

# The Star-Ledger

June 14, 2013  
By Robert Johnson

## DANCE REVIEW

# Angles and angels

BROWN'S LAYERED 'FOUR CORNERS' MERGES HEAVEN AND EARTH

By Robert Johnson  
FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

For its high-profile summer season at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has commissioned a new work from Ronald K. Brown. The

choreographer has already given this company a string of successes; and his spectacular "Four Corners," which made its debut Wednesday, continues the trend, confirming Brown as one of today's most important dance makers.

"Four Corners" reiterates Brown's otherworldly interests and his passion for fluid, driving movement as a metaphor for purification. Here his nameless characters, a mix of angels and ordinary mortals, work tirelessly to overcome. While the stage is full, the struggle

is always personal.

The title "Four Corners" teases viewers by asking us to imagine sharp contours in a locale like the ghostly plane of Brown's "Gatekeepers." Fluffy clouds scud across the backdrop. Brown's choreography supplies the angles, as well as tenuous pathways to salvation that appear only to vanish once more into the gloom.

Dancers may assume positions at the corners of the stage looking in, but the group that forms is subtle and irregular. Later, Brown shrinks and inverts the image, with four dancers clustered in the center facing outward. Still later, Linda Celeste Sims, wearing a power turban designed by Omotayo Wunmi Olaiya, travels around the stage blessing the corners. The dance is magnificently layered. In one scene, Matthew Rushing dances a solo with slow and viscous gestures, while in the background two women stand immobile and other men cavort wildly to the side.

"Four Corners" opens in a dark place, as Rushing backs onto the stage bent forward with one arm swinging low, or lifted to shield his eyes. Music from Carl Hancock Rux's "Lamentations" album sets the tone, and the men who follow Rushing's lead slash the air and stamp the ground heavily.

### Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

**Where:** David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, 63rd Street and Columbus Avenue, New York

**When:** Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 2 and 8 p.m., Sunday at 3 and 7:30 p.m.

**How much:** \$25 to \$135; call (212) 496-0600 or visit [alvinailey.org](http://alvinailey.org).

The women dance separately, with softly undulating shoulders and swishing hips. The moment when Rushing and Sims embrace suggests a reconciliation at once simple and profound.

The quality of the movement is as important as the architecture. When the soundtrack switches to the gentle strings of "Da Na Ma" (a song in tribute to motherhood), the men's dancing grows gentler, too. Now they step softly, and Rushing pats the air with affecting delicacy.

The downstage corner where the women first appear, and where Rushing reemerges to greet Sims after she completes her circuit, seems more important than the others. Brown gives all his dancers a showcase — Kirven James Boyd's electric performance is impossible to miss — but the women have a special role to play, as if the fluid drama of Belen Pereyra, a featured soloist, and the proud, authoritative Sims hold the keys to metaphysical transformation.

Two masterpieces — Jiri Kylián's "Petite Mort" and Ailey's "Revelations" — completed the triple bill on opening night, offering numerous opportunities for individual dancers to shine. Akua Noni Parker and Antonio Douthit must be mentioned; and Rachael McLaren, falling slowly into a supported spin in "Petite Mort" and intensely lyrical throughout "Wade in the Water," was outstanding.

Robert Johnson:  
[rjohnson76@nyc.rr.com](mailto:rjohnson76@nyc.rr.com)



Kirven James Boyd's performance in "Four Corners" was one of the highlights of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's show at Lincoln Center on Wednesday.

PAUL KOLNIK