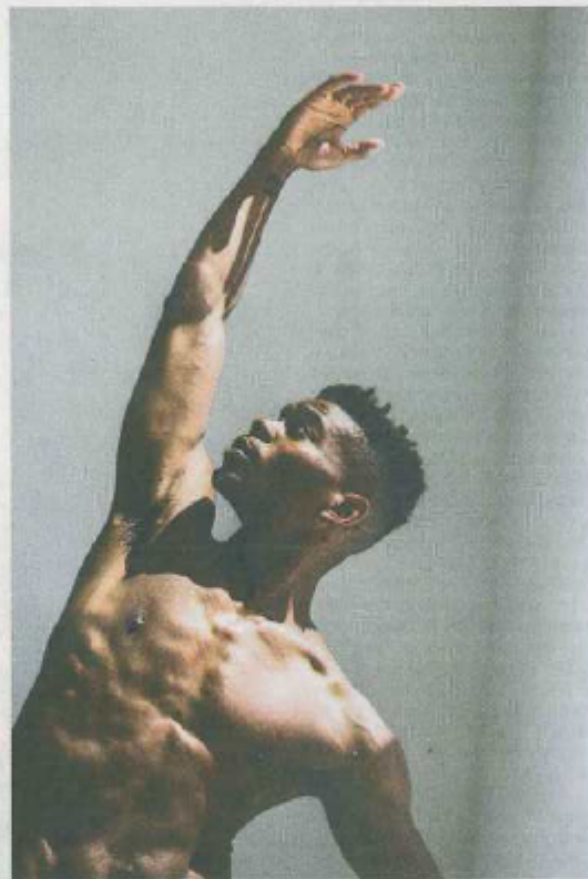
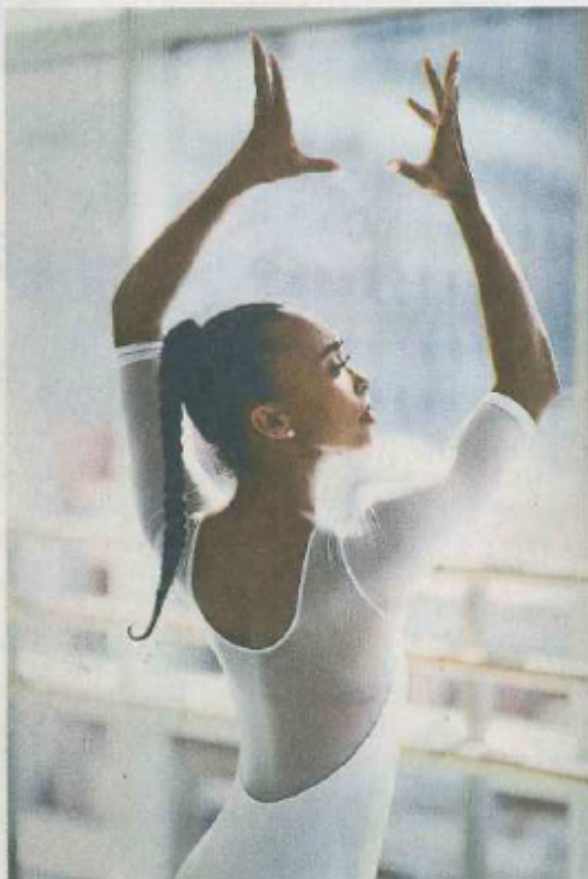


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In Alvin Ailey's Mix, Three to See This Season

From left, Ashley Mayeux, Constance Stamatiou and Solomon Dumas have been added to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's lineup this season. Mr. Dumas is a onetime Ailey youth camper, Ms. Mayeux set aside her beloved pointe shoes to join, and Ms. Stamatiou returned because she missed "that feeling." Page C2.

A Season of Returning, Ascending and Dreaming at Ailey

By GIA KOURLAS

This season, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater welcomes three new company members to its mix. One is the first former AileyCamper to make it into the main company. Another will set aside her beloved pointe shoes for a coveted spot. And the third? She has two young children, but she can't get dancing out of her system. She's returning to the fold.

Solomon Dumas was introduced to dance through AileyCamp in Chicago. (AileyCamp is a summer program for the young, combining dance training with classes in communication and personal development.) Ashley Mayeux, a regal 5 foot 10, comes from Complexions Contemporary Ballet. And Constance Stamatou danced with Ailey for five years before starting a family. This week Mr. Dumas and Ms. Stamatou are performing in featured roles in Ailey's 1980 masterpiece, "Revelations," among other works. (Ms. Mayeux, currently finishing her Complexions contract, will appear with the Ailey company at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in July.)

