A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF THE LIVES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF TWO SELECTED CONTEMPORARY BLACK MALE DANCE ARTISTS--ARTHUR MITCHELL AND ALVIN AILEY--IN THE IDIOMS OF BALLET AND MODERN DANCE, RESPECTIVELY

A DISSERTATION

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BY

JACQUELINE QUINN MOORE LATHAM, B.S., M.S.

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To

Anne Schley Duggan

my genuine friend and

my inspiring mentor

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Arthur Mitchell

Outstanding Black Exponent of Ballet in the United States of America

Alvin Ailey

Outstanding Black Exponent of Modern Dance
in the United States of America

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CHAPTER I

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The present study is concerned with the lives and contributions of two contemporary black male dance artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--exponents of two universally accepted art forms, ballet and modern dance, respectively. In order to place these internationally recognized black dance artists in historical perspective, the biographical material is preceded by a summary of dance as a fine art and with a brief overview of the evolution of ballet and modern dance as two forms of fine art.

Dance as a Fine Art

From historical indications, man danced before he spoke, made music, or created objects of beauty. Curt Sachs states that " dance is the mother of the arts."[1] Sheldon Cheney, historian of the drama, corroborates Sachs' statement in his explanation of the significance of dance in primitive societies:

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[1]Curt Sachs, World History of the Dance (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1963), p. 3.

> After the activities that secure to primitive peoples the material necessities, food and shelter, the dance comes first. It is the earliest outlet for emotion and the beginning of the arts. . . .
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> . . . . . .
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> Not only did drama as such--the art of which action is a pivotal material--arise out of primitive dance . . . . Music too, . . . traces its ancestry to the sounds made to accentuate the primitive dance rhythm, the stamping of feet and clapping of hands, the shaking of rattles, the beating of drums and sticks. Dance, then, is the great mother of the arts.[1]

Dance as an art form may be classified in two major categories--dance as a folk art and dance as a fine art. The distinction between the two art forms can be made with respect to whether or not the dance is performed with an audience or for an audience.[2] Dance as a folk art is communal in nature, encompassing such broad fields as traditional ethnic dance or folk dance as well as some of the avant-garde dance of the late 1960's and the early 1970's.[3] Dance as a fine art, the major concern of this study, may be distinguished by a definite line of separation between

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[1]Sheldon Cheney, Three Thousand Years of Drama, Acting, and Stagecraft (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1929), pp. 11-12.

[2]Anne Schley Duggan, "Class Notes," HPER 531W, College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, Summer, 1966.

[3]Reference is made here to such contemporary works as those of Deborah Hay, where the involvement of the audience is a part of the choreography.

the performers of the dance and those who view the performance.[1]

When the sole purpose for the creation of art is aesthetic, to satisfy man's desire for beauty, the art form is classified as a fine art.[2] According to Duggan, there are three categories of fine arts: (1) arts which exist in space or the visual arts, which include architecture, sculpture, and painting; (2) arts which exist in time or the audible arts, which include music, poetry, and drama; and (3) art which exists in time and space, which is dance.[3]

In this present era of free artistic expression, the products labeled "fine art" which are placed before audiences are many, varied, and sometimes questionable. It has become increasingly necessary, therefore, to establish criteria or standards by which an artistic work may be evaluated. Most authorities seem to agree with Duggan that the following criteria should obtain in manifestations of fine art: (1) creativity, (2) definiteness and clarity of form, (3) communicativeness, (4) independence, (5) high level of skill, and (6) enrichment of personal experiences.[4]

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[1]Duggan, "Class Notes," Summer, 1966.

[2]Margaret H'Doubler, Dance, A Creative Art Experience (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 55.

[3]Duggan, "Class Notes," Summer, 1966. [4]Ibid.

The basic element of all artistic expression is creativity.[1] This does not mean that the material used to shape the object of art is new but rather that the artist has found a new way to ". . . fashion his works as objects of beauty."[2] His product of art emerges because of his ". . . desire to probe for fresh, penetrating views of his life experiences and because of his desire to give outward form to his unique and imaginative response."[3] When the artist becomes aware of the effects of his expressive efforts upon himself and upon others and consciously shapes his creation into a definite and clear form for presentation, the final product satisfies another criterion for the evaluation of fine art.[4] This criterion implies that the work of art be ". . . internally structured and sensitively integrated . . ." and that it has "organization and unity,"[5] whereby diverse elements ". . . achieve collectively an aesthetic vitality which except by this association they

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[1] Ibid.

[2] H'Doubler, Dance, A Creative Art Experience, p. 49.

[3] Alma M. Hawkins, Creating Through Dance (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 11.

[4] Duggan, "Class Notes," Summer, 1966.

[5] Hawkins, Creating Through Dance, p. 94.

would not possess."[1] The artist will insure that his work communicates its raison d'être and needs no further explanation for the purpose of clarification.[2] The artist will further insure that his work is a complete entity within itself--that it will be independent and self-sufficient.[3] The work of art will be indicative of a high level of skill within the range and capabilities of the creative artist.[4] The serious artist will see that his technique is perfected sufficiently to convey his intention to the spectator.[5] Finally, the artist will see that his work provides enrichment of the personal experiences of the spectator.[6] The meaning of this criterion may be grasped from Margaret Lloyd's discourse on modern dance in which she states:

> It [modern dance] is a thing of the spirit. If you come away from a modern dance performance as one who walks on air, chest lifted, head held high, a sense of renewal pervading your being, . . . spirit has spoken to spirit, something ineffable has been conveyed. It is a spiritual elation.
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> The dancer dances for us who have been deprived of dancing, to vent for us our need of rhythmic

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[1]John Martin, The Modern Dance (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, Inc., 1968), p. 35.

[2]Duggan, "Class Notes," Summer, 1966.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Martin, The Modern Dance, p. 62.

[6]Duggan, "Class Notes," Summer, 1966.

> movement, so that we may share vicariously the refreshment of the dance experience. The modern dance goes further and reveals us to ourselves. But elation of the spirit is within the power of all dance to give. . . . our rhythmic natures cannot help responding to rhythmic movement.[1]

Ballet and modern dance, which may be evaluated positively by all of the foregoing criteria, represent today two dominant idioms of dance as a fine art. Since the presentation of ballet preceded that of modern dance on the concert stage in the United States of America, it is in this order that the two idioms of dance are discussed in the present study.

An Overview of Ballet as a Fine Art

Ballet, like all other forms of dance, has its roots in the rituals of primitive man, but its present form did not become recognizable until the Renaissance Period. At that time, the dances of the peasants were copied by the nobility and adapted to the dancing space, the elaborate costumes, and the prescribed etiquette of the court. Italy led the way in this new wave of cultural enrichment. As the upper classes became increasingly affluent, celebrations occurred more and more frequently. Dancing was an integral

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[1]Margaret Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, Inc., 1963), p. 2.

part of all such celebrations.[1] As other courts soon followed the pattern established by the nobility of Italy, a dance movement swept the European continent. According to Kraus, this movement had two essential aspects:

> One was the creation of a variety of new court dances, performed by the nobility themselves as a form of aristocratic amusement and, more than this, a means of educating courtiers in social deportment and grace. The second was the development of a number of major entertainments, or spectacles, which ultimately gave rise to the art of ballet in France.[2]

In keeping with this new movement, a special profession developed, that of the dancing master.[3] His main function was to bring to the court the steps of the peasant dances and to adapt and teach those which would be appropriate for performances by the nobility. He served, in addition, as an arbiter of etiquette and as a director of court festivals. This person, often of less than noble birth, gained the favor of the court to which he was attached and held a trustworthy and respected position.[4]

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[1]Hans Verwer, Guide to the Ballet (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 2.

[2]Richard Kraus, History of the Dance in Art and Education (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 64.

[3]Ibid., p. 60.

[4]Paul Nettl, The Story of Dance Music (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1947), pp. 71-72.

The court dances, or pre-classic dances, were of two general types--the basse danse, characterized by grave, dignified movements in which the feet did not leave the floor, and the haute danse, characterized by lighter, faster movements in which there were skips and jumps.[1] At first these dances were loosely arranged with no precise steps or floor patterns. During the sixteenth century, rules governing the proper steps for each dance were formulated, and each dance was accompanied by a strict musical form. It was not long before the dances were grouped into a certain order by composers, thus giving rise to the musical Suite, which ultimately developed into the Sonata form.[2]

The earliest court dances were the pavane, gillarde, allemande, tordion, courante, la volta, gavotte, canaries, and branles.[3] Later, the sarabande, gigue, and the minuet were introduced.[4] A suite of dances during the sixteenth

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[1]Louis Horst, Pre-Classic Dance Forms (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, Inc., 1937), pp. 4-5.

[2]Ibid., p. 5.

[3]Described by Jehan Tabourot in 1588, writing under the pseudonym of Thoinot Arbeau. In his book Orchesographie, he conducts a dialogue with a youth during which time he teaches him all of the popular dances of the period.

[4]Horst, Pre-Classic Dance Forms, pp. 45-69.

century generally represented a slow dance followed by one of a faster pace and typically was comprised of an arrangement of the allemande, the courante, the sarabande, and the gigue. Although the court dances were not ballet as such, they ultimately evolved into the art as it is known today.[1]

In 1489, Bergonzio di Botta of Tortona, Italy, gave a dinner-ballet in honor of the wedding of Galeazzo, the Duke of Milan, and Isabella of Aragon. Bergonzio, a fervent devotee of both dining and dancing, presented his guests with an event to remember. The dinner included many courses, each of which was introduced by waiters and servers performing dances in the characters suggestive of their particular costumes. During and following the repast, a magnificent spectacle was presented. Selected historical and mythological characters appeared at appropriate intervals offering songs, poetry, and dances to suit the occasion. The fete achieved fame throughout Italy and established a precedent for the society hostesses of the period.[2]

The most important outgrowth of Botta's dinner-ballet was that it instituted protocol for the Royal and Ducal courts throughout Europe for at least a century. This

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[1]Kraus, History of the Dance, p. 70.

[2]Mark Edward Perugini, A Pageant of the Dance and Ballet (London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1946), pp. 51-52.

fashion was fostered by Catherine de Medici of Italy who, in 1533, became the Queen of France by virtue of her marriage to King Henry II of that country. She introduced the practices of the Italian courts to the French nobility; but, more important than that, she was responsible for what most dance historians consider the first ballet. Catherine de Medici commissioned her valet de chambre, the Italian violinist and dancing master Balthasar de Beaujoyeux, to produce a ballet to celebrate the betrothal of the Duc de Joyeuse and Margaret of Lorraine, the sister of the Queen.[1] The production which resulted was Beaujoyeux's famous Ballet Comique de la Reine on October 15, 1581.[2] Beaujoyeux devised the dances and supervised the spectacle while he employed professional court musicians to compose the accompanying music, poetry, and songs. The theme of the production, that of Circe, the Greek enchantress, represented the first attempt to confine a spectacular entertainment to one dramatic theme. Although the splendor of the performance far exceeded any court entertainment that had been devised previously, the use of a single major

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[1]John Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1963), p. 26.

[2]Verwer, A Guide to Ballet, p. 3.

dramatic theme has been regarded as the main reason for the artistic success of the endeavor.[1]

Although the Italians began the art of the ballet, the French with the leadership of de Medici refined the art. The printed account of Beaujoyeux's ballet was produced by the Royal Printers, Ballard, in 1582 and circulated to other courts throughout Europe. Various courts vied with each other in the presentation of similar entertainments as a result.[2] France, however, remained the undisputed center for the development of the ballet.[3]

Until the seventeenth century, aristocratic amateurs continued to be the only performers of ballet, and, between 1589 and 1610, eighty ballets were produced at the court of Henry IV of France.[4] His successor, Louis XIII, also an enthusiastic patron of the ballet, composed the music for several dance works and, in 1617, played a leading role in the ballet entitled La Deliverance de Renault. It was the Sun King, Louis XIV, however, who changed the nature of

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, pp. 70-71.

[2]Perugini, A Pageant of the Dance and Ballet, pp. 55-56.

[3]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 71.

[4]Perugini, A Pageant of the Dance and Ballet, p. 301.

ballet from amateur to professional.[1] Having begun his own career at the age of thirteen with a performance in the ballet Masque of Cassandra, Louis XIV was an excellent dancer who delighted in performing and took daily lessons from his dancing master, Pierre Beauchamps. In 1661, realizing that this art form could be developed to a greater degree than obtained at that time, he asked Beauchamps to formulate rules for ballet. In so doing, Beauchamps established the basic positions upon which ballet technique is structured.[2]

Louis XIV, in 1661, established the Academie Royale de Danse in order to provide a place for professional instruction in the dance. Although it was comprised of thirteen of the most experienced dancing masters of the period, the Academy apparently did not function effectively until it was combined with the Academie Royale de Music, in 1672, under the directorship of Jean-Baptiste Lully, who capitalized upon this union and popularized the Opera-Ballet.[3] Two years later, the Royal Academy of Music and Dance was given the use of the theatre in the Palais Royal,

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 75.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Perugini, A Pageant of the Dance and Ballet, pp. 100-101, 302.

a move which resulted in two major effects upon the ballet as a professional art. First, with respect to his appearance, the dancer was concerned only with the view from the audience, and, as a result, the turnout characteristic of ballet became more pronounced. Second, the performers, having an elevated stage, were separated markedly from their audiences. Performances, therefore, became more and more the prerogative of the professional dancers who were trained at the Royal Academy and who had developed a higher level of skill than that of the amateur performers of the nobility.[1]

During the second half of the seventeenth century, women dancers appeared for the first time in ballet. In 1681, Lully persuaded some of the greatest ladies of the court to appear in his Le Triomphe de l'Amour. Among these were the Dauphiness, the Princess de Conti, and a Madmoiselle La Fontaine who was the first première danseuse of the Academie Royale.[2]

Under the directorship of Lully, the ballet became increasingly professional. The five positions of the feet and the twelve positions of the arms, which were established by Beauchamps, served as focal points around which a wide

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 76.

[2]Perugini, A Pageant of the Dance and Ballet, p. 302.

variety of steps and movements were developed and named. These techniques served as the basis of the professional performer's education in the ballet.[1]

At the turn of the eighteenth century, another important innovation in the ballet occurred--the development of a pattern with respect to the role of the sexes in the dance. The leading producers of the dance were men, such as Lully and Beauchamps, while the star performers in the ballet were women. The two most famous female stars of the period were Marie Camargo, famous for her elevation and her execution of entrechats, and Marie Sallé, who brought dramatic realism and a natural expressiveness to her art.[2] Both women initiated costume changes which allowed greater freedom to the dancers than did the stiffly hooped, heavily panniered, floor length skirts, the elaborate headdresses, and the masks which were the wearing apparel in the eighteenth century.[3] Camargo adopted a shorter skirt which enabled her audiences to view her "ingenious improvisations." In addition, she adopted a soft undergarment and soft slippers. Sallé's contribution to the costume changes of the eighteenth

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 78.

[3] Ibid.

century was the introduction of flowing draperies after the fashion of Greek sculpture.[1]

Professional dancers educated in Paris during the eighteenth century began to travel throughout Europe and performed at the various courts or, in some instances, founded their own ballet schools and companies. Rulers throughout Europe built Royal Opera Houses and Theatres which, in turn, established ballet companies in permanent residencies with guaranteed continuity and protection.[2] Although the companies had the protection of the Royalty, this security stalemated the creative development of the ballet for several decades until Jean Georges Noverre proposed reforms in the art.[3]

Noverre, born in 1727, was a French dancer, teacher, and choreographer ". . . whose time put him in such ill humor, and who was not afraid to confess, 'I'm sick to death of passe-pieds and minuets.'"[4] Instigating a complete reform of the art, Noverre visualized ballet not as a mere

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Agnes DeMille, The Book of the Dance (New York: Golden Press, 1963), pp. 90-91.

[3] Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 80.

[4] Ferdinando Reyna, A Concise History of Ballet (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1965), p. 60.

display of technical virtuosity but rather, as a dance form with dramatic quality. He advocated a return to nature as a source of inspiration. Noverre was responsible for the ballet d'action in which the dance promoted and enhanced the dramatic theme.[1] His book, Lettres sur la Danse, published in 1760, made his ideas, which were revolutionary in his time, available on a widespread basis.[2] Although he had several critics, he also had many followers who slowly spread the principles of the ballet d'action.[3]

During the French Revolution, ballet was temporarily suspended in favor of patriotic spectacles.[4] Following the Revolution, however, classicism was revived; costumes became simpler and sandal-like slippers replaced the satin shoe. Perhaps more important than the change in footwear was the contribution of costume designer Maillot who introduced close-fitting tights which are still an essential part of the dancer's costume.[5]

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 81.

[2]Reyna, A Concise History of Ballet, p. 62.

[3]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 33.

[4]Kraus, History of the Dance in Art and Education, p. 83.

[5]Verwer, Guide to the Ballet, p. 11.

Romanticism, a literary rebellion against the rigid forms established by academic schools, prevailed throughout Europe from 1815 through 1835.[1] This movement brought with it the ethereal ballets, or ballets blancs, which featured supernatural creatures and their conquests over earth beings.[2] During this period, the feminine charms of women were emphasized also; while the male dancers were pushed into the background, the ballerinas were admired and worshiped. This was the era of such extraordinary ballerinas as Marie Taglioni, Fanny Elssler, Fanny Cerito, Carlotta Grisi, and Lucile Grahn. Little attention was given to the great choreographers--Jean Coralli, Jules Perrot, and Arthur Saint-Leon--who designed the dances which made these ballerinas famous.[3]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, interest in the ballet began to decline throughout the western world. Perhaps the absence of the great male dancer from the stage during this period was a major factor in this decline. The typical ballet of the day was based upon a classical myth or a fairy tale in which the entire performance was focused

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 85.

[2]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, pp. 34-35.

[3]Verwer, Guide to the Ballet, pp. 20-21.

upon the technical proficiency and beauty of the ballerina.[1] The appreciation of the audience declined, and, by the beginning of the twentieth century, ballet had fallen to a very low ebb indeed[2]--except in Czarist Russia.

The first ballet seen at the Russian Court was produced for the Czar Alexis in 1675.[3] The Russian ballet was not founded, however, until 1735 when the Empress Anne established an academy at St. Petersburg and imported a Frenchman, Jean Baptiste Lande, as Ballet Master.[4] A few years later he was placed in charge of the Imperial School for which, through the years that followed, the finest ballet masters were imported from Italy and France to insure that the Russian ballet would be the most splendid in the world.[5]

Outstanding among the foreign Ballet Masters was Charles Louis Didelot, an extraordinary French dancer, choreographer, and teacher. Brought to the court as Ballet Master of the Imperial Theatre in 1801 by the Czar Paul,

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[1]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 39.

[2]Ted Shawn, Dance We Must (London: Dennis Dobson, Ltd., 1946), p. 22.

[3]Perugini, A Pageant of the Dance and Ballet, p. 302.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 40.

Didelot choreographed over fifty ballets for the St. Petersburg school.[1]

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, ballet declined in France but reached new heights in Russia. Much of this success was attributed to Jules Perrot, who arrived from France in 1848; Joseph Mazilier, also a Frenchman who came to Russia in 1851; Marius Petipa, who became an instructor at the Imperial School in 1854; and a native Russian, Lev Ivanov. The undisputed master of the ballet during this time, however, was Petipa. He produced approximately sixty ballets from 1862 through 1903 during which time he was chief choreographer of the Imperial Ballet.[2]

Under the influence of Petipa, who felt that the function of the ballet was to display the technical mastery of the body, stage machinery disappeared. Petipa is accredited for the growth of the ballet in Russia to its cherished classic style. Under his tutelage, the ballerina was promoted to a position of elegance.[3] He also developed the form of the full-length ballet which consisted of four or five acts--a practice which has prevailed throughout the

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 92.

[2]Verwer, Guide to the Ballet, p. 55.

[3]Ibid., p. 57.

years. He established, in addition, the structure for the pas de deux and worked closely with his composers, designers, and writers in the coordination of all of his creations. While demanding a coordinated entity, Petipa, nevertheless, maintained that the choreography of the ballets should take precedence over each of the supporting arts.[1] Many of Petipa's ballets remain today in the repertoire of leading ballet companies throughout the world.

The revival of the importance of the male dancer in ballet is also credited to Russia. Under the expert guidance of Christian Johannson, a Swede, and Enrico Cecchetti, an Italian, the technical ability of the male dancer improved remarkably during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Vaslav Nijinsky, a student of Cecchetti, was acclaimed as the single most influential male dancer of the period. DeMille, in her Book of the Dance, writes of his phenomenal elevation and the fact that he was able to pause in the air before he returned to earth; also of the fact that he executed a flawless entrechat douze--a feat which still remains to be matched.[3]

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[1]DeMille, The Book of the Dance, p. 116.

[2]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 95.

[3]DeMille, The Book of the Dance, p. 149.

Russia dominated the world of ballet from 1885 through 1914. During this time, two main branches of Russian ballet matured--the Marinsky Theatre (1869) at St. Petersburg, presently known as the Kirov State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet at Leningrad, which stressed quietness, restraint, musicality, and body line, and, in contrast, the Bolshoi Ballet Theatre (1776) in Moscow, which stressed athleticism, acrobatic feats, vigor, and endurance. By the end of the nineteenth century, the exponents of the Russian ballet schools excelled in virtuosity but, according to DeMille, lacked ". . . one essential necessary to the growth of an art--free imagination."[1] This paucity of free imagination prompted Michel Fokine and Serge Diaghilev to make radical reforms in the ballet.[2]

Fokine, a product of the Imperial School of Ballet and the Marinsky Theatre Ballet Company in St. Petersburg, early in his career became disillusioned by the sterility and the rigidity of the ballet in Russia.[3] He maintained that a ballet dancer should be individually outstanding

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[1] Ibid., p. 176.

[2] Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 170.

[3] Ibid.

while playing his role as a member of the group. He maintained also that ballet is more than ballet dancing, " it is music, dancing, drama, painting--four equal partners making up one whole."[1] His writings in 1904 established the basic philosophy for the modern ballet:

1. The dancing shall be composed in a manner corresponding to the subject and must express the period and ethnographical character.
2. Dance and mime shall be employed only in expression of the theme and not as a mere visual entertainment.
3. Gesture shall partake of the whole body, conventional gesture of the hands to be employed only when required by the style of the ballet.
4. Expressiveness shall reside in every part of the choreographic design.
5. In the arts associated with ballet, perfect freedom shall be allowed to the composer and decorator. The music need not be a simple accompaniment to the dancer's movement; every kind of good music shall be permissible so long as it is good and expressive. Finally, it is not imperative that the dancer be costumed in the traditional ballet skirts.[2]

Fokine's ideas were somewhat ignored until Serge Diaghilev, perhaps the greatest impresario that the ballet has ever known, translated the ideas of the young dance artist into practice.

In 1909, Diaghilev organized a company comprised of great composers, painters, poets, and dancers which

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[1]Arnold L. Haskell, The Wonderful World of Dance (New York: Doubleday Company, 1969), p. 59.

[2]Cyril Beaumont, Short History of Ballet (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1933), p. 34.

dazzled audiences throughout western Europe and South America for the next twenty years. As collaborators in the Ballet Russe, Diaghilev encouraged such choreographers as Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, Leonide Massine, and George Balanchine; such painters as Leon Bakst and Pablo Picasso; such composers as Igor Stravinsky and Rimsky-Korsakov; and such dancers as Thamar Karsavina, Anna Pavlova, Vaslav Nijinsky, Adolph Bolm, Mikhail Mordkin, Alexandra Danilova, and the English ballerina Alicia Markova. Diaghilev died in 1929 after having brought to the western stages Russian music, painting, and dancing. His dancers subsequently settled throughout Europe and the United States and became advisors, master teachers, and/or directors of their own companies, thereby continuing to educate dancers in the Russian tradition.[1]

In the same year as the death of Diaghilev, 1929, England began to emerge as a force in the world of ballet. The Camargo Society produced a series of concerts featuring choreography by Marie Rambert, Ninette de Valois, and Frederick Ashton. The Society was unsuccessful as an organization, but these three choreographers later became dominant figures in the development of ballet in England.[2]

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[1]Verwer, Guide to the Ballet, pp. 82-87.

[2]DeMille, The Book of the Dance, p. 176.

English audiences welcomed and responded appreciatively to the foreign artists of the ballet as evidenced by the success of the Diaghilev Company, the Pavlova Company, the Cecchetti Society, and Madame Adeline Geneé, a Danish ballerina.[1] Ballet was slow in developing as an art form in England, however, because of the disinterest of the English in becoming performers during the early part of the twentieth century.[2]

Marie Rambert, a former student of Cecchetti, believed that among the British youth was ballet material equal to the youth of other countries.
and a small theatre in an old church vestry, and this group, with a long range plan and daily discipline, proved to be the turning point in the lives of talented English dancers.[3] Rambert formed the Ballet Club for the sole purpose of developing English choreographers and dancers, and there she introduced the works of such personalities as Frederick Ashton and Anthony Tudor. She also provided a stage for the developing ballerina, Alicia Markova.
into the Ballet Rambert and has made extensive tours

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[1]Perugini, A Pageant of the Dance and Ballet, pp. 307-308.

[2]Verwer, Guide to the Ballet, p. 107.

[3]DeMille, The Book of the Dance, p. 176.

throughout the world. In 1962, Marie Rambert was created a Dame of the British Empire in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the ballet.[1]

Ninette de Valois was responsible for the development of the Royal Ballet of England.[2] Originally a Diaghilev dancer, she opened her own school in London in 1926.[3] De Valois and her dancers were employed by Lilian Baylis, Director of the Old Vic and the Sadler's Wells Theatre, to present incidental ballet interludes at both of these theatres. The group of dancers was known as the Vic-Wells Ballet, but when the Old Vic was no longer on its schedule, the organization became the Sadler's Wells Ballet--residing at the theatre. There the company grew and eventually produced full-length ballets. Following the bombing of the Sadler's Wells Theatre during World War II, the company moved into central London and presented nightly performances throughout the seige of the city. These courageous performances gave the company the prestige which led to its establishment at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and brought it favor from the Crown which led

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 177.

[3] Cyril Swinson, Guidebook to the Ballet (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), p. 152.

ultimately to the company's becoming the Royal Ballet England, chartered by Queen Elizabeth II.[1]

The chief choreographer for de Valois was Frederick Ashton who succeeded her as Director of the Royal Ballet upon her retirement in 1963. Ashton is compared with George Balanchine in his accomplishments as a choreographer.[2] The major ballet company in England, the Royal Ballet has produced the "super ballerina," Dame Margot Fonteyn, and provided choreographic outlets for such dance personalities as John Cranko and Kenneth MacMillan.[3]

The production of The Black Crook in 1866 is credited with being the first to include a ballet conceived and presented in the United States. Its major attraction, however, was in its spectacle and in the scantiness of the dress of the women rather than in the quality of the dancing. It did, in a small way, provide an incentive to the appreciation of the art in this country as it was the forerunner of a series of similar productions throughout the United States.[4]

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[1]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 116.

[2]Ibid., p. 117.

[3]DeMille, The Book of the Dance, p. 179.

[4]Lincoln Kirstein, Dance: A Short History of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, 1942), pp. 346-47.

Although many foreign artists of the ballet appeared and were well received on concert stages in United States, this nation did not become the focal poi of balletic activity until after the first world war.[1] Anna Pavlova began a series of American tours in 1910, Diaghilev's Ballet Russe made its first visit to the United States in 1916; but there were many barren years with respect to real progress in the art.[2] Many Russian émigrés settled in the United States after the war, and, although the Russian influence was recognizable, these artists contributed immeasurably toward the emergence of a ballet which was distinctly American. Michel Fokine came to New York City to live in 1922 and made an appearance on the stage with a number of his students. Two years later he appeared again, this time with his own company, at the Metropolitan Opera House. Adolph Bolm, a former Diaghilev dancer, and Mikhail Mordkin, Pavlova's former partner, came to live and work in the United States in the early twenties.[3] The leadership and influence of these two artists have been felt throughout the American movement in ballet. The tour

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[1] Walter Sorrell, The Dance Through the Ages (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1967), p. 215.

[2] Reyna, A Concise History of the Ballet, p. 213.

[3] Ibid.

of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1932, with Leonide Massine as chief choreographer and Alexandra Danilova as leading ballerina, under the direction of the impresario Sol Hurok, served to reawaken interest in the ballet. George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein were to provide foundation, however, for the development of ballet as an art form in America.[1]

Kirstein and Balanchine opened the School of American Ballet in New York City in 1934. Their idea was to develop a school and a performing company simultaneously. The première performance of the company, in March of 1935, met with mildly negative reactions. The main objection was that Balanchine, a Russian, was not an appropriate choice for the director of the company if the main purpose of this endeavor was to develop an American style of ballet. Following an unsuccessful tour, the company and its choreographer became the resident company of the Metropolitan Opera. This venture, too, was unsuccessful, and Balanchine left the Metropolitan Opera in 1938. He turned then to the Broadway stage and to the motion pictures for his livelihood.[2]

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 182.

[2]Ibid.

In 1939, Kirstein organized Ballet Caravan in still another attempt to develop ballet as an art indigenous to the United States of America. Although the company lasted only slightly longer than one year, Kirstein's purpose was achieved as he presented works which dealt with American themes, choreographed by Lew Christensen, William Dollar, and Eugene Loring. Following World War II, Kirstein formed another company in conjunction with George Balanchine--The Ballet Society--a membership organization which presented works of such American choreographers as Merce Cunningham and Todd Bolender. Two years later, in 1948, Ballet Society, under the title of the New York City Ballet, became associated with the New York City Center of Music and Drama. It has since grown to become one of the world's foremost ballet companies.[1]

Under the artistic direction of George Balanchine, ". . . the performing style of the New York City Ballet is crisp, precise, brilliant, and impersonal." With respect to Balanchine's philosophy, Reyna adds that " . . he belongs to a school of thought that is now common in the field of the modern dance; the school that believes that the subject matter of dance is dancing."[2] Balanchine, according

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[1] Ibid., p. 183.

[2] Reyna, A Concise History of the Ballet, p. 217.

to Reyna, forms the link between modern dance and the ballet in the United States. His approach to ballet is almost purely musical, and he has set his ballets to the scores of some of the greatest composers. Through the years, his choreography has favored the ballerina, and he has developed some of the best. Included on this list of distinguished ballerinas are Melissa Hayden, Maria Tallchief, Allegra Kent, and Diana Adams. Three outstanding male dancers have also developed within the New York City Ballet--Jacques D'Amboise, Edward Villella, and Arthur Mitchell,[1] who is the co-subject of this study.

While the New York City Ballet was developing under its Russian Director, various American ballet personalities began to emerge in their own right. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1935, Catherine Littlefield founded the Littlefield Ballet, the forerunner of the Philadelphia Ballet.[2] Ruth Page, another American-born dancer and choreographer, danced on leading stages in the United States and abroad and formed, with Bentley Stone, the Page-Stone Ballet Company in 1938. She choreographed some of the first ballets based upon American folklore, among which Frankie

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[1]Ibid., pp. 216-17.

[2]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 190.

and Johnny was the most popular.[1] Lew Christensen, a native of Brigham City, Utah, contributed much to the development of regional interest in the ballet after having served as Ballet Master for the Ballet Caravan from 1936 to 1940. During this period, he choreographed a number of ballets with American themes including Filling Station and Pocahontas. He later moved to San Francisco, California, and joined the San Francisco Ballet of which he became the Director in 1951.[2] Eugene Loring, with his Billy the Kid in 1938, and Agnes DeMille, with her Rodeo in 1942, Oklahoma in 1943, and Fall River Legend in 1948, are two other choreographers who have used American folklore and ideas as thematic sources for their ballets.[3]

The second major ballet company in the United States is the American Ballet Theatre. According to Verwer, it is more "typically American" than the New York City Ballet because over the years it has ". . . mirrored American life in the art of ballet in a highly dramatic manner."[4] The company was founded in 1939 and, under the expert leadership

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[1]Sorrell, The Dance Through the Ages, p. 215.

[2]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, pp. 191-92.

[3]Verwer, Guide to the Ballet, p. 115.

[4]Ibid., p. 112.

of Lucia Chase and Oliver Smith, it has acquired an eclectic repertory. While preserving the classics, Ballet Theatre granted opportunities to new choreographers also. Famous choreographers who have been especially successful in their works presented by the American Ballet Theatre are Anthony Tudor, Jerome Robbins, Michael Kidd, and Agnes DeMille. In its peak period, American Ballet Theatre has developed such dancers as Alicia Alonso, Nora Kaye, Lupe Serrano, and Royes Fernandez.[1]

American Ballet Theatre has been harassed from time to time by near financial disaster and the lack of a permanent home. With the opening of the new John Fitzgerald Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C., on October 8, 1971, the problem of a permanent home for the organization was solved.[2] The American Ballet Theatre became the official resident company of the new Center with its first performance in the Opera House on September 11, 1971.[3]

The dance personalities in the American Ballet Theatre are as eclectic as its repertoire. The company has

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[1]Reyna, A Concise History of the Ballet, pp. 214-45.

[2]Winfred Blevins, "ABT Finds Home," Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, September 13, 1971.

[3]"Presstime News," Dance Magazine, August, 1971, p. 6.

attracted many foreign stars throughout the years including Erick Bruhn, the great Danish dancer who announced his retirement during American Ballet Theatre's winter season in 1972.[1] Among the current stars are Niels Kehlet of the Royal Danish Ballet, who dances Bruhn's roles;[2] Ivan Nagy, a Hungarian who has been with American Ballet Theatre since 1968;[3] and Natalie Makarova, the Russian ballerina who defected to the United States.[4] Like the New York City Ballet, the American Ballet Theatre has only one black dancer in its company--Keith Lee. Lee, recently promoted to soloist and listed among the stars, dances leading roles in such ballets as Petrouchka, The River, and The Traitor.[5]

The fact that the two major ballet companies in the United States each have only one black performer is representative of the difficulty which the black dancer has experienced whenever he has attempted to perform the

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[1]"Presstime News," Dance Magazine, February, 1972, p. 5.

[2]Ibid., p. 4.

[3]Olga Maynard, "Ivan Nagy: Albrecht and Others," Dance Magazine, September, 1971, p. 46.

[4]William Como, "American Ballet Theatre, A Wish to Cherish and a Will to Explore," Dance Magazine, September, 1971, p. 26.

[5]Leonore Lynne Fauley Emery, "Black Dance in the U. S., From 1619 to 1970" (unpublished Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Southern California, December, 1970), p. 267.

so-called "white ballet." His early attempts at performing balletic movements were negated by the critics who played influential roles in shaping the responses of predominately white audiences. Ballet was not considered "natural" for the black performers, and this stereotyped opinion has prevailed through the years.[1] The plight of the black dancer in ballet will be discussed further in Chapter III of this dissertation.

According to Reyna, the twentieth century brought with it a most striking artistic phenomenon--"The rediscovery of dance."[2] Both Diaghilev and Isadora Duncan, the pioneer of modern dance, exerted their separate influences--Diaghilev toward innovations in ballet and Duncan toward freedom of expression. The disciples of Diaghilev and Pavlova, who traveled throughout the western world, were largely responsible for the success of ballet in many countries. Reyna explains the diversity of ballet in different countries when he writes: "Ballet is an art as various and as constantly changing as life itself, and after the ages of Noverre and Blasis the twentieth century has undoubtedly been the most fertile in invention."[3]

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[1]Reyna, A Concise History of the Ballet, p. 221.

[2]Programme, "The American Ballet Theatre," Los Angeles Music Center, Los Angeles, California, February 21, 1972.

[3]Reyna, A Concise History of the Ballet, p. 224.

Ballet has grown to such a status in many countries that ballet companies are awarded Royal and National standing and are official representatives of the Crown or the head of the government. Although all ballet is based upon the same classical tradition, each company from each country has a distinct character of its own. This character is ". . . shaped by national history, climate, customs, and temperament."[1] The contemporary companies which exist throughout the western world are far too numerous for discussion within the scope of this study. Those seen frequently in performances throughout the United States have been the Kirov Ballet of Leningrad and the Bolshoi Ballet of Moscow, the Royal Ballet of England, The Royal Winnipeg Ballet of Canada, and the Royal Danish Ballet. These companies are founded upon the classic tradition. There are other ballet companies rooted in folk or ethnic tradition such as the Moiseyev Dance Company of Russia, the Hungarian National Ballet, and the Ballet Folklorico of Mexico.[2] In addition, a new type of foreign ballet company has come to the American stage--the ultra-modern ballet company such as Maurice Bejart's Ballet of the 20th Century[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 210.

[3] Norma McLain Stoop, "Mudra: Maurice Bejart's Gesture," Dance Magazine, November, 1971, p. 30.

and the Stuttgart Ballet under the direction of John Cranko. Although these foreign groups are no longer necessary to inspire the audiences of the United States and to keep the native talent alive, they do offer the American companies a basis for contrast or comparison with respect to choreographic works and artistic styles.[1]

By 1950 it was obvious that ballet in the United States had grown far beyond the illusionary stage. Native choreographers who used indigenous American themes were on the scene; schools with high standards were established for the training of American dancers; and a vitally interested American audience existed which offered hope for financial security.[2]

During the ensuing years, New York City became the center for ballet activity. The city has served as home base for the New York City Ballet, unquestionably the highest ranking company in the United States; for the American Ballet Theatre, until September of 1971; for the City Center Joffrey Ballet, the resident company of the New York City Center of Music and Drama; for Jerome Robbins' Ballet U.S.A., activated on special occasions for performances;

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 209.

[2]Ibid., p. 193.

for the Harkness Ballet, in operation until the summer of 1970; and, more recently, for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Arthur Mitchell's company of black classical dancers. The stages in New York City, in addition, have been open continuously to performances by foreign companies. This national interest in the ballet has given rise to several other major ballet companies throughout the United States. Among these are the Boston Ballet, the National Ballet of Washington, D.C., the Houston Ballet Foundation, the San Francisco Ballet, the Pennsylvania Ballet, and the Chicago Opera Ballet.[1]

The present status of ballet in the United States cannot be attributed wholly to the success of major companies. There exists also what Kraus labels ". . . a uniquely American phenomenon--the development of a far-flung network of highly successful regional ballet companies."[2] Non-professional ballet companies comprised of directors and non-salaried dancers are called regional companies.[3] A large number of these companies also use the word "civic" in their titles. This does not imply financial support from the city, but rather, that the company serves the city.[4] For the most part, these companies are financed by

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[1]Ibid., pp. 205-06. [2]Ibid., p. 206. [3]Ibid.

[4]Anatole Chujoy and P. W. Manchester, The Dance Encyclopedia (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 504.

community organizations comprised of persons interested in the arts and willing to contribute their services. The majority of the dancers in regional ballet companies are teenagers and are attached to a particular school of ballet. The company performs locally and/or regionally and provides performing opportunities for local dancers while spreading interest in the ballet throughout their respective regions.[1]

The formation of the Atlanta Civic Ballet in 1929 marked the beginning of the regional ballet movement. Since then, over 200 such groups have emerged throughout the country.[2] The first regional ballet festival was held in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1956. Five regional companies participated, and the Southeastern Regional Ballet Festival was formed. Three other regional associations were established during the years which followed. The Festivals represent a climax to the activities engaged in by the separate companies throughout the year and culminate in a public performance presenting works which were selected by a panel of experts who have judged all productions presented by each of the participating companies.[3]

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[1]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 206.

[2]Doris Hering, "Dance and Decentralization," Dance Magazine, December, 1965, p. 129.

[3]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 208.

Regional ballet companies have many and varied goals. Two goals which seem to be universal with the companies are: (1) to provide a medium of expression for regional choreographers, designers, musicians, and dancers; and (2) to stimulate interest in and support of ballet performances and schools of ballet.[1] The latter goal is perhaps the most important contribution of the regional ballet to the status of dance as a performing art today. According to Kraus, "The growth of larger professional companies around the United States must in large measure be supported by the existence of knowledgeable and enthusiastic audiences, young and old, throughout the country."[2] And thus the art of the ballet, which evolved from the peasant heritage of the people and was dominated by the nobility during the Renaissance Period, has again returned to the people. In the twentieth century, ballet exists for all.

