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Sarah Daley

Smooth movement and subtle intelligence set the Ailey dancer apart.

BY RACHEL ELSON

Because Sarah Daley's dance career seems very directed—from an Ailey/Fordham BFA to Ailey II and, for the last three years, at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater—it comes as a surprise that she can be easily bored. "I glaze over when things are the same all the time," she says, explaining the appeal of Ailey's wide-ranging repertoire. "I like to explore." That impulse seems the key to her stage presence, which combines liquid movement, meticulous placement and a serene internal focus. "I've realized that to become the kind of dancer I want to be, I require a lot of information," she says. "I have to do a lot of investigation."

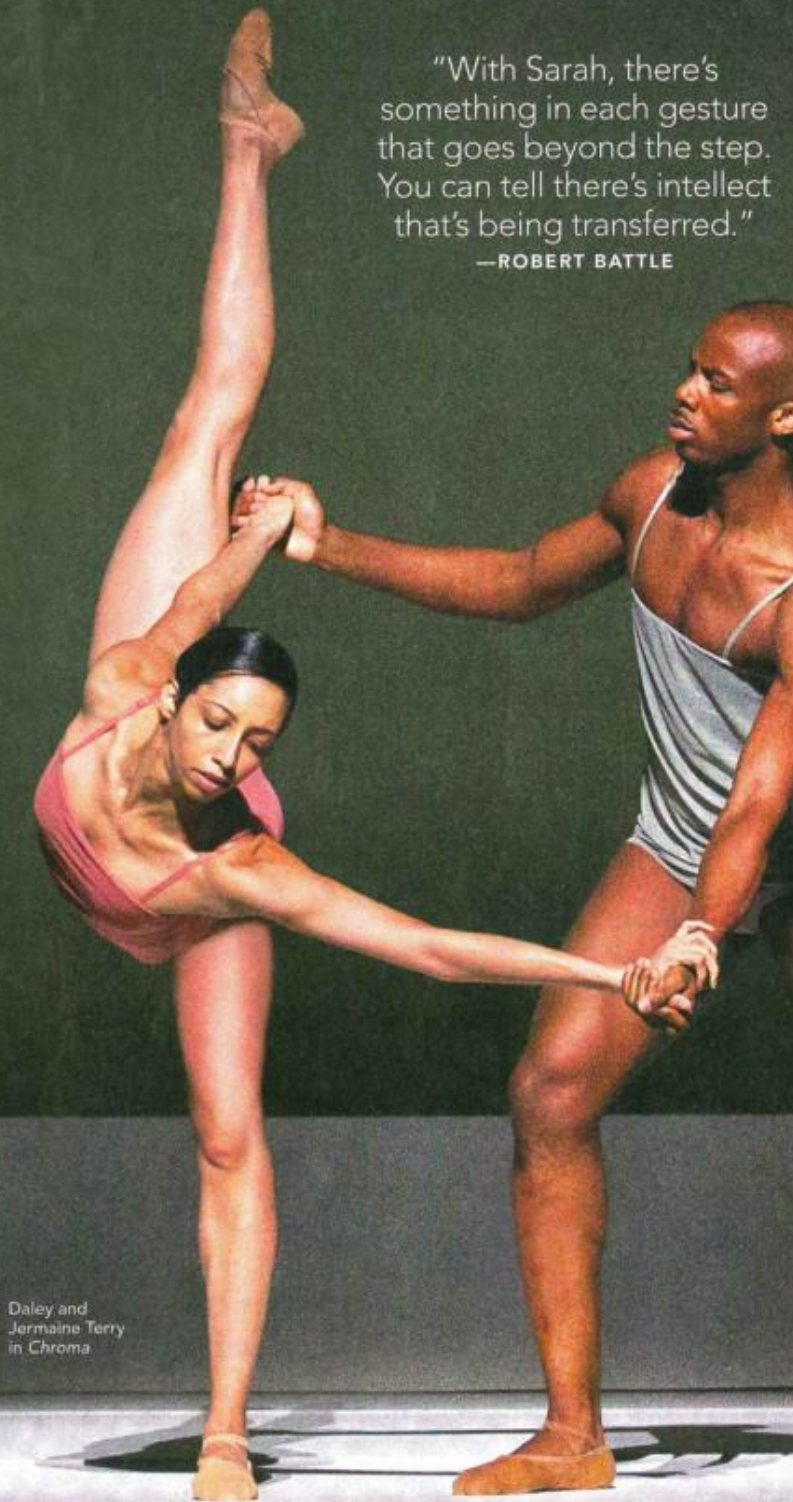
Daley cites working with Wayne McGregor on Ailey's staging of the choreographer's *Chroma* as an example of her process. "He's right there as you're doing it, in your face, telling you all these words to think about," she says. "I'd go home and, on my own, really slowly, let the words he was saying connect to the movement."

Daley spent her childhood training at the Faubourg School of Ballet in suburban Chicago. "My mom threw me into dance class to get me out of her hair. But once she put me in, I never looked back." Daley stayed at Faubourg through high school, studying first ballet and then modern and jazz, before moving to New York for college.

She arrived in the main company at the same time as artistic director Robert Battle, who praises both her cerebral approach and her versatility. Recently, the 27-year-old has begun getting more prominent roles. In *Chroma*, for instance, Daley shared a role with Ailey star Alicia Graf Mack. "I think Sarah's going to continue to surprise us with what she's able to do," Battle says. "She has more than possibly even she knows in her arsenal." ■

"With Sarah, there's something in each gesture that goes beyond the step. You can tell there's intellect that's being transferred."

—ROBERT BATTLE



Daley and Jermaine Terry in *Chroma*