

APRIL 2009

REVIEW

ballet.*magazine**Alvin Ailey  
American Dance Theater**Program C: 'Festa Barocca', 'Solo',  
'Revelations'**March 2009  
Berkeley, Zellerbach Hall**by Renee Renouf*

© Steve Vaccariello

[Alvin Ailey 'Festa Barocca' reviews](#)['Festa Barocca' reviews](#)[Alvin Ailey 'Revelations' reviews](#)[recent Alvin Ailey reviews](#)[more Renee Renouf reviews](#)[Discuss this review](#)

(Open for at least 6 months)

While it may have the glossy building near Lincoln Center in New York City, The Alvin Ailey Company seems pretty much an annual fixture in Berkeley's late winter performance calendar. The Ailey company's 50th Anniversary celebration included six days at Zellerbach Hall in Berkeley. It must be easily a decade the Ailey has graced Zellerbach, at least half that contributing to Berkeley Area youth with its Ailey Dance Camp.

The Ailey doesn't serve all its goodies up in one program; the local season included three programs. In choosing program C, I picked a memorable one, demonstrating the company had reached a notch higher range if that is possible, certainly adding to its formal side while delivered

with winks and a healthy exposition of pitos to Handel!

But first, the audience watched a brief documentary celebrating the fifty years of the Ailey enterprise, featuring early photographs and footage of Ailey, Jamison, members of the company, Executive Director Sharon Gersten Luckman and displaying, with understandable pride, the Ailey's glass building near Lincoln Center.

In Festa Barocca, Mario Bignonetti, the Italian choreographer and former artistic director of Alterballetto, was aided by brilliant satin skirts lined with gorgeous contrasting colors designed by Mark Hoppel and worn by the entire ensemble. The two pas de deux were executed with the dancers stripped to form-tight Milliskin, stunning every last one of us with startling partnering, acrobatic yet with abandoned intimacy between the dancers. Danced with anything short of



tenderness, feet on head, chest to chest as the bodies rolled from a crouch, woman hung from a grasp of the foot to end parallel along the man's shoulders, the maneuvers would have been cruel and exploitive, male or female. Instead, both pas de deux were paeans to feeling, celebrating connection. Constance Stamatou and Clifton Brown, and Celeste and Glenn Allen Sims proved that with proper intent almost anything can evoke transcendence.

This was not the only elegance to the lengthy piece. Hope Boykin introduced the exploration in a solo memorable in the use of hands and arms to Handel's lively cadences, marking the tempo with a style, a delivery that made me want classical dancers to come take notes. *Festa Barocca* may well become Ailey's second signature work.



Hope Boykin in *Festa Barocca*  
© Steve Vaccariello

The San Francisco Ballet retirement performance of Peter Brandenhoff, Stephen Legate and Yuri Possokhov was the last time Hans van Manen's Solo was danced



in the Bay Area. No such poignancy or nostalgia was evident in the rendition of Abdur-Rahim Jackson, Yannick Lebrun and Antonio Douthit; they lent the increasingly dizzy demands of the Bach violin music a certain jazzy inflection, dancing with definite zest.

The program finished with Revelations, as crisp, glorious and compelling as I have ever seen the Ailey signature work. Clifton Brown convinced us he wanted to be ready and the Sims were equally earnest in being asked to be fixed by Jesus. Stamatiou, Vernand J. Gillmore and Renee Robinson waded in the water with relish, their feet deliciously flexed, torsos, undulating. Particularly exciting were the jetes of Anthony Burrell, Yannick Lebrun and Gillmore in Sinner Man; they were not only nervous and hunted in keeping with the admonition in the lyrics, but seemed to jump higher than waist level. Ailey's capacity to build to the finale, Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham, never fails to excite Berkeley's audience, the men crisp in their strutting assignments, the women in yellow flounced gowns, floppy hats and palm fans pointing their toes, wiggling into their seats and invariably into our hearts.



---

[{top}](#)   [Home](#)   [Magazine](#)   [Listings](#)   [Update](#)   [Links](#)   [Contexts](#)

---

...apr09/rr\_rev\_alvin\_ailey\_american\_dance\_theater\_0309.htm      revised: 17 March 2009

Bruce Marriott [email](#), © all rights reserved, all wrongs denied. [credits](#)

written by Renee Renouf © [email](#)

design by [RED56](#)

---