An Overview of Modern Dance as a Fine Art

Archeologists affirm that primitive man leapt when he was happy, beat his breast and tore his hair when he was sad, and stretched his hands to heaven or bowed to the

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[1]Doris Hering, "Framework of a Regional Ballet," Dance Magazine, October, 1958, p. 49.

[2]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, p. 209.

earth when he was thankful.[1] Such was the origin of the art of modern dance, a form which is concerned specifically with the communication of emotions, ideas, and feelings through rhythmic movement.[2]

The dances of primitive man were performed originally to express his reactions to natural phenomena, reactions which eventually evolved into religious beliefs. Later, he began to mime various aspects of his life and environment--his quest for food, love, war, and his wonder at the ever-present spectacle of nature.[3] In all stages of primitive civilization, there is evidence that representation played an important role in dancing--especially in pageants of war, the hunt, fertility, and in the enactment of sacrificial rites. These types of dances were based upon anticipating the event, desiring the end, and forcing that end to occur.[4]

Primitive mime dancing is believed to be practiced today among some groups in the same manner as in the beginning of civilization. This is especially true among some of

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[1]J. G. Marash, Mime in Class and Theatre (London: George G. Harrap and Co., Ltd., 1950), pp. 9-10.

[2]Margery Turner, Modern Dance for High School and College (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), p. 1.

[3]Marash, Mime in Class and Theatre, p. 10.

[4]Haskell, The Wonderful World of Dance, p. 10.

the Indian tribes of North America, some of the African and Australian tribes, and a number of the various ethnic groups in the South Sea Islands. The Aborigines of Australia, in the dance of the Emu, reproduce faithfully the movements of the bird. In their snake dance, they also link their bodies together, painted to resemble the reptile, and seemingly reproduce its sinuous movement in a shuffling, undulating line.[1]

Primitive man, constantly alert to his existing environment, learned by experiences. He recognized that there were certain frightening events in his life beyond his control and that among these were the wrath of natural environmental forces and the phenomenon of death which were attributed to the "spirits." He pursued the only logical course--that of offering something to appease those spirits. Rituals and sacrifices were innovated, therefore, and primitive man "mimed for magic."[2] He developed ritualistic dances for every event in his life as well as in the life of the community. He danced in times of peace and in times of war.[3]

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[1]Marash, Mime in Class and Theatre, p. 10.

[2]Haskell, The Wonderful World of Dance, pp. 18-20.

[3]Ibid.

According to Sachs, the religious dances of primitive cultures ". . . gradually transformed the dance from an involuntary motor discharge, from a state of frenzied movement and a ceremonial rite, into a work of art conscious of and intended for observation."[1] The importance of the religious dance to the life and welfare of the tribe precluded random improvisation; it called, instead, for precise formulation and faithful adherence to tradition. Each error was capable of reducing the possibility of receiving the favor sought. In most cases, therefore, instruction in the dance was given to insure perfection among the future dancers, leaders, and teachers.[2]

Just as primitive man had his ritualistic and religious observances, so did the earliest civilizations which followed. The Ancient Egyptians used dance as their chief medium of religious expression.[3] Their religion was based in mythology, and they were deeply concerned with death and resurrection. The Egyptians were probably the first, however, to organize mythology into any kind of system. The priesthood was the most powerful social class, and, in its efforts to make religion mysterious to the

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[1]Sachs, World History of the Dance, p. 218.

[2]Ibid., p. 219.

[3]Shawn, Dance We Must, p. 16.

layman, the priests devised certain animal representations as the visible symbols of their deities. For example, the most popular of these deities, Osiris, became a bull. Transformations such as this one, together with the annual rise and fall of the River Nile, were the thematic sources for numerous dance-dramas.[1]

One festival of the Egyptians which deserves mention here is in honor of the sacred bull, Apis. The animal was chosen with considerable care by the priest who knew the numerous qualifications to be fulfilled and signs by which it must be isolated. Following the selection of the choice bull, the animal was kept in a specially constructed stable-temple where he was attended by forty nude virgins and fed with milk. When he was full-grown, at the time of a new moon, the bull was transported on a royal barge to the Apeum, which was his future home. Once there, his servants performed secret dances which portrayed in detail the adventures of Osiris whose living image the bull represented.[2] Concerning this festival, Broadbent states, "In their dance parades inside and outside the temple, the priests acted out the adventures and benefactions of Osiris in pantomime;

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[1]R. J. Broadbent, A History of Pantomime (New York: Benjamin Bloom, Inc., 1964), p. 26.

[2]Lincoln Kirstein, Dance (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1935), p. 13.

his mysterious birth, the games of his childhood, his love for his sister."[1] Many other festivals were held in honor of the gods or benefactors in which the joy of the people was expressed in the form of appropriate music, song, dance, and pantomime. Upon these small foundations, tragedies and comedies were built.[2]

The Egyptians adhered to a definite class system and the members of the aristocracy enjoyed the services of selected professional dancers and acrobats for the purpose of entertainment. Separate from the temple dancers was a class of independent, professional performers; to these performers or to slaves, all secular dancing was relegated. Kraus attributes to the Ancient Egyptians the following influences upon the development of dance:

1. The formal use of dance in religious practices.
2. The use of dance as a popular courtly entertainment.
3. The increased scope and variety of dance movements.
4. The development of a professional class of dancers within the increasingly differentiated Egyptian social structure.[3]

Greek dancing developed from the communal form of choral dance. As in primitive cultures, the Greeks used

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[1]Broadbent, A History of Pantomime, p. 40.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Kraus, History of Dance in Art and Education, pp. 31-32.

dance as a language of their various actions. They had dances for worship, war, and for everyday events in life. Unlike the Egyptians who regarded dancing as the privilege of priests and the entertainment of kings, the Greeks regarded dance as a necessity for the entire populace and encouraged its use as an exercise to gain harmony of mind and body.[1] To the Greeks, dancing was more than a show of skill, however, it was a way of life.[2] Even the military danced--the Pyrrhic dances which date back to the Cretans were cultivated with particular zeal by the Spartans. The dances were variants of military pantomime which were altered according to the character of the performance but comprised primarily of genuine guarding and fighting movements. These dances were regarded as preparation for actual warfare and could be distinguished from gymnastics only by their artistic movements, rhythm, and musical accompaniment.[3]

In Greece drama flourished. In the great tragedies and comedies of the Fifth Century B.C., the choral dancers were all important. In the huge theatres the choral odes assisted in the development of the themes of the drama, and,

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[1]Haskell, The Wonderful World of Dance, p. 24.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Sachs, World History of the Dance, p. 239.

in conjunction with mime dances and gestures, the odes helped the spectators grasp the true meaning of the text.[1] Although poetry was exalted by the Greeks, their major contribution was the creation of total theatre; poetry, music, and dance were "inseparably imagined."[2]

According to Kirstein, "We study the history of the Roman stage to show not a connection with dance, but a separation from it."[3] It was the Romans, however, who developed the Greek pantomime into an independent branch of art. At first the pantomimic dances were accompanied by a singer, or by a chorus which chanted the development of the pantomimic plot. Later, this dancing evolved into dramatic action without words. The rise of popularity of the pantomime during the Roman Empire may be attributed to the fact that, within the Empire, there were many different spoken languages. The ". . . need for universal communication"[4] is illustrated in the following anecdote.

In the time of Nero, it is said that a foreigner from the house of Pontus had the good fortune of witnessing

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[1]Marash, Mime in Class and Theatre, p. 12.

[2]Kirstein, Dance, p. 26.

[3]Ibid., p. 40.

[4]Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1963), p. 147.

a pantomime while he visited the Emperor on business. The pantomime was concerned with the story of the loves of Ares and Aphrodite. The chorus and musicians were ordered to observe complete silence, leaving the pantomimist to his own resources. He so delighted the visitor that the latter requested this pantomimist as his departing gift. The visitor wished to use him as a kind of "minister of state" to communicate by means of gesticulations with his foreign neighbors.[1]

One author, in his commentaries on Rome, describes the pantomime as "the art of interpretive dancing."[2] Another states that some of the mimes in Rome were so skilled that they seemed to have a mouth at the end of each finger.[3] The consensus is that pantomime is credited with being the universal means of communication between peoples speaking different languages and that the mimes--often Greek slaves--were obliged to provide both entertainment and communication for their Roman masters. This dual purpose brought into focus two distinct types of mimes--those whose purpose was to be serious and to evoke awe, and those whose purpose was to amuse. It was not unusual

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[1]Sachs, World History of the Dance, pp. 247-48.

[2]Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles, p. 131.

[3]Marash, Mime in Class and Theatre, p. 12.

for the Greek slaves to be more intelligent than the Roman warlords and the conquered leaders whom they entertained. As performers, therefore, the mimes strove for clarity and simplicity in order to be understood by both host and guest.[1] This was no doubt the beginning of the high degree of refinement of the art of pantomime which occurred during the period of Roman supremacy.

The successful pantomimist was a master of his mind and body. He was subject to continuous training and careful dieting. His body had to be forever pliable, elastic, and capable of executing graceful, elegant, and effeminate movements because he often played female roles. The superbly qualified pantomimist was well-versed in such cultural subjects as history, music, art and philosophy.[2]

As the Romans cultivated the art of pantomime, the following developments were attributed to them:

1. The establishment of a special school for the development of pantomime.
2. The employment of scenic effects for background.
3. The use of masks to distinguish certain characters.
4. The application of the word "pantomime" to the actor as well as to the action itself.
5. The use of the word "pantomime" to signify the method of the actor when it was confined to gesticulation.[3]

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[1]Joan Lawson, Mime (London: Sir Issac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1957), p. 132.

[2]Kirstein, Dance, pp. 49-51.

[3]"Pantomime," Encyclopedia Britannica, 28th ed., XVII, 192.

The thematic sources for the Roman pantomimes, like those for Egyptian and Greek dancing, were also of a mythological nature. They were so well executed that the audiences had no trouble in following the story line with ease.[1] In retrospect, the major differences between the pantomime of the Romans and the later ballet d'action of the Western drama were that, in the latter, the participants usually did not wear masks, and that the ballet d'action was accompanied by instrumental music only.[2]

The fall of the Roman Empire and the progress of Christianity throughout Europe brought formal development of the art of pantomime to a halt. Though the pantomimists were banished from the kingdoms proper, they appeared at festivals whenever their services were desired. These wanderers were referred to by many names but, for the most part, they were called mummers or troubadours.[3]

Following the fall of the Roman Empire, the history of the dance is closely related to the development of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe. Although the first Christians despised the rituals of the Greeks and Romans, many pagan dances were adapted for use in rites of worship.

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[1]Broadbent, A History of Pantomime, p. 62.

[2]"Pantomime," Encyclopedia Britannica, p. 192.

[3]Broadbent, A History of Pantomime, p. 74.

It was possible for these rites to be performed by one or many dancers and to be comprised of steps which varied from simple leaps to a complete round or procession.[1] Because of the paganistic rituals fostered by the Church, the art of the dance survived during the Dark Ages.[2]

During the Middle Ages, a new attitude toward death prevailed. Unlike the Dark Ages when death was considered a release, the people of the Middle Ages regarded death as a prison. From this attitude emerged the danse macabre. Based upon the premise that all must ultimately join in the fatal Dance of Death, dances in conjunction with the danse macabre were performed in medieval churchyards. These dances were both for and against the dead and were comprised of ". . . boisterous, three-step hopping dances in a circle."[3]

With the coming of the Renaissance, history had made a full cycle with respect to the arts. Sorrell comments that:

> European man felt as if he had rediscovered his own being. He found himself surrounded by an atmosphere in which he could not help but become creative. . . . Kings did a great deal for the arts and particularly for the dance. Thus we find the cradle of theatre

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[1]Haskell, The Wonderful World of Dance, p. 38.

[2]Ibid., p. 39.

[3]Ibid., p. 41.

> dance in Italy, although it received its polished stylization and, later, its baroque beauty in France.[1]

The outstanding contribution to the dance during the Renaissance Period was the development of ballet into a form of art. This evolution was discussed on pages 6 through 39 of this chapter. From the beginning of the Renaissance, ballet reigned supreme as the idiom of dance which was considered a form of art and remained in this position until the early twentieth century when modern dance emerged as an important art form.

Modern dance, known today as a unique American art, began in the United States with Isadora Duncan. Although she left no definite system of dance, she was the first to break away from what she considered artificial balletic movements in order to lay the foundations for the development of modern dance.[2] According to DeMille, "What we inherit [from Duncan] is a point of view, a sense of dignity and passion, where before there was none; a tradition of glory in a field long soiled and shabby."[3] Duncan rediscovered the natural, free movements of the human body. She discarded ballet slippers and brought the foot in

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[1] Ibid., p. 89.

[2] Duggan, "Class Notes," Summer, 1966.

[3] DeMille, The Book of the Dance, p. 135.

contact with the ground. She cleared away the scenery and freed herself of restricting costumes. Duncan advocated dancing for everyone and brought about reforms in the dress of women. Her philosophy concerning this was: "Dress sensibly. Move freely. Keep healthy. Consider yourself no one's slave--not even your husband's. Express your emotions deeply and freely in art."[1] Although Duncan's philosophy was advocated at a time when freedoms of all kinds were being sought, her concepts concerning dance were not well received by American audiences. Her ideas concerning freedom, however, were not ignored.[2] Margaret Lloyd feels that the legacy left by Duncan was a spiritual one,[3] and Sorrell states that:

> She [Duncan] gave the human body its natural rights. She delivered the dance from the fetters of mere entertainment and recreated the art in its oldest form: as a means of self expression. She gave the twentieth century dancer his passport to complete freedom.[4]

Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn are credited with the official founding of American dance. Having begun their careers independently, they met and married in 1914, and

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[1]Ibid., p. 137.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 7.

[4]Sorrell, Dance Through the Ages, p. 179.

established the Denishawn School and Company which provided the rebels against the classic tradition with a place to study. From 1915 through 1932, the school associated with Denishawn existed in some fashion--either in Los Angeles, California, or in New York City.[1] Ruth St. Denis pursued a spiritualistic approach to dance as she "wanted to dance God."[2] In her youth, she sought to accomplish her goal through oriental dance themes. According to Maynard, these themes ". . . expressed her romantic imagination, and she had the physical ability to personify a sinuous grace and a mysterious seductive femininity."[3] In a further description of St. Denis' approach to dance, Maynard explains:

> St. Denis's approach to dance was feminine and intuitive . . . [she] built her career on the mystery and seductiveness of the East. . . . [she] was mercurial in temperament, naturally rhythmic, instinctively gifted for gesture and the usage of drapery in the dance. She was at her best teaching women of deeply feminine natures like her own.[4]

With maturity, Miss Ruth--as she was affectionately called in her later years--became primarily concerned with religious

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[1]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 22.

[2]Walter Terry, The Dance in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), p. 60.

[3]Olga Maynard, American Modern Dancers: The Pioneers (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1965), pp. 84-85.

[4]Ibid., p. 95.

explorations.[1] She was the leader of her Church of the Divine Dance where she performed and taught dance as a form of divine worship.[2]

Ted Shawn, determined to become an "American" dancer, was the first American male to abandon his studies of the ballet and to search for a new expression of dance. He brought to Denishawn his own eclectic version of techniques--aspects of primitive dance and popular dance as well as an adapted version of ballet.[3] Shawn, as the chief organizer and teacher, believed that the dance-educated person should be exposed to the techniques of all possible forms of dance.[4] His outstanding works and contributions are many, but he is perhaps best known for helping the male dancer gain recognition through his all male dance group[5] and for the founding and direction of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, and the University of the Dance in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts.[6]

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[1]Terry, The Dance in America, p. 60.

[2]Maynard, American Modern Dancers: The Pioneers, p. 85.

[3]Terry, The Dance in America, p. 71.

[4]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 23.

[5]Sorrell, Dance Through the Ages, p. 181.

[6]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 31.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn gave Denishawn to America. Denishawn became ". . . the cradle and stronghold of modern dance in America. St. Denis and Shawn [became] the parent force of the dance."[1] At Denishawn, these two innovators worked toward releasing the innermost potentialities of their dancers. In so doing, they produced three "rebels" who were to become the core of the second generation of American dancers--Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman.[2]

These rebels left Denishawn because they believed that they could make personal contributions to the development of modern dance which would far exceed those conceived within the boundaries of Denishawn.[3] Each one reacted to the effects of Denishawn in his own specific fashion. Lloyd cites an example with respect to St. Denis' idea of religious expression and how this idea influenced each of the three rebels in his expression of religious impulses:

> Martha Graham [expresses religious impulses] by a terrific exposure of the evils in the recesses in the human heart; Doris Humphrey [expressed these

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[1]Maynard, American Modern Dancers: The Pioneers, p. 94.

[2]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, pp. 33-34.

[3]Don McDonagh, The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1970), p. 24.

> impulses] by social criticism and exhaltation of the human spirit; and Charles Weidman [expresses them] by spearing with wit and humor the social and separate frailties of mankind.[1]

The contributions of these three artists as dancers, teachers, and choreographers are monumental. Many of the third generation of American dancers owe their fertile background to this trio.

Concurrent with the dance activities of Graham, Humphrey, and Weidman in the Eastern United States, Lester Horton was developing his Modern Dance Theatre on the West Coast. Horton approached modern dance from the aspect of total theatre, and his performances were theatre productions rather than concerts. Although they had had no contact with each other, several of Horton's dances were surprisingly similar to those of Graham and Humphrey. He abandoned these works, however, when he discovered the similarity. Horton developed his own techniques and produced many fine dancers.[2] He had an unusual love for all kinds of people--an attitude shared by Martha Graham on the East Coast[3]--and, therefore, his company was open to dancers

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[1]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 25.

[2]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, pp. 176-77.

[3]Mary Hinkson, personal interview held in New York City, August 13, 1970.

of all races. Consequently, the outstanding contemporary black male dancers--James Truitte, Don Martin, Claude Thompson, and Alvin Ailey--are exponents of the dance school which was directed by Lester Horton.

By the 1940's modern dance leaders of various backgrounds began to appear on the concert stages in the United States. Many of them were trying to find that basic American pulse about which Ted Shawn wrote when he stated that, in order to develop a great American ballet, it must be comprised of:

> American born and American trained dancers, dancing to music by American composers, with scenery and costumes designed by American artists, and under the direction or management of American business men of great vision.[1]

It was during this time, the early forties, that the black dancer emerged as an important figure on the concert stage. The performer whose songs and music had already been the thematic inspiration for dances which were considered basically American was finally allowed to perform dances other than those in keeping with the stereotyped image of the happy-go-lucky, grinning, tapping, Negro.[2] The subject

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[1]Ted Shawn, Thirty-Three Years of American Dance (1927-1959) and the American Ballet (Pittsfield, Massachusetts: The Eagle Printing and Binding Company, 1959), p. 40.

[2]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., from 1619 to 1970," p. 266.

of the black dancer on the concert stage in the United States will be discussed in Chapter III of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The present study was undertaken in order to make available biographical information concerning two contemporary black male dance artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey. Included in the study is information concerning the personal life of Arthur Mitchell from the time of his birth through 1971 and the personal life of Alvin Ailey from the time of his birth through 1972; each subject's special studies in various types of dance; his professional career as a dancer, as a choreographer, as a teacher, and as a director of professional dance companies; and his outstanding contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively.

Definitions and/or Explanations of Terms

The following definitions and/or explanations of terms have been established for use in the proposed study:

Biography--The investigator accepts the following explanation by Garraty who states that

> . . . biography is the reconstruction of a human life. It attempts to describe and evaluate one individual's career, and also to reproduce the

> image of his living personality, analyzing its impact upon his actions and the world in which he lived.[1]

Contemporary--The investigator accepts the clarification of this term as it appears in the Oxford English Dictionary which defines "contemporary" as "belonging to the same time, age, or period; living, existing, or occurring together in time."[2]

Choreographer--The investigator accepts the definition of Chujoy and Manchester who state that a choreographer is "a composer of dance and ballets; the author of the choreography of a ballet, modern dance, dances in shows, . . ."[3] The foregoing definition is applicable to the structuring of dance compositions in all idioms.

Dance--The investigator accepts the explanation of Ted Shawn who states that

> The art of dance is too big to be encompassed by any one system, school, or style. On the contrary, the dance includes every way men of all races in every period of the world's history have moved rhythmically to express themselves.[4]

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[1]John A. Garraty, The Nature of Biography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 28.

[2]"Contemporary," The Oxford English Dictionary, 1933, II, 895.

[3]Chujoy and Manchester, The Encyclopedia of the Dance, p. 200.

[4]Ted Shawn, Every Little Movement (Pittsfield, Massachusetts: The Eagle Printing and Binding Company, 1954), p. 7.

The investigator chose this explanation from among many possible choices because it encompasses the two universally recognized art forms of dance represented in this study.

Modern Dance--The investigator accepts the explanation of Turner who states that modern dance is

> . . . an art form that uses movement as a medium of expression. It is the result of intentional ordering of movement by a choreographer. The movement is created in response to the re-experiencing of emotional values, which are thus given a new existence. The expressive movement is highly selected, spatially designed, and organized through rhythmic structure; the result is the communication of an idea, mood, feeling, state, or situation.[1]

Ballet--The investigator accepts the explanation of Krokover who states that ballet is a form of dance which ". . . uses a vocabulary of movement built on traditional techniques developed over the centuries and involving the five specific positions."[2] Curt Sachs explains the codification of the classical ballet in the following manner:

> The systematic spirit of the dance instruction of the time can be traced in the foundation of the teaching method on a scheme of invariable basic positions of the head, the trunk, the arms, and the legs as the beginning and end of each movement.[3]

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[1]Turner, Modern Dance for High School and College, p. 1.

[2]Rosalyn Krokover, The New Borzoi Book of Ballet (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 3.

[3]Sachs, World History of the Dance, p. 394.

Ethnological Dance--The investigator accepts the explanation of La Meri who states that

> . . . the ethnological dance does not include the folk dance, the former being an art dance and the latter a communal dance. But I believe it is safe to say that all ethnological dance arts spring from communal dance.[1]

The investigator agrees with La Meri in the foregoing explanation in that it implies that ethnological dance as an art form is based upon the indigenous steps, movements, and music of a particular racial or ethnic group.

Purposes of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to report information regarding the lives of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey with emphasis upon each one's professional career and his contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively. The investigator conducted a critical examination of the contributions of each of the artists as a dancer, as a choreographer, as a teacher, and as a director of professional dance companies. Specific purposes of the study were to describe the following sequences of experiences as they relate to each of the subjects:

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[1]La Meri, "The Ethnological Dance Arts," The Dance Has Many Faces, ed. by Walter Sorrell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 4.

1. Early life, educational background, and dance education.
2. Experiences as a professional dancer.
3. Teaching experiences.
4. Choreographic achievements.
5. Activities involving each subject's particular professional dance companies and tours.
6. Appearances on radio and television broadcasts.
7. Contributions to dance literature.
8. Honors and/or awards of merit.
9. Unique contributions to the field of dance as a black male dance artist in contemporary society.

Limitations of the Study

The present study was limited to biographical data pertaining to the life of Arthur Mitchell from the time of his birth through 1971 and to the life of Alvin Ailey from the time of his birth through 1972, and to each subject's contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively. The study was limited further by the availability of relevant background material concerning the contemporary black male dancer in the United States of America and to the availability of both documentary and human sources of data with respect to biographical information pertaining to the two selected subjects.

Survey of Previous Studies

The investigator found no previous research studies which duplicate the present dissertation. Several studies, however, are closely related in that they are biographical or historical reports of outstanding figures in the field of dance. Those studies most closely related to this dissertation in scope and intent were selected, therefore, for presentation in a survey of previous studies.

In 1963, Poindexter completed a detailed biographical account of Ted Shawn and the imprint which he made upon the American dance scene.[1] The general purpose of this study was to make available a biographical account of the personal life of Ted Shawn, his professional career, and his contributions to the development of dance in the United States. The subject's life and career had extended over a period of more than fifty years at the time the study was conducted. Further purposes of the study, therefore, were to report information concerning (1) the early life of Ted Shawn, (2) his educational background, (3) his personal interest and hobbies, (4) his professional dance experiences

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[1]Betty Poindexter, "Ted Shawn: His Personal Life, His Professional Career, and His Contributions to the Development of Dance in the United States from 1891 to 1963" (unpublished Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, Texas Woman's University, August, 1963).

during his early career, (5) his affiliation with Denishawn, (6) the development and direction of his famous group known as Shawn and his Men Dancers, (7) his direction of, and participation in concert and lecture tours, (8) his founding and directing of Jacob's Pillow, known now as The University of the Dance and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, (9) his published writings, (10) his lectures, (11) his awards and honors, and (12) his contributions to the development of dance as attributed to him by recognized authorities in the field.

Data for Poindexter's study were secured through personal interviews and correspondence with Ted Shawn, with selected individuals who were familiar with his personal life and career, and through published and unpublished materials written by and about Shawn. Poindexter concluded that Shawn was a dynamic leader in the field of dance with respect to dance education, dance for men, and dance as a performing art.

This study is similar to Poindexter's in that both are concerned with the contributions of male dancers to the field of dance. The present study is similar also in that biographical techniques were utilized in conducting and in reporting the study. The two studies differ in that Poindexter focused upon the life and contributions of Ted

Shawn, who is generally considered as the "Father of American Dance," whereas the present study focused upon the lives and contributions of two black male dance artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively.

In 1950, Kulynitch completed a study pertaining to Louis Horst which chronicled his contributions to the choreography of modern dance through his courses in dance composition as well as those evidenced by the influences of his teachings upon the choreography of selected professional modern dancers who had studied with him.[1] The purpose of the study was to record the contributions of Louis Horst and the subsequent influences of his teaching upon the development of the choreography of modern dance compositions.

Data were secured from personal interviews with Louis Horst, personal interviews and correspondence with selected professional modern dancers who had studied with him, published and unpublished materials written by and about Horst, and from materials and class notes recorded by the investigator while enrolled in courses in dance

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[1]Mary Kulynitch, "Louis Horst, A Historical Study of His Contributions to Modern Dance Choreography" (unpublished Master's thesis, School of Education, New York University, 1950).

composition taught by him. It was concluded that Louis Horst's contributions to choreography are evidenced by the frequent use of his techniques in dance education today.

The present study is similar to that of Kulynitch in that both studies are concerned with the contributions of the selected subjects to the field of dance. The present study is similar also in that biographical techniques were utilized in conducting and in reporting the study. The two studies differ with respect to the subjects chosen.

In 1965, Wynne completed a study pertaining to the life and contributions of José Limón as a modern dance artist.[1] The purposes of the study were to report information concerning (1) the boyhood of José Limón in Mexico, (2) his education in the United States, (3) his early years as a dancer at the Humphrey-Weidman Studie, (4) his dance activities in the Armed Forces, (5) the organization and development of his own professional dance company, (6) his development as a choreographer, and (7) his contributions to the art of dance.

The human sources of data for Wynne's study included Limón and selected persons who were well acquainted with him.

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[1]Kathleen Wynne, "The Life and Contributions of José Limón" (unpublished Master's thesis, Smith College, 1965).

These data were collected through personal interviews and correspondence. Documentary sources of data included written materials concerning the life and contributions of Limón, books, periodicals, and newspaper articles pertaining to Limón and articles written by Limón concerning the choreography of modern dance, and the tours of his professional dance company. Wynne concluded that Limón has made a significant contribution to modern dance.

The present study is similar to Wynne's in that it is concerned with the contributions of one of the selected subjects to the idiom of modern dance. The present study is similar also in that biographical techniques were utilized in conducting and in reporting the data. The studies differ in that Wynne's study is concerned with the life and contributions to José Limón to the art of modern dance whereas the proposed investigation entails a detailed study of the lives and contributions of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey to the arts of ballet and modern dance, respectively.

In 1966, Yerg completed a study of the professional life of Isadora Duncan and the influence of her philosophy upon modern dance.[1] The purposes of the study were to examine (1) the professional life of Isadora Duncan, (2) her

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[1]Reneé Yerg, "An Historical Study of the Professional Life of Isadora Duncan and the Influence of Her Philosophy on Modern Dance Today" (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966).

influence upon selected individuals who were her contemporaries, and (3) the effects of her understanding of dance upon the present status of modern dance as an art form as well as an integral part of educational curriculums.

Data were obtained from personal interviews with Irma Duncan, Margaret H'Doubler, and Walter Terry; from autobiographies, periodicals, biographies, and pamphlets; and from articles written by Isadora Duncan and by artists, authors, and critics of the dance. It was concluded that Isadora Duncan has influenced contemporary artists and educators in the field of dance.

The present study is similar to Yerg's in that it is concerned with the contributions of the selected subjects to the field of dance. The present study is similar also in that biographical techniques were used in conducting and in reporting the study. The two studies differ in that Yerg's study is concerned with the life of Isadora Duncan whereas this investigation entails a detailed study of the lives of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey and their contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively.

In 1955, Brown completed a study pertaining to the contributions of Mary Wigman to the field of dance.[1] This

[1]Katherine M. Brown, "The Work of Mary Wigman" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Utah, May, 1955).

study was conducted when Wigman was approaching her thirty-ninth year as an outstanding figure in the dance world. The purposes of Brown's study were (1) to chronicle the evolution of an original form of dance as created, performed, and taught by Mary Wigman, and (2) to present a discussion of factors which might have influenced the choreography, teaching techniques, and personal philosophy of this German artist.

Data were obtained through personal interviews with Mary Wigman, selected professional associates, former students, and from published and unpublished materials by and about Mary Wigman. The study chronicled the factors which influenced Wigman's life and the interrelationship of these factors with the dance form generally ascribed to her, the establishment of her school in Dresden, Germany, and her public performances. The study was concluded with an index of the dances which were choreographed by Wigman and a review of her major compositions.

The present study is similar to Brown's in that it is concerned with the contributions of one of the selected subjects to the idiom of modern dance. The present study is similar also in that biographical techniques were utilized in conducting and in reporting the study. The two studies differ in that Brown's study is concerned with the

evolution of an original dance form as created, performed, and taught by a German artist, Mary Wigman, and a discussion of factors which might have influenced Wigman's choreography, teaching, and personal philosophy of the dance whereas this investigation entails a detailed study of the lives of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey and their contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively.

In 1971, Andreasen completed a biographical study of Walter Terry which emphasizes his professional career and his contributions to the field of dance.[1] The specific purposes of the study were to describe information concerning Terry's (1) formal education, dance education, and professional career; (2) association with the Boston Herald, the New York Herald Tribune, the Saturday Review, and the President's special International Program for Cultural Presentation; (3) lectures and lecture-demonstrations focusing upon dance history, dance criticism, and his own philosophy of dance; (4) appearances on radio and television; (5) contributions to dance literature; (6) personal views on dance criticism and the future of dance in the United States

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[1]Lois Andreasen, "A Biography of Walter Terry with Emphasis Upon His Professional Career and His Contributions to the Field of Dance" (unpublished Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, Texas Woman's University, 1971).

of America; and (7) recognition through various honors and awards bestowed upon him.

Data were obtained through personal interviews with Walter Terry, personal interviews and correspondence with selected individuals acquainted with Terry during various periods of his life and career, and published and unpublished material by and about Walter Terry. The present study is similar to Andreasen's in that it is of a biographical nature and emphasizes the contributions of the selected subjects to the field of dance. The study is similar also in that biographical techniques were utilized in conducting and in reporting the study. The two studies differ in that Andreasen's study is concerned with the life and contributions of a noted dance critic to the field of dance whereas this investigation entails a detailed study of the lives and contributions of two noted performers to the field of dance.

In 1970, Emery completed a study pertaining to black dance in the United States.[1] The specific purpose of the study was to develop a history of the Negro and dance in the United States between the years of 1619 and 1970. Her study was based upon three assumptions: (1) there exists an abundance of primary source material dealing with the

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[1]Emery, "Black Dance in the U. S. from 1619 to 1970."

dance of the Negro in the United States; (2) it is possible, by careful and diligent searching and examination, to separate fact from fiction, supposition, bias, and imagination in the existent sources; and (3) that white Americans have invented and developed a stereotyped image of the Negro, and, in many cases, the Negro himself has accepted and lived that image. It was assumed, therefore, that some of the dance performed by the Negro in the New World was in fulfillment of this image.

Data were secured through personal and telephone interviews and correspondence with contemporary leaders in the area of black dance and with selected individuals considered knowledgeable in the field, and through published materials made available through contact with numerous libraries throughout the United States. Emery concluded that (1) much primary source material still remains untouched, (2) the biases and prejudices of many authors were all too obvious in many of the references, (3) the minstrel stereotype of the black is less frequently practiced by blacks than expected, (4) the Afro-American has contributed more and has been more influential in the American dance than nearly any other source throughout the years, and (5) through the dance, the universality of man as man, not as black or white, can be revealed.

This study is similar to Emery's in that both are concerned with black dance in the United States. The present study is similar also in that biographical techniques were utilized in conducting and in reporting the study. The two studies differ, however, in that Emery's is an historical study which aims to encompass the entire scope of the black dance in the United States whereas the present investigation entails a biographical study of two black artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--and their contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively.

In addition to the studies reviewed by the investigator, several published biographies and autobiographies were of interest and particular value to her and proved to be of great assistance in the development of this dissertation. Among these was Madame Sarah,[1] the life of Sarah Bernhardt, by Cornelia Otis Skinner. Miss Skinner, a distinguished writer and a gifted actress in her own right, presented an excellent picture of the life and career of Sarah Bernhardt, considered one of the greatest actresses that the world has ever known. Skinner treats the personal and theatrical lives of "Madam Sarah" with the same

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[1]Cornelia Otis Skinner, Madame Sarah (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967).

inexhaustible attention and chronicles important historical events which tended to shape the destiny of the great actress. This investigator found the informal style of writing of particular interest and the historical approach to biographical writing valuable in the organization and development of the biographical studies of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey.

Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham,[1] by Ruth Biemiller, is a biographical sketch of the early life of Katherine Dunham with emphasis upon the factors which shaped her professional career. Miss Biemiller gives an enlightening and in-depth account of Katherine Dunham's activities during the years that the anthropologist-dancer was developing into one of the most exciting and original artists in the contemporary theatre. This book was of particular interest to the investigator because it represents the only publication of its kind concerning contemporary black dance artists.

A published autobiography which was particularly helpful in the development of this dissertation was Theatre Street[2] by Tamara Karsavina. Karsavina, who was one of the

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[1]Ruth Biemiller, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969).

[2]Tamara Karsavina, Theatre Street (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1961).

greatest stars of the Diaghilev period of leadership in ballet, not only presented a vivid picture of her own life and career as a prima ballerina, but she also presented character sketches of her teachers and fellow artists. Her autobiography is an invaluable historical account of great moments in the Russian ballet. Theatre Street was of particular interest and value to the investigator because it represents the personal feelings and views of a performer in the art of the ballet and because of the historical significance of the work.

Summary

The present investigation entails a biographical study of two outstanding artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--exponents of two universally recognized forms of fine art, ballet and modern dance, respectively. Dance as an art form falls into two major categories--a folk art or a fine art. Dance as a folk art is communal dance and encompasses such major categories as ethnic dance, folk dance, and some avant-garde dance. Dance as a fine art may be distinguished by a definite separation between audience and performer and may be judged by the criteria of creativity, definiteness and clarity of form, communicativeness, independence, a high level of skill, and

enrichment of personal experience. It is in this category that ballet and modern dance are considered.

Although ballet has its roots in the rituals of primitive man, it was not until the Renaissance Period that semblances of its present form became recognizable. Italy led the way in the elevation of the peasant dances to a noble quality worthy of the aristocracy, but France refined the dance into an art form. The present day concept of ballet owes its beginning to Louis XIV, who had his personal dancing master, Beauchamps, establish definite rules for the ballet. These rules have endured throughout the centuries as the basis for ballet technique.

The establishment of the Academie Royale de Danse in 1661 marked the beginning of professional education for dancers of the ballet. Combined with the Academie Royale de Music in 1672, this institution was responsible for producing many outstanding dance artists. Professional dancers educated in Paris soon began to travel throughout Europe, and they, in turn, performed at various courts or founded their own ballet schools and companies.

Ballet reigned supreme among the dance arts in France until the French Revolution. Following the Revolution and the rise of Romanticism, ballet began to decline throughout the western world with the exception of

Russia. There, ballet was supported by the State and, under the tutalage of outstanding foreign Ballet Masters, two distinct schools of ballet came into being--the Kirov State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet at Leningrad, and the Bolshoi Ballet Theatre in Moscow. Outstanding Russian dancers and choreographers developed, but, with the desire for freedom of creativity, many of these artists have since left their homeland to spread the Russian ballet to other parts of the world.

The Russian impresario, Diaghilev, organized a unique company of superior dancers, choreographers, composers, and painters to form the Ballet Russe which was responsible for the re-emergence of ballet as an important art form during the early twentieth century. Diaghilev died in 1929, but his dancers settled throughout Europe and the United States, keeping the Russian influence on the ballet alive.

England was somewhat slower than other European countries in the development of native ballet dancers and choreographers, owing perhaps to the British lack of interest in performing. The persons most influential in the development of native talent were Marie Rambert, a former student of Cecchetti, who established the Ballet Rambert, and Ninette de Valois, a former Diaghilev dancer, who

founded the Vic-Wells Ballet which ultimately became the Royal Ballet of England. England has produced such ballet personalities as Dame Margot Fonteyn, Sir Frederick Ashton, John Cranko, and Kenneth MacMillan.

The production of the Black Crook in 1886 was apparently the first to include a ballet conceived and presented in the United States. This country did not become a focal point for ballet, however, until after the first world war. Following the war, many Russian immigrants settled in the United States, and the ballet artists began laying the foundation for the development of ballet in America. Among the foreign artists who made outstanding contributions are Mikhail Mordkin, Leonide Massine, and George Balanchine.

Lincoln Kirstein and George Balanchine formed a partnership in 1934, when they opened the School of American Ballet in New York City. From this beginning, the New York City Ballet emerged fourteen years later. Under the artistic direction of George Balanchine, the New York City Ballet has become one of the world's foremost ballet companies. This company was the first major ballet company in the United States to employ a black dancer as a permanent member of the company. The dancer was Arthur Mitchell, co-subject of this study.

During the twentieth century, dance was re-discovered. Nearly every country in the world now has its own ballet company, many of which have achieved Royal and National standing and are official representatives of the heads of governments. Although all ballet is based upon the same classical tradition, each native country has a distinct character of its own. Among those companies typically representative of the history, climate, customs, and temperament of the country are the Moiseyev Dance Company of Russia, the Hungarian National Ballet, and the Ballet Folklorico of Mexico.

Concurrent with the development of the New York City Ballet, other companies and native choreographers began to emerge throughout the United States. Among these companies were the American Ballet Theatre, the National Ballet of Washington, the Houston Ballet Foundation, the San Francisco Ballet, the Pennsylvania Ballet, and the Chicago Opera Ballet. The outstanding list of native choreographers includes such personalities as Agnes DeMille, Lew Christensen, Ruth Page, and Jerome Robbins.

The present status of ballet in the United States cannot be attributed wholly to the success of major companies. There exists in the United States today an increasing number of regional ballet companies. These non-professional ballet

companies, comprised of directors and non-salaried dancers, have as their major goals the stimulation of interest in ballet and the support of ballet companies and of schools of ballet. These regional companies provide the larger professional companies with knowledgeable and enthusiastic audiences. In the twentieth century, the art of ballet has again embraced the people.

The dances of primitive man were performed originally to express his reactions to natural phenomena, reactions which eventually evolved into religious beliefs. Later he began to mime various aspects of his life and environment--his quest for food, love, war, and his wonder at the ever-present spectacle of nature. The importance of the religious dances to the life and welfare of the tribe, however, was responsible for organized instruction in the art and execution of certain dances among primitive societies. Any error in the performance of the dance steps was believed to reduce the possibility of receiving the favor which was sought from the deity. Instruction was given, therefore, to insure perfection among the future dancers, leaders, and teachers of dance.

The Ancient Egyptians used dance as their chief medium of religious expression in much the same fashion as did primitive man. Their religion was based in mythology

with the various adventures of their mythological gods, together with the annual rise and fall of the river Nile serving as thematic sources for the ritualistic dance-dramas which the Ancient Egyptians performed as religious rites. Separate from the temple dancers was a class of professional performers; secular dancing was relegated to these dancers or to slaves.

