

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

The River
(1970)

(Ailey Company Premiere- 1980)

Choreography: Alvin Ailey
Restaged by: Masazumi Chaya
Original Score: Duke Ellington
Original Music Coordination: Martha Johnson
Costumes: A. Christina Giannini
Lighting: Chenault Spence

“...of birth...of the well-spring of life...of reaffirmation...of the heavenly anticipation of rebirth...” – Duke Ellington



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Jamar Roberts and Alicia Graf Mack in Alvin Ailey's *The River*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.

The River is Alvin Ailey's acclaimed collaboration with the late musical genius Duke Ellington, choreographed and composed in 1970 for American Ballet Theatre and first performed by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1980. One of 14 dances Ailey created to Ellington's music, *The River* was Ellington's first symphonic score written specifically for dance, and represented a major collaboration between two great American artists. Combining classical ballet, modern dance and jazz, the suite suggests tumbling rapids and slow currents on its voyage to the great sea, mirroring the journey of life. *The River* has been restaged by Associate Artistic Director Masazumi Chaya for several companies in addition to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. With Ailey's amalgam of light and fun yet dark and romantic choreography balanced with Ellington's score, the work is an abstract celebration of birth, life and rebirth.

“*The River* is most telling in what it suggests about Ailey as a choreographer... He knew his classical ballet and his admiration for it is clear in this suite of dances that suggests the flowing, roiling push of water. But his is not an academic love. *The River* is lyrical, hard-charging and funny in turn, with ample opportunities for individual dancers.”

The New York Times

“*The River* triumphs as luminous theater...in its savvy arrangements evoking the fluency and sparkle of bodies of water ...floods the stage with a freshness and visual distinction all its own.”

The Wall Street Journal

“*The River* [is] Ailey at his best, a piece ambitiously structured and wonderfully dynamic... The choreography flows from cool blue to red hot, an adventure in momentum... **The company shines.”**

The Times [London]

Duke Ellington

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1899, composer, pianist and band-leader Duke Ellington was one of the most influential figures in the history of music. In the early 1930's his band established its fame at the Cotton Club in New York City, with a sound Ellington called “American Music” rather than jazz. In his fifty year career, the “Duke” played over 20,000 performances in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East as well as Asia, and is best

remembered for the over 3,000 songs that he composed before his death in 1974, including *It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got That Swing*, *Sophisticated Lady*, *Mood Indigo*, *Solitude* and *Satin Doll*. Ellington's popular compositions set the bar for generations of jazz, pop, theatre and soundtrack composers to come.

The River

Music Credit Information

Music: **The River**

Movement I: Spring

Movement II: Meander

Movement III: Giggling Rapids

Movement IV: Lake

Movement V: Falls

Movement VI: Vortex

Movement VII: Riba (Mainstream)

Movement VIII: Twin Cities

Composed by: Duke Ellington

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