

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Vespers
(1986)
(Ailey Premiere 1987)
New Production (2016)

Choreography and costumes: Ulysses Dove
Restaged by Masazumi Chaya
Music: Mikel Rouse (*Quorum*)
Lighting: William H. Grant III

Ulysses Dove's bold choreographic voice and daring athleticism are embodied by the phenomenal Ailey women in *Vespers*, a dramatic work full of raw energy and profound grace. Mikel Rouse's percussive score matches the dancers' insistent drive as they propel themselves across the stage in this ballet that *The Village Voice* proclaimed, "astonishing...an exemplary vehicle for six Ailey women, showing off their streamlined power and how coldly they can burn."

Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison was committed to continuing the presentation of Dove's works in the Ailey repertory and this season, Artistic Director Robert Battle is proud to bring a new production of *Vespers* back into the Company's repertory. "Dove is one of those choreographers whose works we love to keep in the Company's repertory as much as possible," says Associate Artistic Director Masazumi Chaya, who last restaged the ballet in 2012.



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Ulysses Dove's *Vespers*. Photo by Andrew Eccles.

"I love to expose new dancers to the genius of Dove's work," Chaya reveals. "At the same time it keeps the ballet from becoming a 'museum piece'—it keeps it alive and new. I want each new dancer to bring this generation's perspective to the steps; I don't want them to dance it exactly the way the original cast did. There has to be life in it."

Dove's choreography has been a fixture in the Ailey repertory since 1980, when the former Ailey dancer set one of his earliest ballets on the Company. Like many of his works, *Vespers*, which was first performed by the Company in 1987, has a stark, ferocious quality. Whether viewed as a feminist statement against the struggles endured by women or a validation of women's strength and pride, this powerhouse work is certain to captivate audiences with its intensity and passion.

Ulysses Dove was acclaimed as a "choreographer with a bold new voice," by *The New York Times* in 1986. A native of Columbia, South Carolina, Dove began studying dance at Boggs Academy a college-preparatory academy for African Americans in Georgia. He attended Howard University and gave up his premedical studies to transfer to the University of Wisconsin where he studied dance with Xenia Chilstwa of the Kirov Ballet. He transferred to Bennington College where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in dance in 1970. He then moved to New York City where he performed in Anna Sokolow classic "Rooms." He also danced with the companies of Mary Anthony and Merce Cunningham. In 1973 he joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, where he quickly rose to the rank of principal dancer, acclaimed for his commanding presence, bright clarity of movement, and truthful dramatic intensity. In 1979, Dove made his professional choreographic debut with the piece "I See The Moon...and The Moon Sees Me." Dove turned to choreography at Mr. Ailey's urging, and created the 1980 solo "Inside" for Judith Jamison. From 1980 to 1983, Dove was the assistant director of the Groupe de Recherche Choreographique de l'Opéra de Paris. As a freelance choreographer, Ulysses Dove created over 26 works for ballet and modern dance companies throughout the world after leaving Paris. Dove's works can be seen in the repertoires of several major dance companies such as: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Dutch National Ballet, Basel Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Ballet West, Pacific Northwest Ballet, the London Festival Ballet and several others.

Ulysses Dove received two choreographic grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Bessie award, and a 1995 prime time Emmy Award for best choreography for the "Dance in America" special "Two by Dove." Ulysses Dove made his final transition on June 11, 1996.