Greek dancing developed from the communal form of choral dance. The Greeks also used dance as a language of their various actions but elevated this form of communication to the level of pantomime. The drama flourished in Greece and, as a result, the Greeks' major contribution to the arts was total theatre--a marriage of poetry, music, and dance. Greece was the home of the great tragedies and comedies. In the huge theatres, the choral dancers were all important; through the use of mime, dances and gestures, they helped the spectator grasp the true meaning of the text.

The Romans did not contribute to the development of the dance *per se*, but they developed the Greek pantomime into an independent branch of art. This development may be attributed to the need of a form of universal language because of the number of different languages spoken in the Roman Empire.

Following the fall of the Roman Empire, the history of dance is closely related to the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe. Although the first Christians despised the rituals of the Greeks and Romans, many pagan dances were adapted for use in Christian rites of worship.

The outstanding development in the dance during the Renaissance Period was the refinement of ballet into a form of art. From the beginning of this Period, ballet assumed a position of supremacy in the dance and remained in that position until the early twentieth century.

Modern dance, known today as a unique American art, began in the United States with Isadora Duncan. Although she left no definite system of dance, she was the first to rebel against what she considered artificial balletic movements and thereby laid the foundation for the development of modern dance. Duncan advocated freedom in life and in art and left to the world a spiritual rather than a technical inheritance.

Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn are credited with the official founding of American dance. Having begun their careers independently, they met and married in 1914, and established the Denishawn School and Company which provided the rebels against the classic tradition a place to study.

The most outstanding among these rebels were Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman--each of whom has made monumental contributions to the field of dance.

Concurrent with the dance activities of Graham, Humphrey, and Weidman on the East Coast, Lester Horton was developing his modern dance theatre on the West Coast. Horton, who evolved his own special techniques, opened the doors of his school and company to dancers of all races and colors. Among the contemporary black dancers who are alumni of the Lester Horton group are James Truitte and Alvin Ailey--the latter a co-subject of this study.

By the 1940's, modern dance leaders of various backgrounds began to appear on the concert stages in the United States--many of them trying to find the basic American pulse with respect to the dance. It was during this time also that the black dance artist emerged as an important figure on the concert stage where he was finally allowed to perform dances other than those in keeping with the stereotyped image of the happy-go-lucky, grinning, tapping Negro. The subjects of this study, Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey, are two contemporary black male dance artists who have made outstanding contributions to the field of dance on the concert stage in the United States.

Specific terms utilized throughout this study were defined and clarified by the investigator. The terms include biography, contemporary, choreographer, dance, modern dance, ballet, and ethnological dance.

The purposes of the study were to describe the early life, educational background, and dance education of each subject; to describe his experiences as a professional dancer; to describe his teaching experiences; to describe his choreographic achievements; to describe the activities involving his particular professional dance companies and tours; to describe his appearances on radio and television broadcasts; to describe his contributions to dance literature; to describe his honors and/or awards of merit; and to describe his unique contributions to the field of dance as a black male dance artist in contemporary society.

The investigator established the following limitations in the development of her study: biographical data pertaining to the lives of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey and their contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively; the availability of relevant background material concerning the contemporary black male dancer in the United States; and the availability of data pertaining to the two selected subjects from both documentary and human sources.

Several studies have been completed which are closely related to the present investigation in that they are biographical or historical reports of outstanding figures in the field of dance. None of the studies which were reviewed by the investigator duplicated the present dissertation.

The following unpublished studies were reviewed by the investigator: "Ted Shawn: His Personal Life, His Professional Career, and His Contributions to the Development of Dance in the United States from 1891 to 1963" by Betty Poindexter; "Louis Horst, A Historical Study of His Contributions to Modern Dance Choreography" by Mary Kulynitch; "The Life and Contributions of José Limón" by Kathleen Wynne; "An Historical Study of the Professional Life of Isadora Duncan and the Influence of Her Philosophy on Modern Dance Today" by Reneé Yerg; "The Work of Mary Wigman" by Katherine M. Brown; "A Biography of Walter Terry with Emphasis Upon His Professional Career and His Contributions to the Field of Dance" by Lois Andreasen; and "Black Dance in the United States From 1619 to 1970" by Leonore Lynne Fauley Emery.

In addition to the biographical and historical studies reviewed by the investigator, several published biographies and autobiographies were of interest and

particular value to her and proved to be of great assistance in the development of this dissertation. Published biographical and autobiographical materials reviewed included: Madame Sarah by Cornelia Otis Skinner, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham by Ruth Biemiller, and Theatre Street by Tamara Karsavina.

The procedures followed in the development of this dissertation will be reported in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

The present investigation entailed a biographical study of two contemporary black male dance artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--and their contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively. Procedures utilized in the development of this study were divided into the following five major categories: (1) Preliminary Procedures, (2) Procedures Followed in the Collection of Data from Documentary Sources, (3) Procedures Followed in the Collection of Data from Human Sources, (4) Procedures Employed in the Organization, Analysis, and the Presentation of Data in the Form of a Final Written Report, (5) Preparation of a Classified Bibliography, and (6) Preparation of Appropriate Appendixes.

Preliminary Procedures

The investigator conferred with Doctor Anne Schley Duggan, Dean of the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation at the Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas, with respect to the feasibility of undertaking the

proposed study. Inasmuch as the investigator chose to limit the study to one contemporary black male dance artist from the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively, an overall effort was made to select the leading representative in each idiom.

Prior to the selection of the two subjects, the investigator surveyed, studied, and assimilated data from all available literature pertaining to contemporary black male dance artists in the United States of America. Upon the basis of the documentary data reviewed, criteria were established for the selection of one outstanding representative of contemporary black male dance artists in ballet and in modern dance, respectively. These criteria were submitted to members of the Dissertation Committee and were revised in accordance with their corrections and suggestions. The established criteria used in the selection of these representative artists are listed below:

1. The persons in question must be black male dance artists who have made their contributions in the respective dance idioms within the past decade--1960 through 1970.

2. The works of the artists must have been recognized and reviewed by noted dance critics.

3. The accomplishments of the artists must have appeared in leading dance periodicals and other pertinent literature as well as other media of communication such as television and cinematography.

4. The persons in question must have been performing dancers as well as creative artists.

5. The persons in question must have directed their own dance companies or projects of similar magnitude.

6. The selection of the artists must be corroborated by the opinions of recognized leaders in the field of dance.

Several artists who met the established criteria were selected from those representative of the two idioms of dance. In order to limit the selection to two of the most outstanding representatives in the respective idioms of ballet and modern dance, however, the investigator selected empirically recognized authorities in the field of dance to serve as a jury of experts to assist in the identification of the artists. This selected jury of experts included: (1) the late Ted Shawn, pioneer in modern dance and Founder-Director of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, and the University of the Dance; (2) Walter Terry, Dance Critic for the Saturday Review; (3) Doris Hering, Critic-at-Large and former Associate Editor for Dance Magazine; (4) Ann Barzel, Dance Critic for the Chicago American.

A letter of explanation with respect to the proposed dissertation was developed and sent to the jury of experts accompanied by a postal card questionnaire requesting that they list three preferences among the most outstanding black male dance artists in the idioms of ballet

and of modern dance in the United States. The results of this questionnaire were tabulated, and the artists selected as subjects for this study were those most frequently chosen by the jury of experts.

Arthur Mitchell was selected as the outstanding representative of ballet, and Alvin Ailey was selected as the outstanding representative of modern dance. Since the subjects are both living, it was necessary to obtain each one's permission to study his life and contributions to the field of dance before preliminary plans could be initiated. Dean Duggan placed long distance telephone calls to Arthur Mitchell and to Alvin Ailey in New York City to obtain their approval of the proposed investigation. Each subject stated that he was not committed and would not commit himself to any other biographer. Each subject granted permission to the investigator to undertake his biography, stated that he would be in New York City and available for interviews during the summer of 1970, and pledged his cooperation throughout the duration of the study.

Immediately following the telephone conversations, the investigator initiated correspondence with each subject confirming his commitment to her. She also requested that each subject compile a list of the names and addresses of persons associated with him throughout the various phases

of his life and professional career who could provide additional information relevant to the proposed study.

The investigator developed interview questions and data sheets for use in obtaining data from individuals in each of the following categories: (1) the selected subjects, Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey; (2) selected relatives, friends, teachers, colleagues, and students; (3) selected members of the professional dance companies of the two subjects; (4) contemporary black male dance artists; and (5) former teachers of successful black male dance artists. The interview questions and data sheets were submitted to members of the Dissertation Committee and revised and corrected in accordance with suggestions made by them.

Additional preliminary procedures entailed a survey of the literature pertaining to biographical research as well as selected biographies and autobiographies of persons in the field of dance and related arts. A further documentary analysis of all available literature pertaining specifically to the lives, professional careers, and contributions of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey in the idioms of ballet and of modern dance, respectively, was undertaken by the investigator. Upon the basis of this documentary analysis, the investigator prepared a Tentative Outline of the proposed dissertation.

The Tentative Outline of the proposed study was presented on June 12, 1970, in a Graduate Seminar conducted by Dean Duggan in the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation at the Texas Woman's University. During the Graduate Seminar, members of the faculty in the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, along with members of the Dissertation Committee, suggested changes in the Tentative Outline. All feasible changes were incorporated in the Outline, and the investigator filed the revised and approved Outline in the form of a Prospectus in the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies at the Texas Woman's University.

The selected subjects were requested to provide the investigator with their specific performance and travel schedules during the summer of 1970. On the basis of this information pertinent to the availability of the subjects, the investigator arranged to spend the period of time from June 17 through September 19, 1970, in New York City, in Washington, D. C., and at the University of the Dance at Jacob's Pillow in Lee, Massachusetts, for the purpose of collecting data relevant to the proposed study.

A Topical Outline of the dissertation as a whole was prepared to serve as a guide in the organization of the accumulated data and in the preparation of the final written

report. The Topical Outline was submitted to the members of the Dissertation Committee for their revisions and corrections. After incorporating these suggested revisions and corrections, the investigator made a return trip to New York City which extended from January 3 through 19, 1971. During this period, she personally reviewed the Topical Outline with each of the subjects, incorporated their suggestions and corrections, and received final approval of the Outline.

Procedures Followed in the Collection of Data from Documentary Sources

During the summer of 1970, and the first two weeks of January, 1971, Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey, the subjects of this study, made their personal and professional files accessible to the investigator. These materials were examined and analyzed, and extensive notes were made with respect to the data relevant to her study. In many instances, duplicate copies of pertinent materials were provided for the investigator through the administrative offices of the professional, non-profit organizations directed by the respective subjects. In addition, Mrs. Willie Mae Mitchell, the mother of Arthur Mitchell, lent the investigator materials from scrapbooks and family albums. Mrs. Fred Cooper, the mother of Alvin Ailey, also

provided the investigator with family records and memorabilia of Ailey's childhood and his early career in dance. This material was acquired from Mrs. Cooper during a special visit with her in Los Angeles, California, from April 7 through 14, 1971.

The investigator also used the documentary sources of data found in the Dance Collection, Library and Museum of Performing Arts, New York Public Library at Lincoln Center in New York City, and in the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library in New York City. Through the facilities at the Dance Collection, the investigator was able to view films of dances representing the choreography and performances of black male dance artists as well as Clipping Folders containing publicity materials, programs, and reviews of the performances of these artists. In the Schomburg Collection, she found invaluable background materials concerning the early pioneers of black dance in the United States.

Procedures Followed in the Collection of Data from Human Sources

The investigator compiled a working card file of names, addresses, and specific categories of possible contributors to the study as such names were revealed to her

by the subjects or through documentary analysis. The possible contributions of these human sources of data were categorized with respect to their familiarity with the personal lives or with the professional careers of the respective subjects. This file was comprised of forty-eight persons who might provide information concerning Arthur Mitchell, twenty-three persons who might provide information concerning Alvin Ailey, and twenty-eight black male dance artists and former teachers of these artists who could provide additional information for the documentary analysis of background material for this dissertation. Since the majority of the human sources of data lived and worked in New York City and neighboring states, made frequent visits to New York City, or resided in Southern California, the biographical data were obtained from these individuals through the use of personal interviews which were recorded on tape, or through informal discussions during which the investigator made copious notes of materials considered relevant to her study. Whenever such interviews or discussions were precluded by geographical locations, the investigator resorted to telephone interviews or personal correspondence accompanied by biographical data sheets and/or recording tape.

Personal letters drafted for collecting data from individuals were divided into the following three categories: (1) Biographical Data from Friends and Fellow Dancers of the Selected Subject, (2) Biographical Data Concerning Outstanding Black Male Dance Artists in the Idioms of Ballet and of Modern Dance, and (3) Biographical Data Collected from Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists. Sample copies of these letters and data sheets may be found in Appendix A, page 869, of this dissertation.

Within the period from June 17, 1970, through September 19, 1970, the investigator conducted numerous interviews with both Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey. These interviews were recorded on tape and accompanied by the investigator's personal notations. In the course of the interviews, the subjects were guided by the interview questions and the Prospectus of the dissertation although each subject contributed additional information which was relevant to the study whenever he deemed it necessary.

From June 19 through 29, 1970, the investigator was the constant companion of Alvin Ailey. She observed him while he choreographed <u>The River</u> and rehearsed dancers of the American Ballet Theatre for its première on June 25, 1970, at the New York State Theatre located in Lincoln Center; she accompanied him to Washington, D. C., to a

performance of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on June 23, 1970; and she accompanied him to rehearsals as he prepared his company for its tour of North Africa during the month of July, 1970. This informal companionship with the subject gave the investigator the opportunity of gaining special insight into his personality both as a private individual and as an artist. On July 6, 1970, the investigator began sharing living facilities with Miss Ivy Clarke, Administrator for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Incorporated, thereby acquiring a direct connection with all aspects of Ailey's dance organization. Through the personal friendship of Miss Clarke, the investigator was able to move about easily within the circle of dancers and dance artists who have been, or who are currently associated with Alvin Ailey. Formal interviews were conducted with Alvin Ailey in New York City during the months of August and September of 1970, and January of 1971.

On July 6, 1970, Arthur Mitchell returned to the Dance Theatre of Harlem following a Caribbean Tour with his Company. From this date until September 19, 1970, the investigator was privileged to visit freely the Dance Theatre of Harlem and to observe Arthur Mitchell in his various capacities as teacher, choreographer, friend, director, and business man. The investigator also accompanied

the Dance Theatre of Harlem Company as it fulfilled scheduled engagements and was regarded as a member of the company by the dancers, technicians, and administrators of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. This arrangement facilitated personal interviews with personnel associated with the Dance Theatre of Harlem as well as numerous informal discussions which yielded invaluable information pertaining to Arthur Mitchell. The investigator had the opportunity to observe Arthur Mitchell as a professional dancer during the week of August 23 through 30, 1970, at which time he performed as a premier danseur with the New York City Ballet at the New York State Theatre at Lincoln Center in New York City. Formal interviews were conducted with Arthur Mitchell in New York City and at High Folly in Chester, Massachusetts. These interviews were held in July and August of 1970, and in January of 1971.

The interviews which were recorded on tapes were transcribed by the investigator and typewritten copies of the relevant information were prepared and submitted to each of the subjects for his appraisal. Such a procedure was necessary in order to ascertain the accuracy of spelling of specific names, to check the validity of the information provided, and to obtain permission to use direct quotations from the text of the taped responses of the two subjects.

Procedures Employed in the Organization, Analysis, and Presentation of the Data in the Form of a Final Written Report

The data collected from both documentary and human sources for each subject were organized and analyzed under the following topical headings: (1) Early Life, Educational Background, and Dance Education; (2) Experiences as a Professional Dancer; (3) Choreographic Achievements; (4) Teaching Experiences; (5) Independent Professional Dance Companies and Tours; (6) Contributions to Dance Literature; (7) Appearances on Radio and Television Broadcasts; (8) Honors and Awards of Merit; (9) Experiences in Films; and (10) Unique Contributions to the Field of Dance as a Black Male Dance Artist in Contemporary Society. Additional data collected with respect to contemporary black male dance artists were organized and analyzed under the topical heading of Contemporary Black Male Dance Artists in the Idioms of Ballet and of Modern Dance. After the data were collected and organized, they were subjected to further critical analysis with respect to their value to the study. The investigator then prepared a written report of the study, chapter by chapter, and submitted each chapter to the members of the Dissertation Committee for suggested revisions and corrections. The chapters were revised in accordance with these suggestions and submitted to Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey

for revisions, corrections, and approval. Following the incorporation of the suggested revisions and corrections, the report was re-submitted to the respective subjects and to the members of the Dissertation Committee for their final approval.

The study is divided into the following twelve chapters: Chapter I, Orientation to the Study; Chapter II, Procedures Followed in the Development of the Study; Chapter III, Contemporary Black Male Dance Artists of the Concert Stage in the Idioms of Ballet and Modern Dance; Chapter IV, The Early Years of Arthur Mitchell; Chapter V, Arthur Mitchell: Professional Ballet Dancer; Chapter VI, Arthur Mitchell as a Teacher and as a Director of Professional Dance Companies; Chapter VII, Summary: Arthur Mitchell, Black Harlem's Artistic Messiah, Chapter VIII, Alvin Ailey: The Formative Years; Chapter IX, Early Professional Preparation and Career of Alvin Ailey; Chapter X, Alvin Ailey: Artist in New York City; Chapter XI, Summary: Alvin Ailey, Explorer of the Roots of the Black Man; and Chapter XII, Summary of the Dissertation as a Whole and Recommendations for Further Studies.

Preparation of a Classified Bibliography and Appendixes

The investigator compiled a classified bibliography of all sources of data utilized in the development of this

study. The classified bibliography may be found on pages 830 through 868 of this dissertation.

The postal card questionnaire, selected sample letters, interview questions, and biographical data sheets used by the investigator in obtaining data for this study appear in Appendix A on pages 869 through 899; names and addresses of persons who contributed data pertinent to this study appear in Appendix B on pages 900 through 906; professional performances and Lecture-Demonstrations of the Dance Theatre of Harlem were compiled and included in Appendix C on pages 907 through 916; major tours of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater appear in Appendix D on pages 917 through 931; selected photographs representative of activities of both subjects--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--and their respective dance companies may be found in Appendix E on pages 932 through 976; and sample programs and reviews from performances of the companies of both artists are included in Appendix F on pages 977 through 1,000.

Summary

The procedures followed in the development of this study included: (1) Preliminary Procedures, (2) Procedures Followed in the Collection of Data from Documentary Sources, (3) Procedures Followed in the Collection of Data from Human

Sources, (4) Procedures Employed in the Organization, Analysis and Preparation of the Data in the Form of a Final Written Report, and (5) Preparation of a Classified Bibliography and Appendixes.

The final written report was organized and presented in the following twelve chapters: Chapter I, Orientation to the Study; Chapter II, Procedures Followed in the Development of the Study; Chapter III, Contemporary Black Male Dance Artists of the Concert Stage in the Idioms of Ballet and Modern Dance; Chapter IV, The Early Years of Arthur Mitchell; Chapter V, Arthur Mitchell: Professional Ballet Dancer; Chapter VI, Arthur Mitchell as a Teacher and as a Director of Professional Dance Companies; Chapter VII, Summary: Arthur Mitchell, Black Harlem's Artistic Messiah; Chapter VIII, Alvin Ailey: The Formative Years; Chapter IX, Early Professional Preparation and Career of Alvin Ailey; Chapter X, Alvin Ailey: Artist in New York City; Chapter XI, Summary: Alvin Ailey, Explorer of the Roots of the Black Man; and Chapter XII, Summary of the Dissertation as a Whole and Recommendations for Further Studies.

A classified bibliography of all sources of data utilized in the development of the study was prepared. Also included in the final written report are six appendixes which are comprised of information relevant to the study

such as questions used in the interviews conducted, selected photographs, and sample programs and critical reviews which could not be incorporated in the text of the dissertation proper.

Chapter III of this dissertation presents brief biographical sketches of outstanding contemporary black male dance artists in the idioms of ballet and of modern dance.

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY BLACK MALE DANCE ARTISTS OF THE CONCERT STAGE IN THE IDIOMS OF BALLET AND MODERN DANCE

The black entertainer was the first to provide what many authorities consider an ". . . entirely American theatrical element . . ." which has influenced stage performances and dancing styles in the United States.[1] The influence referred to stems from the Minstrel Show which is the ancestor of Vaudeville and of the American Music Hall.[2] Although the music and the movements were those of the black entertainer, he did not receive immediate recognition for his contributions. Marian Eames describes the situation in the following manner:

> Appearing first in alleys, dance-halls and saloons, the Negro entertainer did not attain widespread popularity or professional status until many of his imitators--white men in blackface--had already successfully exploited his "act."[3]

Black music-making and dance arrived in this country with the importation of the first slaves during the sixteenth century.[4] Coming primarily from the Gold Coast,

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[1]Marian Eames, "Comment," Dance Index, February, 1947, p. iii.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Alice Bonner and others, eds., In Black America (Los Angeles: Presidential Publishers, 1970), p. 4.

Ivory Coast, Congo, Angola, Benin, Gambia, Senegal, Nigeria, Dahomey, and Togoland,[1] these slaves brought to America a rich cultural heritage--especially in the areas of music, dance, and African folklore.[2] According to Gorer, Africans, in their motherland, danced to express every emotion--not in a cannibalistic nor primitive developmental sense--but in an exotic and rhythmical sense.[3] During the period of the slave trade, Africans danced for survival under the ubiquitous threat of the application of the whip wielded by the slave dealers.[4] Blacks continued to dance in the New World, again to express their emotions. In the new environment, however, the black man's dances tended to express sadness and loneliness.[5]

The separation of the slaves from the members of their families and their friends, the restrictions imposed upon them by their masters, and the dissolution of their cultural traditions forced them to develop new forms of

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[1]Marian Hannah Winter, "Juba and the American Minstrelsy," Dance Index, February, 1947, p. 28.

[2]Rayford W. Logan and Irving S. Cohen, The American Negro (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), pp. 15-16.

[3]Goeffrey Gorer, Africa Dances: A Short Book About West African Negroes (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 213.

[4]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., From 1619 to 1970."

[5]Ibid.

artistic expression. These new forms were drawn from the Western European traditions of the settlers in the New World, from the inventiveness and creativity of the blacks in providing instruments of sound and rhythm, and from the desire of these oppressed individuals for communion and communication with each other.[1] Black music-making and dance survived even the stringent slave laws of 1740 which forbade the beating of the drums, the blowing of the horns, or the use of any such noise makers which might have aroused slaves to insurrectionary activity.[2] They substituted for the forbidden instruments bone clappers, jawbones, scrap iron, hand clapping, and virtuosity of footbeats to accompany their dance movements; these footbeats, expressive and communicative in quality, became, therefore, the forerunner of the dialogue ". . . tapped out by two performers in modern tap dancing."[3]

The earliest black dancers on the American stage were featured as exotics, comics, and dandies. As early as 1791, a troupe of black comedians and entertainers performed in New Orleans.[4] In the early part of the nineteenth

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[1]Winter, "Juba and the American Minstrelsy," p. 28.

[2]*Ibid*.

[3]*Ibid*.

[4]*Ibid*.

century, the singing and dancing "Negro boy" had become established as a dance hall and circus character.[1] By this time, also, white performers in blackface make-up had begun to capitalize upon the rich theatrical source materials provided by the blacks who often had no theatrical interests or aspirations themselves. The early authentic black performer continued to appear only in "sporadic interludes."[2]

By the late 1920's, the stereotyped image of the black dancer as a comic, dandy, or an exotic primitive was well established.[3] Tap, soft shoe, and jazz dance were considered "natural" to black performers and were accepted favorably by white audiences.[4] The twentieth century black dancer, however, became restless and disenchanted with the old stereotyped image which no longer applied to him as an artist in his own right. Now a definite part of the American scene, he felt again the need to express his dance which was rooted in the emotions resulting from his cultural awareness that he was a full-fledged American citizen.[5]

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[1]*Ibid*.

[2]*Ibid*.

[3]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., 1619 to 1970," pp. 266-67.

[4]*Ibid*.

[5]*Ibid*.

Black Artists Who Paved the Way

Among the earliest pioneers in black concert dance were those who danced with the Hampton Institute Creative Dance Group, the Negro Art Theatre Dance Group, the American Negro Ballet, and the Negro Dance Company.[1] Although not many outstanding performers emerged from these early concert dance groups, the leaders deserve mention.

The Hampton Institute Creative Dance Group was directed during the 1920's and the 1930's by Charles H. Williams and Charlotte Moton Kennedy.[2] The Group presented concerts in modern dance idiom in schools throughout the country,[3] with dances based primarily upon the African heritage and the experiences of blacks, both enroute to and as residents in America.[4] The greatest contribution of this Group perhaps was the fact that its members affiliated themselves with black schools throughout the United States in order to continue to teach black source materials to their students.[5]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Margaret Lloyd, "African Dances, American Plan," Christian Science Monitor, May 17, 1938.

[3]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., 1619 to 1970," p. 270.

[4]Lloyd, "African Dances, American Plan."

[5]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., 1619 to 1970," p. 271.

Hemsley Winfield organized the Negro Art Theatre Dance Group and, on April 29, 1931, presented what was billed as the "First Negro [Dance] Concert in America" in a small theatre atop the Chanin Building in New York City.[1] Included among the dancers in this first group were Edna Guy and Randolph Sawyer. Edna Guy was recognized by the dance critic, John Martin, for her solo suite of Negro Spirituals. Martin stated that he considered her Negro Spirituals more natural to the Negro dancer than her other two solos entitled Ankor-Vat and Offering, respectively, because he felt the latter two solos were imitative of ". . . the manner of dancers of another race. . . ."[2] Guy was motivated to work with Negro Spirituals after she had heard Paul Robeson sing them, and she is credited with being the first to include the Negro Spiritual as a part of programs presented by black dancers.[3] Later in 1931, Sawyer became a member of the all-white Dance Center of Gluck-Sandor and Felicia Sorel.[4] In this newly formed company, John Martin

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[1]Edna Guy, "Negro Dance Pioneer!" Dance Herald, March, 1938, p. 6.

[2]John Martin, "Dance Recital Given by Negro Artists," New York Times, April 30, 1931.

[3]Guy, "Negro Dance Pioneer!" p. 6.

[4]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 169.

refers to Sawyer as ". . . appropriately cast and irreplaceable."[1] In 1933, Winfield's group joined the cast of Hall Johnson's Broadway musical entitled Run, Li'l Chillun, choreographed by Doris Humphrey.[2] During this same year, Winfield also became the first black man to dance with the Metropolitan Opera, performing the role of the Witch Doctor in Louis Gruenberg's opera entitled The Emperor Jones.[3] Winfield was still performing this role when he died suddenly from an attack of pneumonia at the age of twenty-seven.[4] Apparently his death marked the end of the Negro Art Theatre Dance Group as no further reference to it was found in the literature.

The American Negro Ballet made its début in Harlem's Lafayette Theatre on November 21, 1937, under the direction of Eugene Von Grona.[5] Von Grona, a non-black, believed that the blacks were instinctively rhythmical and should be able to evolve a dance form which would, in the words of a writer

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]"Winfield Dead at 27; 'Emperor Jones' Dancer," New York Herald Tribune, undated newspaper clipping from the Dance Clipping File of the Dance Collection in the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts, New York Public Library, Lincoln Center, New York City.

[5]John Martin, "Negro Ballet Has Debut in Harlem," New York Times, November 22, 1937, p. 15.

for Newsweek, ". . . make established ballets look feeble."[1] He had launched his project of proving his belief three years prior to the initial concert presented by the American Negro Ballet in 1937.[2] He offered free lessons to 150 blacks in the gymnasium of the Harlem Young Women's Christian Association, and from these students emerged a concert group of thirty members. The Group, comprised of both male and female dancers, performed dances ranging from Stravinsky's Firebird to racial ballets which received mixed responses from the dance critics. Jon Edwards was singled out for personal acclaim as a performer.[3] The performance as a whole was considered successful, and subsequently the Company performed in Lew Leslie's Blackbirds,[4] the musical which opened at the Liberty Theatre in early 1928 and became a "New York institution."[5]

During the early 1940's, Wilson Williams organized the Negro Dance Company in an attempt to diminish further

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[1]"Harlem Under Control: Negro Ballet Gives Firebird and Park Avenue Approves," Newsweek, November 29, 1937, p. 28.

[2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

[4]Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer, Black Magic: A Pictorial History of the Negro in American Entertainment (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 264.

[5]James Weldon Johnson, Black Manhattan (Kingsport, Tennessee: Kingsport Press, Inc., 1968), p. 212.

the stereotyped concept of the black performer of the early Minstrel Shows. He felt that it was unfair that the black artist who had provided the thematic source materials for theatrical dancing for well over a century was unsuccessful in the use and performance of such materials.[1] Williams attributed this lack of success to (1) the overpraise of the efforts of black artists rather than praise of their true accomplishments, (2) the false notion that the black artist is a natural dancer and does not need the same training and strict discipline as the white dancer, and (3) the lack of a recognized school established to channel the innate talents of the black dancer into precise, creative expression.[2]

These early companies of black dancers were short-lived because, according to Leonore Emery, the predominately white audiences failed to accept the performances of black dancers which deviated from their preconceived stereotyped image of such dancers. The opinion of the critics influenced, in turn, the responses of the audiences.[3] The leading dance critic in New York City at that time, John

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[1]Elena Maximoina, "Negro Dance on the Scene," Dance Magazine, December, 1942, p. 24.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., 1619 to 1970," p. 267.

Martin, voiced many times the opinion which he expressed in his book, John Martin's Book of the Dance:

> While he [the American Negro] has been looking into his own traditions, . . . he has also taken a glance at the traditions that his American colleagues of other races have been concerned with, especially the academic ballet. By and large, he has been wise enough not to be drawn into it, for its wholly European outlook, history and technical theory are alien to him culturally, temperamentally and anatomically.[1]

Martin states further that "When the Negro takes on the style of the European, he succeeds only in being affected."[2] At this point in history, it appears that the only way for blacks to enter concert dance was by means of the ethnological idiom.

Asadata Dafora: Leader and Exponent of African Dance

Asadata Dafora Horton is considered by most authorities on dance as the first black man to bring the dance of the Africans to the attention of the public.[3] Dafora was the great grandson of an ex-slave who had returned to Sierra Leone, Africa, upon gaining his freedom in Nova Scotia.[4]

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[1]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, pp. 178-79.

[2]Ibid., p. 179.

[3]Hughes and Meltzer, Black Magic: A Pictorial History of the Negro in American Entertainment, p. 266.

[4]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 180.

Dafora's great grandfather had adopted the surname of his former owner, Horton, which was soon dropped by Dafora as a performing dance artist in the United States of America.[1]

During his boyhood, Asadata Dafora Horton observed intently the native dances in Africa as he wandered from district to district ". . . taking in every gesture and body movement."[2] Later, when he entered the white world, he was disappointed with the Negro dancing which he saw, and he considered it a disgrace to the genuine African art of dance. In order to rectify the situation, Horton organized his own dance company--Asadata Dafora and His African Dancers--to perform authentic African dances.[3] Dafora placed such emphasis upon authenticity that he taught African dialects to all persons involved in his company of dancers in New York City.[4]

Dafora came to the United States in 1929.[5] Five years later he presented Kykunkor, which he called an opera,

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Charlotte Hughes, "Sing a Song of Suffern," untitled and undated newspaper clipping from the Dance Clipping File of the Dance Collection in the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts, New York Public Library, Lincoln Center, New York City.

[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid.

[5]Martha Dreillott, "Dafora--Dancer From Sierra Leone," Africa, Today and Tomorrow, April, 1945, p. 25.

to the New York public at the Unity Theatre located on 23rd Street.[1] Lincoln Kirstein, in a review for the Nation, expressed the opinion that even though ". . . one visit to Kykunkor is more rewarding than any other recital has been this spring, . . ." he felt that the production was not likely to become ". . . a cult like for example 'Four Saints in Three Acts' because so much of it is unrelieved and hard to look at."[2]

During the three decades which followed, Dafora presented many other productions which he called dance-dramas. Although they were of the same general character as Kykunkor, none of these dance-dramas had the impact of Dafora's first created work.[3] Kykunkor was based upon tribal life and served as a vehicle for the expression of authentic African music, songs, and dances. The plot was fictional, and the cast was comprised of Africans and black Americans.[4] This particular work paved the way for the theatrical use of ethnic material by the black dancer; in this regard, Emery states that it was proved that ". . .

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[1]Lincoln Kirstein, "Kykunkor: Native African Opera," Nation, June 13, 1934, p. 684.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 180.

[4]Ibid.

black dancers working with material from their own heritage could be successful on the American concert stage."[1] It also paved the way for and thus eased the path of the American-born Katherine Dunham who is referred to affectionately as the "mother" of black concert dance in the United States.[2]

Katherine Dunham: First Lady of Black Concert Dance in the United States

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Katherine Dunham, who was born in 1914,[3] was first impressed by her theatrically inclined relatives as they rehearsed in a Chicago basement for the presentation of a show about Indians entitled Minnehaha.[4] At that time, Dunham, who was only four years of age, was not permitted to participate in the performance. She promised herself, however, that she would sing and dance as much as she pleased when she became an adult.[5] During those early years in Chicago, Dunham was

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[1]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., 1619 to 1970," p. 276.

[2]Opinion formed by the investigator following numerous interviews with leading black contemporary dance artists.

[3]"Awards 1968: To Katherine Dunham," Dance Magazine, April, 1969, p. 37.

[4]Biemiller, Dance: the Story of Katherine Dunham, pp. 11-15.

[5]Ibid.

exposed to Vaudeville during the weekdays and, on Sundays, she visited her uncle Arthur who lived in Mecca Flats--an apartment building which housed many "show business" performers.[1]

The period of excitement about "show business" did not last long for little Katherine as she and her brother, Albert, went to Joliet, Illinois, to re-join their own father, to meet their new step-mother, and to settle down into a new kind of life.[2] Her father, being somewhat of a musician, insisted that his daughter take piano lessons at a very early age. Her career in dance did not begin, however, until she was twelve years of age.[3] One day, when Dunham was in the seventh grade, as she passed from one class to another, she was approached by her teacher of physical education, a Miss Kirby, and invited to join the dance club.[4] She enjoyed the experience so much that she convinced her parents to allow her to add three lessons in dance each week to her schedule which was already overcrowded with household chores, piano practice, and school work.[5]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 19.

[3] Ibid., p. 28.

[4] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[5] Ibid., p. 30.

Dunham's first experience in theatrical productions occurred a short time after she became involved with her lessons in dance. The members of her church agreed reluctantly to permit her to present a cabaret party as a money-raising project.[1] The night of this cabaret party was to be long remembered by young Katherine, who had planned to speak, to sing, and to dance as part of the program. She became ill with an attack of tonsilitis on the day of the performance, however, and was permitted only to dance. And dance she did! To the cheers and shouts of her audience, she leaped and whirled successfully through her Russian Hopak.[2] Her so-called cabaret party was successful financially, netting about seventy-six dollars from the sale of tickets which sold for only twenty-five cents each.[3]

An ardent admirer of her older brother, Albert, Katherine Dunham followed him to Chicago, Illinois, to attend the University of Chicago in that city.[4] She worked her way through college with money earned from teaching of classes in dance. These classes were held in her living quarters which doubled as her school of dance.[5] After her arrival at the University, she decided upon a major sequence

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[1] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[2] Ibid., p. 41.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 76.

[5] Ibid., p. 81.

in anthropology because a lecture which she attended on that subject opened her eyes to the ". . . deep-rooted connection between the dance, music, and archaic ceremonials of a people and that people's social and economic history.[1] During the period of her college career, she operated a dance school, directed several dance groups, and gave performances from time to time for audiences which were usually comprised of the parents of her students and interested friends. At one such performance, she was informed by one of her students that the white lady in the audience was Mrs. Alfred Rosenwald Stern. The excited student exclaimed:

> You've heard of the Rosenwald foundation, haven't you? The organization that gives money to people to study or start new projects in the theatre, or art, or the dance? Well! And Mrs. Stern looks as if she likes what she's seen so far![2]

A few days later, Dunham received an invitation to attend a meeting of the Members of the Board of the Rosenwald Foundation; she left that meeting as the proud recipient of a Julius Rosenwald Traveling Fellowship for anthropological research which afforded her the opportunity to travel in the West Indies.[3]

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[1]A. V. Coton, "Katherine Dunham: Her Story," Ballet, July, 1948, p. 17.

[2]Biemiller, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham, p. 87.

[3]Ibid., p. 89.

Prior to Dunham's West Indian trip, she continued both her teaching and her study of dance. Among her teachers were Ludmila Speranzeva, a former Wigman dancer, and Mark Turbyfill, an eccentric poet and dancer who performed with Ruth Page.[1] Ruth Page, the Ballet Mistress of the Chicago Civic Opera, provided Dunham with her first opportunity to perform as a professional dancer.[2] She cast the young Dunham in one of the three leading roles in her West Indian ballet, La Guiablesse. This role, which Dunham danced during the Opera seasons from 1933 through 1936,[3] did not make her famous, but it attracted an increasing number of students to the classes which she taught.[4]

When Dunham returned to Chicago from the West Indies, she had gathered sufficient data to write an analysis of The Dances of Haiti: Their Form, Function, and Social Organization--a manuscript which she presented as a thesis for a Master of Arts degree in Anthropology at the University

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[1]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 250.

[2]Biemiller, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham, p. 84.

[3]"Curriculum Vitae of Katherine Dunham," obtained through personal correspondence with Katherine Dunham, October 17 and 27, 1972.

[4]Biemiller, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham, p. 85.

of Chicago.[1] More important than that, however, she brought back exciting source materials upon which she could base her choreography in the future. In late 1936, Dunham rapidly assembled a group comprised of her former dancers and began work on new compositions. She also became involved with a writers' project sponsored by the Chicago City Theatre which was designed to study various cultures, and, by special request from the Federal Theatre of Chicago, she choreographed the full-length ballet entitled L'Ag'Ya.[2] The success of L'Ag'Ya brought invitations from New York City for Katherine Dunham and Her Dancers to appear at the Young Men and Young Women's Hebrew Association, located on 92nd Street, in an evening of Negro dance on March 7, 1937,[3] and for Dunham to serve as Director of Dance for a musical show entitled Pins and Needles, under the sponsorship of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.[4]

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[1]Dorothi Bock Pierre, "Katherine Dunham, Cool Scientist or Sultry Performer?" Dance Magazine, May, 1947, p. 13.

[2]Biemiller, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham, p. 118.

[3]Programme, "Negro Dance Evening," Kaufmann Auditorium, New York City, March 7, 1931.

[4]Biemiller, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham, p. 118.

Determined that her Company should have a proper Broadway début, Dunham rented the Windsor Theatre and planned a single performance for Sunday, February 18, 1940.[1] Upon presenting her Tropics and Le Jazz Hot to the New York public, she experienced such success that her performances continued to run for twelve additional Sundays.[2] No previous black concert dance had made such a favorable and enthusiastically received impression upon the New York audiences since Dafora's Kykunkor presented six years prior to Dunham's concerts.[3] According to John Martin, the importance of Dunham's dance may have surpassed that of Dafora's inasmuch as it represented the beginning ". . . of a genuine American Negro dance art."[4]

In the years which followed, Dunham, the dancer-anthropologist, played roles in the following motion pictures: Carnival in Rhythm in 1939; Star Spangled Rhythm in 1941; Stormy Weather in 1943; Casbah in 1948; and in the musical entitled Cabin in the Sky in 1940 through 1942.[5] She also choreographed and staged the dances for the motion

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[1]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 181.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 181.

[4]Ibid.

[5]"Curriculum Vitae of Katherine Dunham," October, 1972.

pictures entitled, respectively, Pardon My Sarong in 1952 and Green Mansions in 1959.[1] In addition to her responsibilities as choreographer and producer of many ballets for her own dance company, Dunham appeared also in 1949 as a guest artist with both the Los Angeles and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestras.[2] During the period from 1939 through 1969, she wrote several books and articles for publication and, in early 1945, she established the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts, Incorporated, in New York City, which served as a "home base" for the members of her dance company.[3] Here, the Dunham method of dance, which combined ballet with Caribbean, African, and Central European dance elements, was taught. Students at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts received instruction also in all other recognized idioms of dance as well as in choreography, acting, anthropology, and various languages.[4] Dunham surrounded herself with hard-working, well-disciplined teachers and dancers. Her teachers kept the School operating smoothly while Dunham and her dancers drew praise wherever they appeared on tours or in fulfilling special engagements.[5]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Biemiller, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham, p. 132.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Playbill, The Broadway Theatre, New York City, beginning Monday, May 8, 1950.

