

Modern Dance: Alvin Ailey

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Early Life

Alvin Ailey was born in Texas in 1931 and was raised by his mother.

Ailey's early life came with many hardships, which shaped the artist he grew up to be.



Ailey had to pick cotton with his mother while the white children would go to school. He also experienced his mother being raped by a white man. These horrific events in his life translate through Ailey's art.

Dancing Career

Many other dancers' specific movements and aesthetics influenced Alvin Ailey. Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, and Lester Horton influenced Ailey's movements. Ailey trained and danced for four years with Lester Horton.

After Lester Horton passed away
Ailey had to move on, so he went to
New York. With Horton's death and
Ailey having to move on, he was
able to branch out and fulfill his
vision.

Diversity Impact & Legacy

Ailey envisioned having a company that would breakdown racial barriers, and that is just what he did. Alvin Ailey was able to create his own group, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which was formed in 1958. Ailey was huge in modern dance and was able to help break racial barriers. Many of Ailey's works

had to do with the social theme of race. One of his most famous works is *Revelations*, which tells the story of many African Americans' struggle. *Revelations*, as well as his other creations, had a religious focus that was able to sustain generations of slaves. Ailey also made sure to utilize choral spirituals and rhythmic instrumentation.

Works Referenced

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Reynolds, N., & McCormick, M. (2003). Modern Dance: The Second Generation. In “No fixed points: Dance in the twentieth century” (pp. 319–353). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7 Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

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