

The Telegraph

Ailey 2, Glasgow King's Theatre, review

Watching these highly trained dancers doing something you could only dream of doing is a sheer delight.

Rating: * * * *

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By Mark Brown



Brilliance of the choreography: Ailey 2 in Robert Battle's *The Hunt* Photo: Eduardo Patino.

There are occasions as a dance lover when one's greatest pleasure comes not from the brilliance of the choreography or the splendour of the music, but from the sheer delight of watching highly trained dancers doing something that you could only dream of doing. So it is with this touring programme from the acclaimed Ailey 2 dance company, the younger sibling of New York City's world-renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Ailey's famous combination of social outreach and intensive dance training has created a young company of extraordinary physical virtuosity. In a change from the brochure, Glasgow was offered the second of the company's two current performance programmes.

Not that there were any complaints about the show opening with Troy Powell's *The External Knot*, a series of pieces danced to the music of Philip Glass and Robert Schumann.

The work is particularly well suited to a young company, as it both demands great feats of delicacy and youthful strength, and also showcases dancers singularly, in pairs and as an ensemble. The collective element is at its most impressive in the concluding section, danced with breathtaking energy, synchronicity and flamboyant, organised chaos to Glass's dramatic *Funeral of Amenhotep III*.

The company's capacity for delicacy is to the fore in the excerpt from Jessica Lang's *Splendid Isolation 2*. Fana Tesfagiorgis dances the piece – which is performed to beautiful medieval religious song in a dress which fans out in a circle across the floor – with tremendous grace; even if there something a little bold, almost harsh in the lighting which cuts against the spirituality of the piece. The high tempo performance of the opening piece is repeated in Robert Battle's beat-driven choreography *The Hunt*; a piece which epitomises Ailey 2's penchant for placing representational, quite literal dance beside more abstract, contemporary work.

All of which was perfect preparation for the justly acclaimed closer, Alvin Ailey's own 1960 piece *Revelations*. Danced to African-American spiritual music, it puts into beautifully executed movement the cultural, political and religious history of black America.

That is a brave and ambitious thing to do, and, like the music of Miles Davis, the songs of Nina Simone or the writing of Maya Angelou, it succeeds with resonating power.

Touring UK until March 16. danceconsortium.com