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[Cal Performances Press Room](#)



Photos of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater are available for download from the Cal Performances [Press Room](#).
A short sizzle reel with excerpts from works in this presentation can be found on [YouTube](#).

CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS
ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN
DANCE THEATER
APRIL 7–12 AT ZELLERBACH HALL

The Ailey Company’s first weeklong residency in Berkeley under Artistic Director Alicia Graf Mack features bold new works from eclectic, multifaceted creators alongside classic company favorites

Highlights of this year’s engagement include the Bay Area premieres of six works and one new production

Berkeley, CA, February 27, 2026—Cal Performances at UC Berkeley welcomes Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater back to Zellerbach Hall for its annual campus residency April 7–12. The engagement continues a nearly six-decade tradition and marks the company’s first Bay Area appearance under the leadership of their new artistic director, **Alicia Graf Mack**. A former Ailey dancer mentored by Judith Jamison, Graf Mack brings a deep artistic legacy to the role. Her multidisciplinary performance background and commitment to artistic innovation inform a season that honors the Ailey legacy while expanding its creative horizons.

Under Graf Mack's leadership, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater brings four programs to Berkeley this year in seven public performances and two SchoolTime performances for K–12 students, with each program showcasing both new and classic works that synthesize an array of cultural and musical influences. Commitment to innovation is on full display in the repertoire, which features the Bay Area premieres of five new works created in the past year: Jamar Roberts' *Song of the Anchorite* (2025); Matthew Neenan's *Difference Between* (2025); Maija García's *Jazz Island* (2025); Frederick Earl Mosley's *Embrace* (2025); *The Holy Blues* (2025), a collaborative creation by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Samantha Figgins, and Chalvar Monteiro; as well as the Bay Area premiere of Medhi Walerski's *Blink of an Eye* (2011); and of a new production of Judith Jamison's *A Case of You* (2004). Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* (1960) serves as the soul-stirring finale for three of the programs, while Ronald K. Brown's rapturous *Grace* closes the fourth.

Alicia Graf Mack, Daria L. and Eric J. Wallach Artistic Director

Alicia Graf Mack, a San Jose, California native, became artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2025—the fourth leader since the company's 1958 founding. Her appointment, following an impressive tenure as Dean and Director of the Dance Division at The Juilliard School (2018–2025), marks a historic homecoming, as Graf Mack was a celebrated performer on the Ailey stage from 2005 to 2014.

“Ailey was always the North Star,” Graf Mack said at the announcement of her leadership. “To come back now feeling prepared, ready, and honored—I couldn't be happier.”

A graduate of Columbia University (magna cum laude, with honors in history), Graf Mack holds an MA in nonprofit management from Washington University in St. Louis and received an honorary doctorate from Juilliard in 2025. She began her career with Dance Theatre of Harlem under the direction of Arthur Mitchell, rising to become a highly regarded principal ballerina. She also performed with Complexions Contemporary Ballet and appeared as a guest artist with Alonzo King LINES Ballet. Her versatility led to high-profile collaborations with icons such as Beyoncé and John Legend, and her achievements have been recognized with *Smithsonian Magazine's* American Innovator of the Arts and Sciences award, Columbia University's Medal of Excellence, and the prestigious 2023 Dance Magazine Award.

In partnership with associate artistic director Matthew Rushing, Graf Mack is guiding the company's contemporary evolution, grounded in the pioneering legacy of Alvin Ailey.

Repertoire

Program A, performed on Tuesday, April 7 at 7:30pm, opens with the Bay Area premiere of Medhi Walerski's *Blink of an Eye*, a work exploring the strong yet vulnerable relationship between dance and music. Walerski, the current Artistic Director of Ballet BC, previously danced with the Paris Opera Ballet and Ballet du Rhin, and was an integral member of Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT) for more than a decade, during which time he performed on the Zellerbach Hall stage. The expansive, athletic choreography of *Blink of an Eye* partners with Johann Sebastian Bach's timeless violin sonatas and partita. The program continues with the Bay Area premiere of renowned Ailey choreographer and former dancer Jamar Roberts' *Song of the Anchorite*, a contemporary response to Alvin Ailey's 1961 *Hermit Songs*, set to jazz trumpeter Avishai Cohen's interpretation of an adagio by Maurice Ravel. A third Bay Area premiere follows with Matthew Neenan's *Difference Between*, which creates a palpable world of tension, grief, and love set to a powerful musical composition by 2025 MacArthur Foundation fellow singer Heather Christian. A veteran dancer and choreographer in residence at Philadelphia Ballet, Neenan has been described by the *New York Times* as "one of America's best dance poets." The program concludes with Alvin Ailey's beloved celebration of the human spirit rooted in his African American heritage, *Revelations*, which first premiered in 1960.

