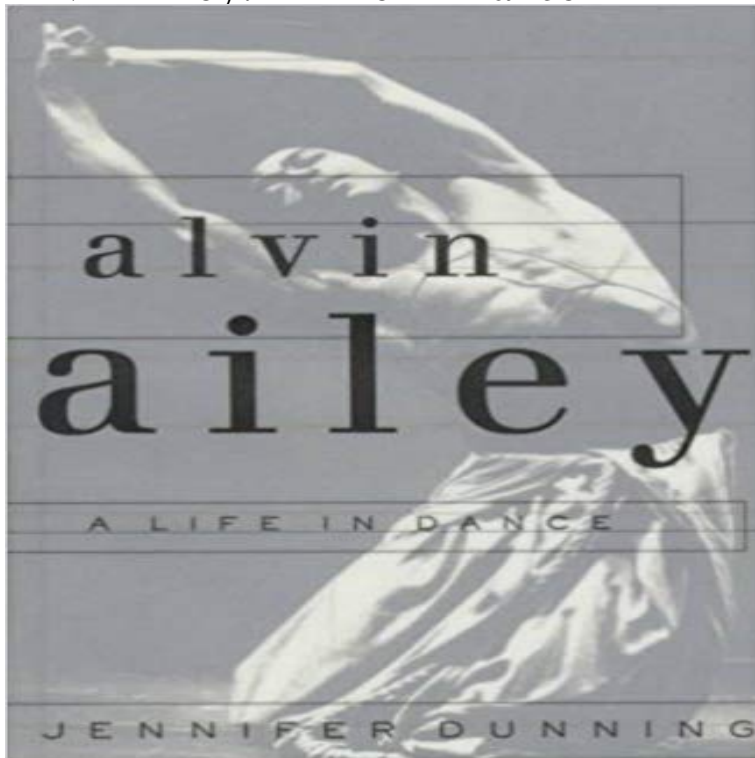


Alvin Ailey: A Life In Dance



Now for the first time, the life and work of Alvin Ailey, one of the most beloved figures in modern dance, is examined by a writer uniquely able to place him and his legacy in perspective. Jennifer Dunning, New York Times dance critic and reporter, brings her expertise, extensive research, and a compassionate intelligence to this larger-than-life personality, making Alvin Ailey not just a portrait of a man, but also of his time. Ailey's story is the stuff of legend. His *Revelations*, one of the great American dance classics, is said to have been seen by more people than any other work in dance history. Yet the small-town-culture that is at the heart of his finest work was absorbed by a child growing up in devastating poverty, neglected by a loving but exhausted mother who raised him alone. Aware of his homosexuality from his teens, Ailey lived and worked in the unusually accepting world of the theater but sometimes hid his sexuality as if he had never left his conservative family and Southern church. An athlete in his youth and a member of a profession that idealizes physical perfection, Ailey abused his body with alcohol and, later, drugs. Surrounded by admiring friends, he felt alone. Yet against great odds, Ailey pulled the pieces of this life together to create a passionate mosaic of art and dance, giving birth to an indispensable institution that continues to play a joyous, vibrant role throughout the world. Dunning shows us how Ailey took the essence of his experiences—whether from the driving rhythmic music that poured from the local Dew Drop Inn on hot Saturday nights, or the simple motion of men beating the water to drive back snakes during his baptism—and translated them into masterpieces. Filled with stunning photographs and hundreds of interviews with those who knew him (including such stars of dance and theater as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Judith Jamison, Lena Horne,

Katherine Dunham, Sidney Poitier, and Dustin Hoffman), Alvin Ailey is the story of a man who wove his life and his culture into his dance and into the fabric of America itself.

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