

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

The Hunt

(2001 / Ailey Company Premiere – 2010)

Choreography: Robert Battle

Assistant to the Choreographer: Erika Pujikic

Music: Les Tambours du Bronx

Costumes: Mia McSwain

Lighting: Burke Wilmore

Robert Battle's *The Hunt* premiered on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2010 as Mr. Battle's first ballet set on the Company after it was announced that he would become the third Artistic Director in Ailey's history.

Set to a wildly percussive soundtrack by Les Tambours du Bronx, this ballet for six men examines the relationship between modern sports and the rituals of the gladiators. Costumed in long black skirts with under layers of red, the dancers throw themselves into a pre-hunt ritual, clawing at their gaping mouths as they stomp and pound with thunderous power revealing the robust side of human nature and the thrill of the hunt. In 2008, *The Boston Globe* proclaimed "The evening's most thrilling dance was *The Hunt*...A manic intensity...evoked the brutality of the hunters, the fear of the prey, and the exhaustion of the chase."



AAADT in Robert Battle's *The Hunt*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

Inspiration for the piece was derived from Mr. Battle's background in martial arts. Replicating the intensity, skirted costumes and combative stances of the art form, the dancers take you inside a spirited ritual preparation for the hunt that tests their physical limits. Battle notes that *The Hunt* shows the versatility of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, while celebrating the masculine and powerful sides of the Company's male dancers.

"The Hunt will send you reeling. The pounding, pumping, warlike choreography is thrilling to watch—and at the same time it's a bit disturbing to see such unbridled aggression. We don't know what or whom they are hunting, but they throw themselves into Battle's battle with fierce determination and abandon."

Dance Magazine

"...a cast drawn from the ranks of Ailey men confirmed the durable construction of Mr. Battle's work and the strength of the Ailey bench."

The New York Times

"Battle... understands how to make an applause machine. The men are shirtless, and this nonstop showpiece lets them flaunt both technique and their bodies."

New York Post

"Most impressive...is the brutal physicality of the dancing and the way these men both find its nuances and give their all."

The New York Times

"...showcased the athleticism of some of the company's most accomplished male dancers, including the wonderful Matthew Rushing."

Associated Press



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, Azsure 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.



Les Tambours du Bronx.
Photo courtesy of Les Tambours du Bronx.

Les Tambours du Bronx

Les Tambours du Bronx is a French industrial percussion band. Founded in 1987, its name comes from a district within the Varennes-Vauzelle suburb called “The Bronx,” where the band’s first drums originated. With 16 members, Les Tambours du Bronx has a powerful sound; its energetic drumming combines elements of rock, techno, hip hop, and Afrobeat, mixed with synthetic sounds and chanting. Les Tambours du Bronx has performed around the world, bringing audiences on every continent to their feet with its powerful rhythms and ceaseless energy.

The Hunt

Music Credit Information

Song: Jungle Jazz

Written by: L. Blomme

Performed by: Les Tambours du Bronx, from the recording: *Silence*

Song: Les Boulets Se Rebiffent

Written by: A. Dipace, J.Y. Lefloch, Y. Nisgand, B. Pingon, and J.M. Tramoy

Performed by: Les Tambours du Bronx, from the recording: *Silence*

Song: Black Bull

Written by: L. Le Mapihan

Performed by: Les Tambours du Bronx, from the recording: *Silence*