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## Short, spirited -- and on pointe

By LEIGH WITCHEL

**W**ednesday night's gala opening of Alvin Ailey's season at City Center was short and glittery -- a sea of tuxedos and gowns, amid which were the Rev. Jesse Jackson, India.Arie and Ivanka Trump, among others.

Celebrating her two decades at the helm, Judith Jamison sauntered out -- joyous and regal -- to ask, "How y'all doin'?" before plugging the five-week run.

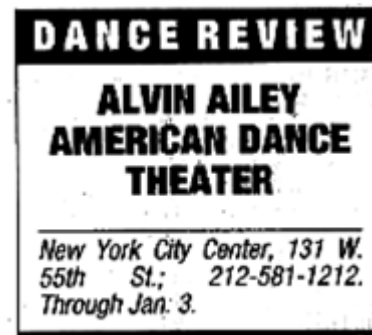
The dancers began with a brief excerpt, "Strength," from Jamison's "Here . . . Now." It was short, but even if it were nothing more than an excuse to hear Wynton Marsalis and his ensemble cut loose, it was worth it.

Robert Battle created a short piece for the occasion, "Anew," danced by Jamar Roberts and Clifton Brown, both shirtless in white pants. Another short excerpt was presented from Jamison's "Divining," made a quarter-century ago.

It seems unimaginable to end an Ailey gala with anything other than his

"Revelations." This time, the spirituals were sung and played live, and the verve in the pit matched the stage -- particularly Robert Mack singing "I Wanna Be Ready" and "Sinner Man."

Roberts and Brown returned to the stage with Kirven James Boyd and



stopped the show. At the finale, every tuxedo and gown in the audience rose to clap along.

Whether it was Marsalis, Mack or the dancers, everyone performed in the moment, improvising when they felt inspired. Go tomorrow, and "Revelations" will look much the same, but it will also be different: These dancers dance as the spirit moves them.