

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

## ***No Longer Silent*** (2007 / Ailey Company Premiere – 2015)

*Choreography:* Robert Battle

*Restaging:* Marlena Wolfe

*Music:* Erwin Schulhoff

*Set:* Mimi Lien

*Costumes:* Fritz Masten

*Lighting:* Nicole Pearce



AAADT in Robert Battle's *No Longer Silent*.  
Photo by Paul Kolnik.

***No Longer Silent*** is a large ensemble work featuring the imaginative interplay of four groups of dancers evoking a complex and mysterious ritual to Jewish composer Erwin Schulhoff's percussive score "Ogelala." Originally created in 2007 for The Juilliard School, **Robert Battle's** alma mater, it was part of a concert of choreography that brought to life long-forgotten scores by composers whose work the Nazis had banned. Powerful phrases stir the imagination with images of flight and fatigue, chaos and unity, and collectivity and individualism as dancers travel in military rows. Created between 1922-1925, the music tells the story of a pre-Columbian Mexican warrior and its ever-shifting mechanical cadence is the backdrop against which the dancers, dressed in all black, dramatically build to the work's piercing conclusion. Lamentably, the composer was denied employment after the

Germans occupied Czechoslovakia and, after being prevented from emigrating, died of tuberculosis in the Wülzburg concentration camp in 1942. This work was presented in conjunction with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of concentration camps Auschwitz and Buchenwald, marking the end of the Holocaust.

"From the very start he seizes attention with his skill ... told not one story but suggested many...**I immediately imagined the Alvin Ailey company, for which Mr. Battle already choreographs, staging this to great effect.**"

*The New York Times (2007)*

"... **highly imaginative and artistically exceptional... complex**"

*The New York Times*

"Lit Perfectly by Nicole Pearce with threads of light...**Powerful phrases stir the imagination with images of flight and fatigue, chaos and unity, and collectivism and individualism as dancers, clad in all black, travel in military rows.**"

*The Huffington Post*

"**A forgotten score can inspire a choreographer to explore an unfamiliar world...It's arguably Mr. Battle's strongest piece, and the most major one that he's set on the Ailey troupe so far.**"

*The New York Times*



Artistic Director Robert Battle. Photo by Andrew Eccles.

### **Robert Battle**

Robert Battle became artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in July 2011 after being personally selected by Judith Jamison, making him only the third person to head the Company since it was founded in 1958. Mr. Battle has a long-standing association with the Ailey organization.

A frequent choreographer and artist-in-residence at Ailey since 1999, he has set many of his works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ailey II, and at The Ailey School. The Company's current repertory includes his ballets *Ella*, *The Hunt*, *In/Side*, *No Longer Silent*, and *Mass* – a 2017 Company premiere. In addition to expanding the Ailey repertory with works by artists as diverse as Kyle Abraham, Azure Barton, Ronald K. Brown, Christopher Wheeldon, Rennie Harris, Hofesh Schechter, Jiří Kylián, Wayne McGregor, Robert Moses, Ohad Naharin, and Paul Taylor, Mr. Battle has also instituted the New Directions Choreography Lab to help develop the next generation of choreographers.

Mr. Battle's journey to the top of the modern dance world began in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami, Florida. He showed artistic talent early and studied dance at a high school arts magnet program before moving on to Miami's New World School of the Arts, under the direction of Daniel Lewis and Gerri Houlihan, and finally to the dance program at The Juilliard School, under the direction of Benjamin Harkarvy, where he met his mentor, Carolyn Adams. He danced with the Parsons Dance Company from 1994 to 2001, and also set his choreography on that company starting in 1998. Mr. Battle then founded his own Battleworks Dance Company, which made its debut in 2002 in Düsseldorf, Germany, as the U.S. representative to the World Dance Alliance's Global Assembly. Battleworks subsequently performed extensively at venues including The Joyce Theater, Dance Theater Workshop, American Dance Festival, and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Mr. Battle was honored as one of the "Masters of African-American Choreography" by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2005, and he received the prestigious Statue Award from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA in 2007. In 2014, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of the Arts and visited the White House to accept from President Obama, on behalf of Alvin Ailey, the National Medal of Freedom – the nation's highest civilian honor. Mr. Battle was named a 2015 Visiting Fellow for The Art of Change, an initiative by the Ford Foundation. In October 2015, Simon & Schuster published *MY STORY, MY DANCE: Robert Battle's Journey to Alvin Ailey*, an inspiring children's book based on Mr. Battle's life. He is a sought-after keynote speaker and has addressed a number of high-profile organizations, including the United Nations Leaders Programme and the UNICEF Senior Leadership Development Programme.



Erwin Schulhoff. Photo from Radio Praha.

### **Erwin Schulhoff**

Erwin Schulhoff (1894-1942) was a Czech composer and pianist whose successful career was prematurely terminated by the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany. One of the first generation of classical composers to find inspiration in the rhythms of jazz music, Schulhoff also embraced the avant-garde influence of Dadaism in his performances and compositions after World War I. In the 1930s, Schulhoff was blacklisted by the Nazi regime, because of his Jewish descent. He could no longer give recitals in Germany, nor could his works be performed publicly. He moved to Prague, where he found employment as a radio pianist, but earned barely enough to cover the cost of everyday essentials. When the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939, he had to perform under a pseudonym. In 1941, the Soviet Union approved his petition for citizenship, but he was arrested and imprisoned before he could leave Czechoslovakia. In June 1941, Schulhoff was deported to the Wülzburg concentration camp, near Weißenburg, Bavaria, where he died on August 18, 1942 from tuberculosis.

### ***No Longer Silent***

Music Credit Information

**Song: Ogelala "Ballettmysterium" Op. 53 (1925)**

Music composed by: Erwin Schullhof