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ALVIN AILEY TO DAZZLE BAM

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Life is a dance with all of us dancers. We find ourselves leaping with joy and swaying with sorrow. We move through the rhythms and heartbeats that stimulate motion and give passion to our emotions. We are performers on the stage of existence, spinning and pirouetting through the passage of time.

The art of dance is most beautiful but does not come without pain or hard work as Alvin Ailey dance artiste Yannick Lebrun, originally from French Guiana, knows very well.

Lebrun was called to dance early on and began his training at the Adaclam School in his native country until he moved to New York in 2004. He secured a fellowship which allowed him to study at the Ailey School. Initially he was part of the second string junior company but by 2008, he joined the professional company of 31 dancers. Lebrun and his fellow troupe members will be taking to the Brooklyn Academy of Music stage where they will present their Encore Season at the Howard Gilman Opera House, located at 30 Lafayette Avenue in Brooklyn, from June 10 through June 20.

"Alvin Ailey offers a diversity of performance and style which encompasses classical, modern dance and African American culture and contemporary works," explained Lebrun. "This Ailey season includes three major acts. Revelations, which was created in 1960 by Alvin Ailey and is a ballet that celebrates the American dance position and culture. Ailey based this on his religious heritage. It's a ballet that speaks to everyone in the world; whether in Africa or Asia, everyone gets the meaning of this rather profound ballet.

"The second program is called "By Popular Demand" and is a program that features the best of Alvin Ailey's 20 years under the leadership of Judith Jamison. It is dedicated to Ms. Jamison and celebrates Ms. Jamison's 20th anniversary with the company with the culmination of a 20-city tour that started in February."

This program includes five excerpts which highlight popular ballets Ms. Jamison has brought to, or revived, in the Ailey repertoire. Featured will be Talley Beatty's "The Stack-up" restaged by Masazumi Chayo; Ronald K. Brow's "Grace" again restaged by Masazumi Chayo, Lor Lubovitch's "North Star" restaged by Ronni Favors and Masazumi Chayo's restaging of Ulysses Dove's "Bad Blood."

This will be the last year Jamison holds the reigns before Robert Battle becomes Alvin Ailey's new artistic director. Thus, the BAM program will be a tribute to Ms. Jamison in appreciation for the 20 years she has run the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre.

This season the Ailey American Dance Theatre will showcase pieces by Ailey entitled "Ailey's Spirit" featuring ballets entitled "Mary Lou's Mass, Revelations and Dancing Spirit." Mary Lou's Mass is a major Alvin Ailey work. A piece that is being performed for the first time in 35 years coinciding with the birthday of jazz luminary Mary Lou Williams.

The third program includes "Uptown" by Matthew Rushing and highlights the Harlem Renaissance era earmarking legends such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Josephine Baker, et al, while featuring the music of Fats Waller, Eubie Blake, and Nat "King" Cole, etc.

Also the program invites both youth and parents to participate in the ING Family Matinées which will be presented on Saturday, June 12 and 19 at The Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). Via the sponsorship of ING, there is a 15 percent ticket discount available via phone, online or at the BAM box office with code #12231. Audiences can enjoy a free post-performance "Meet the Dancers" discussion whereby interested parties can relate to the moving program and talk with the performers.

"I feel lucky to be part of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. From what I learned about Alvin Ailey, he was very generous. He never cared about a person's background or race. He always said that dance came from the people and should always be given back to the people. This year will make it 52 years since Alvin Ailey started his company in 1958," stated the young

performer.

Yannick Lebrun has performed works by choreographers Troy Powell, Matthew Rushing, Debbie Allen, Scott Rink, Thaddeus Davis, Nilas Martins and Dwight Rhoden and danced with the Francesca Harper Project Modo Fusion. He will be featured in a Robert Battle choreographed solo called INSIDE at BAM which is part of the Best of 20 Acts in the By Popular Demand Program on Saturday, June 12.

"It is an honor for me to dance in INSIDE since its representative of power, sensitivity and honesty. I think every artist aims for that at some point in their career so this will be very important for me. Also, I will be dancing in Mary Lou's Mass and Dancing Spirit which is a ballet that will pay tribute to Artistic Director Judith Jamison who will be replaced by Robert Battle in June 2011 when Judith Jamison retires," reaffirmed the talented dancer.

The dance company will go to England from Sept. 13 - Oct. 24 as part of their international tour. Then they will go to Tel Aviv in Israel from Oct. 25 to Oct. 31. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre will also start its annual season at City Center from Nov. 29 to Jan. 2.

The Ailey Extension is available to those who wish to take dance classes at Alvin Ailey, which is located at 405 West 55th Street (9th Avenue) NYC. Interested parties can call 212-405-9083 for further information.

For tickets for the Alvin Ailey Encore Series at BAM from June 10 - 20, call BAM Ticket Services at 718-636-4100 or visit www.BAM.org.