

Alvin Ailey Dance Theater returns to Chicago

By Eloise Marie Valadez
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A celebration of the power and beauty of dance will be spotlighted when Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater takes the stage today through May 22 at The Auditorium Theatre in Chicago.

The troupe's current production will feature six Chicago premieres. Ailey fans will also delight in the company's performance of its signature "Revelations," which this year is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

This year also marks the company's artistic director Judith Jamison's final season with the group.

"To be here in the final days (of Jamison's tenure) is amazing," said Ailey dancer Antonio Douthit, who has been with the company since 2004. He said the iconic Jamison has taken the troupe in a wonderful direction and will be missed.

Douthit said he's always enjoyed performing "Revelations," a dance masterpiece recounting the African American experience that was choreographed by Alvin Ailey. It's performed to a backdrop of blues and spiritual musical works and traditionally ends most Ailey performances.

"I'm pleased to be a part of "Revelations" ' 50th anniversary," Douthit said. "It touches people on a human level" and is a very emotional piece, he said.

Douthit was first exposed to the Alvin Ailey troupe when he was 16 years old.

"I was a shy kid and to see the dancers and their bodies and the way they expressed themselves (impressed) me," he said.

"I admired the beauty and grace of the company dancers."

On the current Chicago program, dance fans will see a variety of works.

The roster includes "Forgotten Time," choreographed by Jamison, and featuring 12 dancers depicting rites of passage as well as two works by incoming artistic director Robert Battle titled "In/Side" and "The Hunt." "In/Side" is a male solo dance performed to "Wild is the Wind" by Nina Simone.

Other works include "Three Black Kings," danced to the music of Duke Ellington and a female solo dance titled "The Evolution of a Secured Feminine," an upbeat/carefree piece performed to tunes by Betty Carter, Nancy Wilson and Ella Fitzgerald.

Douthit said he hopes audience members get much enjoyment out of the current show.

"And we're trying to do more than just entertain you. We want to show that the arts can reach people on a whole new level," Douthit said. The company will perform through Sunday at The Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress Parkway, Chicago. Tickets start at \$30. **FYI:** (800) 982-2787 or ticketmaster.com/auditorium