

## Alvin Ailey troupe delivers 'Revelations' old and new

March 26, 2011

By Jean Lenihan

On its final tour with artistic director Judith Jamison, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performed its signature piece, "Revelations," as well as strong new work at the 5th Avenue Theatre. The troupe performs through Sunday.

### Dance review |

Alvin Ailey is "Revelations" and "Revelations" is Alvin Ailey.

Cited as the most performed dance in the world, Ailey's unforgettable 1961 suite, set to African-American spirituals, still gives goose bumps — from first sight of the stately, grounded flock of eagle-like creatures in "I Been 'Buked" to the staggered, skidding plunges of the three runners in "Sinner Man." Only when the incantatory "Rocka My Soul" begins are the chills displaced by a Pavlovian pang of sadness, signaling this is the final song.

The company has always offered "Revelations" on at least one of its programs at each stop. No matter how much one wants to support all-new repertory, it has never been easy for ticket buyers to opt for the less familiar. The good news on this 24-city outing, which includes Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre — marking the final year in the reign of beloved artistic director Judith Jamison, 68 — is that audiences no longer need to choose. In honor of its 50th anniversary, "Revelations" closes every bill, preceded by a wonderful film with interviews and rare dancing footage of Ailey.

But even better news is "The Hunt" (2001) — a work for six men choreographed by incoming artistic director Robert Battle — which may eventually feed the audience's heat-seeking fix just as well as "Revelations" does. Featuring a percussion recording by Les Tambours du Bronx, Battle's unstoppable group work is a war-cry, a fight, an endurance race and a wildly original dance. To see it unfold is to drift between a visceral attraction to the pounding, progressing movements and the awareness of a choreographic vision so inventive it becomes like a seventh onstage presence — gesturing us to see animals, men, community, gods and mortals.

Also on the opening night bill: the premiere of "Anointed" (2010), a debut work by former Ailey dancer Christopher L. Huggins, set to racing electronic music by Moby and Sean Clements. Huggins' work features raw, meaty partnering that clearly demonstrates Ailey dancers' superiority in expressing coiled energy, suppleness, speed, weight, ballon and stillness.

The evening offers a more imagistic, poetic moment in Camille A. Brown's "The Evolution of a Sacred Feminine" (2007), set to tunes sung by Ella Fitzgerald, Betty Carter and Nancy Wilson. Face cloaked by a jaunty hat and wearing half a suit jacket that works like an anatomical cutaway, Rachel McLaren wittily travels on a journey to selfhood, a delicate mini-revelation of its own.

**Alvin Ailey American  
Dance Theater**

**8pm Saturday and 2pm  
Sunday**

**5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre  
1308 Fifth Ave, Seattle**

**\$30-\$75 (206) 625-1900 or  
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