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## From Sex to Salvation, Not Without Introspection

Thirteen years ago when Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater had its last Lincoln Center season, the David H. Koch Theater was called the New York State

**GIA  
KOURLAS**

**DANCE  
REVIEW**

change.)

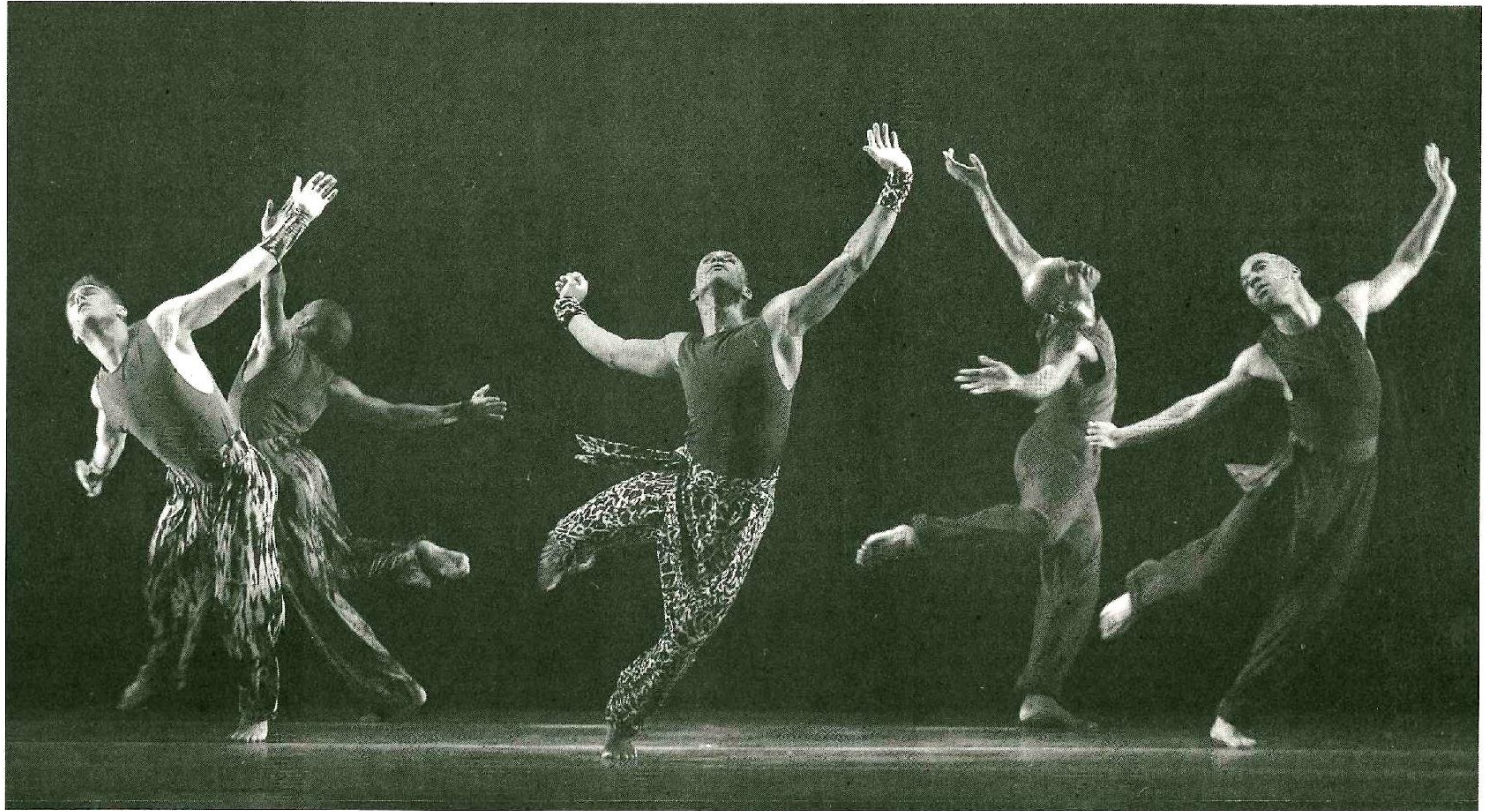
Now Robert Battle is in charge, as he humorously pointed out in a precurtain speech on Wednesday. When he first arrived at Lincoln Center as a scholarship student at Juilliard, he had no idea where to go; he mistook the Metropolitan Opera House for the school. This time Mr. Battle said he knew he was in the right place when he saw his name on the company poster.

That name has injected the company with new life. Opening night led off with “Four Corners,” an enigmatic premiere by Ronald K. Brown, and it didn’t disappoint. As a choreographer, Mr. Brown’s connection with the Ailey troupe is similar to the bond that Alexei Ratmansky has with New York City Ballet: in their works you see dancers fulfilling their potential and choreography performed with backbone.

Mr. Brown’s fifth piece for Ailey since 1999, “Four Corners” hints at a world of angels and individuals seeking peace, with a typical melding of modern and West African dance. As with many of Mr. Brown’s works, characters emerge and fade away and an array of music — here, beginning with Carl Hancock Rux’s “Shadow Interlude”

*Performances continue through Sunday at the David H. Koch Theater, Lincoln Center; (212) 496-0600, [alvinailey.org](http://alvinailey.org).*

Theater. Judith Jamison was the company’s artistic director. And “Revelations,” Ailey’s 1960 masterpiece, was in full force. (Some things never



ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Matthew Rushing, far right, and company members in the world premiere of “Four Corners,” at the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center.

and “Lamentations” and continuing with songs by Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Yacoub — invokes lush spirituality.

As the razor-sharp Matthew Rushing, in purple, backs onto the stage, a hazy side spotlight frames his profile; his movement is slow, even tentative. Yet in spurts his arms move briskly, sending his body into a series of spasms. After he raises his face to a corner of the stage and holds that pose, other dancers enter

from the same side of the stage and make their way into Mr. Brown’s succinct choreographic pulse. Movement stops sharply and picks up again in the hips before rippling out through the body.

Linda Celeste Sims, Mr. Rushing’s counterpart, in purple dress and African head wrap by Omotayo Wunmi Olaiya, is astonishingly lithe as she leaps into the air and swirls her arms above her head before landing onto the floor

and sinking down with an undulating torso. Belen Pereyra and Glenn Allen Sims, wearing gray, are more punctuated in their attack. Three men, forceful and sinewy, form another grouping and four women in print dresses are Mr. Brown’s angels.

But are the angels watching over the couples, or is it the other way around? The guiding force in this work is unseen, and the course of the movement — ritualistic in nature — is vigorously

windswept until the dancers fall into a line with Mr. Rushing leading the way to create a communal dance of dignity.

The program also features Jiri Kylian’s “Petite Mort,” in which the sexual euphemism of the title is taken to tedious extremes in the form of opened legs and arched backs. The bright side is that the Ailey dancers perform it well; its classical vocabulary shows off their balletic line, particularly that of the extraordi-

nary Alicia Graf Mack.

And like any good Ailey gala, the evening concluded with “Revelations.” If you think you’ve seen this dance too many times, think again: the Koch provides a marvelous new frame. The high point came in Jamar Roberts’s poignant rendition of “I Wanna Be Ready.” Picking up from where Mr. Brown left off, this was dignity in action.