

The New York Times

JUNE 16, 2014

... And an Ostrich That Spreads Its Wings

One of the newest additions to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's repertory is, in another sense, the oldest. Asadata Dafora choreographed "Awassa Astrige/Ostrich" in 1932, soon

**SIOBHAN
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**DANCE
REVIEW**

after moving to New York from his native Sierra Leone. On Friday at the David H. Koch Theater, Ailey became one of a handful of troupes to present this three-and-a-half-minute gem, with Antonio Douthit-Boyd as its majestic interpreter: part prowling warrior, part resplendent bird.

Mr. Dafora was one of the first artists to translate West African dance onto the Western theatrical stage. While "Ostrich" may not feel as groundbreaking now as it did then, it invokes an important chapter in modern dance history, when black choreographers in America were for the first time commanding respect as artists, not just entertainers. Mr. Dafora's student Charles Moore recreated the dance; the former Ailey dancer Ella Thompson Moore restaged it.

With hips bedecked in colorful plumage, the strapping Mr. Douthit-Boyd entered with a slow, gliding strut: chest high, arms rippling like beating wings, each step landing on a low drumbeat in Ron McBee and Carl Riley's ritualistic music. Darting, birdlike movements alternated with luxuriant, liquid preening and the occasional coiling crouch

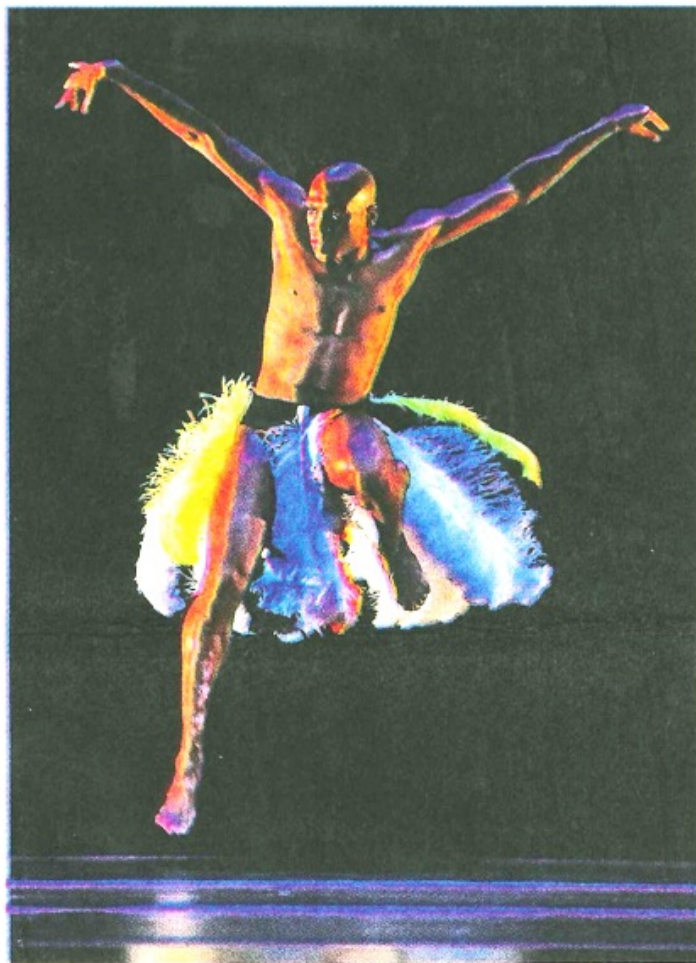
or springing leap, before the same proud walk carried him offstage.

There were resonances here, in the body's pulsations, of Ronald K. Brown's ecstatic "Grace" (1999), an Ailey staple, which opened the program. The more you see this dance, the more it reveals — and the less imposing its spiritual overtones. (Recordings of Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday," with its call to "God almighty God of love," bookend the rousing house and jazz score.) This

*Old choreography is
reinterpreted, with
new majesty.*

time, I noticed Mr. Brown's expressive use of the palms, the way in which an open hand can be an invitation or a plea or a challenge, communicating "Come here" or "What do you want from me?"

The evening also included Bill T. Jones's joyous "D-Man in the Waters (Part 1)" — danced so spectacularly that you longed to see this modern classic in full — and Ohad Naharin's episodic "Minus 16," in which the audience participants, as always, drew as much applause as the dancers.



ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Antonio Douthit-Boyd performs in "Awassa Astrige/Ostrich" at the David H. Koch Theater.