

## In Two Nights of Mixed Choreography, a Dancer's Star Remains a Constant

In 1942, Alvin Ailey choreographed "Reflections in D" to Duke Ellington's music as a vehicle for himself. At only three minutes, it was meant as a transition dance, allowing time for other dancers to change their costumes between pieces. But in

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... recent tasks can produce enlightening results, as this work proves. Clifton Brown, making his debut in the solo on Wednesday night at City Center, dove inside the music, providing voluminous breadth to his curving arms as he fluidly moved from one grounded position to the next.

Making something so rigorous look easy — and Mr. Brown does, with liquid plasticity — is no small achievement, though in many ways that's also part of what makes Ailey's fluid, inherently theatrical choreography so significant. On Thursday night there were no Ailey dances on the program, and the absence was strongly felt until Thyia Tharp's "Golden Section" kicked in, giving the dancers (including the daring Khara Douglass) something meaningful to sink their feet into.

The same program, which included Camille A. Brown's endlessly peppy "Groove to Nobody's Business" and Talley Beatty's strange — though not in

### A versatile Alvin Ailey dancer sustains her trajectory.

a fascinating way — "Road of the Phoenix. Since then, she has also starred in the company premiere of Robert Battle's "Unfold," a 2006 duet set to an aria sung by Leontyne Price from Gustave Charpentier's opera "Louise."

Linda Celeste Sims, a dancer of spellbinding authority and flexibility, arches in an unsupported backbend. Like a weeping willow, her hair nearly grazing the hem of her long orange dress, she remains still until Mr. Brown, standing in the shadows, slowly approaches.

In the program notes, the choreographer refers to the duet as a look at first love, yet it seems strangely somber. The dancers continue Mr. Battle's penchant for arching and spiraling shapes that morph from one anguished

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs through Dec. 31 at City Center, 211 West 55th St., New York, (212) 562-2122, [alviniley.org](http://alviniley.org).



Clifton Brown and Linda Celeste Sims of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Robert Battle's "Unfold," set to a Leontyne Price aria from the opera "Louise." ANDREA MASON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

image to the next: when Mr. Brown walks over Ms. Sims's body, she grabs one of his legs until he crumbles, then crawls across his body as if it's a corpse. Like "Reflections in D," "Unfold" is over before you know it, but this time such brevity doesn't

equal an act of purity. Instead, "Unfold" is piercingly slight. Ms. Sims, one of the company's most prized members, is astounding in her versatility. Despite her small stature, she possesses the stage, as she proved on Wednesday in Ailey's "Memo-

ria" and Eliza Moore's "Treading" opposite Matthew Rushing, and on Thursday in Ms. Tharp's "Golden Section."

Making her debut in "Memoria," her body rippled from shape to shape, holding balances and tilts with aplomb; few dancers

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anywhere have such control, at once vibrant — she never stiffens into a shape — and purposeful. Ailey dedicated "Memoria," a

luminous 1979 dance, to his friend Joyce Trisler, as the program states, for her joy, beauty, creativity and "wild spirit." He could just as easily have been describing the incandescent dancing of Ms. Sims. This season, she is a revelation.