

DANCE[®]

magazine

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2017 Dance
Magazine
Awards
This year we
celebrate
four living
legends
in our field.

BALLERINA

Diana Vishneva

CHOREOGRAPHER

Rennie Harris

AILEY DANCER

Linda Celeste Sims

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Marika Molnar

Linda Celeste Sims

Yes, she's small, but the word "mighty" doesn't even begin to get to the root of Linda Celeste Sims' startling magnetism. She joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1996 and now, at 41, it's as if her luminous dancing has entered another realm.

"I don't feel tired," she says. "I don't feel like I hate it. I don't feel like it's redundant. I can express different things. I can see what's happening in a more mature way, and I'm intrigued by this moment."

It's not that she isn't aware of her aging body. "I'm not as quick and as fast as I used to be," Sims says. "It's a challenge, but how can I express movement in a new way?"

Born in the Bronx, Sims trained at the Ballet Hispánico School of Dance and graduated from the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. While dancing with Ballet Hispánico, she attended an audition at the Ailey company on a whim. She got the job and, in the end, even more—Ailey is where she met her dancer-husband, Glenn Allen Sims.

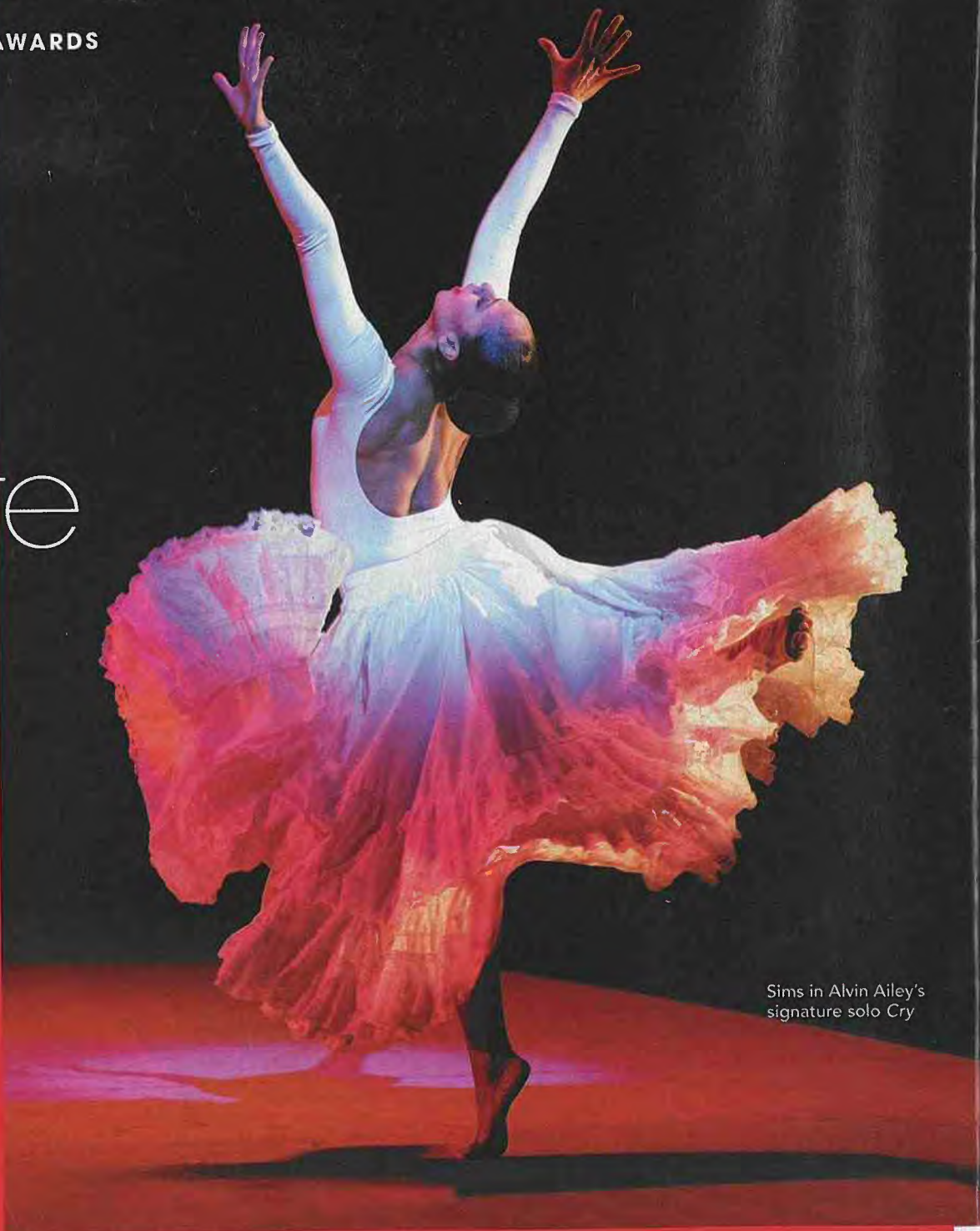
She thrives in works by Ailey: Like him, she understands theater and doesn't overpower the stage, but pulls you in with her simmering dramatic power. "I think I was probably born to be an actress and just fell into dance," she says, with a laugh.

But she's also left her mark in the works of others, namely the choreographer Ronald K. Brown, whose mix of African and modern dance is potently served by Sims—she slips inside of his steps with such ease and liveness that it seems as though music is coursing through her

veins. She credits Brown for encouraging her to be softer. "He has a vision of women being powerful, but they don't have to show their power," she explains. "I've had to learn how to be this woman."

While she has no plans to stop dancing, Sims is the assistant to Ailey's rehearsal director. She recently oversaw Paul Taylor's *Piazzolla Caldera*, and she also coaches individual dancers.

"When I feel I'm done, I'm going to be done," she says. "But I don't feel done. How can I be so efficient in using less energy yet touch people's hearts and change your mood in the seat? How can I do this and still touch you and reach you and make you feel what I feel? That's really a goal." —*Gia Kourlas*



Sims in Alvin Ailey's signature solo *Cry*