

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey Invites You to “A Glorious Return”

Performances from the World-Renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

KANSAS CITY, MO – Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey (KCFAA), in partnership with the Harriman-Jewell Series, will present the modern dance company from New York City, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT), in four stunning performances at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. This is the first time since 2017 that the company has performed in Kansas City. The residency will culminate with the annual KCFAA Gala Benefit performance themed **“A Glorious Return.”**

AAADT will be in residency at the Kauffman Center featuring a school performance for over 1,000 students on March 24 at 10:30 a.m., a public performance presented by the Harriman-Jewell partnership on March 24 at 7:30 p.m., a public performance presented by KCFAA on March 25 at 1:00 p.m., and the Gala performance at 5:30 p.m. on March 25, 2023. All performances will feature Ailey’s signature work, *Revelations*, created in 1960. For ticketing and information on public performances, visit www.kcfaa.org/AAADT. Ticket prices start at \$30.00.

The Gala dance performance by AAADT will be followed by an elegant dinner, live auction, and dance party at 8:00 p.m. at Loews Kansas City Hotel. The Gala’s theme, “A Glorious Return,” acknowledges the long-awaited return of the dance company. The presenting sponsor for the Gala Benefit is T-Mobile. For tickets and additional information, visit www.kcfaa.org/gala.

AAADT is the internationally known, award-winning, modern dance company founded by Ailey in 1958, redefining the genre of American dance. AAADT has performed for an estimated 25 million people at theaters in 48 states and 71 countries on six continents. The company keeps Mr. Ailey’s mission alive, brilliantly combining timeless works of the past with new commissions of today. Every Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performance is a momentous celebration of living art.

Due primarily to scheduling and the pandemic, AAADT has not been to Kansas City in six years, and KCFAA is excited to welcome them back in this Glorious Return. “We celebrate the fact that we have not just survived but thrived. That is what this Company has always done in times of tumult,” said Robert Battle, Artistic Director. “We meet the moment; we transcend place and time and circumstance.”

The Annual Benefit Gala is KCFAA’s largest single fundraising initiative and a critical component of their budget. **Proceeds from the Gala benefit KCFAA’s year-round education and youth development programs that teach children critical life skills through dance.** “The KCFAA Gala has always been a memorable and fun evening to bring our diverse Kansas City community together to celebrate dance and experience the Ailey Magic” said Melanie Miller, Chief Executive Officer.

The 2023 KCFAA Gala Leadership Team includes community leaders from around the Kansas City metropolitan area. This year’s Honorary Co-Chairs are Peggy and Bill Lyons and Jon and Walter P. Porter, II. Gala Event Co-Chairs are Damian Lair and Jamila Weaver.

Community Leader Dianne Cleaver will be honored at the gala as the recipient of the **2023 Janet K. Miller Award**. The award is presented to a person or organization who exemplifies the passion and spirit of Janet K. Miller in the areas of arts, innovation, and youth development. Award recipients make transformative or groundbreaking contributions that benefit Kansas City and exemplify the characteristics of mentorship in their discipline area and display traits of child advocacy, the advancement of equality and diversity, organizational innovation, arts advocacy, and business acumen.

Dianne Cleaver is a civic leader and community activist who has worked for over thirty years to reduce disparities in health care, housing, human services, and education. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Bryn Mawr College and a Master of Arts in Social Psychology from the University of Missouri, Kansas City. She is licensed as a psychologist in the state of Missouri.

Cleaver served as CEO and Executive Director of the Urban Neighborhood Initiative from 2012 - 2021. She led the innovative nonprofit to improve health, job, and education opportunities for neighborhoods generally from Troost Avenue to U.S. Highway 71 and between 22nd and 52nd streets.

The mission of the Urban Neighborhood Initiative (UNI) is to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and historical racial inequities caused by decades of neglect and systemic racism by helping to build healthy neighborhoods that enable all children and families to thrive.

"Disinvestment has occurred in the neighborhoods," Cleaver said. "They've been largely African American neighborhoods subject to the systemic racist issues that were built into many — if not most of — our institutions, but certainly in housing."

Cleaver has been a leader in government initiatives to excel affordable housing. She has worked with government leaders to put policies in place that would allow for more equitable housing; including Kansas City Missouri's Housing Policy Task Force.

In 1984, more than one hundred Kansas City civic, corporate, and community leaders founded Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey and Mr. Ailey celebrated Kansas City as the company's second home. As such, KCFAA presents Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater or Ailey II annually and furthers Ailey's vision of making dance accessible to all people.

For further information, visit kcfaa.org.

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About Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey

The mission of Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey (KCFAA) is to make dance accessible to all people by presenting the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ailey II, teaching young people critical life skills through dance, and modeling interracial and multi-cultural community partnerships.

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