be a **Pre-performance Lecture** featuring **Ruth Rosenberg**, program assistant, Mondavi Center Arts Education Program, beginning at 7 pm on March 26 in the Mondavi Center’s Studio Theatre.

The Mondavi Center Arts Education Program will also present **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** as part of the 2007-08 **Wells Fargo School Matinee Series** at the Mondavi Center on March 26 at 11 am. The School Matinee Series is made available for teachers and students, including homeschooled students. Performances in this series support the California Department of Education Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards. Teachers, educators, and others interested in purchasing tickets may contact the Ticket Office at 530.754.4689.

Alvin Ailey’s story is one of the more inspirational tales in the history of American performing arts. Born in Rogers, Texas, in 1931 to a teenaged mother, he was raised in poverty yet was profoundly influenced by the beauty and vitality of African-American culture. He was introduced to dance through performances by the **Katherine Dunham Dance Company** and the **Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo** and received formal training from **Lester Horton**. When he began creating dance, he drew upon memories of his childhood in Texas and the energy of blues, spirituals, and gospel. His most famous work is *Revelations*, a euphoric celebration of the African-American experience that sets dazzling choreography to the passionate sound of old-time spirituals.

An acknowledged masterpiece and a sure-fire showstopper, *Revelations* will be included in both Mondavi Center performances.

Although he created 79 ballets over the course of his brilliant career, Ailey always insisted that his company be more than a repository for his own work. Since his death in 1989, the company has continued to perform Ailey classics alongside the best new contemporary choreography. In all, more than 200 works by more than 70 choreographers have been performed by the company. Nevertheless, the company's performances retain Ailey's signature style, melding fast-paced, energetic movement with popular, accessible music. The company has previously performed at the Mondavi Center in February 2002 and March 2005.

Before Ailey's untimely death, he asked **Judith Jamison** to become Artistic Director of AAADT. A native of Philadelphia, Jamison 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 the AAADT in 1965 and danced with the company for 15 years to great acclaim. After leaving the company in 1980, Jamison appeared as a guest artist with ballet companies all over the world and starred in the hit Broadway musical *Sophisticated Ladies*.

In 1988, Jamison formed her own company, the **Jamison Project**, and a PBS special depicting her creative process, *Judith Jamison: The Dancemaker*, aired nationally that year. A highly regarded choreographer, Jamison has created works for AAADT and many companies and has received numerous awards, including a National Medal of Arts, the most prestigious award presented to artists in the United States, and a Kennedy Center Honor acknowledging her lifetime of achievements in American culture. She is also an author whose autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, was edited by **Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis** and published by Doubleday in 1993. "I hope I'm a continuation of Alvin's vision," Jamison wrote in that volume. "He has left me a road map. It's very clear. It works."

Under Jamison's leadership, the company continues to receive rave reviews. One recent article in *The New York Times* praised AAADT as "one of the world's premier dance troupes," and wrote that "Under the artistic direction of Judith Jamison, its former star dancer, it has transcended the trauma of its founder's death in 1989 and has forged into the future...Its dancers are better than ever, with marvelous athleticism, vivid personalities, and the sleek sensuality the company has long fostered."

"Ailey's 1960 masterwork, *Revelations*, reminded us of the faith that pulls people through the worst of times," the *Los Angeles Times* wrote. "One of the essential experiences of concert dance, this suite set to American spirituals can charm, dazzle and inspire, and it did all that...in a remarkably fresh performance."

The program for both upcoming Mondavi Center performances by AAADT will be:

- *Flowers* (1971)
 - Choreography by Alvin Ailey, restaged by **Masazumi Chaya**
 - Music by **Janis Joplin, Blind Faith, Pink Floyd**
- *Episodes* (1989)
 - Choreography by **Ulysees Dove**, restaged by Masazumi Chaya
 - Music by **Robert Ruggieri**
- *Revelations* (1960)
 - Choreography by Alvin Ailey
 - Music: traditional gospel and spirituals.

"The company that Alvin Ailey founded 50 years ago remains true to his vision of powerful, soul-stirring modern dance that is firmly grounded in African-American traditions," said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center's

executive director. “We are excited to be hosting Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater once again, and look forward to another unforgettable set of performances.”

What: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
When: March 25 & 26 • 8 pm
Where: Jackson Hall
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
University of California, Davis
Admission: \$59/\$49/\$39 Adults • \$20/\$18/\$16 Students & Children
Tickets/Info: 530.754.ARTS (2787)
866.754.ARTS (toll-free)
<http://www.MondaviArts.org>
530.754.5402 [TDD]

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