

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

## *Ode*

**(World Premiere – 2019)**

*Choreography:* Jamar Roberts

*Rehearsal Associate:* Marion-Skye Brooke Logan

*Music:* Don Pullen

*Costume design:* Jamar Roberts

*Lighting design:* Brandon Stirling Baker

*Set design:* Libby Stadstad

A meditation on the beauty and fragility of life in a time of growing gun violence, *Ode* is the first in a series of three new dance works that company member Jamar Roberts is creating in his role as Ailey's first-ever Resident Choreographer. Like his critically-acclaimed *Members Don't Get Weary* (2017), this work for six dancers will feature a jazz score – Don Pullen's "Suite (Sweet) Malcolm (Part 1 Memories and Gunshots)" – and Roberts' own costume designs.

"... a **powerful**, contemporary work... showed off both his musicality and his ability to move large groups of dancers."

*The New York Times* (*Members Don't Get Weary*)

"...A major **milestone** in his creative career."

*Miami Herald* (*Members Don't Get Weary*)

### **Jamar Roberts**

Miami native Jamar Roberts graduated from the New World School of the Arts after beginning his studies at the Dance Empire of Miami, where he continues to teach and mentor students each year. He received a fellowship to The Ailey School before becoming a member of Ailey II, Complexions Contemporary Ballet and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2002. Mr. Roberts starred in *Moonlight x Ailey*, a short dance film (choreographed by Artistic Director Robert Battle) that pays homage to the Oscar-winning film *Moonlight*. *Dance Magazine* featured Mr. Roberts as one of "25 to Watch" in 2007 and on the cover in 2013. He performed at The White House in 2010, and as a guest star on *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Dancing with the Stars*, and *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. In 2015 Mr. Roberts won Outstanding Performer at the prestigious New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Awards and was a guest star with London's Royal Ballet. Prior to being appointed as Ailey's first-ever Resident Choreographer, he made his Ailey II choreographic debut with *Gêmeos* (2015), and his Ailey Company debut with *Members Don't Get Weary* (2017). In addition, Mr. Roberts has an upcoming commission for New York City Ballet's 2020 spring season.



AAADT's Resident  
Choreographer Jamar Roberts.  
Photo by Andrew Eccles.

### **Don Pullen**

Don Pullen developed a surprisingly accessible way of performing avant-garde jazz. Although he could be quite free harmonically, with dense, dissonant chords, Pullen also utilized catchy rhythms, so even his freest flights generally had a handle for listeners to hang on to. The combination of freedom and rhythm gave him his own unique musical personality.

Pullen, who came from a musical family, studied with Muhal Richard Abrams (with whom he played in the Experimental Band) and, in 1964, made his recording debut with Giuseppi Logan. In the 1960s, he recorded free duets with Milford Graves, led his own bands, and played organ with R&B groups, backing Big Maybelle and Ruth Brown, among others. Although he worked with Nina Simone (1970-1971) and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1974), Pullen became famous as the pianist with Charles Mingus' last great group (1973-1975). From 1979-1988, he co-led a notable inside/outside quartet with tenor saxophonist George Adams that was in some ways an extension of Mingus' band. In later years, Pullen led his African-Brazilian Connection and recorded with Kip Hanrahan, Roots, John Scofield, David Murray, Mingus Dynasty, and Jane Bunnett, among others. His last project found the always searching pianist seeking to fuse jazz with traditional Native American music. Although his life was too short, Don Pullen fortunately did make a fair amount of recordings as a leader, including for Sackville (1974), Horo, Black Saint, Atlantic (his funky "Big Alice" became a near-standard), and Blue Note.

The creation of *Ode* is supported by commissioning funds from New York City Center.

***Ode***

**Music Credit Information**

**Song: Suite “(Sweet) Malcolm (Part 1 – Memories and Gunshots)”**

Written and Composed by: Don Pullen

Album: Solo Piano Album