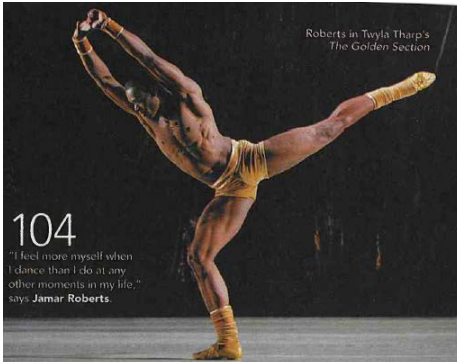


Why I Dance: Jamar Roberts

December 2019 Issue



Roberts in Teyla Sharp's
The Golden Section

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"I feel more myself when I dance than I do at any other moments in my life," says Jamar Roberts.

why dance

Jamar Roberts

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancer and resident choreographer

Some of my earliest memories are of being outside in the blazing heat of Miami's eternal summer, my friends and cousins and I all gathered around a boom box, blasting the best mixtapes we could make. All it took was for that one song that everyone loved for us to start dancing like mad. And in all of our preteenaged glory we began to show off for one another the latest moves we learned from movies and music videos. The Kid 'n Play, the running man, the moon-walk, the stomp-and-grind.

We invented step routines or worked tirelessly at perfecting what is better known nowadays as twerking. With each attempt, we would put a new spin on the moves to make them our own, in hopes of putting the others to complete shame. But more so to simply give them something to laugh about. This is where dance began for me. Dance as play.

Dancing has always been a huge part of the culture that I grew up in. The freedom and agency over one's own body was always permissible, especially upon hearing your favorite song. Even as a kid, I witnessed the power of dance and its ability to focus the mind, liberate the body, lift the spirit and bring people together.

It comes very naturally to me: I feel more myself when I dance than I do at any other moments in my life. It's where I am my most honest and my imagination is unbound. Dance is my playground, and the music is my best friend. Just as it's always been. ■



"Dance is my playground, and the music is my best friend."