

December 30, 2010

Troupe punches things up

By LEIGH WITCHEL

IMAGINE an evening at Alvin Ailey without “Revelations.” It’s pretty rare — ask director Judith Jamison about the complaints she gets when that signature work isn’t on the bill.

But Sunday night, the troupe showed some other works — a few revivals and some they’ve not danced before — all with that trademark Ailey punch.

Robert Battle’s “The Hunt” led off. To a driving recorded beat, six men dance full-throttle, growling and showing their teeth or moving their arms like birds of prey. They pair off, leap and spar like

rams in spring.

Battle, who takes over from Jamison in June, understands how to make an applause machine. The men are shirtless, and this nonstop showpiece lets them flaunt both technique and their bodies.

Jamison’s “Forgotten Time” was made in 1989 for The Jamison Project, right before she took the reins at Ailey. Faith is the subtext as the dancers look upward, searching in the gloom. One of the best moments is a fluid pas de deux where Akua Noni Parker moves from the ground to Yannick Lebrun’s shoulders with seemingly no transition.

Geoffrey Holder’s 1968 “The Prodigal Prince,” inspired by the life and work of Haitian painter Hector Hyppolite, closed the evening in a swirling, red-and-orange pageant of spirits and gods.

It was a night of ace entertainment, if little subtlety. “Revelations” is back for the rest of this week, including tomorrow’s performance with Sweet Honey in the Rock and Sunday, when the season ends with a Jamison tribute.

DANCE REVIEW

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

City Center, 131 W. 55th St.;
212-581-1212. Through Sunday.