

DECEMBER 23, 2012

THE WEEK AHEAD

THE members of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater aren't interchangeable, but some rise to the top faster than others. The elegant Jacqueline Green is everywhere this season, dancing lead roles in Kyle Abraham's "Another Night" and Jiri Kylian's "Petite Mort" as well as — and even she can hardly believe this — carrying the umbrella in the "Wade in the Water" section of Ailey's 1960 masterpiece "Revelations."

As this Baltimore native put it, "The only role that I've ever wanted to do in 'Revelations' was umbrella. It's royal, it's mature. She's a woman."

Ms. Green, who turns 23 on Wednesday, began training at the relatively late age of 13 at the Baltimore School for the Arts. Six months later she was dancing on point. "I was like, 'It's so much easier up here,'" she said, laughing. "I love point to this day."

After Ms. Green danced with Ailey II, Robert Battle hired her during his first year as artistic director of the main company. In her initial rehearsals, she said, she felt weird. "I'd be in the back just looking, like, 'These are my co-workers?'" she said. "Are you serious? It still hasn't hit me that I'm here."

Gia Kourlas caught up with Ms. Green at the Ailey studio, where they discussed her whirlwind of a career. These are excerpts from their conversation.

Q. How did you end up at Baltimore School for the Arts?

A. It was all in trying to figure out which high school I would go to. My mom wanted me to go to a very good academic high school. There was also the transportation issue. B.S.A. is downtown, where she works. She was like: "You could go there. They have good academics." I said: "Mom, why would I go there? I don't have an art. I can't draw, I don't dance. I don't do anything." She was like, "You're flexible."

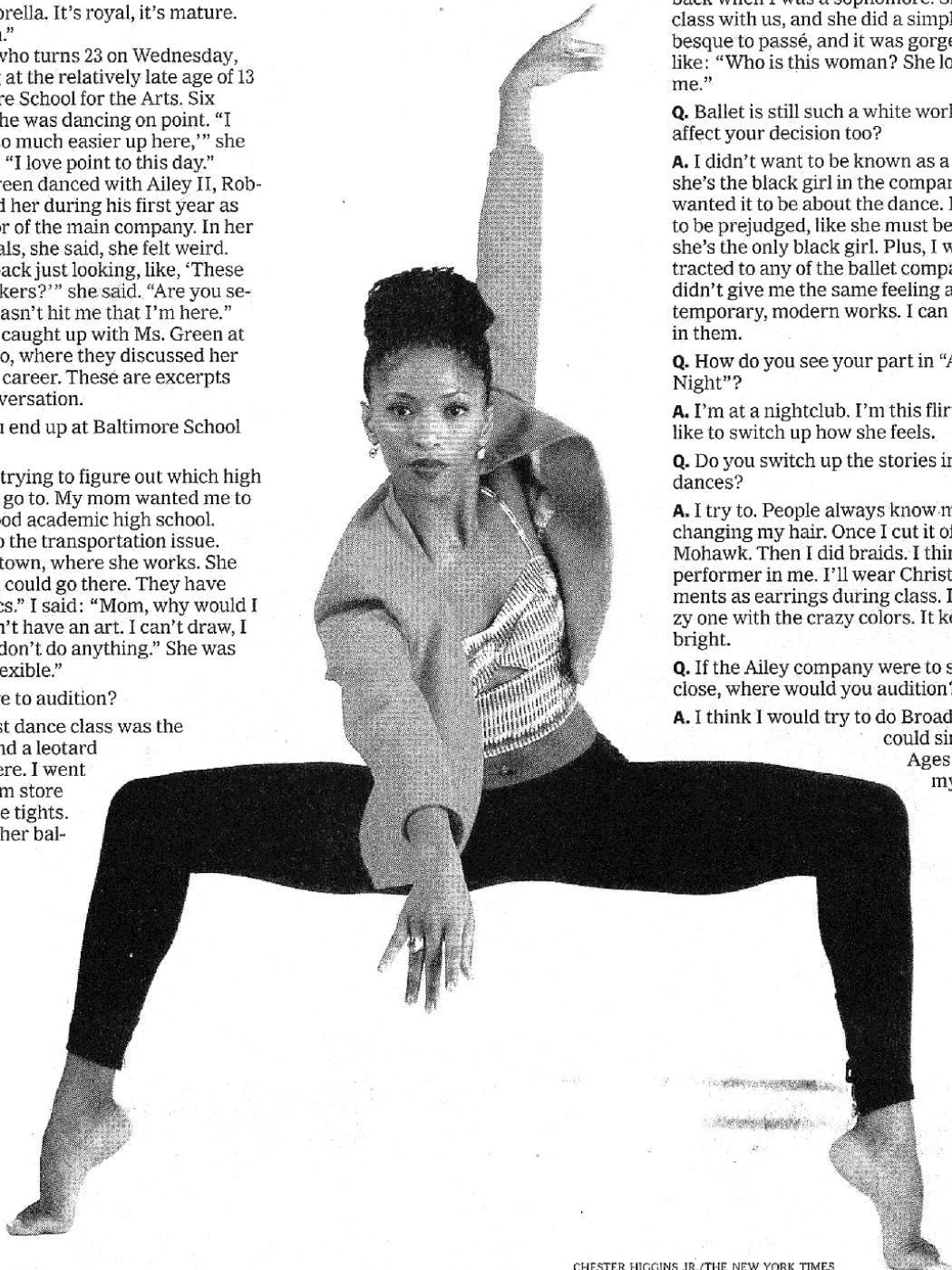
Q. Did you have to audition?

A. My very first dance class was the audition. I found a leotard from somewhere. I went to some random store to pick up some tights. And those leather bal-

Snapshot

Jacqueline Green

For Quick Success, Be Flexible



let shoes from Payless? That was the only place I'd seen ballet slippers, so I got those and went to the audition. I remember them taking my foot and stretching and pointing it. I was like, "Why are they touching me?"

Q. Did you want to be a ballet dancer?

A. I did.

Q. What happened?

A. One big factor was that Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell [from Alvin Ailey] had graduated from my high school, and she came back when I was a sophomore. She took class with us, and she did a simple arabesque to passé, and it was gorgeous. I was like: "Who is this woman? She looks like me."

Q. Ballet is still such a white world. Did that affect your decision too?

A. I didn't want to be known as a token: "Oh, she's the black girl in the company." I just wanted it to be about the dance. I didn't want to be prejudged, like she must be good if she's the only black girl. Plus, I wasn't attracted to any of the ballet companies. It didn't give me the same feeling as the contemporary, modern works. I can be anything in them.

Q. How do you see your part in "Another Night"?

A. I'm at a nightclub. I'm this flirty girl, but I like to switch up how she feels.

Q. Do you switch up the stories in all of your dances?

A. I try to. People always know me for changing my hair. Once I cut it off and had a Mohawk. Then I did braids. I think it's the performer in me. I'll wear Christmas ornaments as earrings during class. I'm that crazy one with the crazy colors. It keeps people bright.

Q. If the Ailey company were to suddenly close, where would you audition?

A. I think I would try to do Broadway. If I could sing, "Rock of Ages" would be my jam.