

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

## Strange Humors (1998)

*Choreography by Robert Battle*  
*Music by John Mackey*  
*Original costumes by Missoni*  
*Costume Redesign by Jon Taylor*  
*Lighting by Burk Wilmore*



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Antonio Douthit & Jamar Roberts in Artistic Director Robert Battle's *Strange Humors*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.

Robert Battle's riveting piece *Strange Humors* was choreographed in 1998 for Parsons Dance Company. His fellow Julliard classmate John Mackey created the contagious blend of African and Middle-Eastern music that Battle describes as a "choreographic argument."

The physically powerful male duet contains influences of tango, Martha Graham and hints of hip-hop. After the piece opens with a soft but rich string melody, the music begins to pick-up igniting the male

dancers to come together on the stage performing a fury of high karate-like kicks and sudden falls. Battle said he placed these sudden falls "right in the middle of the work where people are sort of lulled into it" thus creating a false sense of security of what is going on onstage. This adds excitement to the enticing score as the interpersonal relationship between the two dancers builds.

"... satisfying... it dealt with mysterious passions."  
*The New York Times*, Jack Anderson - June 5, 2000

"an inventive competition between two bare-chested men...The collage of karate kicks, sudden falls on the back and high springs into the air held no terrors for them."  
*The New York Times*, Anna Kisselgoff – November 20, 2000

"As the instruments came together, so did the dancers, in sequences that showed aggression and conflict as well as playfulness and humor. At the end, they dropped to the floor, falling straight backward in remarkable unison."  
*The Portland Press Herald*, Jennifer Brewer - Mar. 10, 2010

"Battle is not afraid to mix styles or even cultures."  
*Richmond Times - Dispatch*, Julinda Lewis - Sept. 9, 2006

"It was a dazzling display of strength and flexibility."

*Albuquerque Journal*, Jennifer Noyer - July 30, 2000

## **John Mackey**

John Mackey holds a Master of Music degree from the Julliard School and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with John Corigliano and Donald Erb, respectively.

John has received numerous commissions from the Parsons Dance Company, as well as commissions from the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra, New York City Ballet's Choreographic Institute, the Dallas Theater Center, the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, the New York Youth Symphony, Ailey II, Concert Artists Guild, Peridance Ensemble, and Jeanne Ruddy Dance, among many others. Recent commissions include works for the American Bandmasters Association, the Dallas Wind Symphony, and a concerto for New York Philharmonic Principal Trombonist Joseph Alessi. As a frequent collaborator, John has worked with a diverse range of artists, from Doug Varone to David Parsons, from Robert Battle to the US Olympic Synchronized Swim Team ( The team won a bronze medal in the 2004 Athens Olympics performing to Mackey's score, "Damn.")

John has been recognized with numerous grants and awards from organizations including ASCAP (Concert Music Awards, 1999 through 2008; Morton Gould Young Composer Awards, 2002 and 2003), the American Music Center (Margaret Jory Fairbanks Copying Assistance Grant, 2000, 2002), and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust (Live Music for Dance commissioning grants, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2005), and an NEA grant in 2007. He was a CalArts/Alpert Award nominee in 2000.

## **Strange Humors Music Credit Information**

Song: **Strange Humors**

Composer: John Mackey