

The New York Times

December 9, 2012

SUNDAY ROUTINE | ROBERT BATTLE

Dance Is Never Far From His Mind

Last year, Robert Battle became the third person to head the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater since the company was founded in 1958. During the troupe's season in New York, which runs through Dec. 30 at City Center, Mr. Battle attends both the matinee and evening performances. At other times, the day is more relaxing (though he also can't seem to stay away from Ailey's Midtown studios). Mr. Battle, 40, has for the past 14 years shared his Upper West Side apartment with Nina Miller, a voice teacher, who he says has become "like family."

ROBIN POGREBIN

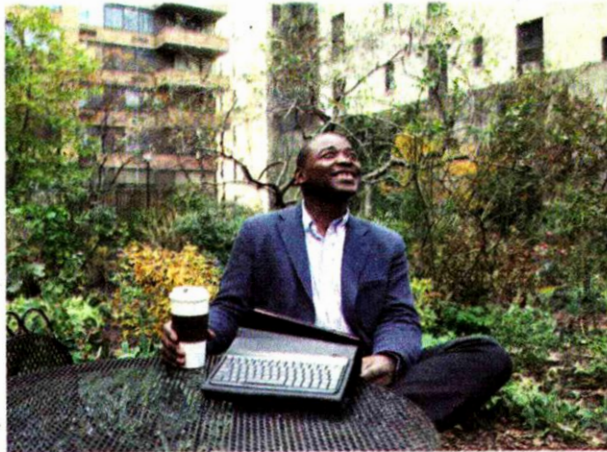
FACEBOOK FIRST I usually get up around 9, no matter what time I've gone to bed the night before. I like to feel that I'm not attached to my electronics, but being the artistic director of this company, I usually check my e-mail, and I check our Facebook page. We now have over 200,000 Facebook fans. I check to see the comments they've made on photographs or performances they might have seen.

A POD OF COFFEE One of my prize possessions is a Keurig, the coffee machine you put the pod in. I turn that on. There's a lovely garden across the street from me called the Lotus Garden. You have to be a member. I never knew it was there, because it's on top of a parking garage. One day, a friend said, "Why don't you have your coffee in the Lotus Garden?" I thought he meant a Chinese restaurant.

ABOVE THE CROWD I'm thinking about the rehearsals and all of the things related to the company — centering myself for the week ahead. So it's reflective but also a preparation. When I was growing up in Miami, I would always go in a huge mango tree where I could also feel a certain sense of meditation. Finding this garden is very similar to that.

GYM BEFORE FOOD I try to make my way to the gym. Usually it is a bit of a battle — no pun intended.

BUFFET ON BROADWAY I love to catch lunch at an Indian restaurant, Indus Valley. Tandoori



chicken, chicken tikka masala, lamb — that's why I love the buffet, because I can't decide. I'm a protein guy, and I force a few vegetables in. I gave up rice unless it's brown rice, because when I stopped dancing in 2001, I not only became a big choreographer in terms of position, but also in terms of stature.

TO AILEY We have a lot of young people on a Sunday taking classes — from the tiniest to the largest children. It's just bustling with activity. Sometimes I will go into an empty studio and practice a little Chopin, exercise a different part of my brain.

EGGPLANT PARM Right near the Ailey building is Puttanesca. Sometimes I go there with Ailey colleagues, like Carolyn Adams, who danced with the Paul Taylor Company and now teaches at the Ailey School. She is a very good friend and mentor to me. I always order the eggplant Parmesan. They also have good martinis. People think of New York as a cold, big-city environment, but there are lots of places that feel so neighborhoody. Everybody knows you; they know what you do. That means a lot to me. If the food's good, that's great. But if you have that feeling about it, that familiarity, it's lovely.

CULTURE OR COOKING Sometimes I catch Jazz at Lincoln Center or a performance at the Joyce Theater. I also like cooking things that take a long time, like a beef stew. It's sort of like choreography for me — you're putting things together. If I'm nervous, I cook; if I'm happy, I cook; if I'm sad, I order in.

SCREENS BEFORE BED I usually have homework of watching videotapes or DVDs of the company, or of other choreographers' work. I switch from CNN to MSNBC, and when I just can't take it anymore, I go directly to the Food Network. Then I lie down and finally face the fact that I need to get ready for the next day and see fabulous dancers in the morning. If I'm being good, I go to sleep around midnight, 1 a.m. If I'm being average, it's 2 or 3.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HIROKO MASUIKE/THE NEW YORK TIMES