

Tuesday, June 1, 2010

Dance Review: Ailey II: A Force to be Reckoned With in the Dance World



Usually when you're watching second companies perform you anticipate small mess-ups: slips, nervousness, unclear pirouettes, lack of confidence. However, this was far from the truth with Ailey II at the Joyce Theater. As part of the 1.2.3 Festival, Ailey II, along with ABT II and Taylor 2, take the stage for a shared week of performances.

Ailey II has reached above and beyond the caliber for a 2nd company. Under the direction of Sylvia Waters and Troy Powell, this company has the total package: maturity, presence, and artistry. Now combine these qualities with beautiful dancers, flawless technique, and

exhilarating choreography then you have an excellent show.

The evening opens with Thang Dao's *Echoes* (2008), featuring the entire company in a beautifully crafted contemporary ballet piece. Although there isn't a clear narrative, the piece does have strong intention that creates a thru-line for the work. Performing with strong fluidity, Chang Yong Sung tears-up the stage during a solo section of the piece.

Christopher Huggins' *Essence* (2002), performed by Ghrai DeVore is the highlight of the evening. In this heartrending work, we witness a woman going through a kaleidoscope of emotions in an effort to express the multifaceted aspect of a woman's character. Ghrai DeVore, is simply stunning in this solo, fully expressing each emotion and really taking the risk of going the extra mile to make the audience experience her raw emotion. DeVore is mesmerizing, strong-spirited, and naturally beautiful in her element.



Carlos dos Santos', *Proximity* (2009), adds an interesting flavor to the line up with a vibrant and cleverly groovy quartet. Jarvis Mckinley has this urban quality and virtuosic presence that magnetizes your attention to him when he's on stage. He is definitely a talent to watch out for! Similarly Fana Fraser, has a sensuously chic flair that complements her exquisite movement.

The evening closes with Judith Jamison's epic work *Divining* (1984). This piece really captures the essence of Ailey II and the foundation of what makes them extraordinary. There is something deeply rooted in this work that the entire company connects to and manifests in their performance.

DeVore does it again in this piece as the leading lady. Let's just say that she is the kind of dancer that makes you want to come up with a new word to express the idea of "fierce."

When it comes to second companies, Ailey II is in a class of its own and standing strong next to the first company. I look forward to seeing what new young talent comes through this company and how these gorgeous dancers evolve as their own artists over the next couple years.

iDANZ Critix Corner

Official Dance Review by Simone Sobers

Performance: Ailey II

Choreography: Thang Dao, Christopher L. Huggins, Carlos dos Santos, Judith Jamison

Venue: Joyce Theater

Show Date: Wednesday, March 14, 2010

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