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Ailey hits a 'Home' run

By LEIGH WITCHEL

THE Alvin Ailey company isn't just about "Revelations." New artistic director Robert Battle put together a program Tuesday night of four varied works — from revivals to a recent commission — to unveil his company's changing face. The makeup wasn't flawless, but there was much to admire.

Ailey's own "Streams" was made in 1970 to an eerie percussive score by Czech composer Miloslav Kabelác. The large cast balances and tilts across the stage in pale light, and the piece highlights the dancers' prodigious abilities — the men can whack their upraised hands with their extended legs. Still, "Streams" feels thinly developed, as if it's more about showing off than choreography.

East meets West — awkwardly — in Battle's 1999 solo "Takademe," here accompanied by an Indian vocalist reciting rapid-fire, tongue-twisting syllabification. Kir-

ven James Boyd's moves are showy, but keep up with the blistering speed of Naren Budhakar's vocals. Still, neither is enriched by the mix. Boyd even lip-syncs — a trivial and cheap joke.

Ohad Naharin's "Minus 16," also from '99, has some great, occasionally interactive, moments. A haunting duet to Vivaldi's "Stabat Mater" features Boyd and Ghrai DeVore grasping and butting one another in slow motion, as if trapped in the same dream. At the finale, a chunk of the audience wound up onstage alongside the dancers — amazingly, the volunteers somehow kept up with the choreography sprung on them.

But Naharin never knows when enough is enough. The cut-and-paste work seemed to end four times. Still, "Minus 16" seemed to be a hit with the audience, and the dancers look good in it.

The dancers also look great in Rennie Harris' "Home." They bust out in loose but

DANCE REVIEW

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

New York City Center, 131 W.
55th St., 212-581-1212.
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PAUL KAHN

Robert Battle lands with "Home," one of four pieces in his first season as Alvin Ailey's director.

intricate hip-hop, yet Harris gets more out of the moves than mere showiness.

"Home" was inspired by the struggles of people living with HIV. Matthew Rushing separates himself from a slowly undulating group: He's shaking, but with ecstasy or chills? The music heats up, and so does the dancing — with stellar, grooving per-

formances by both Rushing and Alicia Graf Mack. But even in the heat there's a chill: a community of people together, but isolated.

The piece is Battle's first commission, and it highlights the company's new but natural face. And, for now, there's no face like "Home."