

## Alvin Ailey dancer Glenn Allen Sims is in it for the long haul

By Karyn D. Collins – December 29, 2013

Alvin Ailey dancer Glenn Allen Sims is in it for the long haul. After 17 years, it would be understandable if Glenn Allen Sims felt this month's New York City season by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was, well, just another New York season.

After all, the Ailey company, of which the Long Branch native has been a part of since 1997, has one of the toughest schedules and repertoire in the dance world. The annual monthlong season of performances at New York's City Center annually caps a long, grueling year for the Ailey dancers. But Sims is anything but blasé. Instead, Sims said the New York City season, which opened Dec. 4 and runs through Jan. 5, is a welcome opportunity to dig deeper into the repertoire and his quest toward ever-higher levels of artistry.



“First and foremost, I am fortunate enough to be in almost all of the new works whether it's first cast or second cast,” Sims said. That means audiences will see Sims in the classic works by the late Alvin Ailey, like audience favorite “Revelations,” and in revivals, like Ailey's “The River” (in which he will be seen partnering his wife, Linda Celeste Sims). Audiences also will see him in the world premiere pieces being offered this season: “Lift” by Aszure Barton and “Four Corners” by Ronald K. Brown, along with the company premieres of Wayne McGregor's “Chroma” and “D-Man in the Waters (Part One)” by Bill T. Jones. Sims said he's particularly excited about “Chroma.” “With a ballet like ‘Chroma,’ there are just so many layers to it. This is going into my 17th season at City Center, so it's nice to have a piece with so much to delve into,” Sims said. “That piece really fulfills the craving that I personally have as a dancer and as an artist, because there's always something more to dig out of it.”

Sims added he's also enjoying being pushed by dancers for whom being in Ailey is a newer experience. “Their energy is different. They push me a lot more. I already have my own personal limits, but the dynamic of younger dancers pushes me even more,” he said. Being more seasoned has also proven to be beneficial in working with a choreographer, like Jones, who is returning to work with the Ailey company. “It's just great to be able to be with Bill and work with someone who is so intellectual about everything and work with him and understand him,” Sims said. “This time, I'm older, so I can understand him even more. I'm really grateful to have that experience.” Sims admits that mentally, preparing such a diverse repertoire can be difficult. The season includes almost 20 different pieces.

“Honestly, it's a lot on the brain. At the end of the day, I am physically exhausted, but I'm more exhausted mentally,” he said. “But I think what keeps me going is I'm constantly learning. If I ever felt like I'm not being challenged or felt complacent, then I would know it was time to go. But I love the style and the work I'm doing, and with (artistic director Robert Battle) bringing in such wonderful work with such diverse choreographers, that keeps me going. “It's amazing. I still feel challenged,” he continued. “I wouldn't have thought I would still feel this way, but I do. It's great.”