



Dance: Alvin Ailey program is 'All New'

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By Megan Kendzior

In a fresh evening of dance, Robert Battle breathes new life into Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater with works by Wayne McGregor, Bill T. Jones and Azure Barton. The "All New" program – ending Jan. 2 – showcases the strength, power and humanity of the charismatic performers in master works by these three talented choreographers.

Wayne McGregor's "Chroma," created in 2006 for London's Royal Ballet, weaves 10 dancers in and out of a massive angular set (designed by John Pawson) with striking moments of stillness and large sweeping movements of luscious partnering and nuanced undulation. Chroma is bold in its voluminous score and brassy white exterior yet incorporates moments of subtle shift and detail. With an epic score by Jack White (of the White Stripes) and Joby Talbot, this contemporary ballet deals with gender and power as the movers support each other in a variety of contexts. Men and women wear tiny garments by Moritz Junge that avoid a clear gender distinction as the British choreographer offers unexpected physical patterning that alternates between tender and fierce, present and absent.

The stark and ferocious performance of Chroma shifts entirely as Bill T. Jones' "D-Man in the Waters (Part I)" takes the stage.

This classic modern dance masterpiece was created in 1989 as a memorial to Demian Acquavella, beloved company member of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. "D-Man" references trust and support in its rich embodiment of Mendelssohn's Octet for Strings. It is truly refreshing to watch the fierceness of the Ailey transform into hope and whimsy through gentle acknowledgement of each other; in this, Megan Jakel shines. With a tilt of the head, a tender embrace or a radiating smile from across the space, they create a moving experience filled with spirit and humanity. City Center resounds with the programmatic note: "In a dream you saw the way to survive and you were full of joy."

The evening concludes with the world premiere of "LIFT" by Azure Barton, a powerful work of ritual with original percussive sound by Curtis Macdonald that celebrates the power of flight against the earthly rawness of a human body. Barton's strength of exposing inherent vulnerabilities within a collective presides over this masterfully crafted work, displaying the strong individuality of each performer in a series of vignettes of all male, all female and variations of the like. The hazy environment activates our focus as she heightens our attention to the strength of the body. In a tender duet between a man of menacing height and a miniscule woman, she presses her face into his chest and we become aware of vulnerability in this action. They flap their wings and find a physical expression of rhythm. We understand images of unity and are left breathless, ready for more.

