

## [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Mixed Bill review – community-spirited joy](#)

By: Sarah Crompton

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The pioneering company's warmth and athletic grace is showcased in a selection of old and new work

There's something generous about [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#). It's there in the dancing – full of skill, passion and a charismatic warmth not always seen in contemporary dance companies. It's there too in the programming: [at Sadler's Wells](#) over the coming week, the company will perform four carefully curated bills, full of rarely seen and new work. At the same time, the young company Ailey II sets off on [tour around Britain](#), with more treats planned.



For all the new commissions on display, nearly every bill ends with *Revelations*, Ailey's 1960 tribute to the gospel music of his southern childhood, full of agonised reaching for salvation and joyful stretches into the light. For those of us who have watched the company, it feels as if it might be overfamiliar. Yet the dancers fill it with a rounded sense of character and a deep understanding of its significance.

It remains quite something, yet the illumination of the first bill – subtitled Contemporary Voices, and also containing two entertaining short works by artistic director Robert Battle – is a stunning new piece by Kyle Abraham, *Are You in Your Feelings?* Like Ailey, he fills the stage with a sense of community – not the fan-waving southerners of the past, but contemporary African Americans, meeting and parting, men and women coming together and sliding apart.



Under Dan Scully's great skipping rope of neon, hung loosely across the stage, couples explore their lives and their feelings to a soulful, bluesy, hip-hoppy mixtape of a score, featuring everyone from Kendrick Lamar to the Flamingos, with Shirley Brown and Erykah Badu in between. The movement in the fragmented scenes is just as varied, switching from the relaxed to the contained, from twitching shoulders to graceful classical arabesques.

It's as full of gleaming wonder as the little bands of light that flash from the feet of Karen Young's bright costumes; the dancers are so dazzling they make you want to hold your breath in the hope that you can catch their melting grace, their insouciant athleticism, in your mind. As the duo who begin and close the work, Ashley Kaylynn Green and Chalvar Monteiro stand out, but it's all glorious.

- [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Mixed Bill is at Sadler's Wells, London, until 16 September](#)