

## 'A true Ailey man' Long Branch native's dance career has legs

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By Karyn D. Collins

A dancer's career is a relatively short one. And long tenures with the same company are especially rare.

That makes Glenn Allen Sims' appearances with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater during its annual monthly season at New York's City Center even more noteworthy. Sims is marking his 15th anniversary with the company.

"It's a great feeling. I didn't think I would be here that long. No one ever says they're going to be in one establishment for 15 years. My original plan was to be here on the 10-year plan at the most," Sims, a Long Branch native, said during a recent interview during a break between rehearsals for the New York season.

"But I got caught up in loving the work, loving being around the dancers, learning so much from Miss (Judith) Jamison and Chaya and Miss (Sylvia) Waters and so many others who have passed along information to us about the work that we do.

"The next thing I knew, it was 10 years. It's a great feeling to have been here as a young man under the tutelage of (former director) Judith Jamison and to now be here in a new era of Ailey under Robert Battle. The years fly by, they really do."

Battle became the Ailey company's third artistic director in 2011. Under his leadership, the Ailey company has added works by modern dance masters like Paul Taylor and will add Jiri Kylian's popular "Petite Mort" this season.

This year's City Center season will reflect even more of Battle's imprint on the Ailey company. In addition to the Kylian addition, audiences will see the world premiere of "Another Night" by up- and-coming choreographer Kyle Abraham, the company premieres of Garth Fagan's "From Before" and Battle's "Strange Humors," and a revival of Ronald K. Brown's "Grace," that Sims said has been revised slightly by the choreographer.

Favorite repertory pieces including Ailey classics like "Revelations" are also featured throughout the season. Sims said the opportunity to be part of this new chapter in Ailey's history was one of the reasons why he has remained with the company. He noted that both he and Battle trained at The Juilliard School and were exposed to some of the same choreographic influences as part of their training.

"One of the things I wanted to do was to see what the transition would be like and to see which choreographers he would be bringing in," Sims said.





While the Ailey New York seasons are always eagerly anticipated, this one promises to have an extra significance. Longtime Ailey star Renee Robinson will end her 31-year career with the company with a final performance on Dec. 9. Robinson, the only remaining dancer in the company to have worked with Ailey, is also to receive the prestigious Dance Magazine award next month.

While Sims is frequently paired with his wife, Linda Celeste Sims, Robinson has also been a frequent partner for Sims over the years. Sims said working with Robinson has been one of the highlights of his career.

“I’ve learned a lot from her. She was here with Alvin. She was here from the beginning with Miss Jamison. The opportunity to be onstage with someone like that has been incredible. She’s taught me so many things. I thanked her for allowing me to be her partner,” he said. “The fact is that she helped me to be vulnerable onstage in that aspect of really showing myself to her as my partner.”

Sims, known as one of the company’s best partners, said Robinson gave him the ultimate compliment.

“She thanked me and said: ‘Glenn, you are a true Ailey man. There are some guys who partner but always 100 percent into it. You’re always 100 percent in it,’ ” Sims said. “Coming from someone who has worked with so many great partners, that meant a lot. Working with Renee has been a pure pleasure and joy and one experience I must say that I will always cherish as part of my experience being in this company.”