

Kirven Boyd Comes 'Home' with Ailey

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By Colette Greenstein

Kirven James Boyd returns to Boston with the legendary Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in the premiere of "Home" choreographed by Rennie Harris. The 27-year-old dancer grew up in Dorchester and Milton and attended the Boston Arts Academy. He has been with the dance company for eight years.

I spoke with Kirven by phone and he is looking forward to returning to Boston (he still has family in Dorchester and Roxbury), and performing before a hometown audience. Boyd talked about what it means to dance with the famed company and what's next on the horizon for him.



How would you describe the experience of performing at the White House in honor of Judith Jamison in 2010?

It was an amazing experience to just be in the White House and to be a part of that history.

I know you're featured in all the advertising that is gracing the buses, banners and print media all over Boston. Have you seen it? How does that feel?

People have been texting me and sending me different pictures. I'm excited about seeing it.

Did your parents know that you were going to be a dancer when you grew up?

When I was first put into dance it was a hobby and a pastime to keep me busy. When I saw Ailey for the first time, that's when I thought about a career in dance. I was 13 years old when I first saw Ailey at the Wang. I would see the pictures up on Storrow Drive and my friends and I would find a way to get tickets or sneak in. It's a really special time for me to perform in Alvin Ailey in Boston.

How do you prepare for a performance?

Usually, our day in the theater starts with rehearsals in the early afternoon for a couple of hours, [I] take a company class, and then prep for about an hour to get ready for the performance, which usually starts around 2pm or 3pm.

What can we expect from the Boston premiere of Home? Is it similar or different?

It's both similar and different to what we do. Similar in that it's not the company's first time working with Rennie Harris. It's a celebration of the life of Alvin Ailey who passed away in 1989. It brought the stories to life but not in a literal sense. There's still a longing for life, a celebration. It's inspired by the stories of the people who participated in the contest. [Bristol-Myers Squibb did a contest about people living with AIDS].

Will you be in all the performances in Boston? What's your favorite?

I'll be in all the performances except for Saturday afternoon. All the pieces being performed in Boston are really exciting. We weren't here last year. Fans can come to the theatre and be excited. It's a different experience for the dancers and the audiences.

Because of the history of Alvin Ailey and what it represents, do you feel that you should be giving back? Helping the next generation?

I definitely feel that because of what I've learned here, I'd really love to run an artist institution and direct a dance program. I want to help young artists develop their career and craft.

You've had the chance to travel all over the world. Do you have a favorite city? How are you received?

Paris is one of my favorite places in the world. I had a great time in Norway. Tel Aviv is [also] one of my favorite places. When we're there we go on the beach and get some sun before our performance. Dance is a universal language and when we go to places like Norway and Germany, we bring such different things. We show them parts of America.

You asked me earlier what's on the horizon for me. I'm still learning and growing. There's still a great deal of information that I can learn from. And with the change in the artistic director, it makes you curious to see what's coming from the company. I'm just developing myself as a dancer, and am still enjoying myself. It's wonderful to be able to wake up and do something like this. Its work, but you're excited to perform.

The Celebrity Series of Boston presents The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater April 26-29 at the Citi Wang Theatre in Boston. This performance marks Ailey's 42nd appearance with the Celebrity Series. Tickets are still available online at www.celebrityseries.org, or by calling Citi Charge at (866) 348-9738 or at the Citi Wang Theatre Box office located at 270 Tremont St. in Boston.