

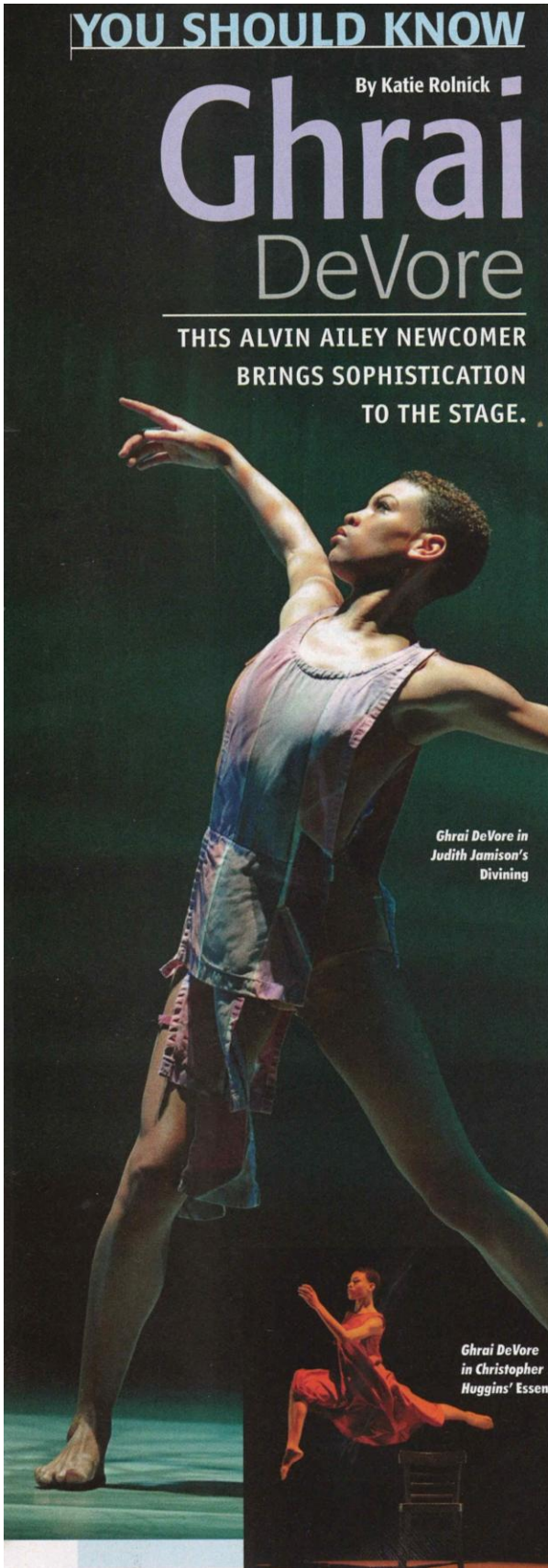


YOU SHOULD KNOW

By Katie Rolnick

Ghrai DeVore

THIS ALVIN AILEY NEWCOMER BRINGS SOPHISTICATION TO THE STAGE.



Ghrai DeVore in Judith Jamison's Divining

Ghrai DeVore in Christopher Huggins' Essence

With her closely cropped hair and lanky body, Ghrai DeVore bears traces of adolescence. But when she takes the stage at the Brooklyn Academy of Music to perform Alvin Ailey's signature work, *Revelations*, she instantly matures. Her dancing is economical but elegant. In the final movement of the piece, the women wag their fingers at their male partners; Ghrai's hand is less frantic, but forceful. She catches your eye without undermining the impact of a unison ensemble.

Ghrai's performance at BAM in June marked her debut as a member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. "I was backstage freaking out," she says. "I thought, 'Wow, I'm a part of this tradition, and I'm about to walk out on stage and give it my all.'" At just 20 years old, Ghrai has already achieved major success.

Born in Washington D.C., Ghrai (pronounced "gray") moved to NYC a couple years later with her mother, a modern dancer. There, Ghrai started dancing recreationally. At 6, she and her mother settled in Chicago, where Ghrai began her formal dance training, first studying ballet, then modern, jazz and tap at the Chicago Multi-Cultural Dance Center. At 10, Ghrai attended a summer program at the Kirov Academy of Ballet in D.C., and soon after committed to pursuing a dance career. She took class every day and attended summer programs at American Ballet Theatre in NYC and LINES Ballet in San Francisco.

At 15, Ghrai performed with Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, where her mother was a company member, at the International Association of Blacks in Dance conference in Toronto. Sylvia Waters, artistic director of Ailey II, spotted her. "I was impressed with this young lady who performed with such confidence and style," Waters says. She spoke with Ghrai about joining the Ailey fellowship program, but Ghrai wasn't ready to leave Chicago.

After skipping two grades, Ghrai graduated from high school at 16 and began dancing professionally. She joined Hubbard Street 2 (the second company at Hubbard Street Dance Chicago) and continued dancing with Deeply Rooted.

By 18, Ghrai felt the pull of NYC. She moved to the city and became an Ailey fellowship student. Just a few months later, when Ailey II dancer Aisha Mitchell took an open position in the main company, Ghrai slipped into her spot in the second company. During her two years with Ailey II, Ghrai lived up to Waters' expectations. "She has an instinct for nuance, both dramatically and physically," Waters says.

In the spring of 2010, Ghrai joined the main company. Her experiences with Ailey II prepared her for the hardships of life with a troupe that tours extensively. "I learned how to listen to my muscles," she says, "to know when I could continue or when I needed to rest." Though Ghrai's already shown that she's a savvy and refined performer, Waters believes she will continue to grow: "She has qualities yet to be discovered." **DS**

FAST FACTS

FAVE FOOD: "Soul food: fried chicken, collard greens, yams and macaroni and cheese."

DREAM DANCE ROLE: *Vespers*, choreographed by Ulysses Dove

SECRET SUPERHERO POWER: "I can read four to five books a week! I like the authors Tananarive Due and Christopher Paolini."

FAVE DAY OFF: "Any day off!"

FAVE DANCE MOVIE: *The Turning Point*

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