

Yannick Lebrun: **Dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**

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**Ailey's Music Man**  
How Yannick Lebrun's playlists  
influence his dancing  
BY MARISSA DESANTIS

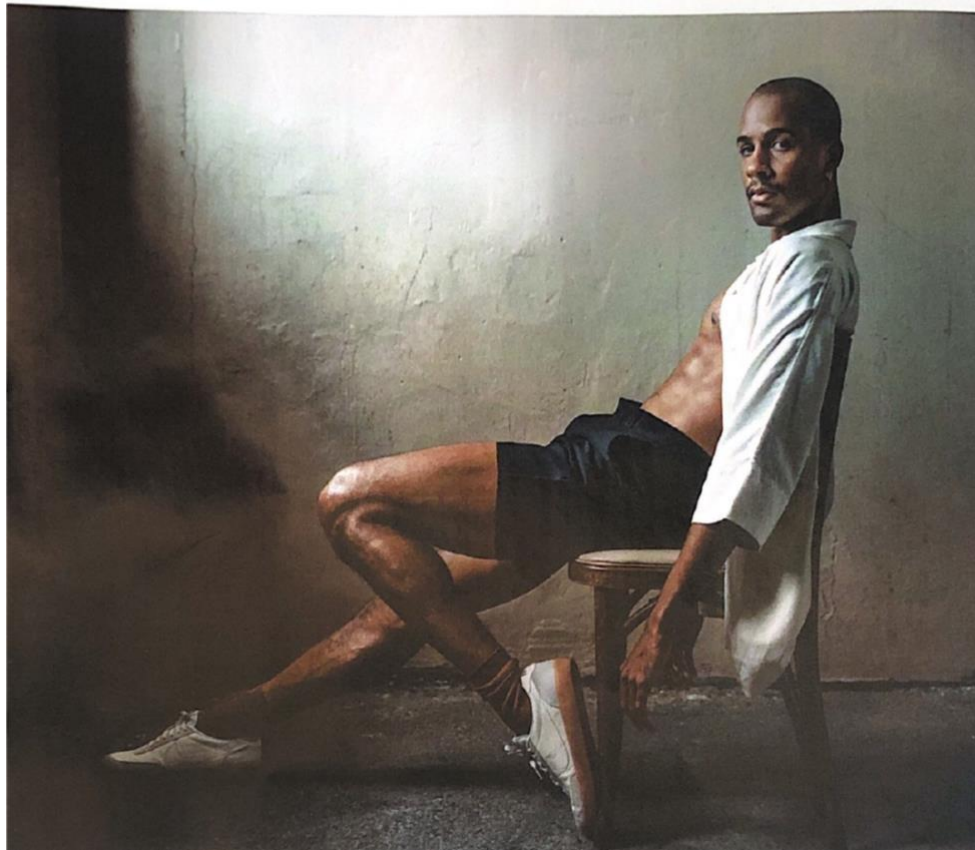
54



# Yannick Lebrun

Dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

BY MARISSA DESANTIS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY QUINN WHARTON



Yannick Lebrun is obsessed with music. "I listen to all kinds—world music, gospel, R&B, reggae, Caribbean, African. There's so much on my playlist," says the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater company member. Lebrun relies on different playlists before each performance to boost his energy or help him get into the mood of the piece. "Also, to be able to choreograph and be inspired, I have to have some beautiful music first," he adds. He's set pieces on his co-workers and Ailey II, and for his first performance since the pandemic shutdown, he created a solo to perform at Kaatsbaan Cultural Park, in September. "The music inspires my movement."

**Favorite role:** "The solo 'I Wanna Be Ready,' from Mr. Ailey's *Revelations*."

**Dream partners:** "I would love to just be onstage with Carmen de Lavallade and Desmond Richardson."

**Offstage hobbies:** "Anything that has to do with art—photography, video projects, museums, a live performance."

**What's on his playlist:** "Sade and Lauryn Hill will always be on my playlist, whether we're in 2020, 2030 or back in 1998."

**Coffee order:** "A latte with regular milk, or coconut milk if I'm at one of those special coffee shops in New York City."

**Post-performance routine:** "A bath with Epsom salt and arnica oil or juniper oil from this brand called Kneipp."

**The two things he can't live without:** "My phone and earbuds—I just need my music." ■



"As a kid, when I saw my cousin doing a dance competition, I was like, 'Okay, that's cool. I'll start also.' I did competitions in French Guiana, and also in France, and that got me a scholarship for the summer intensive at The Ailey School. That was when I was like, 'Wow, I can feel all the energy, I can see other young boys, other young, beautiful Black bodies—I'm not the only one anymore.' "

"Before performing, I always give myself a moment to zone out and listen to music in the dressing room. I also like to find a peaceful corner backstage where I can wait and do my own thing. Then, when I get onstage, I do a quick prayer."

"I was born in French Guiana and I live in New York City, but I feel good in so many countries—the Caribbean, France, Denmark, South Africa. I've been able to find my peace and my joy because of the beautiful places I've been with Alvin Ailey. Sharing our art and communicating and seeing the culture is so fulfilling."