Under the management of the noted impresario, Sol Hurok, Dunham and her Company toured the United States, Europe, South America, the Far East, and Australia.[1] The tours abroad were so successful that Dunham was called "Katherine the Great" by her European public and became the subject of essays by Cocteau, Breton, and other famous writers as well as the model for many outstanding painters.[2] Some of her most famous choreographic achievements are L'Ag'Ya, Le Jazz Hot, Barrelhouse, Tropics, Rites de Passage, Shango, and Bambouche.[3]

At one time or another, most of the early black dance artists studied at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts which was in operation from 1950 through 1953[4] in New York City. Outstanding dancers of her early Company included Talley Beatty and Archie Savage.[5] Later, more permanent members of the Company included Roger Ohardieno, Tommy Gomez, Lenwood Morris, Eddy Clay, Claude Marchant, Andre Drew, Vanoye Aikens, Delores Harper,

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[1]Albert J. Elias, "Conversation with Katherine Dunham," Dance Magazine, February, 1956, p. 9.

[2]Playbill, The Broadway Theatre, May 8, 1950.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Syvilla Fort, "Biographical Data Sheet for Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists," July 21, 1971.

[5]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 244.

Richardena Jackson, Lawaune Ingram, Laverne French, Lavinia Williams, Gloria Mitchell, Ora Lee, Ramona Erwin, Syvilla Fort, and Lucille Evans.[1] Other outstanding personalities in the theatre who have been associated as students with the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts include Eartha Kitt, Marlon Brando, James Dean, Chita Rivera, Betta St. John, Jennifer Jones, and Bobby Capo.[2] Unfortunately, an examination of the existing literature concerning black dance reveals that, with the exception of Talley Beatty, the noted choreographer, no great dance leaders have emerged among the black male dance artists who danced with Katherine Dunham.[3] Many of these individuals, however, are still actively involved in some phase of the dance as is Miss Dunham herself.

Katherine Dunham, the first lady of black dance in America, is now Professor of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University in East Saint Louis, Illinois, where she has established the Training Center and Dynamic Museum where the Dunham techniques can flourish again and where

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[1]Souvenir Programme, "Sol Hurok Presents Katherine Dunham and Her Dancers," 1950.

[2]Biemiller, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham, p. 132.

[3]Opinion formed by the investigator following extensive documentary research with respect to black male dance artists.

students may study also her art treasures collected from worldwide dance tours.[1] Lenwood Morris, a former Dunham dancer, is Director of Performing Arts at the Training Center and Dynamic Museum, and Miss Dunham was negotiating in January of 1971 with several other members of her former Company with respect to their rejoining her and working in this venture.[2] Of the former Dunham dancers, however, Syvilla Fort is singled out and highly praised by black contemporary dance artists as the one person who has done more than any other teacher in New York City to continue the Dunham tradition.[3]

Remembering her days with Katherine Dunham, Fort, former Dunham dancer and former Director of the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts in New York City, writes:

> Her [Katherine Dunham's] contribution to the modern dance trend in the United States and in many other parts of the world must be recognized thoroughly and dramatically--the need of young artists for a creative push in their individual career objectives was provided or at least recognized by this vibrant woman who sustained a working and creative effort throughout the 1940's and 1950's for young dancers,

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[1]Katherine Dunham, personal interview held in New York City, January 10, 1971.

[2]*Ibid*.

[3]Opinion formed by the investigator following interviews with numerous black contemporary dance artists in New York City during the summer of 1970.

> ethnic style drummers, musicians, and singers. The basis of the known careers of several worldwide artists has been recorded for posterity many times over as a result of the exposure which these individuals had with Miss Dunham's dancers and singers. Her contribution as a catalyst toward a workable dance technique is unquestionable, undisputed, and definite. Her ability to pull individuals into her working situation and push them past the needed and immediate performance level of skill is almost a monumental procedure.[1]

In recognition of her contributions to the field of dance, Dunham received the Dance Magazine Award in 1968. The following tribute to her is concise but revealing:

> This anthropological scholar proved herself, on stage the world over, to be one of the most glamorous of performers and a choreographer with the knack of turning research (which she personally conducted in Haiti and throughout the Caribbean) into theatrical excitement.[2]

Syvilla Fort: Influential Teacher

Syvilla Fort was born in Seattle, Washington, where she received her early dance training. She attended the Seattle Repertory Playhouse Theatre and the University of Washington as well as the Cornish School of Arts, also located in Seattle.[3] It was in this city that Karel Shook, Associate Director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, first

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[1]Syvilla Fort, personal correspondence with the investigator, July 21, 1971.

[2]"Awards 1968: To Katherine Dunham," p. 37.

[3]Syvilla Fort, "Biographical Data Sheet for Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists."

saw her dance. He described her as ". . . absolutely one of the most fantastically talented persons I have ever seen. She could do anything with her body."[1] She received wide acclaim as a Dunham dancer and also served as Ballet Mistress for Katherine Dunham and Her Dancers during the 1940's.[2] From 1950 through 1953, she served as Acting Director of the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts in New York City.[3]

Not only was Syvilla Fort a gifted artist but she was also a dedicated teacher.[4] Shortly before Dunham's School was closed early in 1954, Fort became director of her own dance studio in New York City--The Studio of Theatre Dance--where she and her husband, Buddy Phillips, an outstanding tap and jazz dancer,[5] pursued their idea of blending modern-Afro dance techniques with those in the idiom of American jazz.[6] Their Studio at 153 West 44th

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[1]Karel Shook, personal interview held in New York City, January 17, 1971.

[2]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 245.

[3]Fort, "Biographical Data Sheet for Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists."

[4]Shook, personal interview, January 17, 1971.

[5]Louis Williams, personal interview held in New York City, January 15, 1971.

[6]Fort, "Biographical Data Sheet for Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists."

Street became their functional laboratory and it remains so in the 1970's. In the words of Syvilla Fort, ". . . the faces change, but the Studio continues."[1] She comments that dance artists and drummers associated with the Studio have ventured ". . . from the Studio nucleus to places all over the country and the outside world."[2]

Several well-known black male dance artists have studied with Syvilla Fort. Some have made notable contributions in the area of dance, others in the area of acting, and still others in the area of rhythms.[3] High on the list of outstanding dance personalities is Walter Nicks, a teacher and choreographer in both the modern and ethnological idioms of dance. Fort first taught Nicks during the early period of the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts and continued as his teacher until he became the first scholarship student to be advanced to the position of assistant teacher in that School.[4] Fort feels that she gave him the encouragement and hope which he needed at the beginning of his career. She is quick, however, to make the following observation:

> . . . he was always above the average student when it came to intelligently surveying the trends and problems of the creative artist and he made many

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

> decisions which, in my opinion, allowed him to stay in the profession and function creatively during the days when very little attention was paid to the black male dance artist.[1]

Nicks spent most of the 1960's teaching in Europe, fulfilling assignments in France, Germany, and Spain, but maintaining his adopted home in Sweden. During the summer of 1970, he served as a guest instructor at the Dance Theatre of Harlem in New York City.[2] At that time, he expressed an interest in returning to the United States on a permanent basis, and, during the spring semester of 1971, he returned as Artist-in-Residence at the University of Maryland.[3]

Jaime Rogers is another dancer-teacher-choreographer who came directly under the influence of Syvilla Fort. She taught him as a child at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts and believes that this early work gave him direction and helped him to establish certain goals which led to his later experiences and interests. Miss Fort feels that this is particularly true of Rogers because, when he was asked as a child what he wished to become as an adult,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Walter Nicks, informal discussion at a dinner in his honor at the home of Karel Shook, New York City, July 12, 1970.

[3] Shook, personal interview, January 17, 1971.

he replied, "a chemist." He has since become an outstanding figure in the area of modern jazz and presents a strong image for the black male dancer. Rogers is probably best remembered for his portrayal of the "opposition fighter" to Sammy Davis, Junior, in the Broadway musical Golden Boy. He has produced the choreography for several Hollywood television specials and is presently living and working on the West Coast.[1]

Harold Pierson began his first years of serious study with Syvilla Fort in 1953. It was at the Dunham Studio that the direction of his career became evident.[2] He has since been a prominent member of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and, more recently, he has proved to be an outstanding performer in Broadway musicals.[3] The dancer-teacher-singer has to his credits the following Broadway musicals: Jimmy Kicks and Company, Copper and Brass, Sweet Charity, Golden Boy, How Now, Dow Jones, and Purlie. During the summer of 1970, Pierson left the Broadway stage to undertake a program of study directed toward adding further dimension to his personal aims--especially

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[1]Fort, "Biographical Data Sheet for Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists."

[2]Ibid.

[3]Harold Pierson, "Resumé," prepared for the investigator, September 11, 1970.

to that of becoming a dramatic artist.[1] During 1971, this dynamic dance personality was engaged in the teaching of classes in modern dance in private studios in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[2]

Chuck Davis specializes in Modern-Afro and authentic African dance forms. He, too, received his basic training in dance from Syvilla Fort. Although he heads his own group in New York City, he still returns to Miss Fort from time to time for refresher courses. He has expressed the feeling that her work has always been a source of support and inspiration for him.[3] According to Miss Fort, Chuck Davis is an exciting talent of "giant height" who works well with a large group in projecting Afro-dance forms. When he performed at the World's Fair in 1966, Miss Fort says that he ". . . even excited the Watusi group who had been brought in from Africa."[4] Davis has exerted intense influences in New York City where the Chuck Davis Dance Company examines the heritage of the Afro-American and presents him with a confrontation of his present status

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[1]*Ibid*.

[2]Fort, "Biographical Data Sheet for Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists."

[3]*Ibid*.

[4]*Ibid*.

in contemporary society. Davis accomplishes his purpose through dance.[1]

Douglas Crutchfield is a dancer and teacher of Modern-Afro dance forms who has extended the techniques of this idiom to various European bases. He is presently living in Denmark where he adapts his dance techniques for use in the field of geriatrics. Crutchfield received his first formal dance training with Syvilla Fort, to whom he accredits his strength in pursuing his personal goals. According to Miss Fort, Crutchfield has great command of the Modern-Afro technique and attracts dancers to study with him wherever he goes.[2]

Syvilla Fort's influence has not been limited to dance artists. Many outstanding black male artists in other fields have received valuable dance training under her tutelage. Among these are such actors as Leo Coleman, now living in Rome, Italy--famous for the role of the deaf mute in the Gian-Carlo Menotti Opera, The Medium; James Earl Jones, famous for his Othello and The Great White Hope; Yaphet Kotto, who replaced James Earl Jones in the Broadway production of The Great White Hope when Jones left to

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[1]Troy Dubois, "Chuck Davis Dance Company," The Feet, November, 1970, p. 2.

[2]Fort, "Biographical Data Sheet for Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists."

fulfill his commitment in the motion picture version of this play; Raymond St. Jacques, who starred in Cotton Comes to Harlem; and Otis Young, noted for his role in Black Cowboy. In addition, many drummers who help sustain the percussion accompaniment in the New York City dance studios began as dancers at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts but transferred their interest to the field of accompaniment because it afforded more lucrative opportunities than those available to dancers. Among these current drummers extraordinaires are Alex Cambrelan, Danny Barrajanos, and Roland De Longoria.[1]

Syvilla Fort has touched the lives of many black artists and she continues to be an influential force. Inspired by her work with Katherine Dunham, she took the Modern-primitive techniques and developed a Modern-Afro-American style of dance--thus blending the old and the new to produce a Modern-Afro technique combined with that of jazz.[2] The Dunham idea, however, is not passé in New York City; it has been extended and enlarged as Syvilla Fort continues a tradition. In addition to her work as Director of her own Studio of Dance Arts for the past seventeen years, she choreographed the Langston Hughes production of

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

The Prodigal Son which toured the United States and Europe before Hughes' death in 1967. She also choreographed the experimental production of Sartre's The Flies for the Repertory Theatre Company in residence at the University of Michigan under the direction of Vinette Carrol. In 1964-1965, she was a member of a team of dance specialists who were chosen by Harry Belafonte and the Guinean Government to observe, select, and train West African dancers as a step toward forming a National Dance Company in Africa. Since 1967, she has served as a special teacher of dance at Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York City, where she offers instruction in Afro-Caribbean forms of dance. During 1971, she also served as Associate Teacher at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in New York City, teaching rhythms and Modern-Afro forms as well as becoming Supervisor of Afro dance forms at the Hudson Guild Theatre and at the Clark Center of the Performing Arts in New York City.[1]

Pearl Primus: Dynamic Leader in Black Concert Dance

Another great lady of black dance in the United States is Pearl Primus. Primus was born in Trinidad in 1919, but her parents brought her to New York City at the

[1] Ibid.

age of three. There she received her education at Hunter High School and Hunter College with a major sequence in biology and pre-medical sciences. Upon her graduation from college in 1940--the year of Katherine Dunham's New York City début--Primus encountered her first experiences of overt racial prejudice when she was unable to secure employment as a laboratory technician.[1] Intent upon pursuing her formal education, she attended night classes in health education and psychology and searched for any remunerative work which was available in order to support herself. Some of these early experiences included working in factories and shipyards as a welder, a burner, a riveter, and in several other industrial capacities. While she was employed in the wardrobe department of the National Youth Administration in 1941, she appeared in the dance group as a replacement because there was ". . . no one else around."[2] After a very bad start on the night of the performance, she suddenly began to delight in physical movement and, according to the dance critic, John Martin, she ". . . cut loose and stole the show, to nobody's greater surprise than her own."[3]

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[1]"Pearl Primus," Current Biography, 1944, p. 551.

[2]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 268.

[3]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 182.

Following her first performing experience, Primus auditioned for and won a working scholarship to the New Dance Group, a non-profit corporation which maintained a professional company and school in New York City.[1] Among the leaders of the New Dance Group at that time were such personalities as Jane Dudley, Sophie Maslow, and William Bales. A good student, Primus was soon choreographing her own dances.[2]

Partly as an outgrowth of her student work and partly to soothe the wounds which she felt had been inflicted upon her by racial discrimination, Primus became engaged in research on primitive dances.[3] Margaret Lloyd states that this examination of African culture gave her

> . . . confidence and courage, . . . it gave her a sense of background, of belonging to an aristocracy of the spirit; for the Africans were a proud and honorable people, a rich and happy people, before the white man exploited them.[4]

After her first six months of study, Primus had choreographed African Ceremonial, based upon a legend from the Belgian Congo.[5]

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[1]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 174.

[2]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 182.

[3]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 269.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 270.

During the months which followed, Primus prepared for the presentation of three modern dance solos--Strange Fruit, the aftermath of a lynching; Rock Daniel, a lesson in jazz; and Hard Time Blues, a protest against share-cropping.[1] She presented her dances to a New York audience on February 14, 1943, at the Kaufmann Auditorium of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA.[2] John Martin praised her performance so highly that she sought his opinion with respect to whether or not she should continue in medicine or in dance as a profession.[3] Acting upon his encouragement with respect to a career in dance, Primus undertook a regimen to become what Martin terms ". . . obviously the greatest Negro dancer of them all."[4]

All of Primus' choreography was based upon careful and extensive research.[5] During the first five years of her career, she continued to choreograph African dances although she had never been to Africa. From the memories of members of her Trinidadian family, she structured

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[1]Ibid., pp. 270-71.

[2]Programme, "Pearl Primus and Group in Dance Recital," Roosevelt School Auditorium, Gary, Indiana, February 7, 1947.

[3]"Pearl Primus," Current Biography, 1944, p. 552.

[4]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 183.

[5]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 269.

Caribbean dances.[1] Although it was not until 1944 that Primus made an extended tour of the Deep South, her first solo dances depicted the emotions of Southern blacks.[2] While studying the dances among those blacks, she reached the conclusion that the religion of the Southern black, just as that of the West Indian, ". . . is a superficial coating of Christianity over the inbred pagan superstitions, and the movement can be traced straight to African origins."[3] In 1945, Primus was awarded a Rosenwald Fellowship to study dances in Africa. She was so successful in Africa that she was renamed "Omowale" in Nigeria--a title which means "child returned home." In addition, the giant Watusi dancers of the Belgian Congo adopted her as a member of their tribe.[4]

Although Primus eventually visited Africa, the West Indies, and the Deep South for source materials, she discovered that those of her dances structured upon the basis of research were just as powerful and, in some instances, better compositions than those produced following her visits to the actual sites. In addition to her African Ceremonial, other well-remembered African dances choreographed by Pearl

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[1]Ibid., p. 267. [2]Ibid., p. 274.

[3]Ibid.

[4]"Pearl Primus and Her Company," Official Souvenir Programme, 1946.

Primus include Dance of Strength, Dance of Beauty, Te Moana, Excerpts From an African Journey, and The Initiation. Among the dances based upon sources in the West Indies are Santos, Shouters of Sobo, War Dance, Yanvaloo, Play Dance, and Caribbean Congo. Those dances in the Primus repertory which were based upon the experiences of the black American include Study in Nothing, The Negro Speaks of Rivers, Strange Fruit, Mischieveous Interlude, Mean and Evil Blues, Hard Time Blues, Folk Dance, Freedom Train, and a group of Spirituals.[1]

In an article devoted to a comparison of Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus, Dan Deleighbur, of the Amsterdam News, states that "She [Primus] dances and expresses [in her dances] a deep and sincere understanding of her people, of the Negro's struggles, his frustrations." He further states that ". . . she is an artist of the people in the same sense that Paul Robeson is a people's singer." Deleighbur preferred Primus to Dunham because he felt that Dunham had been influenced by Hollywood and the box office receipts to the extent of over-glamorizing the authenticity of her art.[2]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Dan Deleighbur, "Katherine Dunham vs Pearl Primus: Styles and Purposes in Negro Folk Dancing are Compared," Amsterdam News, 1944. Newspaper clipping from the personal files of Joe Nash, n.d.

In an official souvenir program of her 1946 season, Primus was described as "a mixture of excitement." The description further states that Primus was

> . . . inspired by the throbbing depths of the ancient drums of Africa, the strong calypso rhythms of her native Trinidad, the powerful revivals of our Southland, the work songs, the blues songs and the swift-pulsating jazz of America.[1]

Imagining the drums of Africa as the "voice of the earth," Primus

> . . . has taken this voice as the basis of her work . . . she says her technique is of the earth--and that the dance for her is in obedience to those forces which grow from the earth and stretch to the distant heavens . . . . She listens to the earth--she visits it. She studies the oceans. She runs her hands over the smooth resisting rocks. She watches the movement of people and animals. Then she creates and recreates in obedience to that voice within her--the "voice of the earth."[2]

The Pearl Primus of 1970 still responds to the "voice of the earth." She still maintains an active studio in association with her husband, Percival Borde, at 17 West 28th Street, in New York City. She is also on the faculty of Hunter College where she is working toward a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Anthropology.[3] She is available also

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[1]"Pearl Primus" Official Souvenir Programme Pearl Primus and Her Company, 1946, p.11.

[2]*Ibid*., p. 3.

[3]Pearl Primus, telephone interview held in New York City, September 2, 1970.

for guest appearances and, on January 8, 1971, the Harambee Black Arts Council presented her in concert at The Interchurch Center in New York City where her program was comprised of dances from her series entitled Cultural Bridges--The African Dance Style, Its Meaning. At this concert, Primus was her usual dynamic self and continued to arouse interest in the African dance style.[1]

Although Primus has choreographed successful group dances, it seems that she has achieved highest critical acclaim for dances which she choreographed for her company of dancers which was relatively small in size.[2] Some outstanding black male dancers have emerged through performing in her company; she has directed such personalities as Percival Borde, her dancer-husband; Charles Queenan, an original member of the Negro Dance Theatre; Charles Blackwell, employed by Merrick Productions and currently serving as stage manager for the Broadway musical, Promises Promises; and Joe Nash, a multi-media specialist with the National Council of Churches and Director of the Black Resource

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[1]Joe Nash, personal interview held in New York City, January 9, 1971.

[2]Opinion formed by the investigator after reading numerous reviews of performances by Pearl Primus and Her Company obtained from the personal files of Joe Nash.

Center established in September of 1970 in the Office of Urban Education in New York City.[1]

Of the former members of Pearl Primus' concert dance group, Joe Nash has had a most interesting career. Although he is no longer dancing, he has a personal library which includes practically every book and article about black dance in the United States. In recent years, he has been extending his collection to include resource materials pertaining to all forms of black art.[2]

Joe Nash: Authority on Black Resources

Joe Nash, born in New York City on October 5, 1926, began his career in professional dance on January 6, 1946, at the Ziegfield Theatre in the Broadway musical Showboat.[3] Helen Tamiris was the choreographer, and Pearl Primus was the featured dancer.[4] During this same year, Nash became a member of Primus' concert dance group, performing in New York City, and on tour throughout the South, Midwest, and New England. With Pearl Primus and Her Company, he was not

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[1]Joe Nash, personal interview held in New York City, September 10, 1970.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Joe Nash, "Biographical Information Sheet," prepared for the investigator, November 23, 1970.

[4]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, p. 152.

only featured as a solo dancer but he served also as a dance partner for Jacqueline Hairston. Primus' works in which he danced include Te Moana, Dance of Beauty, Afro-Haitian Play Dance, Caribbean Congo, Myth, Folk Song, Trio, Mischievous Interlude, and Legend.[1] Throughout the season of 1946-1947, Nash was praised by various dance critics for his interpretations of Dance of Beauty in which he assumed the role of a seven-foot member of the Watusi Tribe from the hills of the Belgian Congo. Critics and audiences alike enjoyed especially the Afro-Haitian Play Dance and Caribbean Congo as danced by Nash and Hairston.[2]

Included in Joe Nash's eleven-year career as a professional dancer are appearances in many musicals, television shows, and other dance-related activities which include Finian's Rainbow in 1947; Inside U.S.A. in 1949; Bless You All in 1950; Flahooley in 1951; My Darling Aida in 1952; and Living the Life in 1953. In 1957, he danced in the production of Showboat at Jones Beach with June Taylor as choreographer and Geoffrey Holder as featured

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[1]Nash, "Biographical Information Sheet."

[2]Joe Nash, numerous newspaper clippings of reviews from the 1946-1947 touring season of Pearl Primus and her company, from the personal files of Joe Nash lent to the investigator, July, 1971.

dancer. Other concert groups with which Nash has performed include Donald McKayle and Company, Theatre Dance, Inc., and Charles Weidman and Company. On television, he has appeared in choreography by Pearl Primus, Talley Beatty, Donald McKayle, Valerie Bettis, and others. His own choreographic activities have included the NBC "Today Show"--with Dave Garroway and cast from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania--in February of 1956; Aida, for the National Negro Opera Company in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, in October of 1954; The Blue Venus in Philadelphia in December of 1954; and Persephone in December of 1955 for the Philadelphia Cotillion Society. During the mid-fifties, he instructed classes in modern-primitive technique, fundamentals of primitive dance, history of dance, and dance personalities, in Philadelphia, at meetings of dance educators and of the Dancing Masters of America, and in conjunction with local seminar groups.[1]

Nash studied with a number of outstanding personalities in New York City including Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Vitale Fokine, Helene Platove, Matt Mattox, Syvilla Fort, and Pearl Primus. He was a dance instructor at Syvilla Fort's Studio of Theatre Dance for many years, and is now a dance instructor upon a free-lance basis. At the

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[1]Nash, "Biographical Information Sheet."

request of Syvilla Fort, his personal collection of dance resources has been displayed at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City, and studied extensively by students and faculty members of that and other institutions. At this time, he is engaged in designing a course on "The History of the Black Dancer in America," based upon his dance memorabilia.[1]

A survey of Nash's many activities revealed that, from 1958 through 1970, he worked in the field of curriculum development with the Division of Christian Education, National Council of Churches at The Interchurch Center in New York City. He assisted in the preparation of curriculum outlines for the Sunday Schools, the Vacation Church Schools, a series entitled Through-the-Week, and programs for exceptional persons including the mentally retarded and the physically handicapped. This endeavor culminated in the publication of The Church's Educational Ministry: A Curriculum Plan, and Tools for Curriculum Development. These resources were written by denominational representatives participating in the Cooperative Curriculum Project.[2]

During the annual meeting of the Division of Christian Education which was entitled "Man and the City"

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[1]Joe Nash, personal correspondence with the investigator, October 20, 1972.

[2]Ibid.

and held in Chicago in February of 1969, Nash produced a unique program called Highlife comprised of coordinated workshops in folk music, black art, dance, politics, civic concerns, black poetry, drama, welfare and urban issues.[1]

In August of 1970, on behalf of the Black Christian Education Project, Nash mounted a comprehensive exhibit called "Educational Resources for Black Churches" at the Krisheim Study Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[2] This led to the creation of a Black Resources Center in September of 1970 in the Office of Urban Education in New York City where Nash now functions as media coordinator and authority on black educational resources. As Director of the Center, he consults with Christian educators, seminarians, media personnel, community organizations, public school and college personnel, and other persons and agencies interested in black resources. He offers also a workshop entitled "Journey Into Discovery" which is designed to develop skills in locating, identifying, interpreting, creating, utilizing, and evaluating black educational resources. He describes his programs as ". . . a process of helping all persons become aware of the rich heritage of black people, and their outstanding contributions to American culture."[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

Outstanding Artists Among Black Men in Ballet

Most of the early attempts of black men in ballet were discouraged by the stereotyped classification of the dance critics, and by the failure of predominately white audiences to accept these black men strictly upon their merits as dancers. The majority of the dance audiences came to performances with preconceived viewpoints with respect to whether or not black dancers should "invade" the white ballet.[1] As late as the 1950's, two black ballet companies still attempted to exist in order to provide separate outlets for black talent with specific training in classical dance.

During the summer of 1954, the Negro Dance Theatre, an all-male ballet company directed by Aubrey Hitchins, made its début at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated in Lee, Massachusetts. Among those dancers who participated in the début performance were Charles Queenan, Moire-Carson, Norman Dejoie, Charles Martin, and Bernard Johnson.[2] The Company lasted through a return performance at Jacob's Pillow the following year during which

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[1]Emery, "Black Dance in the U. S., 1619 to 1970," p. 310.

[2]Bernard Johnson, personal interview held in New York City, August 28, 1970.

time it premièred Gothic Suite, choreographed by Tony Charmoli; Outlook for Three, choreographed by Dania Krutska; and the Liszt Prelude, choreographed by Aubrey Hitchins. This Company was dissolved soon after its Massachusetts performance in 1955 because sufficient funds were not available for its continued operation.[1]

The experiences of the New York Negro Ballet were similar to those of the Negro Dance Theatre. This Company was comprised of black dancers of both sexes who were trained in classical ballet. Ward Fleming was the Artistic Director of the Company.[2] Prior to the autumn of 1956, Fleming managed to present a sufficient number of performances in and around New York City to raise the funds necessary for a European tour. The Company toured Scotland, Wales, and England with the high point of the tour being an eight-week residency in the Drury Lane Theatre in London. Wherever the Company performed, the theatres were crowded, but the individual dancers were not reviewed as members of a ballet company. They were reviewed instead as black entertainers. Although the Company was not recognized as

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Unless otherwise documented, all information concerning the New York Negro Ballet was obtained through a personal interview with Georgia Collins, former member of the New York Negro Ballet, held in New York City, January 9, 1971.

being technically good, individual personalities were singled out for recognition. Following the engagement of eight weeks at the Drury Lane Theatre, the Company was forced to disband because of a lack of operational funds.

Many black dancers left the United States to reside in Europe where they were recognized as dance artists and given opportunities to star in white classical ballets. One such artist who left the United States for this purpose early in his career was Sylvester Campbell.

Sylvester Campbell: Ballet Star in Europe[1]

Sylvester Campbell was born into an artistic family in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on January 22, 1938. His father, Sylvester Briscoe, was a trombone player with Blanche Calloway's Band, and his mother and grandmother were proficient in modern dance. Campbell began tap dancing at an early age, and his interest in ballet was sparked when he accompanied his two sisters to a ballet class at the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C. After the class, the teacher asked Campbell to attempt various techniques which he had observed during the class, and she

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[1]Unless otherwise documented, all information concerning Sylvester Campbell was obtained from the "Data Sheet for Black Male Dance Artists" and additional biographical data prepared for the investigator by Sylvester Campbell, December 15, 1970.

was so impressed by his performance that she invited him to return the following day in order to participate regularly in her classes. Because his parents were unable to pay for lessons for their two daughters and for Sylvester, he sold newspapers and cleaned the studio to earn money for his tuition.

Sylvester Campbell proved to be a promising student at the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet, and the Directors, Doris Jones and Claire Haywood, became his lasting friends. They secured a scholarship for him to attend the School of American Ballet in New York City where he studied with Karel Shook and began to perfect his techniques in the classical ballet.

Campbell began his professional career with the New York Negro Ballet Company during its 1956-1957 season of performances. In the autumn of 1957, when this Company left the United States for a tour of Great Britain, Campbell was among its thirty members and one of several who chose to remain in Europe at the close of the tour.

During his visit to London with the New York Negro Ballet Company, Campbell met the English choreographer, Jack Carter. Following Campbell's decision to remain in Europe, Carter invited him to dance in some of the works which he was arranging for the television network of the

British Broadcasting Company. In 1958, Campbell joined an all-English Revue in which he toured for two months throughout Sweden. At the end of this engagement, he remained in Sweden where he worked with a Swedish Revue and studied for a year in local schools of ballet. In 1959, he returned to London where he was invited to join a company formed by Marina Svetlova, the American ballerina. With Svetlova's Company, he danced Blue Beard, The Nutcracker Suite, Jack Carter's Dark Angel, and his only choreographic study to date--Such Sweet Thunder, a solo set to music by Duke Ellington. He danced also in such classic ballets as Les Sylphides and Giselle. In 1959, Campbell appeared as a soloist with Pierre Lacotte's Ballet de la Tour L'Eiffel and as a guest artist with the Dublin Theatre Ballet, where he danced the role of Albrecht in Giselle.

Campbell joined the Het Nederlands Ballet in Holland in 1960 under the direction of Sonia Gaskell. He began as a member of the corps de ballet, but two weeks later he was dancing a leading role in Les Presages. In 1963, when Sonia Gaskell became the director of a newly formed Dutch ballet company, The National Ballet, Campbell became its premier danseur.

Campbell has chosen to remain abroad because he believes that many more opportunities for him to perform

in the area of classical ballet exist in Europe than in the United States. He compares his situation with that of his black friends who chose to remain in the United States and who maintain that they have never had an opportunity to dance leading roles in the great classical ballets in this country. Campbell occupies a unique position in that he is probably the only black classical ballet dancer in the world who has performed all of the male leading roles in such ballets as Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, Romeo and Juliet, Giselle, and Les Sylphides. His favorites among the pas de deux which he dances include those in The Black Swan and in Don Quixote.

Campbell is making his contribution to the field of dance as an outstanding black classical ballet dancer. He has appeared on stages in Spain, Germany, Poland, France, England, Italy, Sweden, Yugoslavia, South America, Switzerland, Russia, Belgium, Portugal, Austria, and North Africa. Although he has achieved outstanding recognition for his various performances in the many countries in which he has danced, Campbell wishes to dance in his native United States. He would like to show the dance audiences in his own country what he has achieved abroad and feels confident that, as a mature artist, he would experience the same success in the United States as he has realized abroad.

Billy Wilson: Dancer-Teacher-Choreographer in the Ballet[1]

Billy Wilson is another black male dance artist who has attained success in Europe. Wilson has born April 21, 1935, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and is a graduate of a business college. He became interested in dance primarily through his participation in a black creative dance group which was active in the public school system which he attended. His professional career began at the age of seven and, by the time he was eleven years old, he had danced on the stage of almost every public school in the city of Philadelphia. At the age of eleven, he won first prize at the University of Pennsylvania Cultural Olympics for his performance with the creative dance group which was comprised of children attending the Reynolds School. In 1952, when he was sixteen years of age, Wilson received a scholarship to study with Antony Tudor at the Philadelphia Ballet Guild School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he performed as a soloist with the company associated with this school. He left Philadelphia in 1955, at the age of nineteen, in order to work and to study in New York City. He performed in the 1956 production of

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[1]Unless otherwise documented, all information concerning Billy Wilson was obtained from the "Data Sheet for Black Male Dance Artists," prepared for the investigator by Billy Wilson, November 26, 1970.

Carmen Jones and states that he studied ". . . everything from tap to ballet to survive the best of both worlds."[1] While in New York, he studied with such authoritative teachers as Karel Shook in ballet, Walter Nicks in primitive, and Pearl Lang in modern dance.

Musicals have had a special meaning for Billy Wilson. Not only have they afforded him the opportunity to work with such famous Broadway choreographers as Jack Cole and Jerome Robbins, but he has the distinction also of being the only black dancer appearing in Bells Are Ringing, produced in 1956-1957, and one of two black dancers who performed in the 1958 London production of West Side Story. The latter engagement resulted in an offer for him to become a member of the National Ballet of Holland in which Billy Wilson became the only black soloist in the Company.

According to Wilson, he chose to live and to work in Europe because European audiences accepted him first, as an artist, and second, as a black man. This evaluation afforded him both the time and the opportunity to experience success as a classical dancer early in his career. He admits, however, that at no point in his professional career has he been able to forget the color of his skin. He has always been aware of his heritage and of the responsibility which has accompanied his being a "first black"

[1]Wilson, "Data Sheet for Black Male Dance Artists."

in so many professional capacities. Before going to Europe, he states that he always experienced anxiety with respect to whether or not he would be accepted at various auditions. Following his acceptance after such auditions, he states that he felt a constant determination to prove that he was better than the white ballet dancers. These concerns, coupled with anxiety with respect to his assurance of continuous employment, harassed other black professional dancers of the early fifties. In general, those dancers, trained in the classical ballet, had to depend upon obtaining work in musicals for their livelihood. The opportunity to become affiliated with the National Ballet of Holland, however, alleviated some of these anxieties for Wilson. He performed with this Company for four years before going to Rotterdam to stage the productions of Kiss Me Kate and I Do, I Do for the Rotterdam Theatre Company.

Wilson spent his formative years of performing in Europe but returned to the United States to serve as Chairman of the Department of Dance at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, where he remained for the academic year of 1965-1966. At the close of the year, he returned to Europe for a brief period before deciding to move his family to the United States and to establish a permanent home in this country.

Unlike Campbell, Wilson is involved in much more than the performance aspects of his profession. He is a teacher and a choreographer as well as a dancer. He had several reasons for returning to the United States including the desire to work again in his own country; to introduce his wife, Sonja van Beers, former prima ballerina of the National Ballet of Holland, to this country in order that she might become acquainted with his family and learn something of his heritage; to be a part of the so-called "black cultural revolution" in the United States; and to help provide black children with their own heroes and images which he felt was a way of ". . . replenishing the soil." Since his return to the United States, Wilson has worked with children in underprivileged areas of Boston in association with the Cambridge School of Ballet and with the Greater Boston Public School System. He has participated also in a federally subsidized program entitled "Arts 6" in the greater Boston area. Wilson has directed and choreographed the famous Hasty Pudding Theatrical Revue of Harvard University each year since 1966,[1] and he has established a dance program at St. Paul's School for Boys in Concord, New Hampshire. At this time, in 1972, he is

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[1]"Hasty Pudding à la Billy Wilson," Ebony Magazine, March, 1969, p. 139.

serving as Artistic Director of the Dance Company of the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston, Massachusetts.[1]

At the Center, Wilson has assembled a company of talented dancers, versatile in the idioms of ballet, modern, and primitive dance. He feels that "Black people can't have the luxury of just doing one thing. We've been touched by so many things and since we are about building for the future, we have to be multifaceted."[2] Wilson's Afro-American Dance Company performed during the week of August 23 through 28, 1971, at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, in Lee, Massachusetts. Here he performed Adrift with his ballerina wife, Sonja van Beers.[3] Although he is involved primarily in teaching, directing, and choreographing, he still performs as a dance artist when, in his own words, ". . . it [performing] is interesting and lucrative."[4]

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[1]Untitled newspaper article, The Boston Sunday Globe, May 24, 1970, p. 27, personal files of Billy Wilson.

[2]Billy Wilson, quoted by Dyann Robinson in "Rebuttal: Their Skin Should be Pale . . ." A joint letter to the editor of Vogue Magazine in rebuttal to an article entitled "Ballet Girls" which contained a controversial quote by George Balanchine and was printed in the August first issue of Vogue. The letter was printed in The Feet, September, 1971, p. 5.

[3]"Dance Company of the National Center of Afro-American Artists," The Feet, September, 1971, p. 4.

[4]Wilson, "Data Sheet for Black Dance Artists."

Two of Campbell's friends who had remained in the United States and had tried to break through all barriers into the world of ballet during the early 1950's are Louis Johnson and Arthur Mitchell. The latter is one of the two subjects of this biographical study and has achieved international recognition as a dancer in classical ballet. Louis Johnson is recognized for his choreographic contributions to the field of dance.[1]

Louis Johnson: Outstanding Choreographer[2]

Louis Johnson is another black dancer who is a product of the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C. Born in Statesville, North Carolina, on March 19, 1932, he moved to Washington, D. C. as a young child. During his senior year in high school, he went to New York City to audition for the School of American Ballet. He was accepted but deferred a half year until he finished high school with a major sequence in commercial art. In 1950, he returned to New York City where he studied at the School

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Dance: Cultivated Jazz," New York Times, clipping from the personal files of Louis Johnson, n.d.

[2]Unless otherwise documented all information concerning Louis Johnson was obtained from a "Biographical Resumé" prepared for the investigator by Louis Johnson, New York City, December 5, 1970.

of American Ballet and at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts. He also studied with teachers from the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and from the Metropolitan Ballet. After two years at the School of American Ballet, he became the first black dancer to perform a major role with the New York City Ballet.[1] On February 14, 1952, he danced a solo role in Jerome Robbins' ballet entitled Ballade, set to the music of Debussy. This may be considered a token performance only, however, since Johnson has not had the opportunity since to perform with a major classical ballet company.[2]

Johnson has, however, experienced outstanding success as a performer in Broadway musicals. He began performing on Broadway in 1953 in the Harold Arlen-Gertrude Stein production of Four Saints in Three Acts. Since then, he has performed successfully in My Darling Aida, House of Flowers, Damn Yankees, Kwomia, and Hallelujah Baby.[3] Johnson, like many other black artists of the 1950's, formed his own company, the Louis Johnson Dance Company, in 1953 in order to provide black ballet dancers with some

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[1]Louis Johnson, personal interview held in New York City, July 28, 1970.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Johnson, "Biographical Resumé."

outlet for their talents as no white ballet companies at the time were accepting black dancers.[1] Johnson supported his Company with funds earned through various types of employment, and managed to present many successful and remunerative concerts. The members of his Company would convene periodically to rehearse for scheduled concerts. After such performances, they would be forced to disband in order to seek other sources of remunerative employment, reassembling when needed for other performances.[2]

Although Johnson has proved himself to be a strong dancer, it is through his choreographic prowess that he has made his lasting impression upon those comprising the dance world.[3] His first work, entitled Lament and presented in 1953 at the American Ballet Club's Annual Choreographer's Night, dominated the evening.[4] Since that time, he has choreographed many ballets including Kindergarten, Harlequin, Spiritual Suite, How Many Miles, Ode to Martin Luther King, A View from a Ghetto, First Sin, What a World, and No Outlet.[5] In the fall of 1970, he choreographed Intermezzo

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[1]Johnson, personal interview, July 28, 1970.

[2]Ibid.

[3]"Louis Johnson Choreographs Esteban for WCA," The Feet, August, 1971, p. 2.

[4]"Reviews: Third Annual Choreographer's Night," Dance Magazine, May, 1953.

