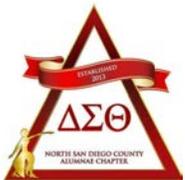


*“Leader Within the Arts:
Because of Them We Can”
Judith Jamison*

**Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
NSDCAC
Heritage & Archives
November 2020**

Taneashia R. Morrell, Esq. - Chair



"Because of Them We Can"



Judith Jamison is an American dancer and choreographer, best known as the Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

In 1992, Jamison was inducted into Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. as an Honorary member.



"Because of Them We Can"



Ms. Jamison was born May 10, 1943, in Philadelphia. Jamison and her mother enjoyed attending museums and theatre performances. As part of her mother's enthusiasm for the arts, she was placed in ballet lessons at the tender age of six. Jamison began her dance training at Judimar School of Dance. There she studied with *Marion Cuyjet* who became one of Jamison's early mentors.

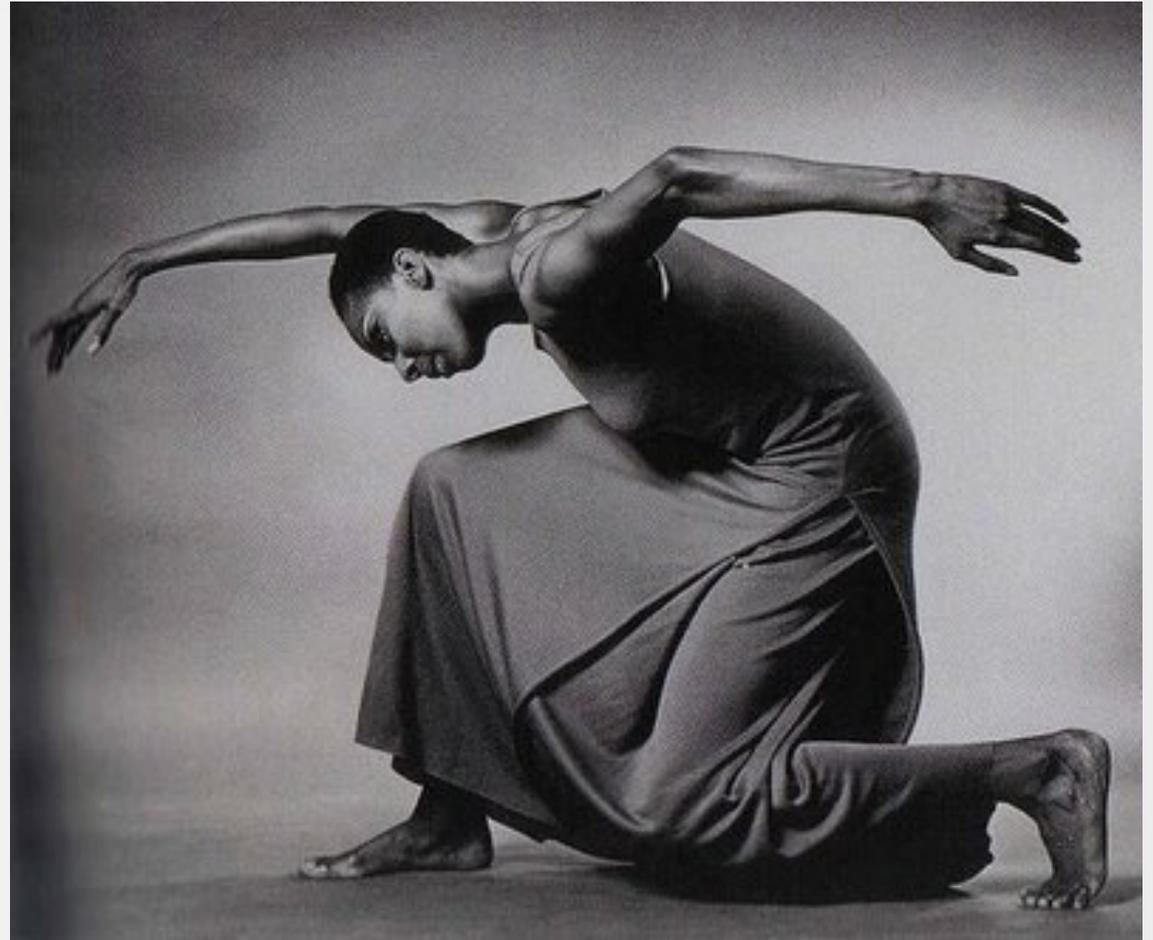
By age eight, Jamison began dancing on pointe and started taking classes in tap dancing, acrobatics, and *Dunham technique*. Over the next few years, Jamison learned the Cechetti method from Antony Tudor, founder of the Philadelphia Ballet Guild, and studied with Delores Brown Abelson.

