



The Alvin Ailey Dance Company performed 'Revelations' before a packed house of school children, teachers and parent chaperones. (Luis Medina photo)

Alvin Ailey Dance Company Performs for Local School Children

More than 2,000 students and their teachers from schools in the Santa Barbara South County descended on the historic Arlington Theater in downtown Santa Barbara Wednesday morning, April 13, to see a thrilling performance of the Alvin Ailey Dance Company's Revelations.

"I said good morning!" exclaimed Hope Boykin, a dancer, choreographer, and 16-year veteran of the company, as she took to the stage to introduce the day's performance. A rousing "Good morning!" came as the reply from the students, teachers and parent chaperones who filled both the lower and upper levels of the iconic venue.

The show, coordinated by the Children's Creative Project (CCP) and presented in collaboration with UCSB Arts & Lectures, was funded with proceeds from the CCP's I Madonnari Italian Street Painting Festival, one of Santa Barbara's signature events that takes place on the grounds of the Santa Barbara Mission every Memorial Day Weekend.

Generous grant support from the Towbes Foundation provided student bussing, and the Metropolitan Theatres Corporation donated the Arlington venue. The event was free to all the school children and teachers who attended.

"The whole idea behind the Children's Creative Project is to provide arts education programs in our schools," said executive director Kathy Koury. "I Madonnari is vital to that end. It enables us to present roughly 500 performances per year for some 50,000 students in 94 schools throughout Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. What these children, teachers and parents saw today was just one very high profile example."

"A study of the arts is such a vital component of a well-rounded education," said Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools Bill Cirone, whose office oversees CCP and I Madonnari. "The literature is clear that children exposed to music and the performing arts often see increased proficiencies in reading, writing and mathematics."

The show marks the unofficial beginning of the peak season for the Children's Creative Project. For the next six weeks, Koury's attention will remain largely focused on preparing for the I Madonnari Festival.

"I love the timing of these performances," Koury says. "When I see the looks on these children's faces as they watch these performances and talk to the dancers afterwards, it reminds me all over again about the many 'value added' layers of I Madonnari."

— David J. Lawrence is the director of communications for the Santa Barbara County Education Office.

