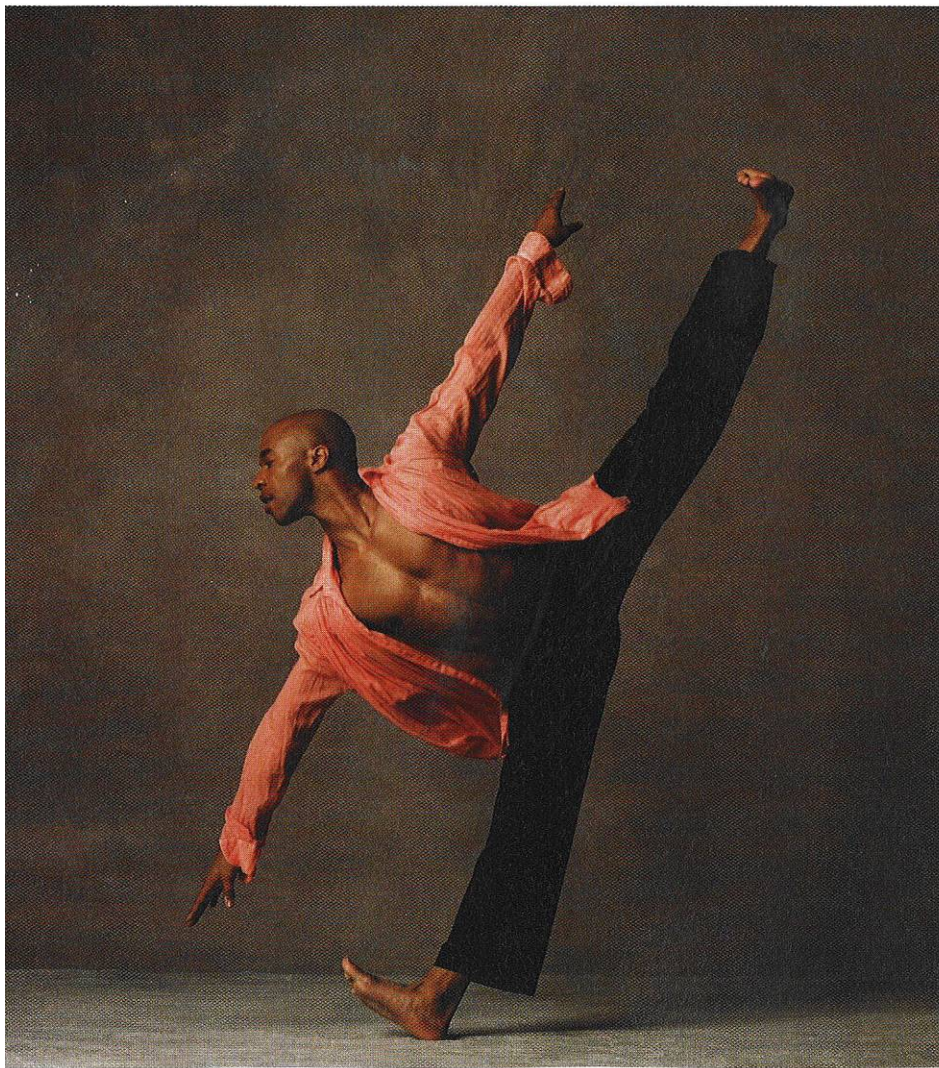


56 **SPOTLIGHT ON STAGE**
PRESENCE Advice from
eight dancers who've mastered it
By Alicia Zuckerman

Below: Matthew
Rushing.



Matthew Rushing

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

I think stage presence goes hand in hand with maturity. I've seen dancers that I feel didn't have strong stage presence, and then I've come back years later and they look like totally different artists.

My first year in the company we went on a European tour, and the late Gary deLoach was performing a solo which I perform now—*A Song for You*—that was choreographed by Mr. Ailey. I was speechless because it did not look like he was dancing, it looked as if a mature male was onstage expressing himself to music. I love it when it is so much a part of you that you don't have to do *at* it. You're not *trying* to be a dancer, you *are* a dancer. You're not trying to be an artist, you *are* an artist.

I believe everybody has a spirit and whenever you get connected to that spirit, it is part of what we see as stage presence. It's not just natural, it's supernatural. One time I did a guest performance of Mr. Ailey's *Pas de Duke* in Paris.

Afterward, one of the audience members came up to me, and in the little French that I understand, she said that she saw a "light" in my performance, and she put her hand over her heart. That really touched me.