Program B, performed on Wednesday, April 8 at 7:30pm; Saturday, April 11 at 2pm; and Sunday, April 12 at 3pm, opens with the Bay Area premiere of Maija García's *Jazz Island*, a theatrically staged Caribbean folktale set to an original score by Etienne Charles. Renowned for her work across theater, film, television, music, dance, and live installations, the Cuban American artist makes her first collaboration with the Ailey company in this piece. The program continues with a work by Frederick Earl Mosley, Founder and Artistic Director of Diversity of Dance, a faculty member of The Ailey School and a recipient of the 2025 NYC Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award for Outstanding Choreographer. His *Embrace* offers a deep look into human connections and their beautifully messy nuances, set to popular songs by artists including Stevie Wonder, Kate Bush, Ed Sheeran, Des'ree, and Pink. The program concludes with Alvin Ailey's powerful masterwork, *Revelations*.

Program C, performed on Thursday, April 9 at 7:30pm and Friday, April 10 at 8pm, opens with the Bay Area premiere of *The Holy Blues*, a first-time collaboration between Urban Bush Women founder Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Ailey dancer Samantha Figgins, and former Ailey dancer Chalvar Monteiro. The work, inspired by the Ring Shout (the circular dance originating from Central and West Africa) and The Door of No Return (the final point of departure of enslaved Africans sent to America), is brought to life through a fusion of gospel music and the blues. Another Bay Area premiere follows with Medhi Walerski's *Blink of an Eye*, exploring the symbiotic relationship between dance and music set to the timeless compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach. The program continues with the Bay Area premiere of a new production, a year after her passing, of Judith Jamison's duet *A Case of You*, performed to Diana Krall's rendition of the classic 1971 Joni Mitchell song. The evening concludes with Ronald K. Brown's rapturous *Grace*, a fluid blend of modern dance and West African movement depicting individuals on a journey to the promised land performed to an eclectic musical mix including selections from Duke Ellington, Fela Kuti, and Peven Everett's house music track "Gabriel."

Program D, performed on Saturday, April 11 at 8pm, begins with the Bay Area premiere of *The Holy Blues*, the 2025 collaboration by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Samantha Figgins, and Chalvar Monteiro, performed to a blend of gospel music and the blues. Next, Medhi Walerski's *Blink of an Eye* delves into the relationship between music and dance, set to Johann Sebastian Bach's violin sonatas and partita. A new production of Judith Jamison's *A Case of You* brings Joni Mitchell's classic to the stage, before the program concludes with Alvin Ailey's historic and moving celebration of African American heritage, *Revelations*.

Education and Community Engagement

In addition to the public performances by the company, two special performances specifically for Bay Area K–12 students take place Thursday and Friday, April 9–10 at 11am in Zellerbach Hall, as part of Cal Performances' SchoolTime series. The hour-long program moderated by an Ailey dancer introduces students to Alvin Ailey's masterpiece, *Revelations*, and features excerpts of Ronald K. Brown's *Grace*. Pre-registration and ticket purchase is required by filling out the order form at calperformances.org/learn/k-12.

Two months following the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's April residency, Cal Performances produces its 24th annual [Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp](#), which accepts applications through March 16. The tuition-free, rigorous six-week summer program uses dance as a vehicle for developing self-esteem, self-discipline, creative expression, and critical thinking skills, and was originally conceived by Alvin Ailey. One of nine AileyCamps nationwide, Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp is the only one situated on a college campus and has always been locally produced and fully funded by Cal Performances. Since its launch in 2002, Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp has touched the lives of approximately 1,400 young people from the Bay Area. Every spring, when the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns for its annual campus visits, recent Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp graduates are invited to reunite by attending one of the Ailey company performances, and taking a free master class with an Ailey dancer who themselves attended AileyCamp.

