



Photo: Patrick McMullan

## André Leon Talley Will Ride Horses, But He Will Not Dance

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Dance aficionado André Leon Talley rearranged a trip to China, presumably for Chanel's pre-fall show in Shanghai, so he could make it to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's opening Wednesday night, which was also a celebration of Judith Jamison's twentieth year as artistic director. (Just so you get a sense of his level of dedication, Denzel Washington, who was co-hosting the gala with his wife, Pauletta, had to cancel because of a filming conflict.) ALT sat with Jamison and star dancer Jamar Roberts at the Hilton Hotel, as giant cutouts of dancer silhouettes towered above him, and talked about his love of dance, horses, and trees — but not, of course, of those unfair people who are denying *The September Issue* its shot at an Oscar.

**Did you ever want to be a dancer?** No, I never wanted to be a dancer, but I have always respected everything that Alvin Ailey ever did, and I've always liked the dance of Martha Graham. I've always admired dancers, the discipline of dancers. The only thing I've ever wanted to do that I haven't done is ride a horse. I think dancers are the most extraordinary people, because they can make their bodies art. And this is one of the most glamorous companies, ever. It's always a beautiful opening night. It's full of glamour. This is Jamar [gestures to amazing dancer sitting next to him]. Look. He's hungry now. And he's in *Sean John*! Sean John! The tie and everything! Sean John dressed the guys and Badgley Mischka the girls. I respect the company so much. I respect everything that Judith has done. I go to their rehearsals. I worship them!

**You go to rehearsals?** Yes, they invite me and I walk in and sit and just watch for an hour. Like at lunch hour from one to two or twelve to one. It's close to my office. Have you met Eric Lewis? He's a composer. He makes fabulous music!

**Have they taught you any dance moves?** No, I wouldn't be so presumptuous.

**Will you get on the dance floor tonight?** Don't ask me to dance. I won't dance! Like Fred Astaire. There's a certain moment when you have to maintain your dignity. Now, if it wasn't a large room and it was someone's private party, I might get up and dance. But I love this opening-night gala for Alvin Ailey.

**Where does the desire to ride horses come from?** Because I've always thought that the discipline of the horse and the man and dance are the same thing to me. It's ballet. It's ballet!

**How so?** Because the man and the horse are ballet. The communication between the man and the horse in a race, that's sort of a little dance. And I've always thought the costumes of men on horses are the same as people on dance floors.

**One other thing. *The September Issue* is out of contention for Best Documentary at the Oscars.** It is?!

**The Valentino documentary made the list.** I don't know what happened. I think that's unfair.

**Sorry to tell you.** I didn't know that news!

**Are you still playing tennis?** I'll do horse and dance only. The horse I will do.

**What do you want for Xmas?** I love to have people give me trees as gifts. For my garden.

### Saplings?

No, not a sapling. A little bit older than a sapling. Something that's evident that it's a tree that's gonna grow.

### What kind of tree?

I like a Chinese blossom/Chinese fountain tree. It looks like a fountain. It's a hybrid. It grows like a fountain and it has pink flowers in spring. But I'll do a Japanese Maple any day.

By: Jada Yuan