

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

Choreographing *Another Night*

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By Kyle Abraham

Real Talk...

I'm so scared of this Ailey premiere! I've had dreams -- or better yet, nightmares -- where the dancers forget their costumes and enter the stage half-dressed or miss an entire entrance on opening night. And more than that, I'm scared of failing or letting people down. Have I made a work that challenges the dancers and audiences in a way that asks questions or triggers something for them? Are people expecting a work that deals with some kind of social consciousness similar to the recent world premiere of [Pavement](#), a new hour-long dance work inspired by John Singleton's 1991 classic, *Boyz n The Hood* and W.E.B. Dubois' renowned essays, *Souls of Black Folk*, seen through the ebbs and flows of Pittsburgh's historically black neighborhoods?

The duality of references in *Pavement* is exactly what lies at the core of the recently commissioned *Another Night* for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Where *Pavement* focuses on the dark disparity of a community struggling with genocide, *Another Night* is a celebration of a livelihood during a time in Pittsburgh's history that brought forth such jazz greats as Billy Strayhorn, Art Blakey and even close friend of Mr. Ailey, Lena Horn, who spent several years growing up in my favorite city (cue *Flashdance* steel mill scenes now)

"Music washes away the dust of everyday life" - Art Blakey

As a dance maker with an affinity for jazz music and the history of my hometown of Pittsburgh, PA, it was almost a no-brainer for me to want to use Art Blakey's interpretation of Dizzy Gillespie's classic, *A Night in Tunisia*.

He was the type of artist I hope to be, reaching outside the box and experimenting with layers and rhythmic structures -- the brotha was no joke! And I want to embrace all of that and expose and express the freedom I hear in his music throughout this 15-minute dance homage.

Although it might not seem like the most likely track for me to use in my work, I was hit right away by the drums and the improvisatory flavor I got from Blakey and his band The Jazz Messengers. Almost every dance work I've made in the past employs some element of improvisation.

I wasn't sure how the Ailey Dancers would respond to my brand of improv -- and it would be more than fair to say that I was just a little intimidated by the virtuosic dancing and their individual dance celebrity status working on my brand of post-modern dance gumbo. But the second I started that first rehearsal, playing songs like Tina Marie's "Square Biz" to break the ice, I knew I was amongst family and new-found friends.

We were able to laugh and joke throughout the process. And that's what the work needs. I need to see a community on stage. I want to see how free I can be with a direction and see where they take it as artists.

We work very collaboratively, and I count on the dancers for their feedback. If the movement I've given you doesn't feel good, then it probably doesn't look good either. I want it to feel good... and I want the audiences to feel good watching it.

I can't believe how many audiences will actually get to see this work!

I'm so honored that Mr. Battle gave me this platform to show my work at this stage in my dance life!

It fills me with such an insane amount of emotions of both joy and fear over expectations-- expectations I hope to meet and exceed.

I was out of the country for Thanksgiving, so I'll just say now how thankful I am to the entire Ailey institution for all of their support and guidance during this process. I was even invited to the all staff Ailey BBQ party! Now that's what I'm talking about!

Next Up:

Directly after the premiere of Another Night on December 5th, Abraham heads to Dublin to present the world premiere of Outsider, a newly commissioned work for Irish Modern Dance Theater.

Most recently, he was selected as the 2012-2014 New York Live Arts Resident Commissioned Artist (RCA). As the second RCA, Abraham will work with his company, Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion (created in 2006), as well as acclaimed composers and visual artists, to create new works set to premiere in September of 2014.

Kyle Abraham's Another Night will premiere on Wednesday, December 5th and be performed by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater throughout the company's New York City Center season through December 30th, followed by a 21-city U.S. Tour. For further information, visit: www.alvinailey.org.