For blind and visually impaired audience members, Cal Performances offers a live audio description at the 2pm performance on Saturday, April 11. The audio track delivered live by a professional audio describer is intended to provide clear and engaging descriptions of the meaningful visual details of a performance, and is offered at no extra charge. The description is communicated via a wireless headset, which can be reserved at the time of ticket purchase or by contacting the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or tickets@calperformances.org.

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Tuesday, April 7, 7:30pm

Wednesday, April 8, 7:30pm

Thursday, April 9, 7:30pm

Friday, April 10, 8pm

Saturday, April 11, 2pm

Saturday, April 11, 8pm

Sunday, April 12, 3pm

Zellerbach Hall
Bancroft Way at Dana Street
UC Berkeley Campus

Dance

[Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#)

Alicia Graf Mack, *artistic director*

Matthew Rushing, *associate artistic director*

PROGRAM A: Tue, Apr 7, 7:30pm

Medhi Walerski/*Blink of an Eye* (2011, Bay Area Premiere; music: Johann Sebastian Bach)

Jamar Roberts/*Song of the Anchorite* (2025, Bay Area Premiere; music: Maurice Ravel)

Matthew Neenan/*Difference Between* (2025, Bay Area Premiere; music: Heather Christian & the

Arbornauts)
Alvin Ailey/*Revelations* (1960; music: traditional spirituals)

PROGRAM B: Wed, Apr 8, 7:30pm; Sat, Apr 11, 2pm; Sun, Apr 12, 3pm

Maija García/*Jazz Island* (2025, Bay Area Premiere; music: Etienne Charles)
Frederick Earl Mosley/*Embrace* (2025, Bay Area Premiere; music: various artists)
Alvin Ailey/*Revelations* (1960; music: traditional spirituals)

PROGRAM C: Thu, Apr 9, 7:30pm; Fri, Apr 10, 8pm

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Samantha Figgins, Chalvar Monteiro/*The Holy Blues* (2025, Bay Area Premiere; music: various gospel songs)
Medhi Walerski/*Blink of an Eye* (2011, Bay Area Premiere; music: Johann Sebastian Bach)
Judith Jamison/*A Case of You* (2004, Bay Area Premiere of a new production (2025); music: Joni Mitchell)
Ronald K. Brown/*Grace* (1999; music: Duke Ellington, Peven Everett, Fela Anikulapo Kuti)

PROGRAM D: Sat, Apr 11, 8pm

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Samantha Figgins, Chalvar Monteiro/*The Holy Blues* (Bay Area Premiere; music: various gospel songs)
Medhi Walerski/*Blink of an Eye* (2011, Bay Area Premiere; music: Johann Sebastian Bach)
Judith Jamison/*A Case of You* (2004, Bay Area Premiere of a new production (2025); music: Joni Mitchell)
Alvin Ailey/*Revelations* (1960; music: traditional spirituals)

Description:

Strength, precision, and passion remain the hallmarks of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater more than 65 years after its inception. The company's legendary dancers return to Berkeley with vibrant programs of new and classic works that synthesize an array of cultural influences, including a range of spirituals, jazz, and classical music and a dynamic blend of contemporary and African dance and ballet. These performances mark the company's first in the Bay Area under new artistic director Alicia Graf Mack and feature bold new works from eclectic, multifaceted creators, including Bay Area premieres and classic company favorites. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is renowned for preserving and elevating the American contemporary dance tradition and the richness and uniqueness of African American culture in performances that are a universal celebration of the human spirit.

For blind and visually impaired audience members, live audio descriptions are available for the 2pm performance on Saturday, April 11. Headsets may be reserved at the time of ticket purchase or by contacting the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or tickets@calperformances.org.

Tickets: \$42–\$184 (prices subject to change)

Tickets for all performances are available at calperformances.org, by phone at (510) 642-9988, or in person at the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, Tuesday–Friday, 12–5:30pm and Saturday–Sunday, 1–5pm.

There is a \$15 per order service charge on ticket purchases made by phone or online that are not part of a subscription package; there is no fee for tickets purchased in person at the Zellerbach Hall Ticket Office. There is a \$20 service charge on all subscription orders.

UC Berkeley students can access exclusive discounts, including half-price tickets in all sections of the theater. Information about UC Berkeley student tickets and discounts is available at calperformances.org/ucb-students; information about other discounts can be found at calperformances.org/discounts.

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