

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Ode

(2019, New Production 2023)

Choreography: Jamar Roberts

Restaged by: Ghrai DeVore-Stokes

Music: Don Pullen

Set Design: Libby Stadstad

Costumes: Jamar Roberts

Lighting: Brandon Stirling Baker

In [*Ode*](#), former Ailey dancer Jamar Roberts offers a meditation on the beauty and fragility of life in a time of growing gun violence. This tender, engrossing work will be staged with an all-female cast and features a jazz score—Don Pullen’s “Suite (Sweet) Malcolm (Part 1 Memories and Gunshots)” —and Roberts’s own costume designs.



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in
Jamar Roberts’ *Ode*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.

“... a powerful and poetic exploration of the effects of gun violence...”

- The New York Times

“‘Ode’ feels like another revelation for Ailey. [Robert] Battle is smart to give Roberts a platform to develop... Works such as “Ode” constitute a powerful new direction for the company.” – The Washington Post

“It’s delicate, daring, and heartbreaking... says something hopeful about the present and future of this company.” – The New York Times

Jamar Roberts

Jamar Roberts, from Miami, FL, was the Resident Choreographer of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from 2019-2022. Mr. Roberts made five works on the Company, all to critical acclaim: [*Members Don’t Get Weary*](#) (2016), [*Ode*](#) (2019), [*A Jam Session for Troubling Times*](#) (2020), [*Holding Space*](#) (2021), and [*In a Sentimental Mood*](#) (2022). He also set *Gemeos* on Ailey II. Mr. Roberts is a graduate of the New World School of the Arts and The Ailey School and has danced for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, and Complexions Contemporary Ballet. Roberts won the 2016 Bessie Award for Outstanding Performer and has performed as a guest artist with the Royal Ballet in London. Commissions include Miami City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, ABT Studio Company, Martha Graham Dance Company, LA Dance Project, Vail Dance Festival, Fall for Dance, The Juilliard School, BalletX, MoveNYC, New York City Ballet, and Works and Process at the Guggenheim where he created the films [*Cooped*](#) and *A Chronicle of a Pivot at a Point in Time*. The March on Washington Film Festival invited Mr. Roberts to create a tribute to John Lewis and he has also made a film for the LA Opera entitled *The First Bluebird in the Morning*. Mr. Roberts was a Director’s Fellow at NYU’s Center for Ballet and the Arts and he is currently a Creative Associate at Juilliard. He was featured on the cover of *Dance Magazine* in 2021 and 2013 and was named one of “25 to Watch” in 2007. He first joined the Ailey company in 2002 and retired from dancing in 2021.



Jamar Roberts. Photo by Dario Calmese.

Don Pullen

Don Pullen developed a surprisingly accessible way of performing avant-garde jazz. Although he could be quite free harmonically, with dense, dissonant chords, Pullen also utilized catchy rhythms, so even his freest flights generally had a handle for listeners to hang on to. The combination of freedom and rhythm gave him his own unique musical personality.

Pullen, who came from a musical family, studied with Muhal Richard Abrams (with whom he played in the Experimental Band) and, in 1964, made his recording debut with Giuseppi Logan. In the 1960s, he recorded free duets with Milford Graves, led his own bands, and played organ with R&B groups, backing Big Maybelle and Ruth Brown, among others. Although he worked with Nina Simone (1970-1971) and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1974), Pullen became famous as the pianist with Charles Mingus' last great group (1973-1975). From 1979-1988, he co-led a notable inside/outside quartet with tenor saxophonist George Adams that was in some ways an extension of Mingus' band. In later years, Pullen led his African-Brazilian Connection and recorded with Kip Hanrahan, Roots, John Scofield, David Murray, Mingus Dynasty, and Jane Bunnett, among others. His last project found the always searching pianist seeking to fuse jazz with traditional Native American music. Although his life was too short, Don Pullen fortunately did make a fair amount of recordings as a leader, including for Sackville (1974), Horo, Black Saint, Atlantic (his funky "Big Alice" became a near-standard), and Blue Note.

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Ode Music Credit Information

Song: Suite “(Sweet) Malcolm (Part 1 – Memories and Gunshots)”

Written and Composed by: Don Pullen

Album: Solo Piano Album