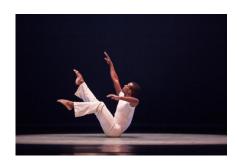
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## Kirven Douthit-Boyd takes his last Boston bow

By Jeffrey Gantz



You know you're a local hero when you come back to town with one of America's premier dance companies and people applaud you just for coming out onstage. That's what's been happening for Kirven Douthit-Boyd during Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Boston visits over the past few years. The company's appearance at the Citi Wang Theatre March 26-29, however, will mark fans' final opportunity to cheer for Douthit-Boyd. After the Ailey troupe's performances in Paris this summer, he and his husband, Antonio Douthit-Boyd, will retire from the stage to become co-artistic directors of

dance at the Center of Creative Arts in St. Louis.

St. Louis is where Antonio grew up; he got his dance training at COCA. Kirven, however, is Boston all the way. He started his formal training at the Boston Arts Academy in 1998 and joined Boston Youth Moves in 1999. He was a scholarship student at Boston Conservatory and later at the Ailey School in New York. There he danced with Battleworks Dance Company, Parsons Dance Company, and Ailey II before graduating to the main Ailey troupe in 2004.

Kirven Douthit-Boyd talked about his career by phone recently, from an Ailey tour stop in Chicago.

**Q.** You're only 30. Why retire so early?

**A.** I've been at Ailey for 11 years now, and I've always said that I wanted to leave at the top of my career. You want people to remember you in a certain light. And I have different career ambitions that I want to fulfill within the field of dance. I always want to have an affiliation with Ailey. But I think it's time to hang up my dancing shoes.

**Q.** How did you and Antonio decide to go to his hometown rather than yours?

**A.** We've been building this relationship with the school at COCA for years now. We sat down with the executive director and told her what we would want when it came time for us to retire, and she figured out a way to make it happen. I love Boston, but there was no other career opportunity for me back home. At COCA, Antonio and I will have to teach, but the most important thing is bringing structure to the program, and mentoring the kids, and getting them adequate training, and helping them on their career path.

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**Q.** Is it fair to say that without a place like COCA or Boston Youth Moves, you might not have become a dancer?

**A.** Oh, absolutely. I think Antonio and I both owe to our respective schools our idea of what is good dance and what is professionalism.

**Q.** How did you come by the name Kirven?

**A.** It was my father's name, so I'm named after him, and I believe it came from a friend of our grandfather.

Q. How did you get started dancing?

- **A.** My family put me in dance when I was younger. I also did karate and gymnastics. But when I was going to high school, the Boston Arts Academy was opening up, in 1998, and I auditioned, and I got in. And then I joined Boston Youth Moves, and that same year I saw Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater for the first time. So it was just a domino effect.
- **Q.** Is that when you knew you wanted to be a professional dancer?
- **A.** That was the point that really changed my perspective and made me want to be better. I started training at so many places and doing summer programs. There's only 24 hours in the day. I wanted to dance 25 of them.
- **Q.** What attracted you to the Ailey company?
- **A.** Not only were they amazing artists, they were chameleons of dance, if you will, and it just made me hungry to be that good. They weren't ballet dancers, they weren't modern dancers, they weren't jazz dancers, they were Ailey. And to me, that means you're good at it all.
- **Q.** How did you meet Antonio?
- **A.** Antonio and I actually met years ago when he was a member of DTH [Dance Theatre of Harlem] and I was a student at the Ailey School. We didn't get to know each other and become friends until much later in life, almost right before we had both gotten into the company. And then it just grew into where we are today.
- **Q.** Do you compete for the same roles?
- **A.** We don't. We do share a lot of the same roles, and what's also great is that there are some ballets that we're in together. I really just am inspired by him. I want to be better because he is so good.
- Q. When the Ailey company comes to Boston, how many ticket requests do you get?
- **A.** I think at this point I've requested at least 20 tickets over the course of the weekend. It's hard, because my entire family is there, and I also have a lot of friends there.
- **Q.** What pieces will you be doing this time?
- **A.** I'm dancing pretty much everything we're bringing this time, with the exception of Matthew Rushing's new work ["ODETTA"]. I'm in "Bad Blood" by Ulysses Dove, I'll be dancing "After the Rain" by Christopher Wheeldon, I'll be dancing "Awassa Astrige/Ostrich" by Asadata Dafora. Also "Uprising" by Hofesh Shechter. And of course, "Revelations."
- **Q.** Do you ever get tired of "Revelations"?
- **A.** I don't necessarily get tired of it. I'm at a point in my career where I don't have to do it as often as some of the younger, newer members of the company. If I'm in two larger works before "Revelations," sometimes they won't put me in it, and so when I do go back into it, it feels like I've had some time away and I can reevaluate and really deliver something new.
- **Q.** What will be the last piece you do in Paris?
- **A.** I actually don't get to make that decision. But I'm sure that whatever we're taking there, I'll be involved in. We're performing in Paris the entire month of July, so my last official performance as a member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will I think be Aug. 1. But Antonio's and my last US appearance will be June 21, at Lincoln Center. It's a very nice way to end our careers. We were really excited when the artistic staff asked us to stay on through the Paris engagement. That's not usually something that happens when dancers come in and tell them that they're leaving the company. But we're so grateful for them and for their support.