

ENTERTAINMENT

## Dancer's Empowering 'Revelations'

BY CLARENCE WALDRON

During a performance of the famed Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, principal dancer Renee Robinson wants the audience to feel "this is the only place in the world I want to be."

"We want the audience to feel special," says Robinson, who has been performing with Ailey 29 years, longer than any female dancer in the company's history. "It's like when you invite someone into your home, you work hard to make them feel comfortable and special. That's what we try to do."

Robinson is the last active member of Ailey Dance Theater who was personally chosen by founder Alvin Ailey and fans may recognize her as the standout performer in the company's signature dance, *Revelations*.

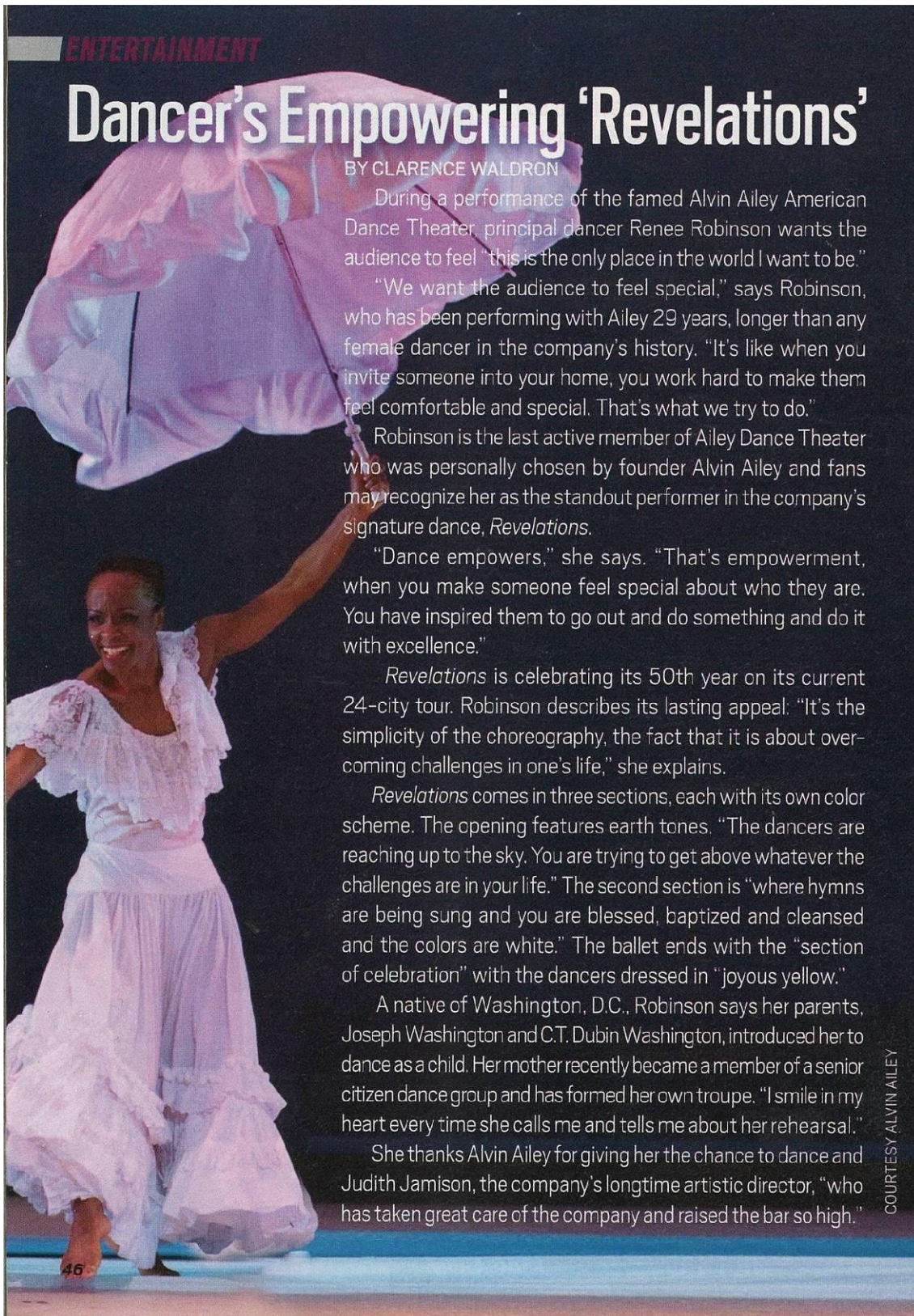
"Dance empowers," she says. "That's empowerment, when you make someone feel special about who they are. You have inspired them to go out and do something and do it with excellence."

*Revelations* is celebrating its 50th year on its current 24-city tour. Robinson describes its lasting appeal: "It's the simplicity of the choreography, the fact that it is about overcoming challenges in one's life," she explains.

*Revelations* comes in three sections, each with its own color scheme. The opening features earth tones. "The dancers are reaching up to the sky. You are trying to get above whatever the challenges are in your life." The second section is "where hymns are being sung and you are blessed, baptized and cleansed and the colors are white." The ballet ends with the "section of celebration" with the dancers dressed in "joyous yellow."

A native of Washington, D.C., Robinson says her parents, Joseph Washington and C.T. Dubin Washington, introduced her to dance as a child. Her mother recently became a member of a senior citizen dance group and has formed her own troupe. "I smile in my heart every time she calls me and tells me about her rehearsal."

She thanks Alvin Ailey for giving her the chance to dance and Judith Jamison, the company's longtime artistic director, "who has taken great care of the company and raised the bar so high."



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