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DANCE REVIEW: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's annual return pairs 'Revelations' with visions for the future

By: Karen Campbell

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LivingArts

Visions for the future



PHOTOS BY ROBERT TORRES

Alvin Ailey troupe pairs 'Revelations' with new works

By Karen Campbell
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Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's annual Boston visit has become a treasured cultural tradition, bringing with it dynamic dance and a whiff of spring. Each program's inclusion of Ailey's stirring "Revelations" is a reminder of the choreographer's humanity and ground-breaking legacy. Fueled by spirituals, the 1960 creation has been seen by more audiences around the world than any other modern dance work, yet it retains a heartfelt power that never gets old.

However, the company continues to forge ahead with new repertoire that shows artistic director Robert Battle is not just building on the past but leading toward the future. Thursday night's opening program, presented by Celebrity Series of Boston at the Wang Theatre, also featured two new works created for the Ailey company by Kyle Abraham and Jamar Roberts.

Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings?" is a major new addition to the Ailey repertory. Abraham is one of the most important and influential choreographers working today, and this most recent work, his third created for the company, is a bona fide hit. It's a feel-good charmer laced with threads of social commentary and lots of heart, and the 12 dancers in Thursday night's performance embraced it like they were born to it. Scored to a mixtape of mostly soul, R&B, and hip-hop, "Are You in Your Feelings?" presents a vivid snapshot of Black culture and community, especially the fluctuations of group dynamics and romantic entanglements. Onstage chatter and voice-overs



provide some context to the good-natured posturing and flirtatious camaraderie — and a frisson of sexual ten-

sion. Rolling shoulders, swiveling hips, and sinuous torsos ride atop quicksilver footwork. Breathless sus-

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs "Revelations" (top) and Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings?" (above) at the Boch Center Wang Theatre in Boston. Left: Ghraí DeVore-Stokes and Chalvar Monteiro in Jamar Roberts's "In a Sentimental Mood."

pensions dissolve into breezy turns. Two men suggest the push/pull of shadowed love, while a solitary woman (a spectacular Ashley Kaylynn Green) reclaims her independence. In one irresistible section, a fabulous septet of women turn saucy repetitive isolations into a riveting gestural tour-de-force.

The context for Jamar Roberts's "In a Sentimental Mood" (2022), given a striking, committed performance by Ghraí DeVore-Stokes and Chalvar Monteiro, is a bit murkier.

DANCE REVIEW

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Presented by Celebrity Series of Boston. At Boch Center Wang Theatre, Thursday (repeats through Sunday). Tickets start at \$39. 800-653-8000, bochcenter.org

Roberts, who danced with the company from 2002 to 2021 and was also its resident choreographer for three years, has created a dramatic, intimate portrait of a couple that is both tender and fraught. Seemingly recalling love and loss through hazy shifts of memory, it is full of connections made and broken, agitated reaches and deep lunges, with mercurial shifts of weight and direction. The fluctuation of music, from Duke Ellington to abstract electronic meanderings by Rafiq Bhatia, adds to the sense of fragmentation. But toward the end, there is a satisfying segment in which the two find themselves in union. Bathed in red light, they find cohesion not in dancing with one another, but in moving side by side.

Paul Taylor's 1964 "Duet" offered a very different take on the male/female duet, its stock and trade clean shapes and long classical lines. Set to the music of Franz Joseph Haydn and gracefully danced by Belén Indhira Pereyra and Patrick Coker, it was genteel and sweet, with endearing traces of humor — a hop skip here, a swoon and drag there, two arms connecting to form the shape of a heart. A soaring lift takes flight one moment, the next Pereyra drapes her body around Coker like a cape, her feet resting atop his as they walk together as one.

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