Ms. Stamatou's return is particularly gratifying for Robert Battle, the company's artistic director; she left just as he was taking over job. "It's fun to have her back, but it's also a statement — that you can follow your own sense of necessity," he said recently in his office at the Ailey studios. "There doesn't have to be one way to do things."

Solomon Dumas

HOMETOWN: Chicago

AGE: 27

Mr. Dumas never wanted to be an AileyCamper. His mother forced him into it. "I don't think I had a choice," he said, with a laugh. "She always kept me in some sort of program. I'm from the South Side of Chicago, so she kept me busy." At the time, he was 12 and involved in community theater; his mother, he said, "came from the school of knowing everything — not just being an actor and a singer."

He may have enrolled reluctantly, but when camp was over, he missed it. "AileyCamp was more than just a dance camp, it was a personal-development camp," he said. He went on to train at the Chicago Academy for the Arts and the Russell Talbert Dance Studio and later, in New York, studied at the Ailey School and was a member of Ailey II before joining Ronald K. Brown/Evidence.

Mr. Brown, who fuses, among other forms, modern and tradi-



SHAWN BRACKEN, FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

From left, Constance Stamatou, Solomon Dumas and Ashley Mayeux are bringing varied experiences to their roles with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

tional African dance, is also one of the Ailey company's leading choreographers. At Mr. Dumas's Ailey audition, Mr. Battle could sense that influence. "My eye kept going to him," Mr. Battle said. "The looseness of the torso, the sense of not pushing, but being in his movement."

When he auditioned, Mr. Dumas was a freelance dancer and working at Barry's Bootcamp, a gym specializing in high-intensity interval training. "I was the last one to walk into the audition," he recalled. "Even in the chaos and in the procrastination, there was a sense of calm. It wasn't me trying to prove myself or to compete with anybody else."

Ashley Mayeux

HOMETOWN: Houston

AGE: 27

Ms. Mayeux began dancing at 6

or 7 at the instigation of her mother, who told her to pick one thing, do it for a year and then decide whether she liked it or not. "From the first day that I took a dance class, I knew that I was going to be a dancer," she said. Ms. Mayeux trained at the High School for Performing and Visual Arts in Houston, where a teacher recommended that she audition for the summer program at the Ailey school; there, at 15, she fell in love with ballet. "That's so late to even start thinking about a serious ballet career, because people are getting into companies at 17."

She kept at it and after graduating from SUNY Purchase and performing in the tour of the Broadway musical "Aida," she joined Complexions, the contemporary ballet troupe led by the former Ailey dancers Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson. "They

shaped me into the dancer that I am now," she said.

While she didn't think she'd be hanging up her pointe shoes so soon, joining the Ailey company has long been a dream. "Everything has been leading up to this moment," she said. And while Ailey specializes in modern dance, isn't there always the possibility that a dance could require pointe work? "We'll see," she said, with a smile. "Maybe I can change that."

Constance Stamatou

HOMETOWN: Charlotte, N.C.

AGE: 31

When Ms. Stamatou left the Ailey organization in 2011, she had spent four years in the company — but she had also been in the school for two years and a member of Ailey II, the organization's second, younger company, for another two. "I just felt like I'd spent

a lot of my life here and I wanted to explore and do something different," she said. "I wanted to try acting."

She dabbled in commercial dance work and was a dancer in Dan Pritzker's 2015 film "Bolden!" but, she said: "There was still something missing — it was the fulfillment of being onstage and just letting everything out rather than dancing for two minutes, cut, another two minutes and cut. Then seeing the company performing at City Center this past Christmas, I was like: 'Oh! Everybody looks so great.' I miss that feeling."

Soon after those performances, she received a call from Masazumi Chaya, the Ailey company's associate artistic director, asking if she would be interested in coming back. "I made myself a student again and I was just train-

ing, taking ballet and Horton classes every single day," she said. "I was even telling the teachers: 'Get on me. Treat me like your student. Help me out.' I started to see my body coming back together."

Back with the company, Ms. Stamatou is thriving, though she hasn't started touring yet. (Ailey's tours are arduous.) The dancer, who lives in Bergenfield, N.J. — her husband is a personal trainer with flexible hours — has the support of her extended family, who live nearby to help with her daughter, 4, and son, 2. "I'll always have a little bit of anxiety about it," she said, "but I know that they'll be well taken care of."

For Ms. Stamatou, it's about being a complete person: "Dancing again is making me a better mother and me being a mother is making me a better dancer. I have so much to share."