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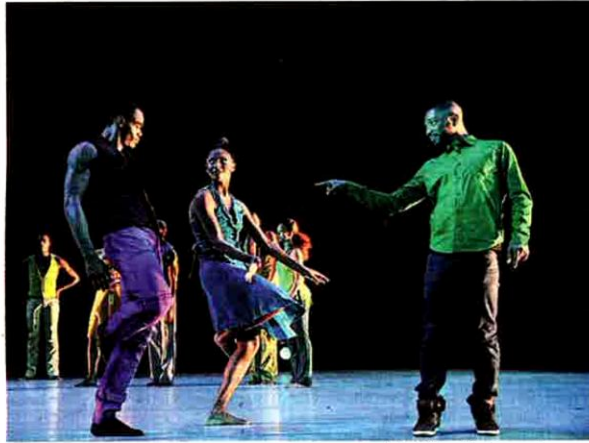
## DANCE REVIEW

# New pieces rekindle amazing Ailey

By Allan Ulrich

The names and faces may change, the dances may vary, but a night at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater guarantees you a night of amazing dancing. So, in that respect, no news is good news about the company, which opened its annual weeklong Cal Performances visit and residency Tuesday evening at Zellerbach Hall. Change, however, is in the air where choreography, often the weakest aspect of the Ailey experience, is concerned.

One can thank the troupe's Robert Battle, the young dance maker who succeeded Judith Jamison as artistic director less than two years ago. Battle promised an infusion of new repertoire, and he has set about that task with a measure of sophistication. Featured on Tuesday's program, the first of four through Sunday, was Jiri Kylián's "Petite Mort," a 1991 only-kidding disquisition on Mozart, courtship and the erotic impulse. The choreographer has been generous with the piece, and it



Paul Kolnik / Alvin Ailey Dance Company

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater made a breezy success of the local premiere of Kyle Abraham's "Another Night."**

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater:** Through 3 p.m. Sunday. \$30-\$92. Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley. (510) 642-9988. [www.calperformances.org](http://www.calperformances.org).

has figured in the repertoires of several companies of both the modern and classical varieties, not least Kylián's own

Nederlands Dans Theater.

Yet, as the six couples took the spotlight in this restaging by Patrick Delcroix, the audible swoons suggested that this was a first-time experience with "Petite Mort" for many observers. The combination of brawn and sensuality as first the men came on, swishing

*Ailey continues on E2*



Paul Kolnik / Alvin Ailey Dance Company

**Glenn Allen Sims and Linda Celeste Sims in Kylián's "Petite Mort," new to the troupe's repertoire.**

# Sensuality, brawn in new choreography

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their foils as foreplay, and the women tantalized with their mobile gowns struck a chord with this company.

Setting the slow movements of two Mozart piano concertos (recorded) seemed an act of daring 20 years ago, but as these couples melt into their pas de deux (stunning lighting by Joop Caboort), you could feel the kinship between sound and vision. Among the fervid couplings, Alicia Graf Mack and Jamar Roberts and

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Akua Noni Parker and Antonio Douthit stood out from their colleagues.

The new name on this program for many observers was Kyle Abraham, who performed here at ODC a few years ago and who as a choreographer has kept the Ailey II company busy. Tuesday's local debut of Abraham's "Another Night" struck this observer as a breezy success. The company's repertoire teems with re-creations of the bebop era, set to iconic jazz recordings, but Abraham's technique balances gestural verve with great discrimination in phrasing.

The music, Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia," as recorded by

Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, prompted this insouciant diversion for 10 very adept dancers in Nako Nagata's vibrant costumes. Amid the windmilling arms and skimming legs, one noticed Jacqueline Green's arching back and diminutive Hope Boykin's irrepressible spirits. "Another Night" merits another viewing.

Battle's own choreographic contributions included his early (1998) "Strange Humors," an oddly compelling, Tweedledum-Tweedledee duet that subjects its two topless male protagonists to technical hurdles, which include butting heads like rutting reindeer. Renaldo Gardner and Michael Francis McBride did the honors Tuesday. Battle's more recent (2008) "In/Side," a wrenching male solo to Nina Simone's recording of "Wild Is the Wind," is the sort of tour de force that gets a young choreographer and dancer noticed by the world. Samuel Lee Roberts' infinite stretch carried off honors.

All the troupe's programs on this tour conclude with Ailey's classic "Revelations," its luster undimmed after 53 years. The company always rises to the challenge of this remembrance of religious fervor in the choreographer's Texas boyhood. Tuesday, Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims ignited their "Fix Me, Jesus" duet, while it was a pleasure to catch former principal Matthew Rushing joining the ensemble for "Wade in the Water."

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