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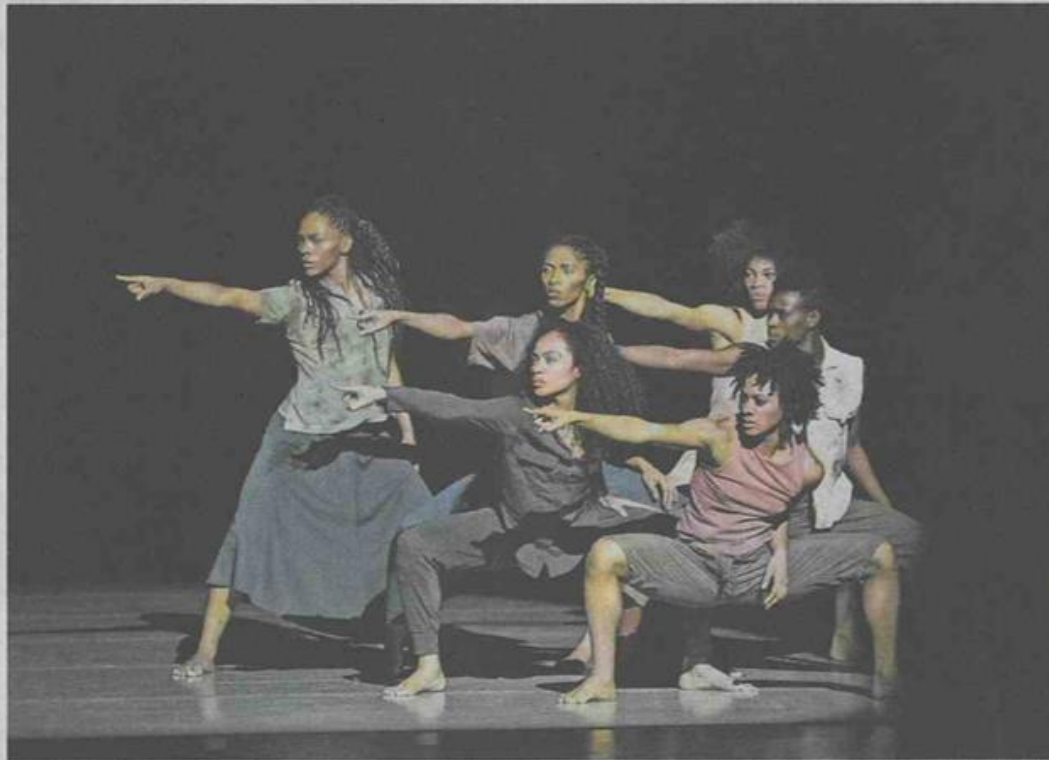
Finding Refuge in One Another

Two 1980s dances return to the repertory with messages that stand the test of time.

TWO PRODUCTIONS FROM the 1980s returned to the repertory of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater last week, in refurbished form. The new iterations of Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's "Shelter" (1988) and Talley Beatty's "Stack-Up" (1982), part of the company's five-week City Center season, proved a study in contrasts of how dances can weather the passage of time. While "Shelter," a potent statement on homelessness and displacement, speaks pointedly to the present, the rambunctious "Stack-Up" seems bound to another era, which made it no less intriguing to watch.

Ms. Zollar, the founder and director of Urban Bush Women, created "Shelter" after moving to New York and being struck by the extent of the city's homeless population. Set to a sonic collage that includes poetry by Hattie Gossett and driving percussive music by Junior Wedderburn, the work both depicts transience and pushes back at it, through the persevering performances of six dancers.

While "Shelter" has been danced in the past by women and men, the version unveiled last Tuesday features a stellar all-female cast: Ghrai DeVore, Samantha Figins, Jacqueline Green, Jacquelin Harris, Rachael McLaren and Linda Celeste Sims. They begin piled on the ground, a heap of bodies that later reappears, uprooting itself and migrating from place to place. Countering these weary moments, they also unleash deep reserves of power, in high, slashing kicks — paired with downward-punching fists — and propulsive, intricately shud-



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The season runs through Dec. 31; alvinailey.org.

dering phrases.

Sandwiched between Ulysses Dove's "Episodes" (1987) and Robert Battle's "The Hunt" (2001), both full of superficially combative relationships, "Shelter" deals with more pressing conflicts. New text by Ms.

Zollar and Paloma McGregor addressed the endangered home that is our planet, referring to hurricanes Harvey and Irma and other recent events. Ms. Zollar's (recorded) voice intoned: "The earth is talking; are you listening? We are talking; are you lis-

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performing Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's "Shelter" (1988) at City Center.

tening?" At times one dancer fell backward, swiftly caught by the rest. If nowhere else, they found shelter in one another.

The more plot-driven "Stack-Up," part of a triple bill on Wednesday, conjures a different kind of community, what could be a group of friends convening on a Friday night. Set against an impressionistic cityscape inspired by Los Angeles, the relentlessly jazzy choreography often resembles an '80s aerobics routine, not least because of four cartwheeling, back-flipping dancers — including the terrific Ms. Harris, who seemed to revel in her role — in neon exercise gear.

The story revolves around a romantic couple — Yannick Lebrun and Constance Stamatiou — and a loner, Jamar Roberts, who drugs Mr. Lebrun during a disco scene. In his ensuing solo, Mr. Lebrun veers impressively between states of ecstasy and fear. Staged in honor of the coming centennial of Mr. Beatty's birth, "Stack-Up" is dated, but so thoroughly that it fascinates as a kind of time capsule.

Both new productions shared a program with Ailey's "Revelations," a classic whose relevance hinges on the dancers' collective energy. Tuesday's performance, unusually, lacked heart, and the work's optimism felt forced. But on Wednesday, its radiance returned.

Do not forget the Neediest!