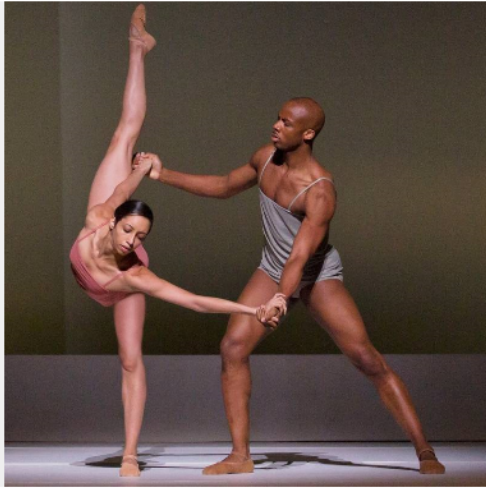


South Elgin dancer returns home with Alvin Ailey

March 6, 2015

By Scott C. Morgan



Sarah Daley, formerly of South Elgin and Bartlett, performs with Jermaine Terry in Wayne McGregor's "Chroma" for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

When former South Elgin and Bartlett resident Sarah Daley was growing up, she became an instant fan of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater after seeing the company perform at Chicago's Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University.

Daley, who trained with the Hanover Park-based Faubourg School of Ballet, always made a point to see Ailey in its annual Chicago residencies. She even pursued schooling at New York's Fordham University specifically because it had an affiliation with the 57-year-old dance company famed for celebrating African-American culture.

Daley's calculated schooling, hard work and career planning paid off when she was admitted as a dancer in the Ailey II junior company in 2008 and promoted in 2011 to the main Ailey company. So Daley is happy once again to be returning to the same theater where she first saw Ailey perform for its annual Chicago residency starting Friday, March 6.

"The Auditorium, it holds a lot of history for me and it feels like a second home as much as a theater can," said Daley, now 28. "In one of the past couple of years I came back, I looked through some boxes I had at home and found programs of when I had gone when I was younger to see Ailey and they're signed by people I'm working with now. That I can now call them co-workers and friends -- that's so surreal."

For Ailey's 2015 two-week Chicago residency, three different mixed repertory programs are on tap with each one concluding with the signature 1960 masterwork "Revelations," choreographed by the company's late namesake founder. One work that Daley is excited for Chicago audiences to experience is "ODETTA," a piece by choreographer Matthew Rushing created specifically for Ailey that pays tribute to the life of the late Odetta Holmes and her diverse career as a singer, songwriter, actress and civil rights activist.

"It's a beautiful, theatrical ballet," said Daley. "It's really moving. It's funny and sad at some points, but it really takes you on a journey through this woman's life and what she sang about through her most influential songs."

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Location: Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress Parkway, Chicago, (800) 982-2787, auditoriumtheatre.org or alvinailey.org

Showtimes Program A: 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 6 and 13, and 3 p.m. Sunday, March 8, and 2 p.m. Saturday, March 14

Showtimes Program B: 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, March 7, and 3 p.m. Sunday, March 15

Showtimes Program C: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 12, and 8 p.m. Saturday, March 14

Tickets: \$32-\$107

Another piece that Daley really wants Chicago audiences to see is the all-male "Uprising" by choreographer Hofesh Shechter featured in Program C.

"It's really different from a lot of the pieces that we've been doing previously, and I think it will get a really great response," Daley said. "It's really exhilarating and acrobatic and athletic and the production element of the music and the lights -- it comes together with high-tension energy and it's really in your face."

Under the leadership of Robert Battle, who took over as Ailey's artistic director in 2011, the largely modern-trained dancers in the company have been pushed creatively with newer classical ballet pieces by the likes of British choreographers Wayne McGregor and Christopher Wheeldon. Program C features a pas de deux fragment from Wheeldon's larger "After the Rain," and it's a piece that Daley has only started performing occasionally on tour.

"It's a dreamlike duet and it's very simple, but it also has some intricate partnering," Daley said. "It's beautiful to watch and a lot of people have enjoyed seeing it so far."

Daley is getting the chance to see the world through Ailey's many international tours. Her most significant memory on the road happened in Paris.

"It's the only place I've experienced doing a double encore in 'Revelations.' When the curtain went down, the audience was still clapping thunderously and stomping their feet," Daley said. "I just didn't believe that it was happening, but they didn't want us to go home and they didn't want to go home. That kind of response just wants me to dance even longer."