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Dance

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A duke, three kings and a lost Ailey find their throne

Three Black Kings returns to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. By **Gia Kourlas**

In 1976, Alvin Ailey paid homage to Duke Ellington in a season that produced a particularly majestic dance: *Three Black Kings*. The work—depicting King Balthazar, King Solomon and Martin Luther King Jr.—hasn't been seen in its entirety in more than 30 years. In 2008, Masazumi Chaya, associate artistic director of Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, staged the final section (the tribute to King), revealing Ailey's essence in the transfixing, lush choreography. This season, Chaya has brought the entire production back. Each section, he says, is "almost like you're going into a different room." Along with the group finale, the first movement is pure masculinity; the second is gentle and dreamlike. "It's so simple," Chaya says. "It's not big. There's not any trick in there, so you have to be you to dance it. Alvin was smart. Instead of giving 100 percent of the information, he just gave 70 percent. Thirty percent, the dancer creates. That way, it's richer."

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

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On why he dances: "I dance because I feel that it's a gift. You know when, say, a friend gives you a ring or some earrings, and they ask, 'Do you ever wear that?' I've never seen you wear that.' I feel a responsibility, in a way, to do it, no matter how much I hate it. It's a beautiful gift. Not everyone can dance."

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs at City Center through Jan 2.

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL KOLIK



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ROYAL FLUSH
The leads are, from left, Glenn Allen Sims (King), Jamar Roberts (Balthazar) and Clifton Brown (Solomon).