

# The Star-Ledger

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## DANCE

# Home-stage advantage for Ailey

By Robert Johnson  
FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

Some people just can't get enough of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. A month at New York City Center doesn't satisfy their craving, and neither does the company's annual weekend at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

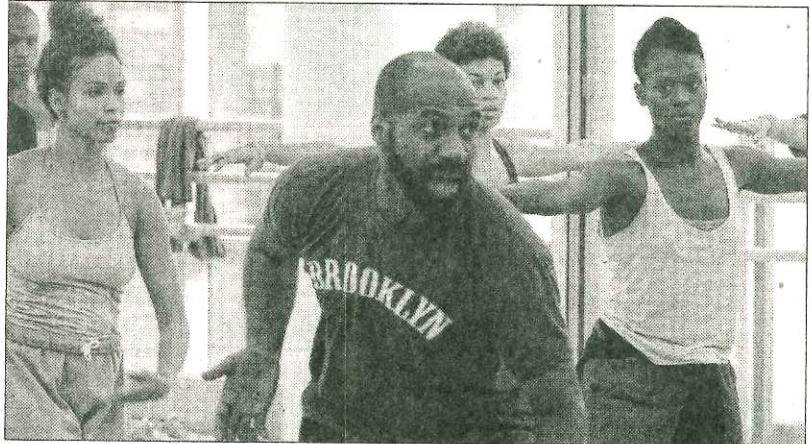
"People are always asking, 'When can I see you again?'" says Ailey artistic director Robert Battle. So when a week opened up at Lincoln Center (where the Ailey begins a five-day run tomorrow), Battle trimmed some dates from this popular company's tour schedule. "We love touring, but it's wonderful to be home," Battle says.

The Ailey company's first engagement at Lincoln Center in 13 years will give audiences another look at some of the striking works that Battle has introduced to the repertory: Garth Fagan's mysteriously glowing "From Before," Jiri Kylián's sensual "Petite Mort" and Ohad Naharin's quirky "Minus 16." Despite their hectic pace, the Ailey dancers have had time to learn a new work by Ronald K. Brown, a choreographer with several Ailey commissions to his credit. His spiritual aesthetic has made him a good fit for the troupe.

Brown's 1999 "Grace" (the sequel to "Revelations" that nobody saw coming) will also be on the bill. But the major focus of the Lincoln Center engagement will be the premiere of "Four Corners," a dance inspired by references to angels guarding the four corners of the Earth.

"I don't want it to be too literal," Brown says, explaining that his new dance is about "the work that angels do."

The choreographer says he took cues from the Bible, particularly a



CLAUDIA SCHREIER

Ronald K. Brown, center, rehearses with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

### Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

**Where:** David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, 63rd Street and Calumbus Avenue, New York.

**When:** Tomorrow, Thursday and Sunday at 7:30 p.m. and Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., with matinees Saturday at 2 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m.

**How much:** \$25 to \$135; call (212) 496-0600 or visit [alvinailey.org](http://alvinailey.org).

passage in Lamentations that depicts the sufferings of a beautiful woman. Yet, the dance also references Oyá, a Yoruba goddess who summons the winds of change. The composite score includes pieces by Carl Hancock Rux and two versions of "Da Na Ma," by the African artist Yacoub.

Although he often takes years to develop a new work, Brown says he choreographed "Four Corners" while jetting around the globe. This year, he has created a work for former

Ailey dancer Asha Thomas in France, toured Cuba inspecting dance companies to fulfill a Joyce Theater commission, visited Colombia to prepare for his own company's appearance at a dance festival there and worked with the Kulu Mele African Dance and Drum Ensemble in Philadelphia. While in New York, Brown keeps busy teaching in Manhattan and Brooklyn (as a teacher, he is equally renowned).

"I've had so much fun watching him in the studio," Battle says. "He's very soft-spoken, so I can't always hear what he's saying to the dancers. But I can read his body language and sense what he's saying. And I love the way he coaches and teachés."

"He has a very specific way of drawing out the impetus of the movement."

The Ailey dancers' fluid work with Brown affects how they perform in other pieces, too. "It's far-reaching," Battle says.

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