[5]Johnson, "Biographical Resumé."

which was first presented by the Capital Ballet Company--the professional dance company of the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet--in March of 1971.[1] More recently, he choreographed for the Dance Theatre of Harlem a work entitled Sources of Rhythm which had its première at the Hunter College Playhouse in New York City on December 11, 1971. Dance Magazine's Gil Forman called this ballet "exciting" and added that ". . . the effect was harmonious and stimulating."[2]

Johnson's choreographic activity has not been limited to ballets in the classical idiom. Since 1955, he has added seven "off-Broadway shows" to his credits. Among the most popular of these productions were Black Nativity, Black Electra, and God is a Guess What. In summer stock, he has choreographed such musicals as Kiss Me Kate, Damn Yankees, and Pal Joey. As Director of Dance for the Negro Ensemble Company, he staged the movement for the Sons of the Lusitanian Bogey which won the 1968 Obie Award.[3] Among his credits in Broadway productions, he has Les Blancs[4] and

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[1]"Jones-Haywood Dance School," The Feet, August, 1971, p. 5.

[2]Gil Forman, "Reviews: Dance Theatre of Harlem," Dance Magazine, February, 1971, p. 31.

[3]Johnson, "Biographical Resumé."

[4]Ibid.

Purlie Victorious.[1] Because of his work with the latter, he became the first black choreographer ever nominated for a Tony Award.[2] In 1969, he choreographed the dances for the Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer motion picture entitled Cotton Comes to Harlem.[3]

Johnson has also devoted his talents to the teaching field. Throughout the years, he has worked as a teacher and choreographer with the Haryou Anti-poverty Program in New York City, with The Children's Aid Society, with the Negro Ensemble Company, and with the Harlem Cultural Council. He has taught dance in workshops designed to promote black art at Yale University, and he has served as a Dance Consultant and Symposium Co-ordinator at Howard University in Washington, D. C., the Virginia State College, the Hampton Institute in Virginia, and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.[4]

During the 1970's, Johnson remains active as a choreographer, creating works for The Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Capital Ballet, and The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.[5] Whenever time permitted, he has assembled

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[1]Programme, "Purlie Victorious," The Alvin Theatre, Summer, 1970.

[2]Johnson, "Biographical Resumé."

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ivy Clarke, personal interview held in Los Angeles, California, May 24, 1972.

his own company known as The Louis Johnson Dance Theatre, in order to share his expertise and experience with young black dancers and choreographers. He feels that, with the proper guidance and assistance, they will reap the rewards which he and many of his fellow students failed to have an opportunity to enjoy.[1]

There are other young black male dancers in the 1970's who have attracted attention and favorable critical praise for their performances in conjunction with major ballet companies in the United States. Among these are Christian Holder of the City Center Joffrey Ballet and Keith Lee of American Ballet Theatre. Holder is the son of the famous Trinidadian dancer and painter, Boscoe Holder, and the nephew of Geoffrey Holder, outstanding figure in ethnological dance in this country.[2] During the season of 1970-1971, Christian Holder became a dancer with the City Center Joffrey Ballet, performing major roles in such ballets as The Mingus Dances, Weewis, Trinity, and Astarte.[3]

During the summer of 1970, Keith Lee choreographed a tribute to Cole Porter, entitled Times Past, for performance

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[1]Johnson, "Biographical Resumé."

[2]Boscoe Holder, personal interview held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, August 7, 1970.

[3]Doris Hering, "Joffrey Journey," Dance Magazine, January, 1972, pp. 31-36.

by the American Ballet Theatre.[1] The première of the ballet evoked rousing applause of the audience on July 23, 1970, at the New York State Theatre.[2] Keith Lee, who is an excellent performer, has danced featured roles in both traditional and contemporary ballets; among these are Petrouchka, José Limón's The Traitor, and Alvin Ailey's The River.[3] At the age of twenty, Lee was promoted to the rank of soloist with the American Ballet Theatre during the autumn of 1971.[4]

Outstanding Artists Among Black Men in Modern Dance

Among the black leaders who immediately followed Dafora, Dunham, and Primus in the field of modern dance in the United States are three men who have achieved success as dancers, as choreographers, and as directors of their own dance companies. These men--Talley Beatty, Donald

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[1]Keith Lee, personal conversation with the investigator during rehearsals at the New York State Theatre for the summer season of the American Ballet Theatre, New York City, June 19, 1970.

[2]Programme, "American Ballet Theatre at the New York State Theatre," New York City, July 23, 1970.

[3]Personal observation by the investigator during the 1970 summer season of the American Ballet Theatre at the New York State Theatre in New York City.

[4]"Presstime News," Dance Magazine, December, 1971, p. 6.

McKayle, and Alvin Ailey--based their early choreographic works upon themes centered around the experiences of black individuals. Later, they broadened their scope of creativity to include abstract as well as classical themes.[1]

Talley Beatty: Serious Artist of the Modern Dance

Talley Beatty was a member of the original dance company of Katherine Dunham which performed in New York City in 1937.[2] It appears that he remained with Katherine Dunham and her company through 1940 as early in that year John Martin, in a review of Le Jazz Hot, mentioned the young dancer.[3] During Beatty's early years as a dancer, his performing experiences were varied as he appeared in works produced by Helen Tamiris and by Esther Junger.[4] Maya Deren also enlisted his talents, making him the sole subject of her dance film, A Study in Choreography for Camera, which she termed ". . . a duet between space and a dancer."[5]

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[1]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., 1619 to 1970," p. 292.

[2]Programme, "Negro Dance Evening," March 7, 1937.

[3]John Martin, "Negro Dance Art," New York Times, February 19, 1940, p. 26.

[4]Lloyd, The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, pp. 152, 232.

[5]Ibid., p. 352.

Driven by a desire to proceed in an independent fashion, Beatty organized a revue called Tropicana in the style of the revues previously produced by Katherine Dunham. He toured in the United States and abroad with this production for a period of five years. It was not until 1958, however, that Beatty achieved success in a series of solo recitals which included a suite of primitive dances, a surrealistic piece called Nobody Came, and a performance of Icarus which was choreographed for him by Earnest Parham, a fellow dancer.[1] John Martin characterized Beatty at this time as an ". . . artist to be taken seriously, with passion, imagination, and a courageous breaking through of forms."[2]

In 1959, a Lena Robbins Foundation Grant made it possible for Beatty to give to the dance world his most famous choreographic work, The Road of the Phoebe Snow.[3] This composition, which has since become a classic, is based upon his childhood memories of games, fights, and romances associated with the railroad tracks outside the

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[1]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 185.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Hughes and Meltzer, Black Magic: A Pictorial History of the Negro in American Entertainment, p. 270.

City of Chicago and with the famous Lackawanna train called the "Phoebe Snow."[1] The choreography was set to the music of Duke Ellington. In 1962, he choreographed Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot,[2] which was, according to John Martin, ". . . full of human relations and implications but essentially an abstraction."[3]

Beatty has experienced many problems as the director of his own dance company. Often he has managed to stage his performances only by sharing the program with some of his colleagues; at other times, he danced with other companies in order to earn money for his livelihood.[4] During the 1960's, he lived in Europe where he worked as a guest choreographer wherever he was invited to serve in this capacity. His fame has increased throughout Europe and other countries because of the performances of his works by the widely traveled Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Ailey has exerted every effort to keep Beatty's choreography alive.[5]

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[1]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 185.

[2]Hughes and Meltzer, Black Magic: A Pictorial History of the Negro in American Entertainment, p. 270.

[3]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 186.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Alvin Ailey, personal interview, New York City, August 15, 1970.

In the early 1970's, Beatty returned to the United States to teach at the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston, Massachusetts, and to choreograph a new ballet for the Boston Ballet.[1]

Donald McKayle: Dancer-Choreographer-Teacher

Donald McKayle was born in New York City on July 6, 1930,[2] and became interested in dance during his final year in high school after having seen one of the early performances of Pearl Primus.[3] In 1947, he auditioned for, and won, a scholarship to the New Dance Group where he studied with such dance personalities as Sophie Maslow, Jane Dudley, William Bales, Jean Erdman, Pearl Primus, and Hadassah.[4]

In the spring of 1948, McKayle made his début as a dancer at the Mansfield Theatre in New York City where he performed in choreographic works by Sophie Maslow and Jean Erdman, respectively. During the following summer, he studied with Martha Graham at the Connecticut College Summer

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[1]Talley Beatty, telephone interview, New York to Boston, July 12, 1970.

[2]Donald McKayle, personal correspondence with the investigator, November 1, 1972.

[3]DeMille, The Book of the Dance, p. 283.

[4]Saul Goodman, "Brief Biographies: Donald McKayle," Dance Magazine, June, 1960, p. 50.

School of Dance in New London, Connecticut, at which time she awarded a scholarship to him to study at her school in New York City--an award which led to future performances as a member of the Martha Graham Dance Company.[1]

McKayle has performed in dances choreographed by many well-known artists in New York City. During the first few years of his career, he danced in Charles Weidman's Traditions, in Daniel Nagrin's Faces of Walt Whitman, in Merce Cunningham's Les Noces, and in Anna Sokolow's Rooms and Lyric Suite.[2] P. W. Manchester describes McKayle's performance in Rooms as one which has never been equaled. She comments that he danced the role of ". . . the desperate creature seeking solace from his fellows and meeting only with indifference until he is reduced to a cowering heap of despair."[3]

Although his early dancing was impressive, John Martin felt that McKayle's primary interest was choreography.[4] Martin's prophecy was fulfilled when, in 1950, Donald McKayle presented his first group work entitled

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[1]Ibid.

[2]P. W. Manchester, "Meet Donald McKayle," Dancing Times, London, January, 1967, p. 186.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 187.

Games, which Agnes De Mille says ". . . reflected the joy and terror of poor children in big cities."[1] Growing up in the city himself, McKayle choreographed from first-hand knowledge a work which has since become a classic.[2] Concerning this choreography, Manchester writes that McKayle exemplifies his greatest strength in his fellow man."[3] She describes him as a "humanist" and comments that ". . . all his best works deal, not with abstractions, but with people; living, laughing, suffering, bitter, pitiful, protesting, superbly human beings."[4] McKayle's other two classic pieces are Rainbow Round My Shoulder, choreographed in 1959, and District Storyville, choreographed in 1961.[5] Rainbow Round My Shoulder is set to the songs of chain gangs and is concerned with the dreams and illusions of a black man on a chain gang. With respect to this composition, Manchester states that "It is another of McKayle's statements about life. He is reminding us of things many of us would prefer to forget."[6] District Storyville is about New Orleans at

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[1]DeMille, Book of the Dance, p. 283.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Manchester, "Meet Donald McKayle," p. 186.

[4]Ibid.

[5]McKayle, personal correspondence, November 1, 1972.

[6]Manchester, "Meet Donald McKayle," p. 186.

the turn of the century when jazz music took its place in the world of the American artist.[1]

McKayle formed his own dance company in 1951.[2] Like many directors of modern dance companies during the early 1950's, he was unable financially to keep his company together except at those times when specific concerts and tours were scheduled.[3] In addition to his own company, McKayle choreographed for Broadway and television productions, staged acts for well-known theatrical stars, and taught in numerous colleges and professional schools.[4] His most popular Broadway credit was Golden Boy in 1964, starring Sammy Davis, Junior. According to Manchester, his choreography saved the play.[5] As a choreographer, his film credits include The Great White Hope and Bed Knobs and Broomsticks.[6] Recently he staged the movement for the 1971 Academy Awards presentation on the television network of the National Broadcasting Company on April 15, 1971.[7] In

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[1]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 188.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Manchester, "Meet Donald McKayle," p. 186.

[4]Martin, John Martin's Book of the Dance, p. 188.

[5]Manchester, "Meet Donald McKayle," p. 187.

[6]"Donald McKayle Choreographs for Forty-third Oscar Awards Show," Waco Messenger, Waco, Texas, February 19, 1971, p. 1.

[7]Ibid.

1972, he served as the choreographer for the New Bill Cosby Show on the television network of the Columbia Broadcasting System.[1]

McKayle came to California in July of 1969 for the filming of The Great White Hope, and as choreographer for the Leslie Uggams television series.[2] Upon the completion of these commitments, he remained in the Los Angeles area where he became a member of the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts and at the Inner City Institute in Los Angeles.[3] He serves also as Artistic Director of the Inner City Repertory Dance Company.[4] On January 20 through 23, 1972, McKayle presented a complete program of his own works at the Inner City Theatre in Los Angeles which included Daughters of Eden, Games, Migrations, Rainbow Round My Shoulder, Nocturne, and Sojourn.[5] With the Inner City Repertory Dance Company, McKayle continues to choreograph and to provide opportunities for gifted young dancers to

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[1]McKayle, personal correspondence, November 1, 1972.

[2]Lea McKayle, telephone interview, Los Angeles to Sherman Oaks, California, July 7, 1972.

[3]Donald McKayle, personal interview held in Los Angeles, California, January 8, 1972.

[4]Programme, "Inner City Repertory Dance Company," Inner City Cultural Center, Los Angeles, California, January 20 through 23, 1972.

[5]Ibid.

perform. In addition to the works kept alive in his company, the Inner City Repertory Dance Company, several of McKayle's choreographies are in the repertories of other dance companies. Games is in the repertory of the Gloria Newman Dance Company and The American Ballet Company, both of New York City; Rainbow Round My Shoulder is in the repertory of the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater of New York City; Daughters of Eden is in the repertory of the Bat-Sheva Company of Israel and the Harkness Ballet of New York City; and Nocturne is in the repertory of the Repertory Dance Theatre of Salt Lake City, Utah.[1]

Throughout the years, McKayle has gained the respect of his colleagues as a writer on the subject of the black dancer.[2] McKayle affirms his belief that, "In the choreographic field, the Negro artist of today has blazed his own trail." He adds that the works of these Negro artists

> . . . are not limited to nor do they necessarily exclude Negro source materials. . . . as to the future of the Negro artist in American dance, it must be stressed that it cannot be viewed outside the whole seething shifting social scene. One thing is sure. It will not become stagnant.[3]

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[1]McKayle, personal correspondence, November 1, 1972.

[2]Emery, "Black Dance in the U.S., from 1619 to 1970," p. 304.

[3]Donald McKayle, "The Negro Dancer in Our Time," in Walter Sorrell, ed., The Dance Has Many Faces (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 191.

The 1960's brought a bevy of young black choreographers and dancers to the attention of the dance world.[1] Each had his own special approach to choreography and his highly personal comments upon the experiences of blacks. Foremost among this new generation of choreographers is Eleo Pomare.[2]

Eleo Pomare: Revolutionary Choreographer

Eleo Pomare was born in Colombia, South America, and reared in Panama, Central America. He studied first at the High School of Performing Arts in New York City and later with José Limón and Curtis James. In Germany, he studied with Kurt Jooss at the Volkswangschule in Essen. Pomare formed the original Eleo Pomare Dance Company in New York City in May of 1958. In 1959, the members of the Company declared their basic purpose as "The creative utilization of Negro talent and ability in American modern dance."[3] From 1961 through 1964, Pomare studied in Europe under the auspices of a John Hay Whitney Fellowship. While

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[1]Emery, "Black Dance in the U. S., From 1619 to 1970," p. 309.

[2]Ric Estrada, "3 Leading Negro Artists and How They Feel About Dance in the Community," Dance Magazine, November, 1968, p. 45.

[3]Programme, "Spelman College Presents Eleo Pomare Dance Company," Atlanta, Georgia, April 17, 1969.

in Europe, he formed The Eleo Pomare Dance Company in Amsterdam, performing and teaching for the Royal Dutch Ballet, at the Scopino Ballet, at the Stockholm University, and at the first International Dance Seminar of the Royal Danish Ballet held in Stockholm. His American Company could not realize its purpose, therefore, until his return to the United States in 1964.[1]

The reorganized Eleo Pomare Dance Company presented its first performance at Kaufman Hall in the 92nd Street YM-YWHA on October 16, 1967.[2] Regarding this performance, Clive Barnes, Dance Critic for the New York Times, writes:

> Mr. Pomare is a Negro choreographer of great muscular energy and a good eye for the commanding dance image. At present, his failing seems partly insufficient discipline, his dances needing more shape and form. But at his not-infrequent best, he is a wonderfully persuasive advocate for the Afro-American dance. While Mr. Pomare is not directly ethnic in orientation, throughout his work there seems to stalk the presence of the African dance, a presence that makes itself felt as much among the fine groupings and classic momentum of his "Serendipity 1966," set to Handel, as in the ritual celebration of his "Miss Luba."[3]

A revised version of Pomare's choreography, entitled Blues for the Jungle, which was originally created in

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Clive Barnes, "Blues Work Convinces at the 92d 'Y'," New York Times, October 17, 1966.

[3] Ibid.

Amsterdam in 1962, was considered the best work on the program. This dance is concerned with the historical spectrum of the life of the American Negro ". . . from the slave market to the Harlem Ghetto."[1] Other choreographic works designed for a large group by Pomare include Up Tight, a dance about the Harlem women during the "not-so-roaring twenties";[2] Las Desenamoradas, based upon the play entitled The House of Bernarda Alba by Federico Garcia Lorca;[3] and Serendipity 1966, a modern balletic composition to the music of Handel.[4]

Pomare feels that his choreography is "non-arty" which, to him, means that its purpose is ". . . to be specific and avoid cloudy symbolism."[5] According to Courtney Campbell, a writer for The Villager,

> . . . [the] important part of the Pomare aesthetic is his sense of negritude. Originally South American, he has consciously steeped himself in the peculiar experience of black Americans. He

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Programme, "The Eleo Pomare Dance Company," Arts Council Program, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 7, 1968.

[3]Don McDonagh, "Dance is Offered on a Lorca Theme," New York Times, April 24, 1967.

[4]Courtney Campbell, "Pomare Company: Unified Technique," The Villager, Greenwich Village, New York, March 16, 1967.

[5]Ibid.

> has used their rhythms, their music, and their hang-ups to make his "non-arty" dance experience.[1]

Pomare has been called "an angry man," but he refers to himself as "alert." He contends that he ". . . tells it like it is." He adds further that:

> I don't create works to amuse white crowds, nor do I wish to show them how charming, strong, and folksy Negro people are--as whites imagine them--Negroes dancing in the manner of Jerome Robbins or Martha Graham. Instead I'm showing them the Negro experience from inside: what it's like to live in Harlem, to be hung-up and up-tight and trapped and black and wanting to get out. And I'm saying it in a dance language that originates in Harlem itself. My audiences, some of them very sophisticated, though black, sense this and identify with it in a way no white man ever identifies with most white works.[2]

Pomare feels that the so-called black revolution should not be limited to politics but should be reflected in art as well. He feels that the duty of the artist is

> . . . to help perpetuate positive black images. . . . the black revolution supports and sustains me. This new climate is allowing me to grow. I talk to black people. Instant communication. I know whom I'm talking to. I am alive.[3]

Pomare is a revolutionist, but his attitude is not necessarily typical of that of all of the young choreographers during the 1960's.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Estrada, "3 Lading Negro Artists, and How They Feel About Dance in the Community," pp. 45-46.

[3] "Eleo Pomare," Ebony Magazine, December, 1969, p. 100.

Rod Rodgers: Artist of Celebration

Rod Rodgers is a black dancer-choreographer-director whose ideas support the "celebration of blackness" but in less of a revolutionary manner than those of Pomare. He writes:

> I have little patience with those who say to be a black choreographer one must limit his scope and deal exclusively with traditional Afro-American materials. . . . whether one functions as a choreographer who happens to be black or as a black man who happens to be a choreographer is determined by his point of view at a given moment.[1]

Rodgers grew up in Detroit where his father had moved as a young man.[2] After having decided to become a professional dancer, the elder Rodgers applied to dance academies only to discover that they would not accept a black student. He finally received employment as a custodian in a school of dance where he practiced at night the techniques which he was able to observe during the day.[3] Times changed for the black dancer of the younger Rodgers' era, however, and he came to New York City in 1962 where, after studying with Hanya Holm, Mary Anthony, and Erick

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[1]Rod Rodgers, "A Black Dancer's Credo: Don't Tell Me Who I Am," Negro Digest, July, 1968, p. 15.

[2]Emery, "Black Dance in the U. S., From 1619 to 1970," p. 325.

[3]Rod Rodgers, "For the Celebration of Our Blackness," Dance Scope, Spring, 1967, p. 6.

Hawkins, he became a member of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company.[1] He was awarded a John Hay Whitney Fellowship in 1965 for work and study in dance.[2]

In 1966, Rodgers formed his own integrated company, called the Rod Rodgers Dance Company, and presented several non-representational works including those entitled Invention, Trajectories, Tangents, and Percussion Suite.[3] Influenced, no doubt, by his association with Hawkins, Rodgers' early works were representative of the views which he states in the following manner:

> Images which encourage intolerance of racial suppression and show the proud Afro-American heritage are not the only means of communicating a black consciousness . . . if an artist's individual sense of immediacy is to vitalize his works, he should have freedom to decide which ideas he feels a need to communicate at a particular time.[4]

Rodgers contends, however, that his dance is Afro-American simply because he is an Afro-American.[5] He feels that his blackness is a part of his identity as a human being and

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[1]Emery, "Black Dance in the U. S., From 1619 to 1970," p. 325.

[2]Rodgers, "For the Celebration of Our Blackness," p. 6.

[3]Emery, "Black Dance in the U. S., From 1619 to 1970," p. 325.

[4]Rodgers, "A Black Dancer's Credo: Don't Tell Me Who I Am," p. 16.

[5]Ibid.

that his exploration of dance evolves in relationship to his total experiences as a man. He writes:

> Each dance I create has grown out of my personal experience as a black American. Each movement I explore is part of my own personal heritage. My emphasis is on exploring through my medium, experimenting with dance, trying to find fresh ways of evoking physical and spiritual images, to make new poetic comments about man's eternal beauty and pathos. My function in the [Black] Revolution will be to share my personal experience through dance.[1]

Rodgers' choreography is not removed from the experiences of blacks. During the early 1970's, he became involved in special performance workshops and lecture-demonstrations designed to promote a better understanding of black dance. He mixes media--using slides, props, and the bodies of his dancers--as he feels it is necessary to do so in order to accomplish his purpose. He dances Inventions as a solo and the members of his Company perform Die Nigga, Change, and Say What in which they all relate and mingle freely with the audience.[2] In addition to the dances mentioned, Rodgers' concert repertory includes also such dances as Dance Sketches and Dances in Projected

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Jackie Earley, "Editorial: Evolution and Revolution in Black Dance," The Feet, December, 1970, pp. 2-5.

Space.[1] Rodgers' choreography and his feelings about it are reflected in his writing as he states:

> The Negro dancers and the Negro public must be brought together. Dance can express images of the Negro which are relevant, authentic and without stereotype. These images must be discovered in black people's terms, because, though our children will be Americans, they never will be white. Negro dance art, whatever form it may take, can be a celebration of the beauty and the virtue of our blackness.[2]

There are other black dance artists who celebrate the beauty and the virtues of black peoples throughout the world. The United States is the home of several outstanding ethnological artists. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss these black ethnological artists, it is only fitting to mention Jean-Léon Destiné, the Haitian-born dance artist;[3] Percival Borde, a Trinidadian dancer-choreographer-teacher who specializes in African and West Indian dance and culture;[4] and Geoffrey Holder, the multi-talented dancer-choreographer-teacher-actor-painter-singer-

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[1]Bernadine Jennings, "Rod Rodgers Dance Company, Clark Center for the Performing Arts," The Feet, March-April, 1971, p. 6.

[2]Rodgers, "For the Celebration of Our Blackness," p. 10.

[3]Jean-Léon Destiné, biographical and publicity materials sent to the investigator, November 20, 1970.

[4]Jonathan Miller, "Dancers 10 Feet Tall!" Journal Herald, Dayton, Ohio, March 31, 1970.

designer, and radio and television personality from Trinidad who uses West Indian folklore as the basis for much of his choreography.[1] These artists have collectively made the contributions of the black male dance artist an increasingly powerful force in the history of dance in the United States.

Summary

The black entertainer was the first to supply what many authorities consider an entirely American theatrical element. The thematic source material for the American Minstrel Show--the ancestor of Vaudeville and the American Music Hall--was black music-making and dance which appeared in this country in the sixteenth century with the importation of the first slaves who, in their motherland, danced to express their every emotion. White performers in blackface capitalized upon the rich source materials provided by the blacks while early black performers appeared only in sporadic interludes. These black dancers on the American stage were featured as exotics, comics, and dandies--a stereotyped image which followed black entertainers well into the twentieth century. The twentieth century black dancer, however, became restless and was no longer satisfied with the old stereotyped image. Now a part of the American

[1]Geoffrey Holder, personal interview held in New York City, June 25, 1970.

scene, he felt the need of returning to dance as an expression of his emotions--the emotions resulting from his cultural awareness that he was a full-fledged American citizen.

In the pioneer days of black concert dance, several leaders emerged. Among these leaders were Charles Williams and Charlotte Moton Kennedy, Directors of the Hampton Institute Creative Dance Group; Hensley Winfield, organizer of the Negro Art Dance Group; Eugene Von Grona, Director of the American Negro Ballet; and Wilson Williams, organizer of the Negro Dance Company.

Asadata Dafora Horton is considered the first black man to bring the dance of the Africans to the attention of the public in a theatrical sense. In 1934, he presented his opera entitled Kykunkor to the New York public. Kykunkor received favorable reviews and during the three decades which followed, Dafora presented many other productions which he termed dance-dramas. Critical and audience acceptance of Dafora's theatrical use of ethnic material paved the way for the American-born Katherine Dunham to ascend to the concert stage.

Katherine Dunham is considered the "mother" of black concert dance in the United States. A native of Chicago, Illinois, Dunham's career in dance began when she

joined the school dance club at the age of twelve. She continued to take dance lessons as often as she could throughout her high school years.

Dunham worked her way through college with money earned from teaching classes in dance. Her major sequence, however, was Anthropology, which led to her receiving a Julius Rosenwald Traveling Fellowship for anthropological research in the West Indies. Dunham's Master of Arts thesis, entitled "The Dances of Haiti--Their Form, Function, and Sociological organization," provided exciting source material upon which she could base her future choreography.

By special request from the Federal Theatre of Chicago, Dunham choreographed the full-length ballet, L'Ag'Ya. The success of this ballet brought invitations from New York City for Dunham and her Company to appear in an evening of Negro dance at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA, and for Dunham to direct a musical show entitled Pins and Needles. Determined that her Company should have a proper Broadway début, Dunham rented the Windsor Theatre in order to present her dancers in one performance on Sunday, February 18, 1940. This performance met with such success that her Company continued to perform for twelve additional Sundays.

In the years which followed, in addition to choreographing for her own company, the dancer-anthropologist

played roles in several motion pictures and in the musical Cabin in the Sky. Under the management of the noted impresario, Sol Hurok, Dunham and her Company toured the United States, Europe, South America, the Far East, and Australia. Some of her most famous choreographic achievements are L'Ag'Ya, Le Jazz Hot, Tropics, and Barrelhouse. During this period, Dunham established in New York City the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts, Incorporated, which served as a home base for her Company as well as a place where aspiring young dance artists could study. Many outstanding show business personalities studied at Dunham's School; among them were Eartha Kitt and Marlon Brando. Of the early Dunham dancers, Talley Beatty, Syvilla Fort, Lavinia Williams, and Claude Marchant have emerged as noteworthy figures in the dance world.

Dunham staffed her School with outstanding teachers--several of whom made lasting impressions upon aspiring black dance artists. Among these is Syvilla Fort who is complimented highly by black artists as the one person who has done the most in New York City to continue the Dunham tradition.

Syvilla Fort, a former Dunham Dancer, served as acting director of Dunham's School from 1950 through 1953 shortly before the School was officially closed. In late

1953, Fort opened her own Studio of Theatre Dance in New York City. Inspired by her work with Katherine Dunham, Fort took the modern-primitive technique of Dunham and developed it into a modern-Afro technique combined with American jazz. The Dunham technique did not die with the closing of her School in New York City; it has been extended and enlarged as Syvilla Fort continues a tradition. Fort's studio remains functional today, in 1973--a place where artists may study modern-Afro dance techniques and American jazz.

Several well-known black male dance artists have enjoyed the tutelage of Syvilla Fort. Among those who have made notable contributions in the area of dance are Walter Nicks, teacher and choreographer in the modern and ethnological idioms of dance; Jaime Rogers, dancer-teacher-choreographer active on the West Coast; Harold Pierson, dancer and teacher in the modern dance idiom; and Chuck Davis, specialist in the area of modern-Afro and authentic African dance forms. Other black artists who have received valuable dance instruction from Syvilla Fort include such personalities as James Earl Jones, noted stage and film actor; and Danny Barrajanas, drummer extraordinaire and accompanist for primitive technique.

Another great lady of dance in the United States is Pearl Primus. The Trinidadian-born dancer, already a

college graduate, began her professional career in 1941 quite accidentally--as a replacement in the dance group of the National Youth Administration. Following her first performing experience, Primus won a working scholarship to the New Dance Group. A good student, Primus was soon choreographing her own dances. As an outgrowth of her student work and in order to soothe the wounds which she felt had been inflicted upon her because of racial discrimination, Primus became engaged in research on primitive dances. After her first six months of study she had choreographed African Ceremonial, based upon a legend from the Belgian Congo. During the months which followed, she choreographed three modern solos and presented her dances to the New York audience on February 14, 1943. At that time, John Martin, leading dance critic, described Primus as the greatest Negro dancer of them all.

All of Primus' choreography was based upon careful and extensive research. The artist choreographed African dances before she went to Africa, she choreographed Caribbean dances from memoirs of members of her family, and she choreographed dances about southern blacks before she traveled in the south. Although Primus eventually visited Africa, the West Indies, and the Deep South for source materials, she discovered that those dances constructed

upon the basis of research were just as powerful and, in some instances, better compositions than those produced following her visits to the actual sites.

As a dancer and choreographer, Primus is credited with a deep and sincere understanding of her people. As a director, she has influenced several outstanding black male dance personalities who have been associated with her companies. Among these artists are Percival Borde, Primus; dancer-husband; Charles Queenan, an original member of the Negro Dance Theatre; Charles Blackwell, stage manager employed by Merrick Productions; and Joe Nash, a multi-media specialist and authority on black resources in the United States.

Most of the early attempts of black men as ballet dancers were discouraged by the failure of the critics and the predominately white audiences to accept these black men strictly upon their merits as dancers. As late as the 1950's, two black ballet companies still attempted to provide separate outlets for talented blacks with specific training in classical dance. The Negro Dance Theatre, directed by Aubrey Hitchins, made its début in the summer of 1954, at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated. The Company lasted through a return performance the following year after which it was forced to disband because

sufficient funds could not be maintained for its operation. The experiences of the New York Negro Ballet were similar to those of the Negro Dance Theatre. This Company, directed by Ward Fleming, managed to present enough performances in and around New York City to raise the funds necessary for a European tour. Following a memorable eight-week residency at the Drury Lane Theatre in the spring of 1956, the Company was forced to disband because of a lack of operational funds.

Sylvester Campbell is a black ballet artist who left the United States early in his career to seek opportunities for performing in Europe. Born into an artistic family, Campbell became interested in dance following a visit to the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C. He enrolled in classes shortly thereafter and later attended the School of American Ballet in New York City. Campbell began his professional career with the New York Negro Ballet Company during the 1956-1957 performance season. When the Company toured Great Britain in the autumn of 1957, Campbell chose to remain in Europe at the close of the tour. He remained abroad to live and work because there were many more possibilities for him as a performer in the area of classical ballet. He occupies a unique position in that he is probably the only black classical dancer in the world who has performed all of the male leading roles in such

ballets as Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, Romeo and Juliet, Giselle, and Les Sylphides. Campbell is making his contributions to the field of dance as an outstanding black classical dance performer.

Billy Wilson is another black dance artist who has experienced success in Europe. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Wilson's professional career began at the age of seven on the stages of the public schools in Philadelphia. At age sixteen, he received a scholarship to study with Antony Tudor at the Philadelphia Ballet Guild School where he performed as a soloist with the company associated with this school. In 1955, Wilson went to New York City to work and study. Here, he joined the cast of Carmen Jones and studied with such authoritative teachers as Karel Shook, Walter Nicks, and Pearl Lang. Wilson's performances in musicals afforded him the opportunity to work with such famous Broadway choreographers as Jack Cole and Jerome Robbins. In addition, his performance in the 1958 London production of West Side Story brought him the offer to join the National Ballet of Holland where he became the only black soloist in the Company.

Wilson chose to live and work in Europe because of his acceptance, first, as an artist and, second, as a black man. At no time in his professional career, however, has he

been able to forget the color of his skin. He has always been aware of his heritage and the responsibility which he has accepted--being a "first black" in so many professional situations.

After spending his formative performance years in Europe, Wilson, involved also in teaching and choreography, returned to the United States in 1965. Among his many reasons for returning to work in his own country is the fact that he wishes to help provide black children with their own heroes and images. Since his return to the United States, he has worked with children in the under-privileged areas of Boston as well as in "Arts 6," a federally subsidized program in the greater Boston area. Presently, in 1972, he is Artistic Director of the dance company of the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston, Massachusetts.

Of the few black artists who remained in this country and tried to break through all barriers into the world of ballet during the early 1950's, two have experienced degrees of success--Arthur Mitchell, the co-subject of this study, and Louis Johnson. Mitchell achieved his success as a performer, Johnson as a choreographer.

Louis Johnson is also a product of the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C. Following his

graduation from high school in 1950, Johnson went to New York City where he studied at several leading schools of dance among which was the School of American Ballet. After two years at the School, Johnson became the first black dancer to perform a major role with the New York City Ballet. He danced a solo in Jerome Robbins' Ballade. This appearance proved to be only a token performance as Johnson has had no other opportunity to perform with a major ballet company.

Like many other black artists of the 1950's, Johnson formed his own dance company in order to provide black ballet dancers with some outlet for their talents. He funded his company with money he earned in various ways and managed to give many successful concerts. Although Johnson was a strong dancer, he made his greatest impression upon the dance world as a choreographer. His first work, Lament, in 1953, dominated the evening at the American Ballet Club's Annual Choreographer's Night. Since then, he has choreographed many ballets--several of which are in the repertories of leading dance companies. For his choreography of the musical Purlie Victorious, Johnson became the first black choreographer ever nominated for a Tony award. Johnson remains busy, in the 1970's, creating

works for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Capital Ballet, and for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre.

Among those emerging black leaders in modern dance in the United States who immediately followed Dafora, Dunham, and Primus, three men have achieved outstanding success as dancers, choreographers, and directors of their own dance companies. These men are Talley Beatty, Donald McKayle, and Alvin Ailey, the co-subject of this study.

Talley Beatty was one of the dancers in the original company of Katherine Dunham which came to New York City to perform in 1937. He apparently remained with Katherine Dunham and Her Dancers through 1940, after which time he appeared in works by Helen Tamiris, Esther Junger, and Maya Deren. He also organized his own revue in the Dunham style and toured with it for five years. In 1959, Beatty gave to the dance world his classic work entitled The Road of the Phoebe Snow. Another representative ballet, Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot, soon followed and today, in the 1970's, Beatty's unique works are kept alive in the repertories of leading dance companies.

Donald McKayle, a product of the New Dance Group, made his début performance in the spring of 1948, in choreography by Sophie Maslow and Jean Erdman. The following summer, a scholarship to study with Martha Graham led to

future performances as a member of Graham's Company. Other outstanding artists whose choreography McKayle has performed include Charles Weidman, Daniel Nagrin, Merce Cunningham, and Anna Sokolow.

Although he was an outstanding dancer, it is through his choreography that McKayle has made his greatest contributions to the dance world. The reflections in his work indicate that the artist is a humanist with a passionate concern for his fellow man. McKayle's three classic works are Games, Rainbow Round My Shoulder, and District Storyville. Today, in 1973, McKayle is a member of the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts and at the Inner City Institute in Los Angeles. He continues to choreograph for moving picture and television audiences as well as for his own dance company, the Inner City Repertory Dance Company.

The 1960's brought a bevy of young black choreographers and dancers to the attention of the dance world--each with his own idea concerning the black experience. Representing two factions of the black dance scene are Eleo Pomare and Rod Rodgers.

Eleo Pomare formed a company in New York City in 1958 which proposed to utilize creative Negro talent and ability in American modern dance. His American company

began to realize its purpose, however, only after Pomare returned from his professional experiences in Europe in 1964. The re-organized Eleo Pomare Dance Company presented its first performance in New York City in October of 1967. According to the critics, his Blues for the Jungle was his most powerful presentation. Critics sensed a deep feeling of "Negritude" in Pomare's works along with the fact that he has consciously steeped himself in the peculiar experiences of black Americans. Pomare feels that the Black Revolution should be reflected in art as well as in politics; his choreography exemplifies his viewpoint in this regard.

Rod Rodgers is a black dancer-choreographer-director whose ideas support the "celebration of blackness" but in less of a revolutionary manner than that of Pomare. Rodgers came to New York City in 1962 where he studied with Hanya Holm, Mary Anthony, and Erick Hawkins. The Hawkins influence was reflected in his program in 1966 when he presented several non-representational works. These early works expressed the artist's view that images which encourage intolerance of racial oppression are not the only means of communicating a black consciousness. Rodgers' later work has included such dances as Die Nigga and Say What, supporting, therefore, the feeling of the artist that Negro dance art, whatever form it may take, can be a celebration of the beauty and virtue of blackness.

There are other black dance artists who celebrate the beauty and virtue of black peoples throughout the world. The United States is the home of several outstanding ethnological dance artists. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to cover these artists, it is only fitting to mention that Jean-Léon Destiné of Haiti, and Percival Borde and Geoffrey Holder of Trinidad have contributed immeasurably to the image of the black male dance artist as a powerful force in the history of dance in the United States.

Chapters IV, V, VI, and VII of this dissertation will be devoted to the life and contributions of the first of the two subjects of this study.

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY YEARS OF ARTHUR MITCHELL[1]

Arthur Mitchell does not approve of the title, "Messiah," by which he rapidly is becoming known. Unlike a "Messiah," he seems to be cold and calculating as he examines and questions each person and event connected with his art. He is calculating but with reason. Like the mighty eagle which guards the fragile egg or tiny baby in her nest, Arthur Mitchell protects his fledgling, vulnerable child--The Dance Theatre of Harlem. Harlem gave Mitchell to the world, and now--at the peak of his professional career--he has returned to Harlem to give other black dancers to the world. The accomplishments of this man are so miraculous that his followers do think of him as their liberator and savior--their "Messiah."

Childhood of Arthur Mitchell

Arthur Mitchell, Senior, and Willie Mae Hearns were natives of Savannah, Georgia, where they met and married

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[1]Unless otherwise documented, all data included in this chapter were obtained through personal interviews with Arthur Mitchell in July and August of 1970, in January of 1971, and through a personal interview and a telephone interview with Willie Mae Mitchell, Mother of Arthur Mitchell, in July of 1970 and in February of 1971, respectively.

several years before coming north to live. They lived first in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for three years before they decided to make their home in Upper Manhattan. Until two years after moving to New York City, the Mitchells had no children and, although their financial resources were meager, they were able to afford the necessities of life.

At his parents' residence located on 112th Street between Seventh and Lenox Avenues, on March 27, 1934, Arthur Adams Mitchell, Junior, entered this world, "feet first and kicking."[1] Young Arthur, the second child of the Mitchells, was born fourteen years after the birth of his sister, Frances Marie, and sixteen years after his parents moved to New York City. Although his conception was, according to his mother, "quite a surprise," he became a member of a sizable family because, within the next four years, Charles William, Laura Mae, Herbert Gerald, and Shirley Elizabeth, respectively, were born.

Mr. Mitchell, a riveter, was employed at the Brooklyn Navy Yard but he was equally adept at carpentry, plumbing, and automotive mechanics. With the rapid increase in the size of the Mitchell family, these other aptitudes were frequently called upon to supplement the

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[1]Willie Mae Mitchell, personal interview held in New York City, July 13, 1970.

family income. Mr. Mitchell often found it necessary, therefore, to move the family residence either nearer to his work or to a location where he could maintain a workshop at home. For these practical reasons, the family moved to 114th Street when young Arthur was about three years of age and later, when Arthur was of school age, the Mitchells moved even farther uptown to a building where his father could maintain a carpentry shop in the basement of their residence.

