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Robert Battle, the new artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, will start a choreography lab next season.

Ailey Awards New Choreography Fellowships

By FELICIA R. LEE

Making his creative vision public for the first time, Robert Battle, the incoming artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, will announce a major new choreography program on Thursday as he unveils the highlights of the company's 2011-12 season.

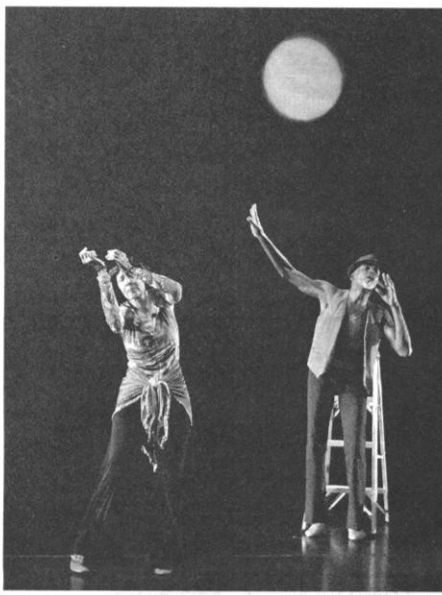
With the premiere of a dance by the hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris; a new production of Ailey's 1970 plotless dance "Streams"; and the choreography lab, Mr. Battle characterized the first season under his leadership as embracing the past and the future.

"I am thinking of lineage, connections, the past, present and future," said Mr. Battle, 38. He was appointed last year to succeed Judith Jamison and officially takes over in July. "I am anxious and excited to put into motion the wheels of my vision," he said during an interview in his office in the company's headquarters at Ninth Avenue and 55th Street in Manhattan.

Mr. Battle selected some 20 choreographic works for the next season of one of the country's most successful dance troupes, which regularly draws strong ticket sales and big audiences. For the first time, the company will add to its repertory a work by Paul Taylor, his complex 1981 "Arden Court." There will be the world premiere of a piece about H.I.V. and AIDS by Mr. Harris, and the company premiere of "Minus 16," by the Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin. There are also new productions of the solo "Journey" by Joyce Trisler, an early member of Ailey, as well as Mr. Battle's solo "Takademe," with its Indian Kathak dance rhythms. And of course Ailey's signature work, "Revelations," will return.

Discussing his choices for the season, which begins on Nov. 30 at City Center, Mr. Battle noted that "Minus 16" breaks down the wall between dancers and the audience.

In particular, though, he was eager to talk about the New Directions Choreography Lab, which will grant \$9,500 resident fellowships to four emerging or mid-career artists each year. For the inaugural class of the program, which has Ford Foundation support, the choreographers are Adam Barruch, who studied at Ailey and Julliard and now has his own company; Camille Brown, whose work has been seen at Sadler's Wells in London,



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Carmen de Lavallade and Gus Solomons Jr. will be advisers.



BOB EMMOTT

Rennie Harris will have a new work about H.I.V. and AIDS.

among other places; Joanna Kotze, a Movement Research faculty member; and Malcolm Low, a former dancer who now works with Crystal Pite and her company, Kidd Pivot.

Those choreographers, identified by Mr. Battle and selected by a panel of dance professionals,

will receive stipends, work with Ailey dancers and be paired with "creative advisers" during seven-week residencies at the Joan Weill School of Dance. At the end they will be invited to show their work informally and receive feedback, but there is no requirement for a final performance or

commission.

The program will benefit the dance world, not just Ailey, Mr. Battle said. Choreographers have few chances to learn outside of commissions, which come with time constraints and other pressures, he said. Those pressures lead them to "reach into their bag of tricks" rather than to take risks in public, Mr. Battle said. The lab, he added, would not focus on results. "Maybe at the end they'll have a kernel of a great idea," Mr. Battle said, but that is not a requirement of the program.

The grants might also foster new work, which Ailey would welcome. Despite the company's financial and popular success, some critics have argued that its repertory is thin that it relies too much on "Revelations." With Ms. Jamison set to step down, Ailey's challenge was to find an artistic director who could inject fresh energy into the company while keeping alive the tradition that filled seats.

Mr. Battle had no institutional models in mind when creating New Directions, he said, although City Ballet began a major program almost 11 years ago, the New York Choreographic Institute.

"It's a good thing to have more of these things for choreographers," said Ellen Sorrin, managing director of the institute. "It's probably one of the most difficult challenges for choreographers to find space, dancers, time or music rights. It's one of the art forms in which you need a lot of things to produce something."

The venerable dancer and choreographer Carmen de Lavallade, one of the lab's first four creative advisers, said it "completes both Ailey and its school," and it institutionalizes informal relationships that have long served emerging and seasoned artists. She added, "It keeps both sides alive."

"The idea that young choreographers need mentoring is catching on like wildfire because we see so much uninformed and mediocre choreography," said Gus Solomons Jr., also a creative adviser. Mr. Solomons Jr., a founding member of Paradigm, a repertory dance company for veteran performers and an arts professor at New York University, cited efforts at the Joyce SoHo and Dance New Amsterdam as well as City Ballet.

He added, "We all steal ideas from each other, and it's a chance for me to see how things have changed over the years."