

November 10, 2015

Ailey II returns to Pittsburgh for one-night engagement at August Wilson Center

By Sara Bauknecht
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Hot on the heels of Philadanco's performance last month at the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, the venue opens its doors to another dance force not seen here in several years.

Tonight, the Pittsburgh Dance Council will present Ailey II, the junior company of New York City's prestigious Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. The one-night-only engagement here is part of a 25-city tour that continues through March 2016. The show is sold out, with limited walk-up tickets available.

The last time Ailey II came to town was in 2011 for the August Wilson Center's Black Dance Festival, a product of Pittsburgh-based choreographer Greer Reed, an Ailey II veteran. The following year, Troy Powell, a longtime Alvin Ailey dancer and a master teacher at The Ailey School, was named Ailey II's artistic director, becoming only the second person to head the company in its 41-year history.

While its leadership has changed, Ailey II remains committed to its roots as a training company for up-and-coming professional dancers, and to the legacy of its namesake, Alvin Ailey.

"When [Mr. Ailey] started the company, it was to celebrate the African-American heritage," Mr. Powell said. "I think he wanted to open the doors up for all different kinds of people, no matter what color you were, no matter what your economic status, no matter what you believe in."

Ailey II embodies this spirit of diversity through the current ensemble's 12 members, who dance with the company for two years before moving on to other endeavors.



Eduardo Patino

The classic "Revelations" by Alvin Ailey will be on the program tonight when Ailey II performs at the August Wilson Center for African American Culture.

Ailey II returns to Pittsburgh

AILEY, FROM D-1

Diversity also is alive in the breadth of dance styles.

Mr. Ailey "wanted his dancers to do all different types of styles and techniques," Mr. Powell said. "It would keep a performance fresh."

The Pittsburgh audience will see a three-piece program. In "Hissy Fits" (J.S. Bach score) by Dwight Rhoden, an Ailey alumna who's choreographed a number of pieces for Pitts-

PREVIEW

Ailey II on tour

When: 7:30 tonight.

Where: August Wilson Center for African American Culture, Downtown.

Information: www.alvinaiiley.org.

burgh Ballet Theatre, couples navigate the passions and pitfalls of their relationships.

Ray Mercer's "Something Tangible" also explores the many dimensions of the human spirit and experience, set to a range of music selections by Max Richter, Olafur Arnalds, Geoff Bennett and

Bongi Duma.

Rounding out the lineup is Mr. Ailey's riveting classic "Revelations," inspired by memories of his childhood in rural Texas. In it, dancers are accompanied by African-American spirituals, song-sermons, gospel music and holy blues. It's been performed in 70-plus countries across six continents in its 55-year history.

"You're not just coming to the theater to see movement," Mr. Powell said. "I hope people are touched by the performance, touched by the dancers, the music, the atmosphere and the environment itself."

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