By the early forties, the area of New York City in which the Mitchell family lived was near the section of Harlem which was the center of the black entertainment world--a section which was attractive also to prostitutes, bootleggers, and bookmakers. Furthermore, there was little outlet for the senior Mitchell's self-learned skills. Because of these factors, the neighborhood on 139th Street between Seventh and Lenox Avenues became so intolerable for the Mitchells and their small children that they sought a home and remunerative employment farther uptown. After moving into an apartment on 151st Street, however, they discovered that their new landlord, in anticipation of his first black tenants and of a new superintendent, had replaced the electric kitchen appliances with a dilapidated wooden icebox and an iron stove. This fraudulent act was

promptly taken to court but to no avail. Mr. Mitchell fortunately served as a repairman for the realtors who owned apartment buildings on 143rd Street; through this connection, he succeeded in changing positions and became the superintendent of the buildings located at 532 and 536 West 143rd Street. It was at 536 West 143rd Street in the City of New York that the Mitchell children grew up.

It is this place, also, that Arthur's nieces and nephews still love to call home even though their parents live in different sections of the city. Many would consider the fusion of these close family ties nothing less than a miracle in a situation in which a boy of fifteen became the head of a Harlem household. This is a position which Arthur Mitchell holds today since all major decisions concerning various members of the family are still made by "Uncle Junior," as Arthur's nieces and nephews affectionately call him.[1]

Young Arthur, being the eldest son, assumed economic responsibility and independence at an early age. When he was seven or eight years old, he sold newspapers and shined shoes, ". . . but," he states, "my first real job--I mean where I was actually on a payroll--was when I

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[1]Mrs. Shirley Mills, personal interview held in New York City, July 30, 1970.

was twelve years old. It was in a butcher shop right around the corner from our apartment."[1] From the very beginning, Arthur, Junior, turned his earnings over to his mother in order to supplement the family income because, at that time, there were six children.

Employment in the butcher shop set the stage for what was to be the obligatory pattern of young Arthur's life. By now, his sister, Frances Marie, had succumbed to diabetes and Arthur was officially the eldest child. As he accepted this role of seniority in the family, the burden of economic responsibility grew heavier and heavier until it became completely his own at the age of fifteen when Arthur Mitchell, Senior, became ill and was no longer able to support his family. Young Arthur's responsibility as the head of the household did not shift for the next sixteen years of his father's illness which terminated with the death of the senior Mitchell on July 1, 1965. Arthur recalls his last visit with his father in the hospital, saying, ". . . my father, who was always a fighter, said to me, 'I'm tired, I'm really just tired' . . ." His son did not expect these to be his father's final words--but they were.

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview held in New York City, January 13, 1971.

Showing his independence at a very early age, Arthur chose to attend school of his own volition. Mrs. Mitchell dressed her four-year-old son and put him on the playground in the school yard which was located across the street from their apartment. She felt that he would be safe there and not be tempted to run to and fro across the street. Arthur was not concerned with the street, but chose, instead, to follow the kindergarten children into their classes every day. It was not long before the school authorities sent for Mrs. Mitchell and informed her that her son would be allowed to attend the kindergarten classes since he insisted upon doing so but that he could not be registered officially because of his age. The budding scholar began at four years of age to attend the public elementary school on 139th Street between Seventh and Lenox Avenues.

Arthur's first teacher was a young white girl who provided her students with many varied and interesting activities in which to participate. One activity which attracted young Arthur's attention was a rhythm band in which she permitted him to perform. Each Friday, the parents of the children in the rhythm band were invited to become acquainted with the various projects in which their children were engaged. Mrs. Mitchell remembers looking on

with great pride as Arthur began his official participation in a musical environment by playing the maracas with the kindergarten band. During the year of 1940, Arthur was officially enrolled in the kindergarten which he had been attending. Reminiscing a bit, Mrs. Mitchell feels that the school authorities did not object to her son's attending kindergarten at such an early age because he was always "so clean and so nicely dressed."

Because young Arthur had supplemented the family income since he was quite young, he had few occasions for socializing outside of his home. As he grew older, he sang in the Convent Avenue Baptist Church Choir, and occasionally he "shot a few baskets" in the park. He does recall, however, that he was a member of the local street gang, of which he says, "First we were called the 'Rebels'--then we switched to being called the 'Hill Top Lovers.' I remember my red satin jacket with 'Artie' written over the left pocket."[1] In recalling his limited social activities, Arthur Mitchell's mother states that he chose "shooting baskets" because ". . . he would never participate in anything that would get him dirty--he simply could not tolerate being dirty." Mitchell explains his obsession for

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal correspondence to the investigator, March 30, 1971.

cleanliness in the following manner:

> As my father was the superintendent of the apartment buildings, we boys had to stoke the coal burners and clean the boilers plus collect the garbage. When the dumb-waiters were broken, we collected the garbage from door to door in huge burlap bags. There were two buildings comprised of six floors and four apartments on each floor. By the time we reached the basement, not only were the bags quite heavy but we were also dirty and smelly ourselves. So the rest of the time I took baths.[1]

Arthur's obsession for cleanliness often made him the object of various practical jokes within the family circle. The anecdote that his nieces like to recall centers around his indulgence in taking several baths each day. During the course of one of his many daily baths, his brother Charles--described by his mother as the "devilish one"--came in from a game of football hot, tired, and ready for a bath. As usual, Arthur was soaking himself in their only bathtub. Charles requested that Arthur hurry and finish--a request to which Arthur paid no attention. Finally, tiring of the wait and planning an appropriate punishment for his brother, Charles went into the bathroom and threw his dirty clothes into the tub. Arthur was so thoroughly upset that he let all of the water out, cleaned the tub, and began his bath again!

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[1] Ibid.

The Mitchell family was comprised of individuals with distinctively different personalities who got along with each other unusually well. Their admirable interrelationships created a uniquely harmonious situation, especially with five children in a small apartment in Harlem where there was no big, open space for them to roam about; nor were there open yards in which they could play. As Arthur comments, ". . . there were so many of us and we always shared everything which we had with each other."[1] Almost everything is nearer the truth for there was always the ritual of Arthur's ice cream which even today is his favorite food. Because he was independent and earned his own money, he always had his own ice cream cone each day. This he shared whenever he wanted his sisters or brothers to undertake a chore for him. For their reimbursement, they were permitted to have a "lick" from his daily ice cream cone. Following this "fair exchange" he retreated to a quiet place and continued to enjoy his ice cream. As Arthur grew older, his moments of solitude were spent reading a book in a small room in the center of the apartment. Mrs. Mitchell, who had hoped that her eldest son would become a physician, soon found that all of these books were about history.

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, January 13, 1971.

Young Arthur was in the second grade when the family moved into the apartment on 143rd Street. He attended Public School 186, which was the neighborhood elementary school located on 145th Street. During his junior high school years, he was enrolled in Public School 143, which accommodated grades seven through nine, and it was during these junior high school years that Arthur's musical interests were again brought to the foreground.

In New York City, the Police Athletic League is a community service organization which provides facilities for, and instruction in, various recreational activities. At the age of ten, Arthur joined the PAL Glee Club and thus began his "training in the arts." Arthur recalls that he received no formal education in dance during his early years; in fact, he was the only member of his family even remotely interested in performing in the theatre. He feels that he must have been interested in becoming a dancer from the time that he was very young and supports his feeling in the following words:

> My mother tells me that when I was a child I loved to dance and that, when guests would come to the house, I would hide behind the door until everyone was seated; she says that I would then emerge and start performing--totally untrained--with "lots of guts" as usual.[1]

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview held in New York City, July 8, 1970.

Mrs. Mitchell corroborates this reminiscence of Arthur's as she describes his first interest in dance. "After he began to walk, whenever he heard music he began to dance. I think that he was born to dance because as a toddler--whenever he heard music--that was it!"

In 1944, while Arthur, at the age of ten, was in the PAL Glee Club he began to study tap dance. At that time, various individuals would go from home to home periodically canvassing parents for the enrollment of their gifted children in a series of lessons in various areas of study. Approximately ten lessons would be included in a "package deal," and all of the students enrolled would be taught together in a studio in the building housing the Columbia Broadcasting System. Arthur remembers those sessions as having ". . . about fifty kids in a room, and we would stand up and sing one song and learn a time step--that was the extent of it."[1] And that was the extent of Arthur Mitchell's early formal education in dance.

Professional Preparation of Arthur Mitchell

While he was enrolled in Public School 143, Arthur's life took on a new direction as the result of participation in a class party held at the end of the term. Arthur, who

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[1] *Ibid*.

had always been good at social dances, was "hamming it up" with one of the girls. The guidance teacher noticed him, and subsequently asked him if he wished to become a professional dancer. Although Arthur was about to finish junior high school, he had given little thought to the course that his professional life would take, and told his guidance teacher that it really did not matter since he did not know what he wished to become anyway. The teacher, recognizing the fact that young Arthur possessed a definite talent in dance, requested a conference with his mother. Mrs. Mitchell's reaction to the suggestion that her son become an entertainer was, ". . . it's up to him."[1] So the guidance teacher and Arthur initiated the procedures necessary to obtain a scholarship to the High School of Performing Arts.

The High School of Performing Arts was opened in 1948 as an experimental school associated with the Metropolitan Vocational High School--a trade school under the auspices of the Board of Education of New York City.[2] The School had been given a building on West 46th Street between Broadway and The Avenue of the Americas, and it was

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[1]Willie Mae Mitchell, personal interview, July 13, 1970.

[2]David Baroff, "High School With a Flair," Dance Magazine, February, 1962, pp. 28-33.

in the second semester of its first year of existence when Arthur Mitchell wrote for application forms for admission. In addition to specified academic requirements, Arthur learned that he would have to prepare a three-minute "dance routine" for an audition as a part of the admission procedures.

With no formal training in dance, Arthur sought the help of Tom Nip, an old-time black vaudevillian who taught him a tap dance routine to "Stepping Out With My Baby." The picture of the audition remains a vivid one in Arthur's mind. He recalls that the other auditioners, who had been studying ballet and modern dance, were performing either classical ballet or very complicated modern dance compositions, and comments: ". . . there I was with this rented top hat, white tie, and tails, but, when my number was called, I came out and sold." Reflectively, he smiles and adds, "I have always felt, however, that they accepted me because they needed male dancers in addition to the fact that I had lots of guts!"[1]

Arthur Mitchell entered the High School of Performing Arts in the fall of 1949 with a major sequence in Modern Dance--a selection which Nanette Charisse, an instructor at the School at that time, pointed out

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 8, 1970.

repeatedly was an error. Throughout his high school career, she continually told Arthur that he was "a ballet dancer gone wrong," and that he should be in the Ballet Department instead of the Modern Dance Department of the High School of Performing Arts. Arthur disagreed with her because he now had become intensely interested in modern dance, and felt sincerely that he had a "message to the world" through this particular dance idiom.

His first year of enrollment in the High School of Performing Arts was not an easy one for Arthur Mitchell. His body was not naturally flexible and lacked various other physical requirements of a dancer. In fact, near the close of the year, one of his teachers suggested that he give up dance altogether. Little did she know that those very words would motivate a little black boy to become one of the world's outstanding ballet dancers! Remembering those days Arthur explains, ". . . the minute she said that, I made up my mind that I would not only become a dancer, but that I would try to become one of the best dancers in the school."[1] Because Arthur Mitchell has always been an individual who could not walk away from a challenge, the very next day he began a regimen designed to disprove the ideas of this instructor whom he prefers

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[1] Ibid.

not to name. He immediately proceeded to overstretch his body and to rip his stomach muscles apart. Although he had to be rushed to the hospital, these injuries in no way halted his career because a remarkable physician "put him together again" so that he was "up and about" in a very short time. When Arthur had mended sufficiently, he returned to school as soon as possible and applied himself diligently toward becoming an expert dancer.

Concurrent with his professional preparation, Arthur Mitchell launched his professional career. He became a member of the Repertory Dance Company of the High School of Performing Arts and began to perform with that organization as well as to experiment with the development of choreography. The Repertory Dance Company was comprised of nine Alumnae of the High School of Performing Arts and Henry Brunjes and Arthur Mitchell, two undergraduates who were the only male dancers.[1] Arthur's affiliation with the Company marked the beginning of an extended association with Shirley Broughton with whom he has performed in many dance concerts throughout the intervening years. Performing with the Repertory Dance Company of the High School of Performing Arts, Arthur Mitchell was exposed to dance

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[1]Programme, "Music in Motion," Altoona Undergraduate Center, Altoona, Penn., March 3, 1951.

audiences who, in turn, were introduced to some of his choreography. Of his Primitive Study, presented at the Altoona Undergraduate Center, in Altoona, Pennsylvania, in 1951, a critic stated that the young dancer found an "appreciative audience" and that he evinced intense feeling in his dancing.[1]

Arthur was not extremely interested in choreography at this time because his primary interest was directed toward becoming a performing artist. He danced, therefore, with several modern dancers who are noted today for their outstanding works. Among these artists are Donald McKayle, John Butler, Louis Johnson, Sophie Maslow, and Anna Sokolow. He became associated with the latter two in 1952 when he was invited by the members of the Greater New York Committee for the State of Israel Bonds to dance for the Purim Festival choreographed by Anna Sokolow, and for the Chanukah Festival of Light choreographed by Sophie Maslow. These two artists were members also of the New Dance Group, and through them Arthur Mitchell began his association with this organization. The two Festivals in which he participated were held as gala benefits in behalf of the newly formed Democratic State of Israel.[2] Arthur danced with and for

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[1]"Dance Review," Altoona Tribune, March 7, 1951.

[2]Manuel Manisoff, letter to Arthur Mitchell, New York City, March 20, 1952, personal scrapbook of Mitchell.

everyone who invited him to do so at that time. The experience of dancing was what he considered the most important thing and, according to him, ". . . it was fun also." He further exclaims, "Can't you just see me in 1952--as black as I am--selling bonds for Israel?"[1]

During Arthur's senior year at the High School of Performing Arts, he escaped the annual term project because of a fortunate encounter which occurred when he accompanied some of his friends to auditions being held for the revival of Four Saints in Three Arts, an opera with text by Gertrude Stein and music by Virgil Thomson. Because he himself had no intention of auditioning, Arthur was seated in the audience when Ethel Linder Reiner, one of the producers of the Opera, passed by him, saw him, and exclaimed, "My God, you'll make a perfect angel!"[2] He then auditioned for the production and was cast immediately as one of the six dancing angels. Arthur believes that Miss Reiner was impressed by his "older looks." When he was twelve years old, he had a natural moustache, and he is convinced that he looks younger at thirty-six years of age than he did as a teenager.

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview held in New York City, July 25, 1970.

[2]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 8, 1970.

Originally presented in 1934, Four Saints in Three Acts was being revived for a Broadway season at the American National Theater and Academy during the spring of 1952. Following the Broadway season, the cast left for Paris, France, to represent the United States of America in the International Festival of the Arts. Playing at the Theatre Des Champs-Elyseés, the two Festival performances met with such success that, by popular demand, four additional performances were scheduled.[1] For Arthur Mitchell, Four Saints in Three Acts affords many meaningful memories. Not only did it mark his first professional appearance, but also it constituted his Broadway début--quite an achievement for a youth who had been told just two years earlier that he should give up dance for some other field! As if dancing on Broadway were not enough, the opportunity afforded Arthur his first travel experience--and nothing less than the romantic excitement of Paris. Arthur's fondest memories, however, center around the calibre of individuals whom he met and with whom he worked. Among the moments which he treasures most highly are the fifteen-minute breaks or the periods between rehearsals when the singers would get together to sing informally. He describes the resultant

[1]Billboard Announcement, Theatre des Champs-Elyseés, Paris, France, June, 1952.

sounds as ". . . absolutely incredible--music which you could not have paid enough to hear."[1] Such personalities as Rawn Spearman, Billy Daniel, Olga James, Martha Flowers, and Leontyne Price were among the singers and Louis Johnson, who was later to become an outstanding choreographer, was one of the three male dancers. Far from the least among these gifted individuals of the Opera is the producer who had discovered Arthur Mitchell, Gertrude Linder Reiner, whom he refers to as ". . . just an absolutely marvelous person and we're still friends today."[2]

A proud and happy eighteen-year-old returned from Paris to receive his certificate in modern dance and to terminate his enrollment in the High School of Performing Arts. His period of good fortune had not yet ended; upon graduation, he received the Dance Award from the School--the first male to receive this award which is given annually to the graduating senior who has made the greatest improvement throughout his high school career. Following graduation from the High School of Performing Arts, Arthur found himself confronted with what was to become the most important decision of his career--which of two scholarships to

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 8, 1970.

[2]*Ibid*.

accept. He was offered a scholarship to Bennington College which was about to become co-educational; and he was offered a scholarship to attend The School of American Ballet by Lincoln Kirstein, an anonymous member of the Board of Directors of the High School of Performing Arts. Arthur's constant dream had always been to complete a college degree and Bennington College was offering him an opportunity to make this dream a reality. On the other hand, however, the other scholarship would enable him to attend the school belonging to one of the world's leading ballet companies--The New York City Ballet.

During the days which followed his graduation from high school, Arthur deliberated upon his future. He had had no formal training in ballet, and to begin a program of intensive study at the School of American Ballet at eighteen years of age he recognized as a grueling and demanding task. He realized also that no black dancer had become a permanent member of a recognized ballet company in this country, and he had already begun to encounter racial prejudice with respect to auditions for Broadway shows. Although he danced better than almost everyone participating in the auditions, he invariably received the same response--"We'll call you." He even noticed that one individual who was conducting an audition used a special code beside the names on his list.

The code included the letters "W" and "N". When Arthur inquired about the meaning of the code, there was no satisfactory reply; he noticed, however, that the only two "N's" on the list followed his name and the name of the other black auditioner present. He realized immediately that the "W" meant white and the "N" negro.

If he were to accept the scholarship to Bennington College, the decision would fulfill his dream of going to college but would remove him from the immediate atmosphere of the dance world which New York City afforded. Finally, one night, as Arthur was lying in bed, he reached a decision about his future. He said to himself:

> Well, Arthur, you have got to beat them at their own game. If you can take what you have as a black dancer--a sense of rhythm, a style, and a way of moving--and couple that with the discipline and the training of classical ballet--you will be in a totally different class from anybody. There will be no white dancer and there will be no colored dancer like you.[1]

He decided, therefore, to accept the scholarship to the School of American Ballet. Having made this decision, it was clear that he would work toward becoming a performing artist--and any idea of becoming an educator had to be discarded or postponed indefinitely.

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[1] Ibid.

It was at about this time in his life that Arthur met Karel Shook, a superb ballet teacher who was later to become his Associate Artistic Director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Shook was teaching at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts when someone told him about a very gifted black boy from the High School of Performing Arts who had been encouraged to go into modern dance because there was no future for him in ballet. Although Mitchell would still continue his studies at the School of American Ballet, Shook immediately requested that Arthur be brought to him. Arthur came, and Shook gave him a scholarship to the Dunham School, saying, "We shall see what happens."[1] What "happened" was that his "enormous drive and ambition,"[2] as Mary Hinkson describes his distinguishing attributes, became uppermost from that time on. Arthur remembers Mr. Shook's telling him that he had all the possibilities of becoming a first dancer if he would work, and that was all that Arthur Mitchell needed to hear. "Work" was like a magic word to him, and he concluded that ". . . if work was all that was required--well, that was easy!"[3] It was to

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[1]Karel Shook, personal interview held in New York City, July 7, 1970.

[2]Mary Hinkson, personal interview held in New York City, August 27, 1970.

[3]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 8, 1970.

become even easier because Shook developed a special interest in young Arthur which led to his acceptance of him as a protegé in much the same fashion as the great English playwrights and actors regarded their protegés during the Elizabethan and Restoration Periods.[1]

At the time that Arthur came to Shook, he was eighteen years old and had assumed full responsibility for the support of his mother and four sisters and brothers. In the past, part-time positions had to be fitted into his schedule of dance classes thereby creating an obstacle which interfered with Arthur's total dedication to dance. In addition to his job in the butcher shop at which he still worked on the week-ends, he acquired another part-time job in the garment district of New York City at which he worked during the week. Disturbed by this situation, he began thinking about methods which might remove the obstacle of essential, remunerative employment outside of and restrictive to his dedication and devotion of all of his time to dance. This problem was soon resolved since the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts closed shortly after Arthur enrolled in it, and Mr. Shook opened his own Studio of Dance Arts. Arthur and several other students

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[1]John Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre from Aeschylus to Ostrovsky (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 430.

of Karel Shook were invited to teach for him in a stimulating environment which attracted such extraordinary students as Mary Hinkson, Geoffrey Holder, and Alvin Ailey. For many of the black student dancers, it was their first formal training in ballet.[1]

This period was indeed a fertile one for Arthur Mitchell, He had already studied tap dance at the Police Athletic League, modern dance at the High School of Performing Arts, ethnological dance at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts, and now he was engaged in a concentrated program of ballet. Not only was Shook a most dynamic Ballet Master, but he was also a friend and a mentor for Arthur. In fact, Mitchell was even surrounded by friends and fellow artists at his living quarters because, even though he still supported his family, he had now moved away from home.

Mary Hinkson and Matt Turney, members of the Martha Graham Company, had found a loft on 23rd Street owned by an indulgent landlord who either loved artists or knew that they never had much money. With the assistance of the landlord, therefore, several of their artist friends moved into lofts on 23rd Street--among whom were Mr. Shook,

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[1]Karel Shook, personal interview, July 7, 1970.

Arthur Mitchell, and Louis Johnson.[1] Mary Hinkson remembers that Arthur would awaken at approximately 8:00 a.m. to do his pre-barre exercises so that his body would be ready for his first class of the day with Shook. He then danced in a second class, after which he went home to sleep and to prepare for his third class. When his day finally ended, according to Mary Hinkson, "... . he would eat for the rest of the night as he always ate a lot."[2] The next morning, he arose and began with pre-barre exercises again. Mary Hinkson summarizes his self-imposed regimen in the following manner: "You talk about discipline--I mean he was possessed with this whole thing!" Regarding Arthur's relationship with Shook, Hinkson says, "I remember that Karel was his teacher and his friend--just as he is now, he [Karel] is just a marvelous, inspiring, warm, and fantastic person."[3]

Shook, who was by this time giving Arthur private ballet lessons whenever possible, had provided him with the encouragement which he needed to support his idea that he could truly become a unique dancer. Arthur was possessed with the necessary dedication, drive, and ambition, essential

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[1]Hinkson, personal interview, August 27, 1970.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>.

requisites for the achievement of his goal. One example of his dedication is evidenced in the rigorous schedule to which he confined himself in order to make his feet point. When Arthur began studying ballet with Shook, he had flat feet at which he often laughed and referred to as "flat irons."[1] In the Studio of Dance Arts, Arthur began his daily dance lessons in specially constructed shoes of leather and steel. Recalling those days, Louis Johnson reports, ". . . when we would arrive for classes, Arthur would have already been there for an hour working on his feet--later Karel would exercise them for him."[2] Of his industrious young student, Mr. Shook had the following to say:

> He was simply a remarkable student. How does one say it? It's very easy to teach talented students--they teach themselves, so to speak. But Arthur was tremendously energetic--always laughing and always very happy. He could work hours and hours every day and he accepted gracefully every correction that was ever given to him.[3]

In addition to being engaged in the classes at the Studio of Dance Arts, Arthur was by now deeply immersed in his studies at the School of American Ballet. Some time

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Louis Johnson, personal interview held in New York City, July 28, 1970.

[3] Karel Shook, personal interview, July 7, 1970.

after he had begun his studies there, Arthur found out that the anonymous Board Member at the High School of Performing Arts who had given him a scholarship to the School of American Ballet was none other than Lincoln Kirstein, the President of the Board. This was another "ego booster" which gave Arthur a further incentive to strive for excellence.

It was not the usual practice for a student who was not oriented to classical ballet to progress through the program at the School of American Ballet in the minimum number of three years--but Arthur Mitchell did so.[1] He was no less personable here than at The Studio of Dance Arts, and he immediately became a great favorite at the School. Remembering her first impression of him, Madame Ouroussow, the Director of the School of American Ballet, says:

> I think I saw him at the barre in class--I just immediately thought, first of all, that he was a very gifted boy and secondly--a very charming boy. He has great charm--his very gay, cheerful temperament always put us all in a good humor.[2]

The following schedule was in operation while Arthur Mitchell was in attendance at the School of American Ballet:

First Intermediate Division (A):
Academic Ballet one and one-half hours six times a week.

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[1]Madame Eugenie Ouroussow, personal interview held in New York City, September 10, 1970.

[2]*Ibid*.

Second Intermediate Division (B):
Academic Ballet one and one-half hours six times a week;
Elementary or Intermediate Toe one hour twice a week;
Men's Class one and one-half hours once a week.

Advanced Division (C):
Academic Ballet one and one-half hours six times a week;
Advanced Toe one and one-half hours twice a week;
Adagio or Variations one and one-half hours once a week;
Men's Class one and one-half hours once a week.

Professional Division (D):
Academic Ballet one and one-half hours six times a week plus all other courses listed for Advanced Division.

Graded courses in Labanotation one hour once a week to students enrolled on a yearly basis in Divisions B, C, and D.[1]

Arthur Mitchell progressed through Division A and B in one year, Division C in one year, and Division D in one year. He participated in each class available to him with the exception of those designated specifically for the young women.

With the foregoing schedule, the professional student at the School of American Ballet has most of the day free in which to engage in other activities. In addition to his intensive studies and his teaching duties at the Studio of Dance Arts, Arthur still danced with anyone who

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[1]Brochure, School of American Ballet, New York City, 1954.

asked him to perform--regardless of the dance idiom. Mary Hinkson recalls that ". . . when you said dance, Arthur danced!"[1] Often dancers were not reimbursed for their performances but money was of secondary importance to most young, aspiring professional dancers. It was always the experience which they sought and valued. Typically, Arthur Mitchell reasoned that the wider he spread himself and the better known he became, the more auditions he would hear about, thereby making it possible for him to secure an increasing number of engagements which would eventually become remunerative. Still deeply immersed in his position as a teacher and in his role as a student, Arthur was performing professionally under the direction of several different choreographers. During the first two years after leaving the High School of Performing Arts, he continued to work with Shirley Broughton and with Natanya Nuemann. "Quartet," choreographed and produced by Shirley Broughton, was a dance for which Arthur received many favorable reviews.[2]

Early in 1953, Arthur Mitchell began working with black choreographers, the first of whom was Louis Johnson. He and Arthur had danced together in Four Saints in Three

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[1]Mary Hinkson, personal interview, August 27, 1970.

[2]"Reviews," Dance Magazine, May, 1952; December, 1952.

Acts and lived in adjacent lofts on 23rd Street.[1] On April 12, 1953, Arthur danced in the première of Johnson's Lament in conjunction with the New York City Ballet Club's Third Annual Choreographers' Night. Concerning this performance, critics said that Mitchell ". . . supported the choreographer most nobly."[2] He was to dance this ballet many times in the future.

During the summer of 1953, Arthur danced his début performance at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, as a member of the professional company of another outstanding black choreographer, Donald McKayle.[3] This association with Donald McKayle and Dance Company proved to be one of considerable duration because Mitchell continued to dance in McKayle's famous works--Games, The Street, and Nocturne--at well-known concert halls and theatres in New York City such as the Kaufmann Auditorium of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.[4] Whenever possible, such performances were

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[1]Mary Hinkson, personal interview, August 27, 1970.

[2]"Reviews," Dance Magazine, June, 1953.

[3]Ted Shawn, speech delivered at Matinee performance of the Dance Theatre of Harlem at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, Lee, Massachusetts, August 20, 1970.

[4]Programmes, "Donald McKayle and Dance Company," The Kaufmann Auditorium and The Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York City, January 31 and February 17, 1954.

programmed as presented by the Donald McKayle and Dance Company or by McKayle's Company in collaboration with the New Dance Group Company.[1]

The New Dance Group provided a place in which artists could meet, choreograph, work, and study together. In addition to one of its founders, Sophie Maslow, other outstanding dance artists to emerge from that 1954 Company included Mary Anthony, William Bales, Joseph Gifford, Donald McKayle, Joe Nash, Eve Gentry, Daniel Nagrin, Ethel Winter, and Arthur Mitchell, In the company of such exciting personalities of the modern dance world, Arthur was enjoying invaluable experiences with the passing of each day.

In April of 1954, William Dollar gave Arthur Mitchell his first opportunity to dance publicly in a classical ballet. The Ballet Theatre Workshop was comprised primarily--although not exclusively--of students from the school associated with the Ballet Theatre with which Arthur was not connected. The Workshop, experimental in nature, was established to give the young dancers opportunities to dance within a purely classical framework. Although other choreographers were featured, the program was arranged by William Dollar. Arthur danced in Dollar's

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[1]Programme, "The New Dance Group," Kaufmann Auditorium, New York City, March 30, 1954.

Concerto, with a score by Mendelssohn, as well as in Out of Eden, with original score and choreography by Hubert Farrington. Like many other dance performances during that period, this program was presented also in the Kaufmann Auditorium at the famous 92nd Street YMHA.[1] According to David Roher, the idea for the work was ". . . charming but not ideally suited for the classical style."[2]

The Jones Beach Marine Theatre at Wantagh, New York, was the site of the Guy Lombardo production of the extravaganza entitled Arabian Nights, which opened on Thursday, June 24, 1954. In the cast of 200, Arthur Mitchell was the only person who was black. Arthur remembers the experience with Arabian Nights as one of his most exciting. Not only was he a part of a "fantastically spectacular production," but he had an opportunity to "do his thing." When Guy Lombardo watched the male dancers perform the sword dance, he was heard to remark, "We need a whole company of Arthur Mitchells!"[3] After Arabian Nights, the famous Lombardo began to present black productions with an integrated cast. Feeling that his performances

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[1]Programme, "The Ballet Theatre Workshop," Kaufmann Auditorium, New York City, April 27, 1954.

[2]David Roher, "Dance," untitled, undated newspaper article from the personal scrapbook of Arthur Mitchell.

[3]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 8, 1970.

impressed Lombardo tremendously with respect to black talent, Arthur considered Arabian Nights a special "feather in my cap."

During the autumn of 1954, Arthur continued to dance with anyone who asked him to do so. Concerning these experiences he relates:

> Unfortunately, this was the only way to get stage experience here in America at that time--particularly in the dance world . . . I think I've danced in every nook and cranny--every off-Broadway, every off, off, off-Broadway that you can name.[1]

After three years of study at the School of American Ballet, Arthur Mitchell made his second appearance on Broadway. He was accepted as a member of the cast in the Truman Capote-Harold Arlen musical entitled House of Flowers. Starring Pearl Bailey, the cast for this musical included exceptional black talent personified. In this production, Arthur was afforded the exciting privilege of working with such personalities as Rawn Spearman, Delores Harper, Diane Carroll, Geoffrey Holder, Juanita Hall, Alvin Ailey, Carmen de Lavallade, Frederick O'Neal, and Josephine Premice.[2]

During the three-month Broadway run of House of Flowers, John Butler, who had now become a noted

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Playbill, The Alvin Theatre, New York City, week beginning February 28, 1955.

choreographer, was forming the John Butler Dance Theatre and preparing to take it on a European tour. Arthur was asked to join this company and, after some deliberation, he decided to do so. He had been hesitant because he still had hopes of becoming affiliated with the New York City Ballet. Although he had attended their school for three years, he still had not been invited to join the official performing company. His optimism, therefore, had become less strong than it had been in previous years.[1]

Before embarking upon its European Tour, the John Butler Dance Theatre continued to present as many performances as possible. Important on the list was its Broadway performance in American Dance, a three-week presentation of contemporary dance, May 3 through 21, 1955, at the American National Theatre and Academy sponsored by the B. de Rothschild Foundation.[2] Here Arthur danced in Butler's Three Promenades With the Lord on the evening of May 18, 1955. The John Butler Dance Theatre appeared on July 1 and 2 of the same year at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, where Arthur danced in Butler's Malocchio or The Evil Eye and in the world première of his

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[1]Mitchell, personal interview, July 8, 1970.

[2]Playbill, The ANTA Theatre, New York City, May 17 through 21, 1955.

Clowns and Angels, during the first week of the Festival.[1] The John Butler Dance Theatre, which was comprised of John Butler and six additional dancers, was re-named the John Butler American Dance Theatre and embarked upon its European tour in July of 1955.[2] Initially the company went to Europe to appear in the Festival Internazionale Del Balletto at the Piccolo Theatre in Geneva. The performance at the Festival was highly successful and was followed by a tour of other European countries. Recalling these experiences, Arthur said, "We toured Europe in a Volkswagen bus--really barnstorming--and we had great success."[3]

"Barnstorming" across Europe gave Arthur Mitchell his first real taste of the less than glamorous life and of the hardships often experienced by members of touring companies. He remembers that he probably could not have endured it were it not for one of the girls in the company, Mary Ann Niles. She decided that, to save money, they should pool their resources and become roommates. This they did, but in spite of stringent economies, they were

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[1]Matinee Programme, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, July 1 and 2, 1955.

[2]Programme, Festival Internazionale Del Balletto, Geneva, July 8 through August 8, 1955.

[3]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 8, 1970.

reduced to one meal a day once when there was no work at all. Arthur describes these lean days in the following manner:

> We used to sleep all day or as long as we could--then when we would wake up, we would entertain each other by taking turns performing skits. Each in his own turn would emerge from behind the screen which we had erected between our beds and sing, dance, or do comedy skits so we would not notice that we were hungry. Then when we could no longer endure it, we would dress up and go out for our one meal. Everyone in the hotel thought we were a honeymoon couple and they gave us little special courtesies--actually, we were just trying not to starve.[1]

Although many days were lean and hungry ones from a materialistic viewpoint, the rewards of the experience were preponderant and although he did not realize it at the time Arthur was receiving invaluable training for his eventual role as a Director of his own dance company. Mitchell's destiny, which obviously escaped him at the time, must have been foreseen by many persons. An article from an Amsterdam newspaper--the title of which was not preserved--was dedicated to Arthur Mitchell. It was written in a manner which reflected the thoughts of a freelance writer who was just strolling, looking for a story perhaps, and happened to come upon:

> . . . a young, supple Negro boy sitting on the terrace of the American Hotel. He was just sitting

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

> there closing his eyes, a little against the sun and enjoying it. . . . He gave the impression of being able to jump up [of] pleasure, and to land with an enormous leap on the table of that fat lady next to him. . . . Of course he did not do so. . . . although he might, because his job is being a dancer, and he has the courage in his face to do things like that. His name was Arthur Mitchell, and he was dancing with the John Butler American Dance Theatre, which gave lately some performances in our country. A boy who seemed to step on the terrace straight from a hard American book. . . . Very bold, this Arthur Mitchell with his twenty-one years. When the photographers came to shoot his picture, he walked to the bridge over the Stadhounderskade, and gave a show of posing, and Amsterdam stopped for a while. He'll probably go a long way, this Mitchell. Because somewhere he just got "it" in his attitude and his eyes . . .[1]

And Arthur Mitchell had every right to have "it" in his attitude and in his eyes for he had just been invited back by Lincoln Kirstein to become a permanent performing member of the New York City Ballet! At last, his dream was fulfilled.[2]

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[1]Unsigned translation of an untitled and unsigned newspaper article from an Amsterdam newspaper, August, 1955, personal scrapbook of Arthur Mitchell.

[2]Lincoln Kirstein, telegram to Arthur Mitchell, New York to Holland, August 24, 1955, personal scrapbook of Arthur Mitchell.

CHAPTER V

ARTHUR MITCHELL: PROFESSIONAL BALLET DANCER[1]

Mitchell as a Member of the New York City Ballet

While Arthur Mitchell was touring Europe during the summer of 1955 with the John Butler American Dance Theatre, he received a cable offering him an opportunity to join the New York City Ballet as a permanent member of that company.[2] The invitation came on August 24, 1955, from Lincoln Kirstein, Managing Director of the New York City Ballet--the same Lincoln Kirstein who had been a member of the Board of Directors of the High School of Performing Arts, and had given Arthur Mitchell the scholarship to study at the School of the American Ballet three years earlier. The John Butler American Dance Theatre had been "barnstorming" in Europe for approximately one month because only a part of the European tour was actually booked for performances

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[1]Unless otherwise documented, all data included in this chapter were obtained through personal interviews with Arthur Mitchell in July and August of 1970, and January of 1971.

[2]Kirstein, telegram to Arthur Mitchell, August 24, 1955.

by the company. Butler hoped to secure additional engagements as news concerning the successful performances of his company was circulated throughout the continent. Because of this uncertainty, however, the company was often without work or means of financial support, and Mitchell received his coveted invitation during one of these periods.

Although the John Butler American Dance Theatre was in financial trouble when Mitchell was invited to join the New York City Ballet, he again was faced with a delicate decision concerning his future--whether to finish the tour with John Butler or to return to New York City and fulfill his own dream of becoming a classical ballet dancer. For someone other than Arthur Mitchell, this might not have been a difficult decision to make, but he is a person of singular integrity who feels completely obligated to fulfill any commitment which he has made regardless of the personal sacrifices evolving from such commitments.

The John Butler American Dance Theater, then nearing the end of its tour, was scheduled to appear in a few weeks at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. Since the company of seven dancers was so small, Mitchell would have to be replaced if he were to leave. In addition to financial strain involved in meeting the added expense, John Butler would find it difficult to obtain a replacement in the

United States and bring that individual to Europe to finish a tour which was already approaching its end. If Mitchell should remain with Butler, however, his career as a professional dancer would not be guaranteed beyond the duration of that particular tour. On the other hand, the New York City Ballet was offering him a permanent position with a guaranteed minimum salary established by the American Guild for Musical Artists, the union for professional dancers.[1] After giving the matter much thought, Arthur Mitchell finally concluded that he should choose advantageously with respect to his own future as a professional dancer. With this part of the decision settled, he regretfully resigned from Butler's company and returned "very nervous and excited" to New York City to become the first black dancer to serve as a permanent member of a major ballet company in the United States of America.

When Arthur Mitchell joined the New York City Ballet in November of 1955, it was not just a major ballet company in the United States of America. Under the astute guidance of Lincoln Kirstein, one of its Founder-Directors, and of George Balanchine, its Artistic Director, it had grown from its beginning in 1934 as The American Ballet to become the company noted for ". . . the American style of

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[1] Ibid.

ballet."[1] Since its first foreign tour in the summer of 1950, during which the company performed in Covent Garden in London, the New York City Ballet had acquired considerable prestige abroad as a result of a European tour in 1952, performances at the Teatro Alla Scala in Milan, Italy, in 1953, and another European tour in 1955. By the time that Arthur Mitchell became a member of the company, therefore, the New York City Ballet had gained recognition as one of the leading ballet companies in the world.[2]

Although Arthur Mitchell joined the New York City Ballet in his official capacity as a member of the Corps de Ballet, he experienced an unexpected and special début as a featured dancer at his first performance. Jacques D'Amboise, who normally danced the Fourth Movement of George Balanchine's Western Symphony, was absent at this time making the film entitled Seven Brides for Seven Brothers. In his absence, Mr. Balanchine cast Arthur Mitchell in the D'Amboise role of partner for Tanaquil LeClerq, then a prima ballerina with the company. At Arthur's request, there had been no advance notices with

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[1]Chujoy and Manchester, eds., The Dance Encyclopedia, p. 665.

[2]Ibid., p. 662.

respect to the addition of a black dancer to the organization. He wished to avoid any newspaper headlines which might have read, "Negro Breaks Barrier" or similar reference to his appearance. The press honored Mitchell's wish in that the November issue of Dance Magazine merely added his name to a list of eight other new members of the New York City Ballet,[1] and dance critics for the New York City newspapers made statements similar to that made by John Martin, at that time the Dance Critic for the New York Times, who wrote, "A casting novelty and a début was the appearance of the talented young Negro dancer, Arthur Mitchell, in the role usually danced by Jacques D'Amboise in Western Symphony."[2] The reaction of the audience, however, was more dramatic than that of the press. Mitchell says that his reception by those comprising the audience was "quite incredible," pointing out that he will never forget his first appearance on stage in his début performance with the New York City Ballet on November 8, 1955. He describes the experience in the following words:

> After my four-count cue following the introductory music for the fourth movement of Western Symphony, I walked out with Tanaquil and there was a bald-headed

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[1]"News of Dance and Dancers," Dance Magazine, November, 1955, p. 3.

