

The New York Times

Realigning for a Eurythmic Convergence

By: Gia Kourlas
March 21, 2020

Realigning for a Eurythmic Convergence

Set adrift and apart, dancers from Alvin Ailey's group film, then merge, pieces of a whole.

By GIA KOURLAS

As the lyrics go in "I Been 'Buked" — the opening section of Alvin Ailey's masterpiece, "Revelations" — "There is trouble all over this world."

Don't we know it. Last week after Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater abruptly ended its tour and sent its dancers home, Danica Paulos — who creates content on Instagram for the group — asked her fellow company members if they were, she said, "down to create some positivity and some inspiration."

The idea came from the dancer Miranda Quinn: The opening sequence of "The Brady Bunch" popped into her head. "How they're all in little squares," she said. "That made me think of how we're all being quarantined and are supposed to stay separate, but this was a way for all of us to still be dancing together and creating together even though we're apart."

Ten dancers, including three who are retiring this year — Ms. Paulos, Akua Noni Parker and Hope Boykin — grace the resulting video, in which they are shown in their own environments performing "Buked." Ms. Quinn described it as "very vulnerable and about creating and nurturing hope through community," adding that she thought it "was perfect for what's happening now."

The dancers are shown in squares performing the deep pliés and overhead reaches of the choreography, with each adding to the last like an undulating prayer, until they all appear onscreen, lowering their arms with their palms facing forward. As the clips accumulate, we see family members, dogs and children.

The result is an artifact, elegant in its brevity: a work of art repurposed from another work of art that speaks to the moment and shows dancers performing, yes, but also just being themselves in their private spaces.

Ms. Paulos plans on creating more videos every week with different dancers, whom she will cast herself. Next up, a part of Renie Harris's "Lazarus," after a gunshot when, she said, "all of the men are dancing and some women come in and it's two minutes of great dance."

She would also like to showcase Ailey's "Cry." And the dancer Patrick Coker suggested "Sinner Man," from "Revelations." But with its virtuosic jumps and spins, it requires space — a studio apartment would never cut it. In a text, he wrote to Ms. Paulos, "If anyone wants to do 'Sinner Man,' I'd be down to meet in a park."

"I was like, 'Awesome,'" she said. "That would be beautiful."



Images from Danica Paulos's video of "I Been 'Buked" from Alvin Ailey's "Revelations," with bits from Akua Noni Parker, above, and other Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancers.

