



## News: Alvin Ailey brings the “retired” Renee Robinson back to Atlanta for Fox performances

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By Cynthia Bond Perry

With great fanfare, Renee Robinson, a radiant dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, celebrated her final season with the company in December. It seemed that she was the toast of New York — there were farewell concerts, tributes and a prestigious *Dance Magazine* award. Most believed it was the last they’d see of her on the Ailey stage.

But Ailey Artistic Director Robert Battle announced this week that Robinson will return as guest artist in three of the 21 cities on the company’s U.S. tour: Washington (her hometown), Boston and Atlanta. It’s most likely Atlanta’s last chance to bid farewell to the much-admired artist.



Robinson will dance in “Revelations” on the first two evenings, February 14 and 15, of the troupe’s annual run at the Fox Theatre. She’ll perform distinguished roles in at least five sections of Ailey’s signature work, a celebration of the human spirit that’s born of the African-American experience and expressed through athletic, emotionally charged modern dance.

It’s a role she has danced often. Dressed in white, she bears a billowing white umbrella as the traditional spiritual “Wade in the Water” pulses with deep vibrations of African drums and electric bass. She blesses a man and woman and gestures toward the floor, arms rippling like a churning river. She bears that fluid motion upward, opening the body to the flow of nature and filling the air with transcendent power and joy.

Later, dressed for church with a yellow hat and fluttering fan, Robinson will lead the final three sections: “The Day Is Past and Gone,” “You May Run On” and the rousing “Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham.”

Robinson is known for her generous presence and zest for the stage moment; in class, she exudes personal warmth and glowing inner discipline. Sealed in that work ethic are more than 30 years’ history with the troupe. She is the last remaining company member selected by its late founder, Alvin Ailey, the female dancer with the longest tenure in the company’s history and the only dancer to have performed under all of its three artistic directors.

Battle explained that the reason for bringing Robinson to Atlanta is simple. “Atlanta and Ailey have developed a special relationship that continues to blossom,” he said. Atlantans pack the Fox every year to see the troupe, and the Ailey school holds an annual summer camp here.

On Saturday, January 19, at 2:30 p.m., Battle will speak at THE DREAM@50 event at the Martin Luther King International Chapel at Morehouse College. He’ll read part of King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and dancer Briana Reed will perform the finale of Ailey’s “Cry.”

The relationship between the company and Atlanta reflects Ailey’s vision, Battle said. “There’s a strong connection,” he said. “We really feel that our Atlanta audience dances with us. There is an energy that fills the

space between audience and dancers that is tangible, visceral and spirit-filled.” Robinson’s dancing reflects those qualities, he said. “So it’s fitting that we celebrate her in Atlanta during her farewell season.”

A few chosen audience members will have a chance to dance, literally, on stage with the company in Ohad Naharin’s “Minus 16,” as the work features an audience participation section. Atlanta Ballet will perform “Minus 16” in March, offering a rare opportunity to see a contemporary work performed by different companies, one anchored in modern dance, the other in classical ballet. And because that section is somewhat improvisatory, no two performances are ever quite the same.

The Ailey programming will also include “Strange Humors” and “In/Side” by Robert Battle, “From Before” by Garth Fagan, “Grace” by Ronald K. Brown and “Another Night,” a new work by Kyle Abraham.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater 2013 Atlanta schedule:

**Thursday, February 14, 8 p.m.:** “Another Night,” “In/Side,” “Minus 16,” “Revelations”

**Friday, February 15, 8 p.m.:** “From Before,” “Strange Humors,” “Grace,” “Revelations”

**Saturday, February 16, 2 p.m.:** “From Before,” “Strange Humors,” “Grace,” “Revelations”

**Saturday, February 16, 8 p.m.:** “Another Night,” “In/Side,” “Minus 16,” “Revelations”

**Sunday, February 17, 3 p.m.:** “From Before,” “Strange Humors,” “Grace,” “Revelations”