[2]John Martin, "Ballet: A Homecoming," New York Times, November 9, 1955.

> man sitting right behind the Conductor at center; the minute I walked onto the stage, his head "shot" up into the light in a way that you cannot imagine! And from another direction came a loud gasp followed by a voice exclaiming, "My God, they've got a Nigger in the Company!" Still another voice was heard saying, ". . . but you know, he is not bad at all--in fact, he is very good." The audience was taken completely by surprise and the comments were precious--absolutely incredible![1]

Once the initial shock of his being black had been overcome by those comprising the audience, they began judging Mitchell upon the bases of his artistry and skill as a dancer only and without reference to the color of his skin.

Although Mitchell gave the impression of being in total command of the situation, he admits that he was nervous from the minute that he began learning Western Symphony until the moment of his actual début. He remembers that on opening night, he could not determine why his trousers kept feeling uncomfortable. It was not until he came onstage, just before his entrance, that he discovered that, in his anxiety, he had put them on backwards. Another incident which had occurred in the preparation for Western Symphony which Mitchell loves to recall is concerned with Balanchine's complete obliviousness to Mitchell's color. The two of them were trying to decide what the color of Mitchell's hat should be; Jacques D'Amboise had always worn

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[1]Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

black and Arthur Mitchell suggested that he should wear either beige or brown. Balanchine stated that brown was not a good color on the stage--a comment to which the young dancer retorted mischieviously, "I beg your pardon, I think brown is the most beautiful color that there is!"[1]

Balanchine was pleased with his new addition to the company as Mitchell received complimentary reviews for his performances in Jerome Robbins' Fanfare and Pied Piper--ballets which, in addition to Western Symphony, were all performed during the initial week of Arthur Mitchell's first season with the New York City Ballet.[2] Asked when he first became aware of Mitchell as a potentially outstanding classical dancer, Balanchine, the famous ballet personality, replied,

> . . . it was when he came to the School of American Ballet--he was at the barre and I observed him and noticed that he was very handsome with nice, long legs--two very important qualifications for the classical dancer.[3]

When asked whether or not he had any plans for Mitchell at that time, Balanchine answered, "No, I am a very patient man. I usually wait until I am sure that they are serious

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Walter Terry, "Dance," The New York Herald Tribune, November 14, 1955.

[3]George Balanchine, personal interview held in New York City, September 10, 1970.

and really want to dance before I make a move." He proceeded to explain that he treated all potential classical dancers in the same way, stating that once they have made an impression upon him, he does not forget them. They must show him, however, why they wish to become dancers and the reason must be the right one--to dance for Balanchine's pleasure and for the pleasure of the audience rather than for self-pleasure.[1] Once Arthur Mitchell had made this point obvious to Balanchine, the way was clear. Balanchine feels that Arthur Mitchell even had an advantage by being a member of the black race as he explains:

> I think that the colored people have an advantage, not in rhythm, but in looks. If they have a beautiful body, they don't have to do much of anything--just dress up and stand while the music plays and people say it is great. But the white person cannot do that--not a chance! We could never just dress up and stand and still look good. In the field of dance, the white person has to be extraordinary to please the public.[2]

Balanchine was speaking from experience based upon periodic contacts with many black children. Each year, several black students had been accepted in the School of American Ballet. Very often the parents of these children visited Balanchine, inquiring about the length of time during which their children would need to study in order to become

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

recognized as dancers. Whenever he told them that it would take at least ten years, many of the children were withdrawn from the School. Most of the economically restricted parents were not willing to wait ten years before their children could show them some worthwhile results with respect to materialistic achievement.[1] Arthur Mitchell was different from the other young students and his mother had not tried to persuade Balanchine to prepare her son for a financially rewarding career around which he might shape his future; she had, in turn, made certain that he had the freedom to make all decisions concerning his professional career. Because he was endowed with good looks, a long, slender body, stamina, and a determination to become "a dancer extraordinaire"--all of the qualifications requisite for a successful career in ballet, Balanchine was pleased with him from the beginning of study.[2]

In contrast to Balanchine's quiet, patient, matter-of-fact acceptance of Arthur Mitchell from an artistic point of view, however, Lincoln Kirstein foresaw realistic obstacles which would have to be overcome. In his initial conference with Arthur, therefore, Kirstein told him that he could not accept him in the company on the same basis

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

as a white dancer. He pointed out the fact that Arthur would have to work harder than his white fellow students and that he would always have to be a solo dancer. Even as a member of the Corps de Ballet, according to Kirstein's appraisal, Arthur Mitchell would still have to achieve the technical ability of a soloist. Kirstein explained to young Arthur that he would have to be three times as good as any white dancer in order to be judged upon the same performance level by a white-oriented ballet audience. Mitchell agreed to join the company with these words of warning and advice serving as a constant challenge to him; he had never been afraid of a challenge, and he had decided definitely that he wished to be a classical dancer and would stop at nothing short of realizing his goal.

Following his début with the New York City Ballet in the Fourth Movement of Western Symphony, Arthur Mitchell has danced numerous roles in practically every ballet in the repertory during the intervening years in which he has been a member of the company. He recalls that, at one point in his career, he could expect the telephone to ring at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon with a request for him to rush down to the theatre to learn a part for someone who, for one reason or another, could not meet the 8:00 p.m. curtain that same evening. Concerning this seeming

imposition, Mitchell explains ". . . you see, I could learn anything super fast and they knew that they could depend upon me . . . I soon learned not to learn so fast." In addition to the Fourth Movement, Arthur Mitchell also has danced the First and Third Movements of Western Symphony. This particular ballet, for the obvious reason of his début performance, will be one that Mitchell holds most dear in his memory.

Although Arthur Mitchell was just a member of the Corps de Ballet, he did not take long to develop himself into what he terms a "demi-soloist." On November 13, 1955, during his first week of performances with the New York City Ballet, he danced a male pas de deux with Jonathan Watts in Jerome Robbins' Fanfare in which they impersonated competitive trumpets.[1] On the same program, he again danced as a principal with Tanaquil LeClerq in Robbins' Pied Piper. Arthur was elated with both of these roles, remembering them as "great fun" to perform. The first season during which he was with the New York City Ballet marked the seventeenth engagement of the company at the New York City Center of Music and Drama. The season lasted six weeks and ended on January 1, 1956. The engagement of the New York City Ballet at the City Center of Music and Drama from

[1]Terry, "Dance, " The New York Herald Tribune, November 14, 1955.

February 24 through March 24, 1956, found Arthur Mitchell dancing what he refers to as another "fun" role. He danced the leading male role in Jerome Robbins' Interplay. Interplay, like Western Symphony, is based upon an American theme. The ballet, with no narrative content and no particular locale, is comprised of four movements, appropriately and informally entitled, respectively, "Free Play," "Horseplay," "Byplay," and "Team Play."[1] Reviewing this work, Walter Terry states that the dancers of the New York City Ballet did not seem comfortable with Robbins' brisk and "jazzy" work, expressing his reactions in the following manner:

> Everyone danced hard but the air of improvisation, the sporting instincts were missing . . . . Barbara Fallis and Arthur Mitchell alone caught the ballet's feeling of fun. For the rest, this performance of Interplay substituted smiling effort for genuine liveliness.[2]

Of this same performance, John Martin reports, "Arthur Mitchell, the young Negro dancer, had far and away his best opportunity thus far, and gave a winning and delightful performance."[3] It is not surprising that Mitchell gave a

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[1]George Balanchine, Balanchine's New Complete Stories of the Great Ballets (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1968), pp. 114-15.

[2]Walter Terry, "Dance," The New York Herald Tribune, February, 1956.

[3]John Martin, "Ballet: Comedy Night," The New York Times, February 3, 1956.

delightful performance since the ballet was basically jazz in idiom and Arthur has always felt that jazz movements were a basic part of his being. Other ballets in which Mitchell performed during his second New York engagement with the company were Allegro Brillante, choreographed by George Balanchine to music by Tchaikovsky, and The Concert with choreography by Jerome Robbins and music by Frederic Chopin. Allegro Brillante opened on March 1, 1956, at the New York City Center of Music and Drama, and The Concert followed five days later with its première on March 6, 1956.[1] In reviewing the season which ended on March 25, 1956, Doris Hering comments upon the male contingent of the New York City Ballet by stating that ". ... as usual, the male roster lagged behind the female. But there was nicely styled dancing from Arthur Mitchell, Roland Vazquez, and John Mandia."[2]

During the late summer of 1956, Arthur Mitchell made his first European tour with the New York City Ballet--an experience which provided him with both trying and beautiful memories. In referring to this tour, Arthur recalls that

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[1]Arthur Todd, "New Ballets," Dance and Dancers, May, 1956, p. 18.

[2]Doris Hering, "Reviews," Dance Magazine, May, 1956, p. 80.

> . . . it was a very lonely tour for me because it was very hard for me to relate to the people [white members of the company] then. I had been with the company less than a year and did not have any close friends *per se*. I have always been a very earthy, relaxed person and being the only black in the company, there was no one with whom I could really communicate. For instance, if the two of us are in a room filled with other people, one look passed between us can transmit a message that no one else in the room can understand. All ethnic groups have their own common bonds, shared and understood by them alone. When you have it--it is indeed a beautiful thing; without it--it can be very lonely. Please do not misunderstand me--everyone was kind to me, but I felt like an outsider because I was not a ballet-oriented, ballet-minded person.[1]

During the months of September and October of 1956, the New York City Ballet appeared in Vienna, Zurich, Venice, Berlin, Munich, Frankfort, Brussels, Antwerp, Paris, Cologne, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. Arthur Mitchell, who has always been very fashionable with respect to dress, spent much of his leisure shopping and observing the Europeans in their day to day activities. At other times, he wrote letters to his parents, visited museums and churches, and went sight-seeing to pass the hours away. Although he had been to Europe with John Butler, this was Arthur Mitchell's first tour with a large dance company. He envisioned a fictionalized, fairy-tale existence in his day-dreams only to awaken to the unpleasant task of packing, moving, and always searching for inexpensive places in which to live.

[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview held in Chester, Massachusetts, August 20, 1970.

It was in Europe on this particular tour that Arthur Mitchell decided that his "off-stage" role with the New York City Ballet would have to be as important as any role which he might perform on stage. He remembers asking himself the question, "Are you, Arthur Mitchell, going to be happy and satisfy your own personal desires--or are you going to suppress 'self' and work for a bigger cause?" He finally resolved that, no matter what the personal cost might be, a black person must remain in ballet in the United States. He concluded that even if there were only one aspiring young black dancers might have someone about whom to say, "Well, if he made it, so can I."[1] Thus, Mitchell made another major decision, and began to develop a significant but "off-stage" role with the New York City Ballet.

The July, 1956, issue of Dance Magazine carried the announcement that Gian Carlo Menotti, on commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, was writing a Madrigal opera entitled The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore, to be choreographed by John Butler.[2] The ballet, performed by the New York City Ballet, was based upon the

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, August 20, 1970.

[2]"News of Dance and Dancers," Dance Magazine, July, 1956, p. 3.

"pain wrought children of a poet's fancy" and had, as its main characters, three monsters who had a special relationship to their hero. The Unicorn represented the dreams of the poet's youth, the Gorgon represented manhood for him, and the Manitcore was the symbol of old age.[1] Arthur Mitchell, dancing the role of the Unicorn, was delighted when these marvelous monsters received critical acclaim for many seasons. Life Magazine hailed The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore as "the season's best new ballet."[2] During the company's season of three weeks at the Civic Opera House in Chicago, April 23 through May 12, 1957, this spirited ballet proved to be the favorite among the Chicago theatre-goers. Ann Barzel, noted critic for the Chicago American, described the ballet as "an intriguing theatrical experience." With respect to Arthur Mitchell's performance, she had the following to say: ". . . We have had four Unicorn ballets in the past two years and this spirited animal, danced magnificently by Arthur Mitchell, was most evocative of all."[3]

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[1]Programme, The New Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 3, 1957.

[2]"Beasts in a Ballet," Life Magazine, January, 1957, p. 7.

[3]Ann Barzel, "Dance Review," The Chicago American, May 8, 1957, p. 26.

Arthur Mitchell considers the year of 1957 as one of the high points in his career with the New York City Ballet. During that year, Balanchine began choreographing the work which completed a trilogy of ballets begun in 1928 with the ballet Apollo,[1] and continued in 1948 with the ballet Orpheus.[2] For this trilogy, Balanchine used musical scores written by the late Igor Stravinsky, and it was Stravinsky who suggested that the third ballet be comprised of a suite of dances based upon French court dances, which he had found in a seventeenth-century manual, rather than upon another Greek myth as were the first two ballets in the trilogy. The name of the ballet was Agon--the Greek word for contest, protagonist, agony, or struggle--which was to be the only thing Greek about the ballet. The French dancing manual which served as the inspiration for Stravinsky in his composition of the score was the only thing French about it. Agon was to become what is generally referred to as Balanchine's first modern ballet. Arthur Mitchell was selected for the leading role and danced the only pas de deux included in the three-part ballet--a pas de deux created especially for him. His partner was Diana Adams.

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[1]Balanchine, Balanchine's Stories of the Great Ballets, p. 18.

[2]Ibid., p. 276.

A preview of Agon was presented at a "March of Dimes" benefit on November 27, 1957, but the official première of the Stravinsky-Balanchine ballet took place at the New York City Center of Music and Drama on December 1, 1957.[1] Many of the dance critics had mixed views with respect to the discipline of the music, the lack of another Greek theme, or the new vein of Balanchine's choreography. For the pas de deux by Mitchell and Adams, however, they all had nothing but praise. Even Doris Hering, of Dance Magazine, who heretofore had had little to say about Arthur Mitchell, praised the pas de deux in the following manner:

> . . . in the ensuing duet for Diana Adams and her magnificent partner, Arthur Mitchell, the motivation came always from Mr. Mitchell. Miss Adams was his lovely, pliant, intentionally passive doll.
>
> Their dance was a constant play of physical contrasts . . . complicated movement against simple movement, rounded movement against angulated movement. Mr. Mitchell propelled her body about his. He placed her in an arabesque with the raised leg finally folding against his chest, her foot crooking under his chin. He knelt and Miss Adams floated fishlike over his shoulders and head and down his chest. He poised her body in semi-flight and stretched out on the floor to admire it.[2]

Miss Hering further stated that this work was ". . . virile and intellectually stimulating . . . and it

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[1]"Presstime News," Dance Magazine, November, 1957, p. 3.

[2]Doris Hering, "Review," Dance Magazine, January, 1958, p. 25.

promises new rewards with every showing."[1] P. W. Manchester, of the Dance News, was not as impressed by Agon as were most of the critics; she seemed to have been annoyed by every aspect of the ballet. She compared watching Agon to watching the trapeze routine of a circus act, and she stated that the particular fascination of the pas de deux danced by Arthur Mitchell and Diana Adams was in the element of danger rather than in any aesthetic enjoyment. Miss Manchester did admit, however, that her review represented a minority opinion as the audience received Agon "with almost hysterical rapture."[2]

From mid-April through mid-August of 1958, Arthur Mitchell toured again with the New York City Ballet, traveling to Japan, the Philippine Islands, and Australia.[3] During this tour, Arthur began to dance leading roles in Stars and Stripes, Bourrée Fantasque, and The Four Temperaments. In The Four Temperaments, he danced the part of Phlegmatic which he recalls as being one of his most exciting roles. The choreographic idea for The Four Temperaments was derived from the ancient belief that the human organism

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[1]Ibid.

[2]P. W. Manchester, "The Season in Review," Dance News, January, 1958, p. 8.

[3]Chujoy and Manchester, The Dance Encyclopedia, p. 662.

is made up of four humors which, in turn, produce four corresponding physical and psychological types of persons--melancholic, sanguinic, phlegmatic, and choleric. These types, in turn correspond respectively with the four elements--earth, water, fire, and air.[1] Describing the joy that he has always experienced in performing this role, Arthur Mitchell explains:

> I like dancing Phlegmatic--not only for the technique of it but for the dramatic quality which the dancer can portray through movement. I like working from the standpoint of a theme or an idea. Even when I am working with abstract pieces, I try to give myself an emotional story line or something from which to draw the abstract movements.[2]

The choreography for the role of Phlegmatic requires the male dancer to enter the stage and dance alone for a short time. With variations in the music, the dancer's mood changes, and he is joined by four girls with whom he dances to the sequence of light, gay, and humorous melodies.[3] For his performance of the leading role in the Phlegmatic variation of The Four Temperaments, Arthur Mitchell has received enthusiastic critical acclaim. He was the subject

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[1]Balanchine, Balanchine's Stories of Great Ballets, p. 171.

[2]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

[3]Balanchine, Balanchine's Stories of Great Ballets, p. 171.

of many newspaper articles in Sydney, Australia, where the company spent the greater portion of the tour. Although many of the newspaper titles were not preserved, some of the critical expressions are worthy of note such as the one which read:

> One has waited for the opportunity to grant the dancer Arthur Mitchell his due praise. In this ballet [The Four Temperaments] he revealed himself as a dancer from the tips of his hands to the tips of his feet. He is never static. He dances as no one else with a native aptitude for rhythm and with always a beautiful classical expression.[1]

In describing the power which Arthur Mitchell possesses as a dancer and which, in turn, enables him to force the aesthetic communication intended by the patterns of classical ballet upon a receptive or a non-receptive audience, another Australian critic had the following to say about the able young dancer:

> There is no doubt that Arthur Mitchell has this power in a degree which transcends the average. We saw him dance two different solos in "Western Symphony" and a glittering all-male pas de deux in "Fanfare." The choreography of these three dances was of high standard but by no means extraordinary. Arthur Mitchell made them tremble with life. There was a complete absence of dead moments. Even when promenading humbly around the ballerina and supporting her in an arabesque he displayed the gaiety of a stylish boy-scout who is assiduously trying to

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[1]Unsigned, untitled newspaper article, Sydney, Australia, 1958, personal scrapbook of Arthur Mitchell.

> do his best. He has a way of performing the most innocuous movements as if they were the expressions of the very spirit of dance.
>
> He has attack. That means that he throws himself into every step with an artful impetuosity that pushes each movement to its outermost border without exaggerating or disturbing its sensitive proportions. Thus every movement is not only being realized, but the secret arch of beauty which towers above the sensual content of a work of art is disclosed to our sight with magic intensity. Arthur Mitchell supplies the movements of classical ballet with a meaning which is not only their own but which is the inexplicable meaning of art itself.[1]

Throughout the year that followed Arthur Mitchell's successful reception in Australia, he continued to dance increasingly difficult and challenging roles. On December 17, 1959, he danced his first wholly dramatic role as Jason in Birgit Cullberg's Medea. To Mitchell, generally considered a light, gay dancer, the leading male role in this dramatic and tragic ballet was a challenge as it requires the dancer to project a strong, heavy quality. For this role, Mitchell had to develop a new approach in his style of dancing--the success of which may be noted in the following words of Walter Terry: ". . . Arthur Mitchell did admirably in the role of Jason, although he has not yet discovered all of the dramatic values of the part."[2] With

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[1]Anton Sedlar, "An Interview with a New York Ballet Personality," Tempo and Television, July, 1958, p. 38.

[2]Walter Terry, "Dance," The New York Herald Tribune, December 18, 1959.

future performances of Medea, Arthur made a dedicated effort to discover all of the dramatic values of Jason and to accept the challenge of extending those values in his dancing.

In the spring of 1960, on the occasion of the Fourth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology which convened in New York City, Balanchine choreographed The Figure in the Carpet as a tribute to the Congress. Stylistically, this ballet is patterned upon the formal entertainment of the Courts of Louis XIV, but the choreography has been designed to portray the actual creation of a Persian carpet in terms of dance. The third scene of the ballet, "The Building of the Palace," represents a formal court reception at which ambassadors from various countries are received by the Prince and Princess of Persia before whom the diplomats perform a series of dances typical of each one's national character.[1] Balanchine asked Arthur Mitchell to find a black girl with whom he might dance a pas de deux as the representatives from Africa. For the role, Arthur called Mary Hinkson, a Martha Graham dancer, and asked her to audition for the part. Miss Hinkson recalls the occasion in the following manner:

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[1]Balanchine, Balanchine's Stories of the Great Ballets, pp. 152-53.

> It was evening when Arthur called and my husband and I were having champagne in celebration of my birthday. I have always been very nervous about ballet but he [Mitchell] said, ". . . drop everything and come down to the auditions right now." I did just that and I breezed through them before I really had time to realize what I was doing--perhaps it was the champagne, but I got the part![1]

The première of The Figure in the Carpet was on April 13, 1960, and was received enthusiastically. John Martin's comment was ". . . Mary Hinkson and Arthur Mitchell do an African twosome that is dashing and stylish."[2] Mitchell considers this "marvelous little divertissement" the lowering of another barrier because Mary Hinkson was the first black girl ever to dance with the New York City Ballet. Even though it was not on a permanent basis, a black girl had now officially danced with the company.

During the summer months when the New York City Ballet was not touring, Arthur Mitchell usually involved himself in other dance projects. The summer of 1960 found him organizing and taking a company of his own to Spoleto, Italy, in order to participate in the Festival of Two Worlds. The activities of this particular summer are recorded in Chapter VI of this dissertation.

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[1]Hinkson, personal interview, August 27, 1970.

[2]John Martin, "Ballet: A Novelty Bows," The New York Times, April 14, 1960.

In the early fall of 1960, Arthur re-joined the New York City Ballet--this time performing pure classical ballets such as Symphony in C and Allegro Brillante for the first time. These roles constituted a new challenge for Arthur Mitchell, but it was one that he would cherish because now he could be referred to officially as a classical dancer. His feelings toward dancing pure classical ballet are summed up in the following statement:

> To dance in a pure classical style is harder than any other form of dance in the world because there is nothing worse than a bad classical dancer. The technique involved in dancing classically can be compared to that of playing a piano--you must hit the right note or it just doesn't work. The same thing is true of dancing classically. The technique must be there and it must be right.[1]

Mitchell was very nervous at first about his role in the purely classical ballets. It was not long, however, before he was completely at ease in what he impishly refers to as "the white ballet." He was involved also during the same period in other special roles which he considered "rather natural" for him such as the principal pas de deux with Patricia McBride in John Tares' Ebony Concerto and the role of the snake in Todd Bolender's Creation of the World. The latter role is very un-balletic and Arthur is able to interpret it in a disturbing, sensuous manner, never

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

allowing the audience to become aware of either a beginning or an end to a movement. He feels that this role gave him an extraordinary opportunity to explore and to utilize all of the other forms of dance which were a part of his educational background.

Early in 1961, Arthur again was requested to find a black dancer to be a "guest performer" with the New York City Ballet. He recommended John Jones, a young, talented, and inspiring dancer. At this time, Balanchine was choreographing a modern jazz ballet to the music of the Modern Jazz Quartet.

Arthur Mitchell with Melissa Hayden and John Jones with Diana Adams became the principal quartet of dancers in Balanchine's Modern Jazz Variants, the ballet which had its première in New York at the City Center for Music and Drama on January 4, 1961.[1] John Martin's review of the performance implied, in a manner which was easy to detect, that Balanchine should not venture into the choreography of jazz ballets. He mentioned also that Arthur Mitchell and John Jones danced well "as a matter of course."[2] One has

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[1]Walter Terry, "Dance," The New York Herald Tribune, January 5, 1961.

[2]John Martin, "Ballet: Jazz Variants," The New York Times, January 5, 1961.

but to study John Martin's reviews to reach the conclusion that the former noted critic for The New York Times possessed stereotyped ideas concerning the roles of black dancers. It is especially evident in his "end of the season" comments with respect to the male contingency of the New York City Ballet:

> Among the other younger members [of the New York City Ballet] Arthur Mitchell is finding himself admirably in a difficult situation, since for a Negro dancer not all roles are automatically credible, and there must be many adjustments.[1]

John Martin's viewpoint naturally disappointed Arthur because one of the foremost dance critics in the United States of America was judging a dancer upon the basis of the color of his skin rather than upon his merits as a dancer. Arthur expressed his disappointment in John Martin when he said, ". . . does he [John Martin] say that, because Edward Vilella is Italian, he should not play the role of The Prodigal Son since he is not a Jew?"[2]

In spite of stereotyped undertones based upon personal and biased opinions which were reflected periodically in dance reviews, Arthur Mitchell's spirits remained undampened as he continued to dance his way to his present

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[1]John Martin, "The Dance: Summing Up," The New York Times, January, 1959.

[2]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

position as one of the eminent male ballet dancers in the world. The next major step in his career came in 1962 when Balanchine asked him to perform the role of Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Balanchine told Arthur that the role would be structured in form, but rather freely, in order that the portrayal of the freshness and versatility required of Puck might be enhanced by his interpretation and portrayal of the role. Arthur remembers that, as rehearsals progressed, Balanchine presented him with no definitely structured choreography for his role as Puck. Mitchell finally became so depressed that he spoke to his famous Director about his feelings of being neglected and was quickly informed that his role was not going to depend upon dancing as much as it would depend upon acting. Having always had an interest in dramatics, this reply intrigued Arthur so much that he acquired a copy of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream and studied the role of Puck diligently. As he began to realize that many qualities which were inherent in Shakespeare's depiction of Puck were characteristic of himself, his portrayal of the role assumed an increasingly significant meaning for him. Arthur began to feel such a kinship with it that A Midsummer Night's Dream is still one of his favorite ballets.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, based upon Shakespeare's well-loved comedy and danced to the music of Felix

Mendelssohn, had its première at the New York City Center on the evening of January 17, 1962. This was the first full-length ballet which Balanchine had choreographed since the presentation of his version of The Nutcracker Suite in 1954. He again had produced a successful ballet and drew extravagant notices from all of the dance critics. Arthur Mitchell's performance of Puck was photographed repeatedly and drew complimentary appraisals from all of the dance critics with the exception of John Martin who merely mentioned that Mitchell played the role of Puck.[1] Walter Terry had the following praise for Mitchell's performance:

> Arthur Mitchell is not only the most perfect Puck I have ever seen but I couldn't imagine a better one. As he trots about with his magical flower that will induce love, uses it on the wrong persons, unscrambles his mistakes, grins roguishly, leaps with the shimmer of a moonbeam among the leaves, Mr. Mitchell leads us into a world of delightful fantasy.[2]

Although P. W. Manchester of Dance News admitted that wonderful things happened in A Midsummer Night's Dream, she still disagreed with Balanchine in his casting choices. Basing her opinion perhaps upon her pre-conceived interpretation of the original script of the Shakespearean play,

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[1]John Martin, "Ballet: A Gala Premiere," The New York Times, January 18, 1962.

[2]Walter Terry, "The City Has a Royal Ballet in 'Dream,'" The New York Herald Tribune, January 28, 1962.

she pointed out the fact that the Puck in Balanchine's ballet should not be taller than his master. The casting of Edward Vilella as Oberon and Arthur Mitchell as Puck was in direct opposition to this premise. Manchester does, however, give the dancers their due credit when she notes:

> The fault is neither in Vilella nor Mitchell; both dancers in their different ways are superb. Mitchell is spilling quicksilver, all over the stage in darts and jumps, naughtiness incarnate.[1]

Another critic was moved to the point of making a prolonged analysis concerning Arthur Mitchell's performance as Puck. Doris Hering devoted an entire article in the March, 1962, issue of Dance Magazine to an appraisal of the new ballet. The opening paragraph of her article reads:

> We knew it all the time. George Balanchine is really Puck. With all the fleetness and magic of Shakespeare's "merry wanderer of the night," he conjured up a two-act Midsummer Night's Dream that was, like Titania's bower, "filled with dances and delight."[2]

In her analysis of Puck, Miss Hering wrote:

> There was nothing dreamy about Puck. Arthur Mitchell, his body glistening, the corners of his eyes drawn up in playful wisdom, was truly the link between the two worlds. Half-mortal, half-bewitched, he skittered across the stage, knees bent--or he alighted upstage to pluck the magical

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[1]P. W. Manchester, "The Season in Review," Dance News, February, 1962, p. 4.

[2]Doris Hering, "... With Dances and Delight," Dance Magazine, March, 1962, p. 37.

> flower. At every moment he proved not only what an intuitive comedian he is, but what a resourceful actor.[1]

Arthur Mitchell feels that the role of Puck has been one of his best roles to date because he both enjoys the ballet as a whole and he has great fun dancing his particular role. He feels, also, that it is so enjoyable because he has the opportunity to use his own creativity--within a certain framework--and to employ acting and timing techniques which are essential requisites in the theatre. He again feels that he was able to draw upon his previous experiences and training outside of the realm of classical ballet in order to perfect his role in A Midsummer Night's Dream. And perfected the role was, because Arthur was destined to receive "rave reviews" for his portrayal of Puck for years to come. Typical of one of these reviews is that of Allen Hughes of the New York Times concerning the New York City Ballet's performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream in their new home, the New York State Theatre at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, on April 24, 1964:

> The part of Puck was acted and danced as usual by Arthur Mitchell, which means that it was about as nearly perfect as it could be. How he retains the spirit of freshness that imbues his every

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[1]Ibid., p. 39.

> appearance in the role is a secret known only to him.[1]

When asked about this "secret," Arthur Mitchell flashed his characteristic big grin and replied:

> I run a lot, in and out all over the place--I've often threatened to attach a pedometer to my waist just to see how many miles I run per performance--it must be at least ten miles! But I love every minute of it.[2]

The audience loves every minute of Mitchell's performance too, and, in the words of Walter Terry, ". . . even Shakespeare would have loved it for Mr. Mitchell has given us an unforgettable characterization, mischievous, antic, lovable and, in movement matters, muscularly thrilling."[3]

The role of Puck remains the last role to date which Balanchine has created specifically for Arthur Mitchell. Since then Arthur, however, has danced in practically every ballet in the repertory of the New York City Ballet. Other roles which he has enjoyed performing particularly have included those of the Ragtime pas de deux in Ivesiana and of the Bridegroom in Bugaku. Although Mitchell became involved in many activities during the late

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[1]Allen Hughes, "Ballet: City Company at New Theatre," The New York Times, April 25, 1964, p. 18L.

[2]Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

[3]Walter Terry, "Ballet Glitters in Regal New Home," New York Herald Tribune, April 25, 1964.

1960's which took him away from the New York City Ballet, he still dances with the company whenever his schedule permits. When Balanchine was asked to state how he felt about having one of his principal dancers absent from his stage for long periods of time, he replied:

> There is always a place for Arthur Mitchell with the New York City Ballet. I realize that he has to go and "do his own thing," but whenever he has the time to come and dance with us, we are happy to have him do so.[1]

Mitchell's Experiences Outside the New York City Ballet

Arthur Mitchell's stellar performances have never been confined to activities with the New York City Ballet. He has always had a thirst for knowledge and a burning desire to learn as much as possible about every aspect of the theatre both technically and artistically. Since his boyhood days at the High School of Performing Arts, whenever his schedule permits him to do so, Mitchell has continued to study both acting and voice. He has always believed that a dancer should never allow himself to become satisfied totally with concentration in any one area of the theatre or with involvement with any one ballet company. In his opinion, such a situation tends to hamper the growth of the

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[1]George Balanchine, personal interview, September 10, 1970.

individual, and he feels that, the more a dancer grows with respect to theatrical techniques and/or total theatre, the better dancer he becomes ". . . and besides," Arthur adds, "they [varied performance experiences] keep you from growing old."[1] Mitchell keeps his techniques polished in types of dance other than ballet by performing in musicals, making guest appearances, and accepting engagements whenever the New York City Ballet has a break in its performance schedule.

Since Arthur Mitchell first appeared on Broadway in House of Flowers, discussed in Chapter IV of this dissertation, he has performed in four other Broadway musicals entitled, respectively, Carmen Jones, Kiss Me Kate, Shinbone Alley, and Noël Coward's Sweet Potato. Revivals of Carmen Jones and Kiss Me Kate were both presented at the City Center of Music and Drama during the late spring and the early summer of 1956. Both musicals ran for three-week periods and were presented in the form of summer stock.[2] Although Mitchell did not have an outstanding role in either of these musicals, he felt that performance in such theatrical productions was necessary to keep him imformed with

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview held in New York City, January 13, 1971.

[2]Programme, "Spring Musical Season 1956," City Center of Music and Drama, New York City, beginning May 9, 1956.

respect to the dance environment outside of that provided by the New York City Ballet.

During the spring of 1957, Arthur Mitchell's role in Shinbone Alley was more colorful than those he had played in either Carmen Jones or Kiss Me Kate. He served as Assistant Choreographer to Rod Alexander for whom Mitchell had auditioned for the television production of "Show of Shows" two years prior to the production of Shinbone Alley. In recalling the occasion of the audition of "Show of Shows," Arthur states:

> It was one of those days when I felt as if the hand of God were upon me--if he [Rod] asked me to do three pirouettes, I did five--if he asked me to jump two feet, I jumped four--I simply could not do anything wrong. At the completion of the audition, Rod told me that it was the most incredible audition that he had ever seen but, unfortunately, he could not use me because he could not put me in the chorus of the show. However, he said if he could work out a solo spot for me, he would use me. You see, they were not using black dancers on television as a part of a white ensemble at that time.[1]

Rod Alexander, in preparing to choreograph Shinbone Alley, remembered that incredible audition and asked Arthur to serve as his Assistant Choreographer and Dance Captain. About halfway through the development of the choreography for the show, a misunderstanding with the management arose

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

and Rod Alexander resigned, leaving Arthur to complete the choreography. Although his interest was still not particularly keen with respect to choreography, Arthur was forced to assume complete choreographic responsibilities. The production, starring Eartha Kitt and Eddie Bracken, had its première performance on April 13, 1957.[1] Although the show was not well accepted by the critics, it provided Arthur with invaluable experiences.

During the New York City Ballet's season of November 19, 1967, through February 16, 1968, in addition to dancing with the company at the New York State Theatre, Arthur Mitchell became an undisputed dance star in the Broadway revue entitled Noël Coward's Sweet Potato. This proved to be the most recent Broadway production in which Arthur Mitchell received star billing.

At this period in his life, Arthur had become involved in several of the many projects which have since earned him the popular title of "The Man Who Never Sleeps."[2] During weekdays, he worked with the children at the Harlem School of the Arts, an involvement which will be discussed

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[1]Playbill, The Broadway Theatre, New York City, week beginning May 20, 1957.

[2]Informal discussion with members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, High Folly, Chester, Massachusetts, August 19, 1970.

in Chapter VI of this dissertation; on Sundays, he danced with the New York City Ballet; and at night, he sang, acted, and danced at the Ethel Barrymore Theater in Noël Coward's Sweet Potato. When asked by Walter Terry, the former Dance Editor for the Saturday Review, why he would perform in a Broadway show when he was involved already in so many other activities, Mitchell replied:

> Well, it is fun and something to try. Besides, I love to perform and I have to plan ahead to my performing future. I will not always be able to dance as I do now, and I have to look ahead to the time when dance must be minimized. I want to be ready for that. But this I will say now--ballet prepares you for anything. Such a discipline![1]

The numbers in which Arthur sang and danced in Noël Coward's Sweet Potato included "Word Weary," "Matelot," "Headless Dance," and "Teach Me to Dance Like Grandma." The last song was a duet which he sang and danced with the versatile comedienne, Dorothy Loudon. Walter Terry describes Arthur's dancing in Noël Coward's Sweet Potato as ". . . part balletic, part modern dance, part jazz, and all sheathed in a beautiful combination of sexiness and elegance."[2]

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[1]Walter Terry, "World of Dance," The Saturday Review, October 19, 1968, p. 49.

[2]Ibid.

Arthur Mitchell's association with performing artists other than those affiliated with the New York City Ballet often led to lasting friendships and additional opportunities for performing. During the production of Shinbone Alley, he formed a friendship with Eartha Kitt who was playing the leading female role in that production. When the show closed, she invited Arthur to Newport, Rhode Island, to participate with her in the 1959 Newport Jazz Festival. This appearance can be described as a "Classy Night Club Act" in which Arthur Mitchell supported Miss Kitt with songs and dance.[1] These performances in conjunction with the Newport Jazz Festival served only as the beginning of a series of appearances for Mitchell as a guest artist which were to take place whenever the New York City Ballet had an interval of freedom between seasons or engagements.

Arthur Mitchell's friendship with Gian Carlo Menotti developed in a fashion similar to that which fostered his friendship with Eartha Kitt. Menotti observed Mitchell in his portrayal of the Unicorn in the Menotti-Butler opera, The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore, and invited him to form a company to participate in the

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, January 13, 1971.

Third Festival of Two Worlds which was to be held in Spoleto, Italy, from June 8 through July 10, 1960. Arthur and the company which he assembled for the Festival danced works choreographed by Karel Shook, Donald McKayle, Herbert Ross, and Paul Taylor.[1]

A policy of the Directing Board of the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto is to import different artists each year in order to offer the audiences a variety of artistic approaches to dance. Arthur Mitchell, however, made such an impression upon the Festival audiences that he was invited back to perform the following year at the Fourth Festival which convened from June 15 through July 16, 1961.[2] Gian Carlo Menotti, who again was General Director of the Festival which was subtitled Fogli d'Album 1961, extended the invitation to Arthur, asking him to bring a female dance partner. Arthur chose Akiko Kanda, a member of the Martha Graham Dance Company. Upon their arrival in Spoleto, Menotti provided Mitchell and his partner with a small theatre, the Teatro Piccolo, in which to work on choreography in preparation for the forthcoming Festival. Arthur was still not deeply interested in developing choreography,

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[1]Programme, Terzo Festival Dei Dsu Mondi, Teatro Nuevo, Spoleto, Italy, June 8-July 10, 1960.

[2]Programme, Quarto Festival Die Due Mondi, Teatro Caio Melisso, Spoleto, Italy, June 15-July 16, 1961.

but it was expected of him, and he explains the situation quite honestly by stating: "I have always felt that there were too many bad choreographers in the world, and I did not want to add my name to the list; however, when there is no money, one has to do what one has to do:"[1] Arthur choreographed three dances for presentation at the Festival--Sala di prova, a pas de deux for Akiko Kanda and himself; Monsieur Chocolat, a solo which he danced; and In Giardino, another pas de deux with Akiko Kanda.[2]

Arthur Mitchell's choreographic activities for the summer were not limited to the three dances which were presented as a part of Fogli d'Album 1961 since he was employed also to choreograph the "Dance of the Seven Veils" for the Luchino Visconti production of Salomè. It was not the success of the choreography--which was praised by the critics in the Italian newspapers[3]--which Arthur considered the most exciting aspect of the production of Salomè, but rather, the opportunity to work with Mr. Visconti whom Arthur refers to as "a most difficult task-master." While working with Mr. Visconti, Arthur had to choreograph as a

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

[2]Programme, Quarto Festival Die Due Mondi.

[3]Untitled, undated newspaper articles, Spoleto, Italy, personal scrapbook of Arthur Mitchell.

prescribed assignment rather than as a creative expression governed by his own desires. Concerning this restriction, he states, ". . . the training was excellent for me--having to take what I wanted to do as a choreographer and transfer it into a framework designed by someone else."[1]

The summer of 1961 held still another interesting experience for Arthur Mitchell in Spoleto, Italy--a one-act play entitled Il Pegno written especially for him by Gian Carlo Menotti. The play is a melancholy love story about an American sailor who had come to Italy on a tour and, upon visiting a certain church, saw a casket containing the body of a Saint who reminded him of his former sweetheart who had now deserted him. Arthur, who does not speak a word of Italian, learned the play phonetically and made such an extraordinary impression upon his audiences that, following one performance, a director of a French company of actors extended him a standing invitation to come and join the French company in Paris at any time that he so desired.

Arthur Mitchell takes an impish kind of delight in remembering the spring of 1962 as ". . . the season during which I replaced Dame Markova at the Met."[1] Alica Markova,

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

[2]Ibid., August 20, 1970.

upon becoming ill, had had to relinquish her invitation to become dancer-choreographer-director of the opera Orfeo ed Euridice,[1] and Arthur Mitchell and Violette Verdy, both of the New York City Ballet, were asked to appear in the opera as guest artists. Arthur danced in the season's four scheduled performances presented on March 3, 10, 21, and 29,[2] and in a subsequent performance on April 20, 1962.[3] Although the dancing failed to receive any sensational reviews, the performances were exciting for Arthur because they comprised his first experience as a premier danseur with the Metropolitan Opera.[4]

In the years which followed Arthur Mitchell's success at Spoleto and his performances with the Metropolitan Opera, he has made innumerable appearances as a guest artist--both as a soloist and in conjunction with special presentations of the New York City Ballet. John Cranko, the outstanding choreographer, saw Mitchell dance with the New York City Ballet on one of its European tours

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[1]Doris Hering, "Reviews," Dance Magazine, April, 1962.

