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**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Performing Live at Mesa Arts Center
Friday, April 10 – Saturday, April 11**

Tribute to Civil Rights Icon with World Premiere of Matthew Rushing's *ODETTA*

Presidential Medal of Freedom Acknowledges Powerful Legacy of Alvin Ailey that Continues to Thrive Under Leadership of Artistic Director Robert Battle with Inspiring Performances Featuring a Wide Variety of Premieres, New Productions and the American Masterpiece *Revelations*

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Mesa, AZ – Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, beloved as one of the world's most popular dance companies, will share its inspiring artistry with audiences on a **19-city national tour that includes performances in Mesa Arts Center's Ikeda Theater on April 10 and 11 at 8 p.m.** Arizona Community Foundation's Black Philanthropy Initiative is the Event Sponsor for the Mesa performances. Tickets are available at mesaartscenter.com or by calling 480-644-6500.

Prior to the launch of Ailey's exciting new season, Artistic Director Robert Battle visited the White House to accept the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#) – the nation's highest civilian honor - on behalf of Alvin Ailey. Bestowed 25 years after the passing of the Company's legendary founder, President Obama proclaimed that "through him, African-American history was told in a way that it had never been told before -- with **passionate, virtuoso dance performances that transfixed audiences worldwide.**"

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater carries on Alvin Ailey's pioneering legacy of uplifting, uniting and celebrating the human spirit as Ailey's extraordinary dancers bring life to a wide variety of premieres, new productions and classic works. The **Associated Press** proclaimed that "... the timing could hardly be more apt for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's new civil rights-themed piece" ***Odetta*, a world premiere** choreographed by renowned Ailey dancer **Matthew Rushing**. The tribute is set to the musical repertoire of celebrated singer and civil

rights activist **Odetta Holmes**, who was known as “the voice of the Civil Rights Movement” and anointed as “the queen of American folk music” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Season company premieres are introducing Ailey audiences to three different and respected choreographers whose works are being performed by Ailey for the first time. ***After The Rain Pas de Deux***, the iconic and sensual duet by famed choreographer **Christopher Wheeldon**, “... is set to Arvo Pärt’s “Spiegel Im Spiegel” ... which prompts **languid and soaring moves** that Mr. Wheeldon’s choreography inventively embodies....” stated ***The Wall Street Journal***. ***Suspended Women***, created by celebrated former Martha Graham dancer, choreographer and master teacher **Jacquelyn Buglisi** to a score by **Maurice Ravel** is called a “...complicated delight...” by ***New York*** magazine. ***Uprising***, the critically-acclaimed original work to a self-composed percussive score by in-demand choreographer **Hofesh Shechter**, was described by ***The Financial Times*** as “...a maddeningly attenuated struggle for dominance that begins with a chokehold and ends with a dangerous embrace...It is good to have a dance that can absorb our shock and sorrow, especially for moments like this.”

In addition to performances of Ailey classics, including Alvin Ailey’s signature American masterpiece **[Revelations](#)**, other premieres and new productions include **[The Pleasure of the Lesson](#)**, by **Robert Moses**; **[Awassa Astrige/Ostrich](#)**, by Sierra Leone-born choreographer **Asadata Dafora**; **[Polish Pieces](#)** by Hans van Manen; and ***Bad Blood***, by former Ailey dancer and renowned choreographer **Ulysses Dove** with music by **Laurie Anderson** and **Peter Gabriel**.

Audience members and the general public are invited to enjoy pre- and post-show events beginning at 6:30pm on Friday, April 10, including a Swing Dance lesson given by the Arizona Lindy Hop Society on Mesa Arts Center’s North Patio, pre- and post-show performances by Bruce Gates Big Band with special guest Dennis Rowland on the Alliance Pavilion Stage, and a post-show reception with food and beverage available for purchase. A ticketed pre-show dinner is also available on both April 10 and 11.

Audience members are also invited to join in the dance during their next New York City visit with **a complimentary class at The Ailey Extension for first time visitors by using a ticket stub from any Ailey performance**. The Ailey Extension’s popular program of 80 weekly “real classes for real people” has been enjoyed by over 85,000 at Ailey’s building The Joan Weill Center for Dance, New York’s largest building dedicated to dance. Each “Ticket to Dance” special offer is good for one year from the performance date for first time students, and when purchasing a 10-class card for classes for returning students.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater inspires all in a universal celebration of the human spirit using the African-American cultural experience and the American modern dance tradition. For further information, visit: www.alvinailey.org.

Mesa Arts Center is located at One East Main Street in downtown Mesa.

Editor's Note: Images are available for download via Mesa Arts Center's online Press Room at <http://www.mesaartscenter.com/index.php/misc/about/press-room/login>. Password is macmedia.

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For additional photos and press materials please visit pressroom.alvinailey.org

(Photos, Left to Right) Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Matthew Rushing's *ODETTA*. Photo by Steve Wilson; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. Photo by Andrew Eccles; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Hofesh Shechter's *Uprising*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.

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About Mesa Arts Center

The Mesa Arts Center mission is to inspire people through engaging arts experiences that are diverse, accessible, and relevant. Owned and operated by the City of Mesa, Arizona's largest arts center is recognized as an international award-winning venue. The unique and architecturally stunning facility is home to four theaters, five art galleries, and 14 art studios and an artist cooperative gallery. For more information, visit mesaartscenter.com.