



ANDREA MOHRN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Arden Court** Members of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performing this Paul Taylor piece from 1981, on Thursday at City Center, in a program that also featured "Home" and "Minus 16."

## A Growing Repertory for Swaying Hips and Busy Feet . . .

When Robert Battle took over as the artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater last year, it was the equivalent of being given the helm of a luxury cruise ship. In the scrappy modern-dance world most directors are still in paddle boats.

**GIA  
KOURLAS  
DANCE  
REVIEW**

So far under Mr. Battle's direction it has been smooth sailing for the Ailey company, which presented its second program at City Center on Thursday evening. The lineup showcased three dances that Mr. Battle introduced to the repertory last season: Paul Taylor's "Arden Court," Rennie Harris's "Home"

and Ohad Naharin's "Minus 16," a repeat from opening night. When viewed together, they reveal much about Mr. Battle's aim to make the Ailey dancers multidimensional performers: He's giving them artistic options.

In "Arden Court" they return to the essence of modern dance. Mr. Taylor's 1981 work, a vibrant showcase for six men and three women set to William Boyce's baroque music, remains a technical test. Its rapid-fire footwork, unexpected changes of direction and jumps that spring into the air from nothing are still slightly beyond the Ailey dancers' grasp.

That struggle is good. It engenders a raw edge that draws out

the specificity of Mr. Taylor's movement, as the men indicate in the powerful adagio section. Here they plant their bodies and shift slowly through space like breathing sculptures and eventually cartwheel their way across the stage in pairs — with one body upright and the other upside down.

Rachael McLaren is as delicate as a bird as she takes crouching steps on her toes underneath Glenn Allen Sims's extended leg. In their duet Michael Francis McBride and Samuel Lee Roberts knit front and back crossover steps with low jumps that bite at the air around their ankles. And when Linda Celeste Sims, sup-

**Adding material gives performers a chance to show more dimensions.**

ported by two men, performs a somersault in the air, you can hear her body laughing.

The next work from Mr. Taylor can't enter the repertory soon enough, and the same could be said for the work of Mr. Harris, whose "Home" unlocks a starkly different world. The dance, spon-

sored by Bristol-Myers Squibb, was initiated by Fight H.I.V. Your Way, a contest in which people told stories about survival. Mr. Harris, a much-admired hip-hop choreographer from Philadelphia, sets his dance in a club: a home away from home.

Nearly from the start Dennis Ferrer's driving "Underground Is My Home," which is part of the score, creates a rich sense of place. Through his subtle layering of house and hip-hop dance, Mr. Harris creates a pulse and follows it to the end.

The phenomenal Matthew Rushing begins in the middle of a group of bodies; raising his arms he claps his hands and slips be-

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More photos of the company in performance:

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tween the others. His body, as he starts to get the kinks out, is like liquid. As groupings of dancers break in and out of movement — three kick their heels forward in unison while four others undulate their hips — it's like watching a spotlight pass over bodies on a dance floor. Mr. Harris mixes two worlds, stage and club. When it's over, life will go back to normal, but for now, this is freedom.