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Jet-setting with Ailey's Glenn Allen Sims: Welcome

By Glenn Allen Sims



Fifteen years. Wow. I'm entering my 15th year as a dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater! I remember my very first tour with the Company. We embarked on a 10-week international tour, and here I am 15 years later on an international tour with the exact same length of time. So many things have transpired in my life since then. I met the love of my life—Linda, my wife, who is also a dancer in the Company—and have been married for 10 years. I've danced at the White House and I've been written about in books. However, this time around I have the opportunity to share my experiences with you directly, which I'm really excited about. You will be my intimate guest with an exclusive VIP pass to the life of Glenn Allen Sims and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Now keep this in mind about our schedule; we left NYC on June 18 and we return August 29. That's not counting the 15-weeks of a U.S. tour that we'd just finished at the end of May.

First stop, Oslo, Norway. The Ailey Company hasn't been to Oslo in something like 20 years. There are so many wonderful things to experience in this quaint town, but with very little time to check out the sights, I have to pick what will have the most impact on me as an artist. So Linda and I visited the Viking Ship Museum and Vigeland Sculpture Park.

We were slated to perform at the Oslo Opera House, modeled after a glacier. The only downfall was that Ailey's cargo hadn't arrived and opening night was descending upon us. Our outstanding crew worked feverishly to construct new props, doing what they could, while we dancers had to bring whatever we had in our luggage to the theater to use as potential costumes. However, at about 5:30 pm, one hour and a half before curtain, the cargo arrived. WHEW! The performance began and the audience gave the usual welcome the Company receives from a European city—thunderous applause.



Three days after our final bow in Oslo, we performed in Moscow, Russia. I felt exhilarated to be there. Moscow is the largest city in Russia and Europe, as well as one of the largest cities in the world. There are so many things to see and absorb. The metro stations, Red Square, and let's not forget the Bolshoi Theater, home to the Bolshoi Ballet. The Russians seem to be in awe of the Company. There's press everywhere, not to mention random people wanting to take photos of us on the street. Our performances launch "American Seasons in Russia," a year-long initiative supported by the U.S. State Department that shares American arts to forge cultural connections between both countries.

Moscow has embraced us with open arms and there is something else that Moscow can now add to its baldrick. It is the city in which Robert Battle became the artistic director of Alvin Ailey.

Actually, on July 1, the date he became director, I danced the ballet *Anointed* by Christopher Huggins with Linda and it felt different. I'm not sure why, but it seemed as if we were dancing not just for the sake of dance and being artistic, but also for our new leader. When Robert addressed us during his first meeting as head of the Company, he said, "Remember that feeling when you were a child dancing and why you loved to dance. As long as you remember that feeling, we'll be all right." We kept those words with us when the curtain went up that evening.