

techniquemyway

Antonio Douthit-Boyd

The Ailey star never stops working.

BY JENNY DALZELL

If you've seen an ad or a billboard for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater this year, chances are you've seen Antonio Douthit-Boyd. He's the poster boy for the company's North American tour, which hits seven cities this month alone. (And his picture still lingers on many New York City buses after Ailey's past winter season.) Douthit-Boyd's long limbs make for breathtaking photographs, but even more impressive is the way he manipulates those lines onstage.

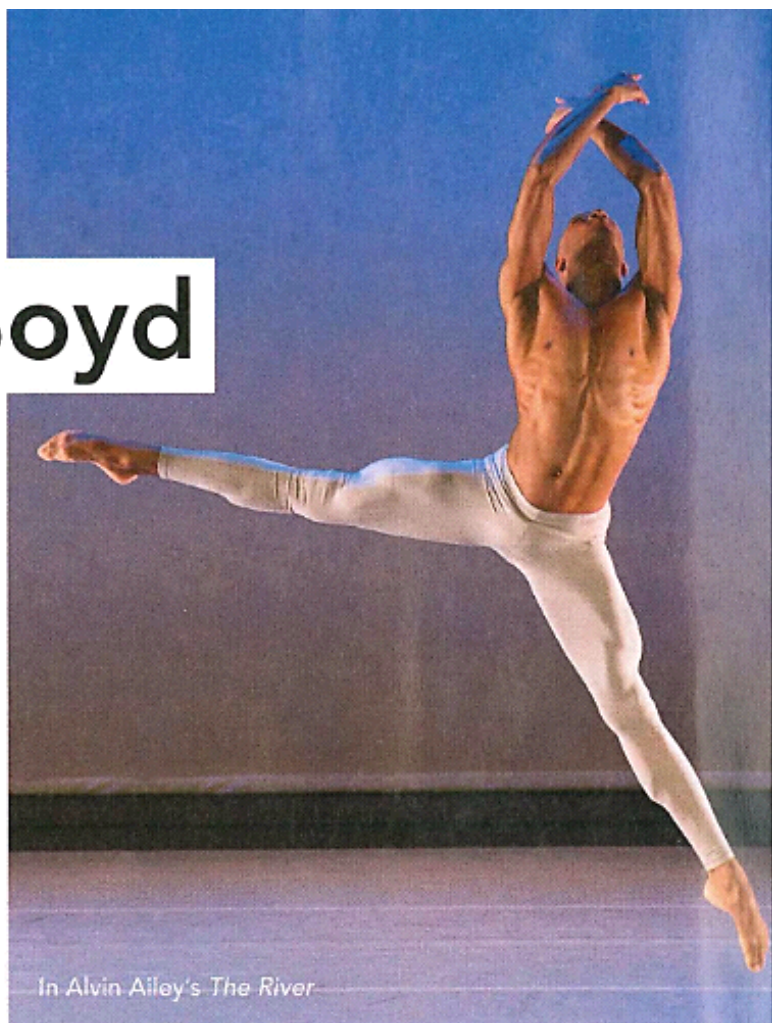
In 10 years with the company, Douthit-Boyd's unrivaled mix of strength and lyricism has carried him through a range of demanding works, from Ailey classics, like *The River*, to Robert Battle's athletic *Strange Humors* and Wayne McGregor's exhausting *Chroma*. But no matter the role he's performing on any given night, each day begins the same way: in company ballet class, refining his technique.

Is there a correction that you think of daily?

When I first came to Ailey from Dance Theatre of Harlem, Judith Jamison told me to never lose my ballet past. She said to continue working on all that I was before I got to Ailey, in addition to anything new that I'd learn here. It stuck with me.

What have you been working on recently?

My port de bras. I carry a lot of tension in my



In Alvin Ailey's *The River*

shoulders and I have to keep them down and relaxed. I'm most tense in fifth position. As soon as I put my arms up I'll hear "Put your shoulders down!" from the front of the room.

What helps? When I first started ballet, I held all positions so tightly because I was trying to make them correct. Now, I realize even static positions have life in them. I have to constantly tell myself to breathe and let my shoulders fall back into place.

Is there an image that works for you? I love watching videos of Fernando Bujones to see how he uses his arms. His port de bras was masculine, but fluid. There was no stagnant energy. Pictures of him are always rolling through my mind. ■