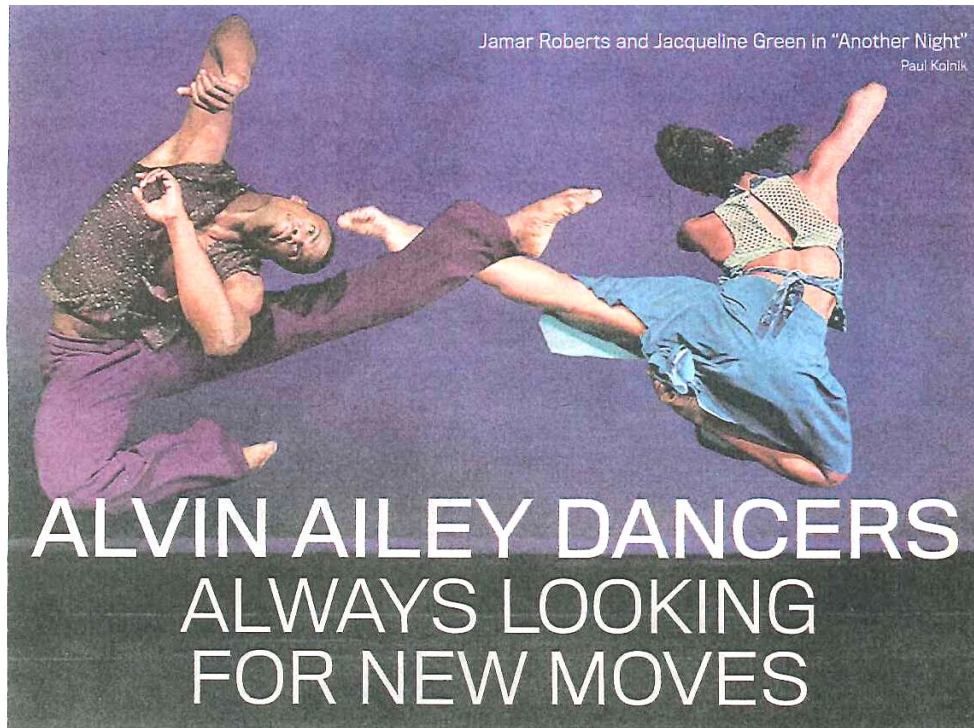


The Detroit News

March 21, 2013



Jamar Roberts and Jacqueline Green in "Another Night"
Paul Kolnik

ALVIN AILEY DANCERS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW MOVES

Choreographer bringing 'wide vocabulary of movement' to Opera House performances

BY ANDREA DANIEL
Special to The Detroit News

An unexpected phone call gave choreographer Kyle Abraham the chance of a lifetime — to bring new moves to the renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Abraham, a dancer for nearly 20 years, was no stranger to the Ailey company. In 2010, he choreographed for Ailey II, the troupe's group of young dancers and emerging choreographers.

While on tour in 2011 with his own dance company, Abraham Movement, he got a call from Ailey artistic director Robert Battle telling him how much he believed in his work.

"I didn't even really know what to say," Abraham says. "The phone call came out of the blue. He asked me if I would like to do something on the company and, of course, my laughing became crying."

Before he even met with the dancers, Abraham went into high creative mode with his own company to choreograph "Another Night," which will be performed when Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns to the Detroit Opera

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

7:30 p.m. tonight and Friday, 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, 2:30 p.m. Sunday

Detroit Opera House
1526 Broadway, Detroit
Tickets \$25-\$80
(313) 237-7464

www.michiganopera.org
www.Ticketmaster.com

House tonight through Sunday.

"Of course, I'd seen the Ailey company and their beautiful dancers over the years, but you don't just rely on what you know they can do," he says. "I think Battle wanted to challenge his dancers."

Marcus Jerrell, who is in his fifth season as an Ailey dancer, knows firsthand Battle's desire to stretch the company's talent.

"This is his (Battle's) second season as artistic director, and he keeps wanting more," Jerrell says. "He wants to bring in even newer works that our audiences have not been exposed to,

And I think that gives us a challenge, a good challenge, to keep striving towards what he's after while still striving towards what Mr. Ailey brought from the very beginning."

For "Another Night," Abraham chose jazz drummer Art Blakey's version of Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia" as the driving force behind the dance.

"I'm a huge fan of Art Blakey," Abraham says, "and I like to make work that is closely related to my experience growing up in Pittsburgh. I wanted to pay homage to Pittsburgh and its rich history in connection with jazz music."

Blakey's version, Abraham says, has a night vibe. "You get this kind of, like, hot thing. The drums are going, all these things are happening. That's kind of different from the cool, lax version that you get from the original."

One of 10 dancers performing in the 16-minute piece, Jerrell says Abraham has a rich repertoire. "Kyle has a very wide vocabulary of movement. It varies from quick to silky."

Andrea Daniel is a freelance reporter.