

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Takademe (1999 / Ailey Company Premiere – 2012)

Choreography: Robert Battle
Music: Sheila Chandra
Original Costumes: Missoni
Costume Redesign: Jon Taylor
Lighting Design: Burke Wilmore

During his first season as Artistic Director, Mr. Battle chose to bring one of his first creations to the Ailey Company, *Takademe*. Previously performed by Ailey II, the complex, tightly woven rhythms of Indian Kathak dance are deconstructed and abstracted in this percussive, fast-paced work. Clear shapes and propulsive jumps mimic the vocalized rhythmic syllables of Sheila Chandra's jazzy score.

"...one can add **Battle's** name to the list of brilliant solo choreographers such as Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, and Ted Shawn..."

The Los Angeles Times

"**The piece is a gem...**"

Dance Magazine

"... [a] fast-moving excursion into **rhythmic exotica.**"

The New York Times

"... **highly kinetic, demandingly coordinated dance** that incorporates sudden scissoring jumps, low stamping, a contracting torso and fluttering hands — **often all at the same time.**"

The New York Times



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Yannick Lebrun in Robert Battle's *Takademe*. Photo by Andrew Eccles.



Artistic Director
Robert Battle. Photo
by Andrew Eccles.

Robert Battle

Robert Battle became artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in July 2011 after being personally selected by Judith Jamison, making him only the third person to head the Company since it was founded in 1958. Mr. Battle has a long-standing association with the Ailey organization.

A frequent choreographer and artist-in-residence at Ailey since 1999, he has set many of his works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ailey II, and at The Ailey School. The Company's current repertory includes his ballets *Ella*, *The Hunt*, *In/Side*, *No Longer Silent*, and *Mass* – a 2017 Company premiere. In addition to expanding the Ailey repertory with works by artists as diverse as Kyle Abraham, Azure Barton, Ronald K. Brown, Christopher Wheeldon, Rennie Harris, Hofesh Schechter, Jiří Kylián, Wayne McGregor, Robert Moses, Ohad Naharin, and Paul Taylor, Mr. Battle has also instituted the New Directions Choreography Lab to help develop the next generation of choreographers.

Mr. Battle's journey to the top of the modern dance world began in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami, Florida. He showed artistic talent early and studied dance at a high school arts magnet program before moving on to Miami's New World School of the Arts, under the direction of Daniel Lewis and Gerri Houlihan, and finally to the dance program at The Juilliard School, under the direction of Benjamin Harkavy, where he met his mentor, Carolyn Adams. He danced with the Parsons Dance Company from 1994 to 2001, and also set his choreography on the company starting in 1998. Mr. Battle then founded

his own Battleworks Dance Company, which made its debut in 2002 in Düsseldorf, Germany, as the U.S. representative to the World Dance Alliance's Global Assembly. Battleworks subsequently performed extensively at venues including The Joyce Theater, Dance Theater Workshop, American Dance Festival, and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Mr. Battle was honored as one of the "Masters of African-American Choreography" by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2005, and he received the prestigious Statue Award from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA in 2007. In 2014, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of the Arts and visited the White House to accept from President Obama, on behalf of Alvin Ailey, the National Medal of Freedom – the nation's highest civilian honor. Mr. Battle was named a 2015 Visiting Fellow for The Art of Change, an initiative by the Ford Foundation. In October 2015, Simon & Schuster published *MY STORY, MY DANCE: Robert Battle's Journey to Alvin Ailey*, an inspiring children's book based on Mr. Battle's life. In 2017, he choreographed *Moonlight x Ailey*, a dance film homage to the Academy Award-winning film. He is a sought-after keynote speaker and has addressed a number of high-profile organizations, including the United Nations Leaders Programme and the UNICEF Senior Leadership Development Programme.

Sheila Chandra

Born in South London to a South Indian immigrant family, Sheila Chandra discovered her voice at the age of twelve while at Theatre Arts school. In 1981 Sheila Chandra met Steve Coe in London and became the lead singer of his Asian fusion band Monsoon which then signed to Polygram. Monsoon had a UK Top Ten hit with their first single "Ever So Lonely" when Sheila was 16. After Monsoon disbanded, Sheila signed Steve Coe's Indipop label in 1984 and went on to make her first four solo albums in two years. Sheila retired when she was 20 to take a sabbatical that lasted 4 years and re-emerged with her fifth solo album on Indipop.

In 1991 Sheila decided to give concerts for the first time and developed her distinctive voice and drone approach — drawing on vocal cultures from around the world — so that she could perform alone on stage. Sheila formed her own music production company and went on to write a trilogy of albums in this style, each of which she licensed to Real World as one-offs, in order to retain creative control.

Takademe **Music Credit Information**

Song: **Speaking in Tongues II**

Written and performed by Sheila Chandra

Courtesy of Real World Records Ltd.