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BY IAN SPELLING

THE RECORD

SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

WHAT: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday, 8 p.m. Saturday, 3 p.m. Sunday.

WHERE: NJPAC, 1 Center St., Newark; 888-466-5722 or njpac.org.

HOW MUCH: \$23-\$92.

"It's been a blink," Tina Monica Williams says, marveling at the fact that she just celebrated her 10th anniversary as a dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

"It's been exciting. It's really rewarding. I think 10 years at any job is a benchmark, but 10 years in this career, at Alvin Ailey, to work with Judith Jamison for 10 years, has just been truly amazing. I feel blessed."

Williams, still at the peak of her dancing prowess, and the Ailey troupe are in the midst of an ambitious 20-city tour that's seen them perform world premieres, new renderings of venerable classics and everything in between. Speaking by telephone from her parents' home in Livingston, Williams, now of Manhattan, discussed her upcoming shows at NJPAC. She'll be on view in the pieces "Uptown," "Revelations" and "Hymn."

"All of the pieces this year at NJPAC are really exciting," Williams says. "

'Uptown' was choreographed last summer by Matthew Rushing and it's about the Harlem Renaissance. It goes back to the 1920s. Matthew did a lot of research about the different styles of dance, the different music, and it's a glimpse into history that's rather closely connected to us. It happened in New York, but it wasn't something I had a lot of awareness of. It was an amazing period in time where so much art, music and dance came into existence.

"There's a great part called 'Divas' where I play a character that's reminiscent of Ethel Waters, this amazing woman who had an amazing journey," Williams continues. "I think when Matthew choreographed the ballet he tried to put people into characters he thought they were reminiscent of, and so it's a lot of fun to see who I am in relationship to this woman and to let that all out onstage."

Jamison originally choreographed "Hymn" in 1993; it's a full-company piece punctuated by contributions from Anna Deavere Smith. And veteran Ailey followers will recognize "Revelations," as Alvin Ailey himself created the piece in 1960, with African-American religious music, including holy blues, gospel and song-sermons, complementing the dancers' moves.

"'Revelations' is 'Revelations,' Williams says, laughing. "It's another reason to stay here for 10 years, just to be able to do that ballet over and over again. This year at New Jersey PAC I'll be doing two different roles in it, and it's an honor to be a part of that legacy. Nothing gets old about it. It just keeps renewing itself."

Williams "who kicked off her formal training in 1994 at the Ailey School" is still quite young. However, the definition of "young" in the real world differs greatly from the dance-universe interpretation. Williams has given her next act some serious thought, and her plans may surprise some longtime fans.

"I'm not a dancer that wants to choreograph," Williams says. "I would love to teach, especially young people, elementary school grades. But as far as a career, I love the traveling aspect of what we do. Even before I joined the company I loved to travel and I've always been interested in different cultures.

"So I would really love to go into the hospitality industry, possibly even tourism, especially with all the things that are happening with sustainable tourism. I want to be able to help cultures be experienced without being exploited. Working with Ailey has been a real eye-opener in that way.

"I know that Alvin always said, 'You need to go out and live your life as well so that you can come back and be a full person onstage and bring all these different experiences to the different roles you're given,'" Williams concludes. "So that's what I'd like to do whenever 'next' comes, be a part of helping other people experience that as well."