



Young performers light up the stage at '1,2,3 Festival'

By [Robert Johnson/The Star-Ledger](#)

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Nic Ceynowa and Christina Lynch Markham of Taylor 2 in "Company B."

NEW YORK — Dance is a renewable resource, whose passions will never run dry. To sample this abundant energy, audiences need only visit the "1, 2, 3 Festival", and greet the next generation of youngsters discovering an irrepressible urge to soar. Now an annual event at the Joyce Theater, where it returned on Tuesday, the "1, 2, 3 Festival" showcases just-born talents in the feeder companies of three prestigious dance troupes: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, and the Paul Taylor Dance Company. In these "junior" ensembles, young artists polish their skills, smoothing the transition from the classroom to a professional career.

Ailey II, ABT II, and Taylor 2 alternate during most of the festival, but a special atmosphere prevails at the opening, when they bring their fans together for a shared night of whooping excitement. This year, the modern groups presented old favorites — Paul Taylor's "Company B," a poignant recollection of WWII dancehalls set to music by the Andrews Sisters, and Judith Jamison's more abstract and sinuous "Divining." The ballet dancers took a risk, offering a premiere by emerging choreographer Edwaard Liang.

Taylor 2's version of "Company B" is not identical to what the main company performs, and a major interest is in seeing how ingeniously Taylor has edited his work for a six-person ensemble — half the size of the original. Only one section has been omitted, but by changing the direction of exits and doubling roles, the thrifty choreographer achieves a model of efficiency. This version of "Company B" is not a patched hand-me-down, but a lighter and more intimate creation that delivers the same emotional knockout.

In "Company B," vignettes dramatize the characters' romantic illusions or sheer randiness, while jitterbugging tunes sound a wake-up call for young people just opening their eyes to life's experiences. Meanwhile, behind the revelers, shadowy silhouettes point to unspoken realities; soldiers take aim and shield their faces, and some men are more than comrades in arms. Just beyond the lights and music, a slaughter is taking place, intruding upon the party when dancers crumple to the floor.

Wonderfully resilient Justin Kahan danced two exhausting roles, the "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" and "Oh Johnny," without seeming to tire. On the spot Christina Lynch Markham is brisk and always ready to move, yet this performer also makes the most of soulful stillness in "There Will Never Be Another You." Latra Wilson brings delicious intrigue to "Rum and Coca-Cola." Remember those names!

Set in a stylized rainforest, "Divining" has a single featured role. In this quietly spiritual solo, Ghrai DeVore struck her wrists loosely and made her hands quiver to illustrate the twang of the berimbau. A nearly frictionless performer, she seems exceptionally mature. The depth of Ailey II was also evident, however, in ensemble dancing filled with dynamic contrast. After sustaining a balance or a smooth turn, a dancer may be snatched away. Yet the members of this group never lose their poise.

Although Liang's serviceable new piece, "Ballo Per Sei," offers a pleasant contrast between crisp pointework and a languorous upper body, ABT II has looked better.

1, 2, 3 Festival

Where: The Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Ave. at 19th Street

When: Friday-April 25 (Tuesday-Wednesday and Sunday at 7:30 p.m., Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Saturday-Sunday at 2 p.m.)

How Much: Tickets are \$10-\$59. Call (212) 242-0800 or visit joyce.org