

The New York Times

Thursday, May 1, 2008

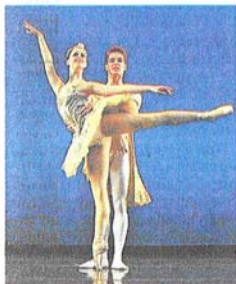
The Refinement of Youth, That Inexhaustible Ore

To see young dancers perform at the start of their careers is to see dance in a poignantly pure or raw state. They have not developed star personas or

JENNIFER DUNNING

DANCE REVIEW

the practiced look of longtime corps dancers. The world is theirs, or so they hope. And the 123 Festival, which opened on Tuesday night at the Joyce Theater, offers a chance to see gifted youngsters on the brink of



Top, Justin Kahan, left, and John Eirich of Taylor 2 in "Arden Court"; above, Kaia Annika and Joseph Gorak of ABT II in "Raymonda."

123 Festival

Joyce Theater

careers. All three participating companies — Taylor 2, Ailey II and ABT II — performed together on opening night but will have their own individual programs through May 11.

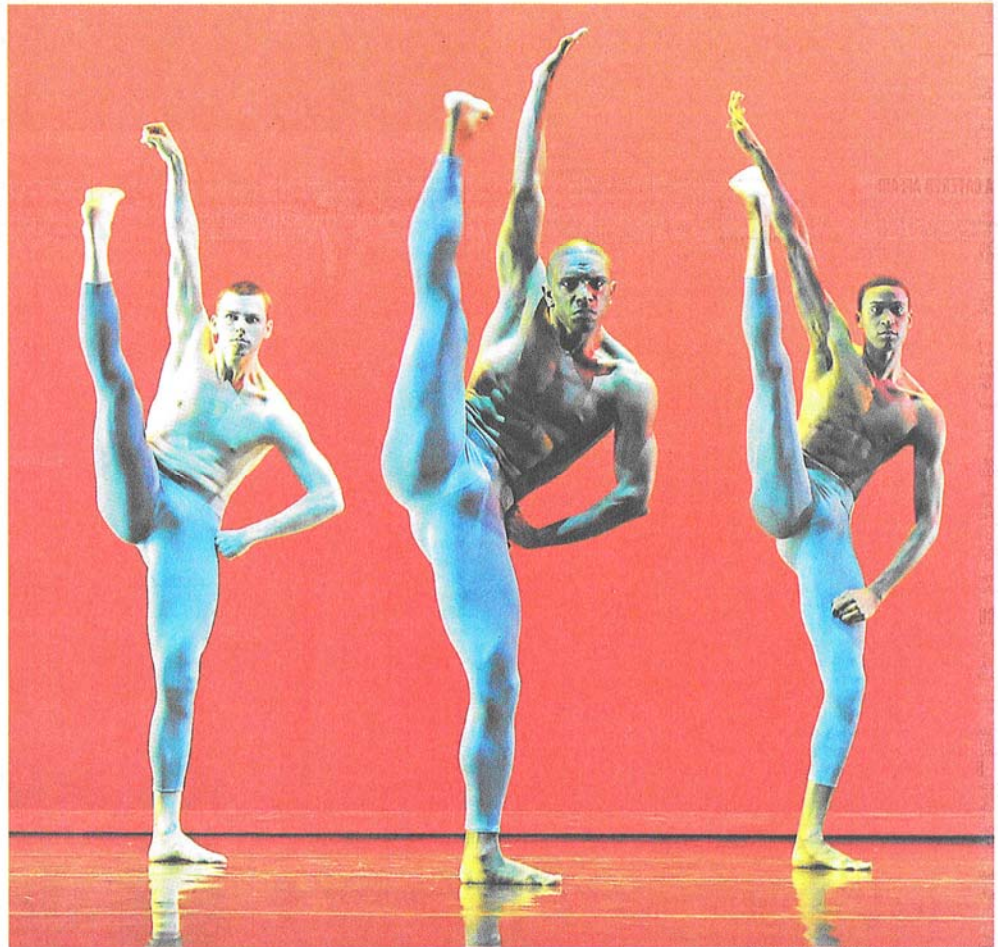
These troupes serve as conduits into senior companies and showcases for work by new choreographers. The junior companies tour, exhaustively, throughout the world, often appearing in theaters too small for full productions by the senior troupes. These juniors are, in effect, messengers of dance.

The six dancers of Taylor 2, who performed Paul Taylor's "Arden Court," were impressive in the way they have achieved the state of controlled abandon that is a crucial element in Mr. Taylor's style. No matter how high they flew, they maintained the weightedness that made the Taylor performance earth to Ailey's fire and ABT's air.

The men (Justin Kahan, John Eirich and Nic Ceynowa) needed to be more defined in their attack. The women (Alison Cook, Jamie Rae Walker and Latra Wilson) triumphed, looking as if they could step right into the senior troupe. Ms. Walker stood out in particular for her spirit and lightness, with Ms. Wilson giving every move a special glow.

Alvin Ailey's "Streams" requires an extra maturity. It is not the most accessible of his works. One pleasure of the Ailey performance was that they managed to give their youthful all to

The 123 Festival continues through May 11 at the Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Avenue, at 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 242-0800 or joyce.org.



Members of the Ailey II company performing in "Streams" as part of the 123 Festival at the Joyce Theater Monday evening.

the piece, with its fast-moving diagonals and sultry pas de deux, without losing the polish more experienced dancers would bring.

It was hard not to smile as

the dancers of ABT II, American Ballet Theater's second company, sailed through the Petipa classic "Raymonda," staged by Irina Kolpakova, with additional choreography by Wes Chapman,

the company director.

They looked so very young, despite their technical accomplishment, especially Kaia Annika, the lead ballerina, for all her fierce imperiousness. Led by Jo-

seph Gorak, the men looked better here, bringing more individual presence to their dancing. But first-night nerves were slightly evident in all three companies.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES