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STL's own Antonio Douthit dances the role of a legend at the Fox

By Kenya Vaughn



St. Louis' own Antonio Douthit will appear in Dance St. Louis' production of *The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater* on March 11-12 at the Fox Theatre. Photo by Wiley Price.

In the most recent edition *Vogue Magazine*, the iconic fashion publication gives props to men of style for their own spin on Bohemian chic. On the left of the page is Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter John Legend. To the right is rising blactor Anthony Mackie, who caught the eye of the mainstream last year with his starring role in the Academy Award-winning film *The Hurt Locker*.

But bursting center page is St. Louis' own Antonio Douthit.

He is in a pair of jeans and hanging suspenders. Captured in motion, his contorted frame nearly fades the others into oblivion. His pointed toe even seems to threaten a swift kick to Legend's jaw.

The other men may have a leg up with respect to household acclaim, but in this particular image, all eyes initially land on Antonio: *Who is that?*

That also is the reaction to Douthit whenever he takes the stage – so much so that dance legend Judith Jamison took notice, and the world

followed suit.

Less than two years after Jamison asked Douthit to join the legendary Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, he was praised by *New York Times* dance critic Gia Kourlas for his 2006 performance in “Sinner Man,” an element within Ailey's iconic *Revelations* ballet.

“The splendid Mr. Douthit is not so much a star in the making: he's arrived,” Kourlas wrote.

“I don't know, maybe people see the St. Louis in me,” Douthit said of his success in dance. “There are so many diamonds in St. Louis people never get to see. There is so much talent that doesn't get exposed – but we have it. The only thing holding us back is that we can't get to the East or West Coast.”

Five years after his arrival, Douthit will return home to once again show what he – and St. Louis – is made of. Dance St. Louis will present Douthit and the rest of the Ailey troupe next weekend as they celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the *Revelations* ballet and the transition of leadership from Jamison to Robert Battle.

“I'm a little saddened that Ms. Jamison is leaving her position and I won't be working under such a great legend in the same way,” Douthit said. “But change is good. And it's also exciting to work for someone so eager and so ready to take over this job.”

As Battle steps into Jamison's role behind the scene, Douthit will have some even bigger shoes to fill upon his return to the Fox Theatre.

He was one of three dancers (along with Jamar Robbins and Glen Sims) selected to portray Ailey in *Anointed* – a special tribute ballet by choreographer Christopher Huggins.

It's fitting that the first time Douthit will perform as Ailey will be on the stage where he was introduced to him and his company, thanks to a field trip with COCA as a teen.

"It's an honor and mind-boggling at the same time," Douthit said. "Performing as Ailey and being placed in the same category with those two men – it's another chance for me to advance myself as an artist. And who gets the opportunity to say that they portrayed Mr. Ailey in anything?"

But he will bring some of his St. Louis style to the role.

"I'm doing his steps, but putting some of me in it – it will be Alvin Ailey's choreography but Antonio Douthit the dancer and the person, because that's what Mr. Ailey would have wanted," he said.

"He wanted dancers to show themselves through his movement – show who you are and your human spirit through his dance."

Dance St. Louis will present The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on March 11-12 at the Fox Theatre. For more information, visit www.dancestlouis.org and for ticket information, visit www.metrotix.com.