

Dance review: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

October 22, 2010

By Kelly Apter

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL THEATRE

WHEN they're out on tour, the dancers in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater end every show performing Revelations. Would that we could all end each day watching it. For there are moments in Alvin Ailey's 1960 work that are as close to perfection as dance gets. Gravity-defying leaps, muscle-clenching steadiness, perfect leg extensions – and the kind of joyous movement that sends your hands clapping, body swaying and heart soaring. But Revelations is so much more than that. Be you atheist or believer, Ailey's homage to the traditional spiritual songs of the American South can reach out and touch an audience like few other works.

That said, Christopher Huggins also moved us in all the right ways with his incredibly poignant Anointed. Choreographed to mark the imminent departure of artistic director Judith Jamison (the woman who took over the company after Ailey's death in 1989) the piece overflows with emotion. Moby's stirring score forms the perfect backdrop for Huggins' movement, which goes from a tender duet between Jamison and Ailey, through a powerful all-female ensemble piece, to a wonderful celebration of the company as a whole.

Jamison's 1993 work Hymn also reflected the achievements of Ailey and those who continued in his wake. Matching energetic, synchronised choreography with transcripts of interviews with Ailey, Jamison and former dancers, the piece showed just what these dancers are capable of – which is pretty much anything.