Prior to her eighteenth birthday, Jamison graduated from Judimar School of Dance. She subsequently attended Fisk University and after three terms she transferred to the Philadelphia Dance Academy.

"Because of Them We Can"



Dunham Technique is a vibrant African American dance form that engages the body, mind and spirit! Created by dance pioneer Katherine Dunham, the technique is informed by the traditional dances of the African Diaspora, as well as by modern and ballet.



"Because of Them We Can"



Jamison debuted with the American Ballet Theatre in 1964. In 1965 she joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, where she remained for the next 15 years. Her iconic performances in Mr. Ailey's masterpieces *Blues Suite* and *Revelations*, brought her worldwide stardom. However, one of the most notable roles that Mr. Ailey created for Jamison was the tour-de-force solo *Cry*. The solo is a long exhausting tour de force in which Jamison works successively through moods of pleasure, pain, and persistence. Michelle Obama said that a picture of Jamison performing *Cry* used to be the only art hanging in the Obama household.

Over the next two decades, Jamison performed with ballet companies (domestic and abroad), performed on Broadway (*Sophisticated Ladies*), and formed her own company (*The Jamison Project*).

In 1989, she returned to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater when Mr. Ailey asked her to succeed him as Artistic Director.



"I don't feel as though I'm standing in anyone's shoes. I'm standing on Alvin's shoulders. The horizons become broader. He was an individual. However, we shared the same spiritual traditions . . . [t]hat's why I stayed with the company for 15 years: We were walking the same path, that's why we had such a special connection."



Upon Ailey's death, on December 1, 1989, Jamison assumed the role of artistic director and dedicated the next 21 years of her life to the company's success. In July 2011, Jamison transitioned into the role of artistic director emerita and appointed Robert Battle to the position of artistic director designate.



Highlighting a Few Awards



“Jamison received a prime-time Emmy and the American Choreography Award for the PBS special, A Hymn for Alvin Ailey, based upon her acclaimed work Hymn (1993). She was also awarded the Kennedy Center Honor, a National Medal of Arts, a New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Award, and the Handel Medallion. Featured in “The TIME 100: The World’s Most Influential People,” she was also honored at the White House and inducted into the National Museum of Dance’s Hall of Fame. Jamison’s celebration of the African-American cultural experience and her preservation and enrichment of American modern dance have made her a powerful ambassador for diversity in the arts.”

<https://facultygov.unc.edu/files/2015/12/Jamison.pdf>

Highlighting a Few Quotes



“Learn the craft of knowing how to open your heart and to turn on your creativity. There’s a light inside of you.”

“If you look at a dancer in silence, his or her body will be the music. If you turn the music on, that body will become an extension of what you're hearing.”

“I think our dancers are extraordinary-looking people. Not ‘pretty’ and ‘handsome’, but interesting. There’s something about them that is different, so many different sizes, shapes and colours, and ways of looking at dance. They’re all coming from different perspectives when they do movement. The kind of satisfaction they get from what they do shows onstage.”

“I believe God has a path for me. He's always had a path for me, and I've always been in the right place at the right time - not because of my efforts, but because of my preparation and because of the guides that I have, the mentors that I have, the spiritual walkers that I've had all my life.”

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