

May 18, 2011
By Britt Julious

A Revelatory Evening



The charisma, technicality, and athleticism of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater sets the group apart from other contemporaries. Works such as the masterpiece "Revelations" invoke a fiery, visceral reaction in the audience. The group returns to Chicago beginning tonight for an eclectic engagement that includes six Chicago premieres at the Auditorium Theatre (50 East Congress).

Company member Glenn Allen Sims claimed that first watching the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater perform motivated him to push forward more aggressively in his dance practice.

"It really motivated me to just *want* to dance," Sims said. Originally from New Jersey, Sims first auditioned for the theater in 1993. In 1997, he graduated from Julliard and auditioned again. Since then, his immense talents have been broadcast in a number of different performances, some of which will be making their local debut.

"The experience I've had has been a blessing," he said.

Sims worked under Artistic Director Judith Jameson, marking her final season under the position.

"To be under Jameson's directorship is a real gift," said Sims. "It really is one of those precious jewels."

Besides Jameson's imminent departure, the year also marks the 50th anniversary of "Revelations." A tribute to African-American heritage, "Revelations" uses spirituals to explore emotions of grief and joy within the human soul. Since it's premiere in the middle of the last century, "Revelations" has become an audience favorite due to the power and strength of the choreography.

"The steps are ingrained in your DNA and you're free to be in your dancing," Sims said about the familiarity of "Revelations."

However, the popularity of the work does not take away from the theatricality and aesthetic value of the work.

"You get a chance to experience the dancers' bodies," said Sims. Each work is forward moving and solidifies "Ailey dancing." Stamina, candor, and an exhaustion coupled with a sense of accomplishment rounds out the aesthetics of each work.

"They're so musical and times," said Sims. "Your whole perspective on dance will change with these performances," said Sims.

--

Each evening of the performances will include 3 to 4 works from classics such as "Revelations," "Night Creature" (1974), and "Suite Otis" (1971) as well the Chicago premieres.

Chicago premieres:

"Anointed" (2010) - Choreographed by former Ailey company member Christopher L. Huggins, this new creation features music by Moby and Sean Clement and pays homage to Ailey's past, present, and future.

"The Hunt" (2001) - Choreographed by Artistic Director Designate Robert Battle, this athletic work in the vein of traditional Ailey performances features six men and explores ideas of human nature and the "thrill of the hunt."

"In/Side" (2008) - Also choreographed by battle, this male solo includes Nina Simone's "Wild is the Wind."

"Forgotten Time" (1989) - Departing Artistic Director Judith Jameson's large work includes 12 dancers on a journey of ancient rituals and rites of passage.

"The Evolution of a Secured Feminine" (2007) - Featuring music by Ella Fitzgerald, Betty Carter, and Nancy Wilson, choreographer Camille A. Brown explores ideas of femininity.

"Three Black Kings" (1976) - A monumental three-part ballet set to Duke Ellington's last major score features religious and historical icons: Balthazar, the Black King of the Nativity; Solomon, King of Israel; and Martin Luther King Jr.

--

Performance Schedule:

Wednesday, May 18 at 7:30pm: "Anointed," "The Evolution of a Secured Feminine," "The Hunt," "Revelations"

Thursday, May 19 at 7:30pm: "Night Creature," "In/Side," "Forgotten Time," "Revelations"

Friday, May 20 at 7:30pm: "Night Creature," "In/Side," "Forgotten Time," "Revelations"

Saturday, May 21 at 2pm: "Anointed," "The Evolution of a Secured Feminine," "The Hunt," "Revelations"

Saturday, May 21 at 8pm: "Three Black Kings," "Suite Otis," "In/Side," "Revelations"

Sunday, May 22 at 3pm: "Anointed," "The Evolution of a Secured Feminine," "The Hunt," "Revelations"

--

Tickets (beginning at \$30) can be purchased [online](#), in person at the Auditorium Theatre Box Office at 50 East Congress Parkway, or by phone at (800) 982-2787.



AAADT's Glenn Allen Sims and Linda Celeste Sims in Alvin Ailey's Revelations. Photo by Nan Melville