[2]Arthur Mitchell, contract issued by the Metropolitan Opera Association, New York City, February 20, 1962.

[3]John Gutman, letter to Arthur Mitchell, New York City, March 30, 1962.

[4]Programme, Orfeo ed Euridice, The Metropolitan Opera, New York City, March 3, 1962.

and invited him to Germany to dance with his company. Cranko, therefore, provided Mitchell with one of his most memorable experiences--that of dancing the role of Mercutio in Cranko's version of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. He also danced the leading role in Cranko's Catalyst in the annual gala ballet celebration given by the Stuttgart State Opera Ballet in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1963.[1] As a result of these performances, Arthur was invited later that same year to Munich, Germany, to dance the leading role in Heinz Rosen's Othello, in George Balanchine's Donizetti Variations, and in John Taras' Orpheus. He later returned to Munich in 1964 to preform in a special work entitled Dance Panels in Seven Sections, created by Heinz Rosen to the music of Aaron Copland, for the opening of the new Munich Opera House. Arthur remembers that Clive Barnes, who was then Dance Critic of the London Times, praised his role of Othello as one of the two best versions of that role which the noted critic had ever seen. Other memorable guest performances of Arthur Mitchell entailed his appearing in choreography by George Balanchine. Arthur danced in Agon and in the role of the Dark Angel in Orpheus at the Hamburg Stravinsky Festival in Germany, and he appeared with the

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[1]Chujoy and Manchester, The Dance Encyclopedia, p. 634.

New York City Ballet in Stars and Stripes and in Western Symphony at the inaugural presentations for Presidents John F. Kennedy in 1961 and Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. He appeared at the Geneva Opera in Geneva, Switzerland, where he danced in Agon during the week of October 10-15, 1970. This performance was in conjunction with a complete program of Balanchine's works presented as a tribute to the famous choreographer who is one of the Artistic Directors of the Geneva Opera.

Arthur Mitchell has made individual appearances before television viewing audiences in the United States on the Jinx Falkenburg Show, the Jackie Gleason Show, and the Harry Belafonte Specials. The Jackie Gleason Show provided Arthur with an opportunity to observe and to learn many helpful techniques from that dynamic "show business" personality--Jackie Gleason, himself. Arthur, who played the role of a "Cop" in Gleason's show entitled Tawny, found himself observing the mannerisms of the members of the New York City Police Force in order to portray his role realistically. On the first Belafonte Special, Arthur danced with Mary Hinkson and the show--"Belafonte: New York 19"--won an Emmy Award for the best Television Musical of 1960. The following year, Arthur

danced again on the Belafonte Special, and this time the show was nominated for an Emmy Award.

The television appearances of Arthur Mitchell, for the most part, have been in conjunction with the dance companies of which he was a member. While dancing with Donald McKayle in 1953, the company filmed Games, Nocturne, and Rainbow Round My Shoulder for presentation on "Camera Three," associated with the National Educational Television network, which is a subsidiary of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Later, when Arthur became a member of the John Butler American Dance Theatre, he danced in Butler's Three Promenades With the Lord for television audiences in this country and again in Italy while the company was touring Europe. In 1960, Arthur's own company was filmed for Italian audiences during its engagement at Spoleto.

Although Arthur Mitchell has danced in many theatres with the New York City Ballet "without regard to color," his television experiences with the company have not been quite as pleasant. He has appeared with the New York City Ballet on television networks in Canada without a hint of an incident, but at home in the United States of America, the administrative personnel of various television stations felt that they had to insure the fact that he would not dance with a white girl lest the Southern stations would

ban the show.[1] When the New York City Ballet was preparing to film Stars and Stripes for presentation on the "Bell Telephone Hour," Arthur, who was not scheduled to dance in Stars and Stripes, was asked by George Balanchine to substitute for a member of the ensemble. He agreed to do so and later learned that persons representing the management of the television station had informed Balanchine that they could not allow a black boy to dance with a white girl. Balanchine, in turn, informed them that if Arthur did not dance, then the New York City Ballet would not dance; and he, therefore, placed Arthur in the ballet which was filmed and shown without incident.

The New York City Ballet was filmed in the Nutcracker Suite for presentation on the Columbia Broadcasting System television network on December 22, 1957.[2] George Balanchine had been giving his audiences surprises with last-minute changes in the final scene of the Nutcracker Suite during a period of several performances of the ballet. At the filming session, Arthur Mitchell, who was playing the role of Coffee, won the hand of the Fairy Princess in the closing scene--another Balanchine surprise. This was during

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[1]Allen Hughes, "Without Regard for Color," The New York Times, February 21, 1965.

[2]"News of Dance and Dancers," Dance Magazine, October, 1957, p. 3.

the time of the racial tension in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Balanchine was heard to remark as he watched the playback of the television rushes, "I hope Governor Faubus is watching this."[1] When Arthur Mitchell reflects upon his experiences as the pioneer black dancer to become a member of a major ballet company in the United States, he has the following to say:

> I am a fighter--and I fight with my art. Each unpleasant experience has made me stronger and more determined to give to the world black classical dancers who have instilled within themselves the attitude that the major distinction between performing artists lies not in the color of their skin, but in their ability to perform. This is why the Dance Theatre of Harlem must exist.[2]

Today, Arthur Mitchell, "the fighter," devotes most of his time to the use of his art in such a manner that highly proficient black classical dancers have not only become a reality but will continue to do so in increasing numbers.

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, July 25, 1970.

[2]*Ibid.*, January 14, 1971.

CHAPTER VI

ARTHUR MITCHELL AS A TEACHER AND AS A DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL DANCE COMPANIES[1]

Mitchell's Early Involvement with Teaching and Directing

The multi-faceted role which Arthur Mitchell was eventually to play began to manifest itself in 1953 at approximately the same period in his life as the beginning of his education in ballet. Karel Shook, his famous teacher, soon recognized Mitchell's ability to teach and often delegated certain of his own classes to the aspiring young dancer. Mitchell's first teaching experience occurred in the Katherine Dunham School, in New York City, where Shook was employed; later experiences were afforded at the Studio of Dance Arts, also in New York City, which Shook owned and operated. Further opportunities for teaching resulted either directly or indirectly from Mitchell's association with the New York City Ballet. Melissa Hayden, a prima ballerina with the New York City Ballet, owned a school of dance in Cedarhurst, Long Island, at which

[1]Unless otherwise documented, all data included in this chapter were obtained through personal interviews with Arthur Mitchell in August of 1970 and in January of 1971.

Mitchell taught for a short time before becoming associated with the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C.

Directors Doris Jones and Claire Haywood for many years have provided, through their school of ballet, a place where black children may study classical dance. During the late 1950's Louis Johnson, who was a fellow-student of Mitchell at the School of American Ballet and an alumnus of the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet, informed Mitchell that the Directors of the Washington school were seeking black professional dancers to participate in their annual dance performance. Johnson and Mitchell went to Washington, D. C. where the two dancers performed with the Jones-Haywood group. For Mitchell, this appearance proved to be the beginning of a long friendship and association with both Jones and Haywood. The warm relationship among the three artists has endured throughout the intervening years, and has provided Mitchell with some of his most exciting and rewarding teaching experiences.

Arthur Mitchell's involvement with teaching was interrupted temporarily in 1960 when his role as a director assumed major importance. Gian Carlo Menotti invited Mitchell to organize a company of dancers to be presented at the Third Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. In retrospect, it appears that some of the inner frustrations

of the young black artist were evident in his work at Spoleto; it was much later, however, when Mitchell realized that the germination of his philosophy was manifest in the fact that for this work he organized a multi-racial company of varied skin tones--persons of American, European, and Asian ancestry, all working together for the development of the art of dance. He realizes now that he had a basic desire to show the world that the genuine talents of individuals--regardless of race, creed or color--could be combined readily for the presentation of brilliant dance performances. He believed that audiences would evaluate the individual participant upon the basis of the quality of his art rather than upon the color of his skin or the religious sect which he represented. His expectations were fulfilled when dance critics in Spoleto responded with enthusiastic reviews.[1]

The program organized for presentation at the Third Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto was entitled New American Ballets. The nine performances of the program were comprised of Donald McKayle's Games and Rainbow Round My Shoulder, Karel Shook's Entrance, Paul Taylor's Meridian,

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[1]Untitled, unsigned newspaper articles, Spoleto, Italy, personal scrapbook of Arthur Mitchell, June 9 and July 3, 1960.

and Herbert Ross' Toccata for Percussion.[1] The successful performances by the members of the company and the highly acclaimed artistry of the program earned an invitation for Arthur Mitchell to return the following year. Although the policy of the Festival precluded his bringing a company of dancers two years in succession, he returned with equal success as a guest artist with Akiko Kanda, a dancer from the Martha Graham Dance Company.

On December 16, 1963, the Ford Foundation announced a project designed to promote further development and status of professional ballet in the United States.[2] Of the $7,756,000 granted for the project, $1,500,000 was channeled through the School of American Ballet in New York City for the improvement of instruction and performance in local communities.[3] Mitchell was requested by Lincoln Kirstein, the Director of the School of American Ballet, to inquire about schools which offered specialization in ballet for black dancers in and around New York City. Knowing of none in the city, Mitchell informed Kirstein of the existence of the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C.

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[1]Programme, "New American Ballets," Teatro Nuovo, Spoleto, Italy, June 8 through July 10, 1960.

[2]Chujoy and Manchester, The Dance Encyclopedia, p. 663.

[3]Ibid.

As a result, this school was selected to participate in the project sponsored by the Ford Foundation which, in this case, took the form of a scholarship class for beginners ranging in age from six to nine years.[1]

On October 5, 1964, Mitchell began commuting to Washington, D. C. on Monday afternoons in order to teach classical ballet to the enthusiastic boys and girls enrolled in the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet. They were not the only ones who were enthusiastic, however, their equally stimulated teacher found this group of children to be the most responsive group of students with whom he had ever worked. He was especially pleased with a class of little boys as a "tiny-tot," all-male ballet class is an unusual group situation. Paid a small stipend which covered a little more than his travel expenses, Mitchell was now engaged in a community project which served as valuable preparatory experience for the role which he was to play ultimately. He continued to teach and to perform at the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet until 1966 when a busy schedule of activities with his own professional dance companies precluded his continued close association with this School.

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[1]Hughes, "Without Regard for Color."

The First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal, April 2 through 24, 1966, led to widespread recognition of Mitchell's organizational capabilities. The sponsors of the Festival asked every nation in the world which had a black population to participate in their project. Because of his varied dance background and the fact that Mitchell was neither a dancer in nor a director of a black dance company, representatives from the United States Committee for the Festival, chaired by Virginia Innis Brown, believed that he would not be biased in his selection of dancers; he was invited, therefore, to serve as Dance Chairman for the committee representing the United States--a position which he accepted in January of 1966. Subsequent to his acceptance of that chairmanship, the diligent young artist organized a company of thirty-one black dancers of phenomenal capabilities. This talented group was comprised of such personalities as Paula Kelly, Claude Thompson, Carmen de Lavallade, Llanchie Stevenson, Sarah Yarborough, and William Louther. Although the majority of these dancers was oriented primarily toward modern dance, Mitchell required them to enroll in a two-hour ballet class each day because he believed that classical ballet techniques represent the best discipline for performance in any dance idiom.

Mitchell's plan for the company at the First World Festival of Negro Arts was to present major choreographic studies created by black artists of the United States. The members of the new company worked daily without any compensation and soon reached a high level of skill and artistry in performance. Mitchell remembers that Hy Faine, the President of the American Guild of Musical Artists, who was present at a "run-through" of one of Talley Beatty's choreographic works, exclaimed, "My God, I have never seen black persons dance this way before." In response to this exclamation, Mitchell quickly replied, "Yes, because they have never had the opportunity to do so before." This extraordinary company of dancers, however, failed to realize the rewards of its labors because, two weeks prior to the Festival date, Mitchell was informed that the budget of the Festival Committee had been reduced and that the money for sending the new dance company to participate in the First World Festival of Negro Arts could not be provided. Upset by this news, Mitchell registered a protest with representatives of the Committee, basing his rationale upon the fact that comparable funds had been expended upon previous occasions for other similar projects. According to Mitchell, his protest was ignored. Later he learned that, prior to his notification, the Festival Committee had

already selected the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, comprised of predominantly black modern dancers who were marooned in Europe at the time, and sent them on to Dakar, Senegal, to represent the United States at the Festival. The services of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Company were secured for only one third of the money which had been allocated originally to send Mitchell and the members of his company to Dakar.

The disappointment of having ". . . to disband his magnificently trained group of dancers" was not the only disillusioning incident in conjunction with the Festival in Senegal. A few days after acquainting the members of his company with the disheartening news of the cancellation of their engagement, Mitchell felt that ". . . personal insult was added to injury" when he received a cable from the Festival city with an invitation to him from Alvin Ailey to come to the Festival along with Carmen de Lavallade and Sarah Yarborough as guest artists with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Company for a fee of $1,000 per performance. Mitchell promptly refused this offer as he felt that, if the Festival Committee could afford that sum of money for his guest performances, it could afford to send his company <u>in toto</u> as originally scheduled. The disappointed artist replied, ". . . either the entire company comes or no one comes, including myself."

Although the foregoing experiences emanating from the First World Festival of Negro Arts were filled with heartaches for Arthur Mitchell, his organizational capabilities did not go unnoticed. Immediately after the collapse of his company, he was called upon to participate in a Cultural Exchange Program with the Brazilian government. This experimental program in which individuals possessing expertise in the arts were sent to underdeveloped countries to assist the natives of such countries in launching their own artistic programs was one of several being initiated by the United States government. Mitchell accepted the assignment and, on March 15, 1966, he, as Director, Gloria Contreras, as Choreographer, and Suzzane Ames, as Recorder, left for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in order to organize the first National Ballet Company of Brazil. The determined trio entered a country which lacked the atmosphere most conducive to the organization of a professional ballet company. Climatic conditions, combined with a national penchant for spectacular carnivals, presented a problem. The Brazilians themselves doubted that the project would materialize. Mitchell remembers that he was popularly referred to as ". . . a crazy man beating the Brazilians to death and whipping them into shape." Once the sincere and selfless ambitions of the three artists

from the United States were recognized, however, they received the necessary local support to form what Mitchell terms "a fabulous little company."

Although the National Ballet Company of Brazil was successful, it lasted for only three months. The reigning government was soon replaced by a military regime which severed all connections with any projects initiated by the former ruling powers. As a result, the Cultural Exchange Program between the United States and Brazil was discontinued. Good fortune was with the dancers, however, as one of the young women in the National Ballet Company of Brazil was married to a wealthy Brazilian, Pablo Ferraz, who asked Mitchell to return the following year and form a private ballet company. On January 13, 1967, therefore, Mitchell again began traveling to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he was employed as Premier Danseur, Choreographer, and Director of the new Brazilian Company of Ballet whenever he was not appearing with the New York City Ballet. The Brazilian Company had a new theatre in Rio de Janeiro, the Teatro Nova, and it was here that the maturing artist, Arthur Mitchell, began to develop serious choreography.[1] Prior to this time, Mitchell had not considered his

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[1]Catherine Hughes, "Poet in Motion," Ebony Magazine, October, 1968, p. 216.

choreography worthy of the art to which he was dedicated. The Brazilians, however, provided him with an environment for dance which was rich in folklore and religious beliefs--an environment which was tremendously stimulating to his creative mind. Mitchell choreographed several ballets for the Brazilian Company of thirty-one dancers. He considers Rhythmetron--which he later adapted for the Dance Theatre of Harlem--his most noteworthy accomplishment in choreography while in Brazil. For the most part, he used Brazilian themes, ideas, and music, and choreographed the ballets in the classical idiom. He felt that the use of indigenous sources gave the Company a unique value in itself. He believes that too many choreographers, living in countries which are rich in exciting folklore, search outside of their own boundaries for thematic sources for their dances and, thereby, create a subsequent cultural loss.

Arthur Mitchell, keenly interested in religious practices as possible thematic sources for his ballets, had already explored to some degree the Christian and Buddhist religions before going to Brazil. As a matter of course, he sought conferences with the local religious authorities upon his arrival in that country. Although it is usually difficult for an outsider to witness religious ceremonies in any country in which the Christian faith is

not the predominant religion, the Brazilians soon accepted Mitchell as one of their own--a person totally interested in their culture and mores and in improving their artistic environment. He, in turn, was soon deeply immersed in the study of the Candomblès which is the dominant religion practiced in Rio de Janeiro. According to Mitchell, those who practice Candomblès believe it to be the direct antithesis of Voodoo in that they feel that Voodoo is for those who are "bad" and Candomblès is for those who are "good."

Other manifestations of the Brazilian culture which awed Mitchell were the folk and national dances of that country. Once when he was in Bahia, he began learning the Capeira, a dance indigenous to the Angolese, an African tribe. The dance is based upon the fact that, although the tribesmen are not permitted to carry weapons, they have developed a technique by means of which they carry sharp razors between their toes; thus armed, they are able to slash a foe to ribbons. Mitchell refers to the Capeira as ". . . an incredible dance, the mother and father of jujitsu, karate, and other similar defense tactics." He hopes eventually to choreograph a ballet using the Capeira as its thematic source.

Mitchell experienced such personal gratification through his work with the Brazilian Company of Ballet that he might have remained in that country had it not been for the assassination of Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior, the famous non-violent leader of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. On the day of King's assassination, Mitchell arrived at the John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City just as the announcement of King's death was broadcast. He remembers weeping as he sat on the plane enroute to Brazil and saying to himself, ". . . here I am going hundreds of miles away to give of my talents to persons in another country; I should be right here helping my own people."[1] Although not yet ready to leave the newly-formed Brazilian Company of Ballet, Mitchell knew that, as its director, this was to be his last trip to Brazil. Later, in recalling his feelings evoked on this tragic occasion to Olga Maynard, Contributing Editor of Dance Magazine, he said:

> After Martin Luther King was assassinated, and there were all the eulogies, I asked myself: Arthur Mitchell what can you do? When you pay homage you do the thing that you do best--if you make music, you beat your drum; if you are a singer, you sing; if you are a dancer, you dance. Once I made up my mind to [pay homage through dance], all I needed were money, work, and love.[2]

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, August 20, 1970.

[2]Olga Maynard, "Arthur Mitchell and the Dance Theatre of Harlem," Dance Magazine, March, 1970, p. 62.

Arthur Mitchell found these three essentials and combined them into a working formula which spells the magic of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. This magic was nourished through several stages, however, before it became a reality.

The Harlem School of the Arts

Dorothy Maynor, a former professional singer of fame and the Founder-Director of the Harlem School of the Arts, had plans for extending the cultural program of the School to include a Department of Dance during the summer of 1968. The responsibility of organizing this Department had been delegated to Nancy LaSalle, a member of the Board of Directors of the School. Realizing that she had no expertise in this area and that a black person should assume the responsibility delegated to her, Miss LaSalle suggested Arthur Mitchell for the task. When Miss Maynor, acting upon Miss LaSalle's recommendation, first discussed the proposed project with Mitchell, he was not interested. His schedule was already over-taxed by his activities in Brazil as well as by his regular duties with the New York City Ballet. Following the assassination of Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior, however, Mitchell called Miss Maynor and offered his services to the Harlem School of the Arts.

The Department of Dance at this School was still in an embryonic stage when Mitchell agreed to join its faculty.

The fact that Miss Maynor had no money for financing her project did not deter Mitchell. He immediately set his organizational abilities in action and interested enough private donors in the project to raise $25,000 for operating expenses. The Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts opened on July 8, 1968, three months after King's assassination.[1]

Prior to the opening of the Department of Dance in the Harlem School of the Arts, Karel Shook, friend and former teacher of Arthur Mitchell, had been the Associate Artistic Director for the National Ballet of Holland. As unusual as it may appear, the death of Martin Luther King also marked a special decision-making date for Shook who recalls events of that evening. En route home from a day in rehearsal with the National Ballet of Holland, he came upon a huge crowd gathered at the Westerkerk, the largest church in Amsterdam. The cars of diplomats as well as those of the mayor of Amsterdam and other high-ranking Dutch officials were parked at the Church also. When Shook inquired about the occasion for the gathering of such personages, he learned of the death of Doctor King. Not having read a newspaper for three days, and knowing that

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[1]Karel Shook, original notes for the manuscript of "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," lent to the investigator.

King was a great friend of Queen Juliana of Holland, Shook asked if King were in the church. The following conversation ensued:

> "No," . . . "He is not here--he is dead."
> "Dead?"
> "He was assassinated by the Nazi Americans this morning."[1]

Shook, appalled at these answers to his questions, recounts his reactions in the following manner:

> I did not say any more, but went quietly into the Westerkerk which was crowded with perhaps three thousand people. Martin Luther King was dead, and in Amsterdam, Holland, some few hours after his murder, he was receiving one of the greatest tributes that any man, alive or dead, has ever received. I was lucky to find a seat close to the altar and listened for two hours while the elite of Holland spoke his eulogies. The people around me cried, but I could not cry because I knew that the death of this man must lead to life--out of the pessimistic must come the optimism that keeps man surviving. I determined to go back to America . . . and start over again. I did not know how I would do it, but I knew I had to do it. From the ashes of a man meaninglessly assassinated, some kind of phoenix had to arise.[2]

A few days later, Arthur Mitchell telephoned Mr. Shook in Amsterdam and invited him back to New York City as Ballet Master and Associate Artistic Director of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts. Feeling a compulsion to accept the invitation, Shook left his position

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[1] Ibid., p. 6.

[2] Ibid.

in Holland and joined Mitchell in New York City on July 31, 1968.[1] This reunion with his former student was short-lived, however, and the responsibilities inherited from Mitchell by Shook were enormous. Mitchell, who had not been idle for a moment since the inception of his idea of a school and company in Harlem, was scheduled to leave on August 1, 1968, to spend a month in Vancouver, Canada, where he was starring in the pre-Broadway run of Noël Coward's Sweet Potato.[2] Shook, therefore, assumed temporary directorship of a three-week old Department of Dance and a four-member dance company.[3] The situation reflected Mitchell's philosophy that a school and company of dancers must co-exist. He had maintained constantly that a school of dance provides a company of dancers with the fresh talent which it needs, and that the company, in turn, provides the school with an ultimate goal to which the students may aspire--membership in a professional concert dance company.

During the month of August, while Mitchell was in Canada, Shook worked diligently to realize Mitchell's goal. By the end of the summer of 1968, the Department of Dance in the Harlem School of the Arts, which began with an

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[1] Ibid., p. 7.

[2] Ibid., p. 8.

[3] Ibid., p. 10.

enrollment of about thirty students in a gymnasium in the Community Center of St. James' Presbyterian Church at 141st Street and St. Nicholas Avenue, had reached an enrollment of 250. Excited and encouraged by such a successful beginning, Mitchell sought means to insure the continued existence of the fledgling Department. Recalling that a Ford Foundation Grant had subsidized the program at the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in 1964, he sought the help of this Foundation in subsidizing his newly-formed organization. He learned that, in order to receive financial support through the Ford Foundation, the organization had to exist as a non-profit corporation. Acting upon this information, he applied for and received a grant for the Harlem School of the Arts which was allocated specifically for the financing of the Department of Dance.

The Harlem School of the Arts had acquired an old street-level garage located adjacent to St. James' Presbyterian Church on St. Nicholas Avenue. Plans were made to remodel this building into a dance theatre-studio in which the Department of Dance would be housed.[1] Work was begun on the theatre-studio but the available funds were exhausted shortly after a stage, designed by George

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[1]Joan Barthel, "When Mitchell Dreams, He Dreams Big," New York Times, August 18, 1968.

Balanchine, was completed, and further remodeling was brought to a standstill. Mitchell offered to raise the funds for the completion of the theatre-studio if Miss Maynor would agree to employ a contractor. She was not receptive to this suggestion, however, because she preferred to serve as her own contractor. Although work was not resumed on the theatre-studio, the dancers cleared away the rubble left by the carpenters and converted the construction site into a studio area.[1] Despite the relatively minor lack of agreement between the artist Mitchell and the administrator Maynor, the program of dance developed as scheduled.

By September of 1968, the news of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts had spread throughout New York City. Students from downtown began making the long trek uptown to study with Mitchell and Shook, and additional dancers had become members of the dance company with which the school was identified. Shook decided not to return to Holland but to remain with this project and to assume full responsibilities as both Ballet Master and Associate Artistic Director. Shook's decision, in turn, freed Mitchell for his necessary concentration upon the

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[1]Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 15.

development of choreography for the repertoire of the evolving dance company. During the ensuing weeks, he choreographed and produced Ode to Otis, to a score by Coleridge Taylor Perkinson, and the first movement of Tones, set to music by Tanya Leon; he also adapted Rhythmetron from his Brazilian repertoire for performances by the members of the young company. Under the collaborative artistic direction of Mitchell and Shook, the dancers were eager learners and, within three weeks, they had mastered an adequate repertoire of Mitchell's works for public presentation at lecture-demonstrations.[1]

As a method of involving the community with the newly-formed Department of Dance, Mitchell and Shook initiated a series of lecture-demonstrations at the Harlem School of the Arts. Each program was presented informally at an Open House to which the public was invited. The first half of each program was devoted to a demonstration lesson with students and members of the company participating; the second half was comprised of segments of repertory danced by the members of the company. Recalling the first such lecture-demonstration given at the Harlem School of the Arts, Shook wrote:

> The dancers arrived on stage beautifully groomed and looking like dark gods and goddesses. Arthur

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[1] Ibid.

> used them all--even the youngest . . . the demonstration part of the program went like a dream--Arthur was his usual breathtaking self and the kids danced like dark angels. The audience was enthralled, and when it was finished, applauded wildly.[1]

After the program, one of the members of the Board of Directors of the Harlem School of the Arts was overheard saying to Miss Maynor, its illustrious Founder, "My God! Dorothy, this is fantastic! At last you have someone professional. This is what it should be--this is the way it must be!"[2]

The Department of Dance soon became a threat to the Harlem School of the Arts. This was an unfortunate situation since the two artists--Maynor and Mitchell--were, in essence, working for the same cause--to bring the arts to the people. The School was established by Miss Maynor in order to offer children at place in which they might study music, art, drama, and dance, all day, every day if they so desired.[3] Mitchell's hope was to build within this same establishment a dance department which would prove second to none in the world. Little did he realize that his particular project would overshadow the School as a whole and outgrow its particular space and position. He

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 16. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] Barthel, "When Mitchell Dreams, He Dreams Big."

simply plunged ahead as an aspiring young artist yearning for fulfillment who had finally discovered the path which he should follow. Joan Barthel, of the New York Times, sensing this extraordinary situation, writes:

> The Harlem School of the Arts is where Arthur Mitchell took over last month as dance director; this is where there is more than enough desire, ambition, creativity, ideas and talent, and not nearly enough money. This is where a small black boy came in off the street one day, walked up to Mitchell and said, "Teach me anything."[1]

Miss Barthel, who visited the School in its very early stage of existence, observed Mitchell working with two of his dancers, Lydia Abarca and Gerald Banks, who were apprentices at the time. She describes the atmosphere which pervaded the rehearsal in progress in these words:

> The door to the street stands open; several little girls and two boys have drifted in, and even the boys are wide eyed. A Harlem housewife on her way home from the grocery store has stopped in; she will watch for an entire hour, sitting on a concrete block. From the garage next door, a mechanic has come in and is trying to make himself invisible, pressed up against the back wall. Lydia skims across the platform like a bird in flight; Jerry stands tall and poised, waiting. They meet, merge and bend; supple and free and black is beautiful. The room is very still. . . .[2]

What Barthel observed and described was the result of Mitchell's accomplishments after a period of only three weeks.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

The ensuing months from September of 1968 through September of 1969 were filled with joys and frustrations for the fledgling organization. The Wednesday afternoon Open House Sessions attracted many devotees and those who were periodic observers began to refer to Mitchell's work as the "miracle of 141st Street." By the same token and for reasons not understood by Mitchell, an opposing contingent developed, accusing the young group of dancers of "moving too fast." Shook believes that this contingent did not wish Mitchell's dance company to exist because, as he says,

> . . . we had begun to show up the seams of the entire establishment of the dance world and we were accomplishing, in a frightfully short period of time, what they knew they should have done years ago.[1]

Parallel to the dichotomy which existed among the observers, the administrative relationship of the Harlem School of the Arts was engulfed in an aura of uncertainty. Disagreements, which Mitchell prefers not to discuss, arose periodically. From the time that the School was founded, Miss Maynor had been considered the patron saint of the arts for the Harlem community. It is conceivable, therefore, that the rapid expansion of the new Department of

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[1]Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 22.

Dance might have presented a direct threat to her position, according to Mitchell. In spite of whatever strain the artists may have suffered, however, the dance program continued to flourish. Children came from all over New York City, and the staff of teachers expanded to include Tanaquil Le Clerq, James Truitte, Pearl Reynolds, and Mary Hinkson. In addition to these able teachers of dance, Tanya Leon was appointed Musical Director and Daniel Barrajanos the official drummer.[1]

The advent of the summer session of 1969 brought additional anxieties as rumors circulated to the effect that the Department of Dance was to leave the Harlem School of the Arts. The parents of the children plead with the members of the dance staff to stay; the garage men next door begged them to stay; but, exactly as the rumor had indicated, Miss Maynor asked them to leave. On August 1, 1969, two weeks before the scheduled end of summer classes, Miss Maynor left for Africa, leaving orders for Mitchell and his dance company to vacate the premises by August 15. The Department of Dance was still operating under a Ford Foundation Grant and such an order meant that a portion of the funds must be forfeited although they had been allocated

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

specifically for use by the Department of Dance. Despite this financial loss, Miss Maynor's orders were obeyed and the Department of Dance of the Harlem School of the Arts was closed on August 15, 1969.[1]

Although this severance brought temporary relief for the dance artists with respect to their administrative difficulties, they were keenly aware of the void which was created by their departure. In writing about his last day at the School, Shook recalls that, when he said goodbye to the garage men and to their helpers, they were visibly shaken. He remembers that one old man gripped his hand tightly and said, "Mr. Shook, you and Mitchell have brought love and joy and soul to this street and it is a sin that you have to go away, but we will be saying our prayers for you no matter where you are."[2] Another man tried to give Shook a ten dollar bill, explaining that, although it was all of the money which he possessed, he wished it to serve as his contribution wherever the dancers went because he knew that ". . . the children would need dancing shoes." After persuading the potential donor to hold the money until a later date, Shook left with the conviction that he and all of the company would have to return to Harlem soon.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem

In keeping with Mitchell's philosophy that "out of death, comes birth," the closing of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts opened the door for the official birth of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. The idea had been conceived, according to Shook, in the mid-nineteen fifties at his Studio of Dance Arts located at 144th Street and 8th Avenue in Manhattan. He recalls the conception of the idea in the following manner:

> Here, Arthur Mitchell, my student and assistant teacher, and a rising young dancer of extraordinary gifts, first spoke of his dream to one day found a school and company devoted to the development of black people as classical dance artists, and to provide an outlet for the display of their developed talents.[1]

Mitchell had nourished his idea alone through years of personal preparation but he could contain it no longer after King's assassination. He revealed it to those individuals whom he loved and trusted and on whom he would rely for assistance and implementation. He remembers Balanchine's warning to him at that time:

> Once you begin this, Arthur, you will never sleep again. You begin as an artist with just the idea of a school and a company in mind--but then you will meet dozens of other ramifications of which you never dreamed. There will be no more rest.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[2] Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, August 20, 1970.

Despite this warning, Arthur Mitchell, the individual, was no longer important to Arthur Mitchell, the crusader. His physical self was obsessed by his idea and by his dream for the future. Although Mitchell's original intention was to develop a dance program within Maynor's school, it took only a few months at the Harlem School of the Arts for Mitchell to realize that his idea of a dance school and a dance company could not be contained within another organization. He took measures, therefore, to insure the future realization of his dual project whenever the time was right. Toward this end, he sought the assistance of his friend, Charles DeRose, a financial planning consultant for individuals in the theatre and for key executives of corporations.[1] Mitchell became DeRose's client in December of 1968. The first step in insuring the future stability of Mitchell's obsessive idea was to form a non-profit corporation. He invited DeRose to visit the Harlem School of the Arts and to observe the dedication and total commitment of the black children studying in the Department of Dance. DeRose describes his reaction to the visit in this fashion:

> . . . I was intrigued. I told them [Mitchell and Shook] that I would help them, primarily because it was a tremendous challenge. It is one thing to plan for the financial development and growth of a

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[1]Charles DeRose, personal interview held in Fort Lee, New Jersey, January 15, 1971.

> corporation for which you can predict "X" amount of dollars in profit and revenue each year, but it is quite another thing to do the same thing for a non-profit organization that doesn't know where tomorrow is coming from. I had never done anything like this before and I guess that man will always do what challenges him the most.[1]

The organization was formed--unknown to Maynor--and named the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Its certificate of incorporation was granted by the State of New York on February 11, 1969. A Board of Directors of six members was appointed. It was integrated politically, financially, and racially, and the members were selected very carefully in order to create a sense of professional balance. This Board was comprised of Mitchell, as President; George Balanchine, Artistic Director of the New York City Ballet, as First Vice-President; Cicely Tyson, motion picture and television actress, as Second Vice-President; Brock Peters, motion picture and television actor, as Third Vice President; Nancy La Salle, a member of the Board of Directors of the City Center of Music and Drama, as Secretary; and Charles DeRose, financial planning consultant, as Treasurer. The Board of Directors was balanced also in the sense that it was comprised of three blacks and three whites.[2] The

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

non-profit status of the organization was granted on August 15, 1969, and its tax-exemption certificate was issued on October 15, 1969.

During these organizational months, Mitchell and DeRose became true partners although DeRose originally had no idea that his own personal involvement with the project would become so intense. Together they walked the streets, knocked upon doors of potential donors, submitted, revised and re-revised various financial proposals to major foundations only to be dismissed because of one reason after another. DeRose wondered why he ever became involved, but Mitchell kept preaching, "never give up." His enthusiasm was infectious, and DeRose soon became as determined as his client. DeRose states that he realized later that:

> . . . heretofore, I just had not been able to find the right vehicle with the same amount of dedication and intensity as my beliefs. I have found that in Dance Theatre of Harlem and my life is now dedicated to it. The purpose is good and it is right. The Dance Theatre of Harlem is there to help children; it is as simple as that.[1]

In response to a revelation of this nature, Mitchell simply laughs and says, ". . . once you are in, honey, you are hooked." He radiates a magical, confident air although it is evident that he is completely serious.

When the Department of Dance was closed at the Harlem School of the Arts on August 15, 1969, Mitchell

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[1] Ibid.

established his company and school temporarily in Glen Tetley's studio at 124 West 18th Street in Greenwich Village. The studio was located in a loft and was not properly insured to allow the owner of the building to take the risk which a school situation presented. On September 15, 1969, therefore, he asked Mitchell to move. Mitchell successfully plead with him for an extension of at least one week to allow him enough time to find another place for his school. In his own words, Mitchell insists that ". . . looking for space in New York City is equivalent to looking for a needle in a haystack--it is almost an impossible situation."[1]

Luckily for Mitchell, Mariette Dockery, a member of his Advisory Board, told him about the availability of the Church of the Master which became the new home of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. The Church of the Master appeared to be a godsend. Located across the street from Morningside Park at 122nd Street and Morningside Avenue, this church had a basement with a fine wooden floor and a raised seating area on one side. The congregation of the Church of the Master was building a new church adjacent to this one and they planned to move to the new building soon. Mitchell immediately envisioned the conversion of the main church

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, August 20, 1970.

into a studio-theatre and the prayer hall into an additional studio. The church itself was noted for its sponsorship of various community projects, and it was already housing such organizations as Voices, Incorporated and Headstart in the upstairs section of the building. This was an ideal location for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, and Mitchell leased the entire basement area for his immediate use.

On September 23, 1969, the Dance Theatre of Harlem emerged as a co-existent dance school and dance company in Harlem where Mitchell felt that it belonged. He believed that,

> . . . establishment of a permanent school of ballet in the Harlem community would encourage and develop ghetto youngsters in the art and discipline of the dance, as well as instill "pride of ownership" throughout that community.[1]

Concerning this belief, Mitchell told Olga Maynard,

> It had to be in Harlem; the arts belong to the people and we must carry the arts to the people, not wait for the people to come to the arts. We are training black dancers for a black ballet. Where else would it be, if not in Harlem?[2]

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[1]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Dance Theatre of Harlem Company History," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

[2]Maynard, "Arthur Mitchell and the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 54.

According to Mitchell, even the selection of the name for his organization had to include the word "Harlem." He further added ". . . you see, Harlem to all black people all over the world is like 'Mecca,' and they all can identify with it." While still a part of the Harlem School of the Arts, he explained to Joan Barthel that his school and company had to be housed in Harlem and staffed by black dancers, artists, administrators, and teachers in order to:

> . . . give the young people an incentive to achieve something with their lives and to give them pride. One day I hope it will be an integrated company and school, but in its beginning I feel it must be [black] in every sense, in order to bring to the attention of the [black] community and the world the heights to which [black] artists can rise and the true goals of personal accomplishment to which the [blacks] should aspire.[1]

The Dance Theatre of Harlem was located in the Church of the Master from September 23, 1969, through September 20, 1972. With the proper reconstruction, the Church of the Master would provide adequate space for all that Mitchell hoped to accomplish. He envisioned courses in costume design and construction, lighting for the stage, set design and construction, accompaniment and sound effects, and photography. He knew that there were young persons interested in various aspects of the theatre other than those in the immediate realm of a professional dance

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[1]Barthel, "When Mitchell Dreams, He Dreams Big."

career. He felt, therefore, that the Dance Theatre of Harlem could afford such individuals the type of outlet for their creative abilities through which they would be connected with the theatre and associated with dance.

Beautiful dreams, in this case, made reality easier to bear as ". . . poverty was sniffing at the door."[1] Mitchell accepted total responsibility for his new school and company. He depleted all of his investments and negotiated a series of personal loans in order to reimburse the members of his staff and to give the students their weekly dance scholarship stipends.[2] Mr. Shook describes the situation succinctly: "He kept food on the table and salaries were paid on the dot, and no one knew what he was going through when he was alone."[3] Mitchell, who does not discuss his personal sacrifices in conjunction with his project, hints at his tribulations when he states:

> I believe that God or something, some force, whatever one chooses to believe in as a God--is behind this project because the core of it is right, and nothing can transcend that. Sure, I make it sound very wonderful, but I readily admit that I often go home and cry at night simply because I am so weary. There is no time to rest. There are so many

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[1]Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 28.

[2]DeRose, personal interview, January 15, 1971.

[3]Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 28.

> problems to solve--financial and otherwise. But then, everyone is given a choice. I chose Dance Theatre of Harlem and, somehow, it just has to be.[1]

Relief came for Mitchell and his organization on October 1, 1969, when he received a grant of $315,000 from the Ford Foundation. The total budget was $466,000, $151,000 of which had to be matched. This meant that the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, was assured of receiving the $315,000 as long as its independent earnings during the year reached a total of $151,000. It was hoped that this projected income would materialize through personal contributions and the ticket sales for performances and lecture-demonstrations--a somewhat hazardous gamble for a young dance company which had not yet made its formal début. Although Balanchine's fateful warning to Mitchell that ". . . you will never sleep again" became more meaningful to him than ever before, he felt confident that he would find a way to realize his goals.

Perhaps the greatest lesson which Mitchell had to learn was that he was not asking for money for Arthur Mitchell personally but for the Dance Theatre of Harlem; prior to this adjustment in his reasoning, he suffered emotional turmoil as a result of his personal pride. In addition to learning to keep books, to develop schedules, and

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, August 20, 1970.

to cope with all of the administrative details of his organization with many different personalities. As Arthur Mitchell, the individual, he would have walked away from many situations--but Arthur Mitchell, the protagonist, states that ". . . as the representative of thirty other individuals, he had to grin and bear it." When he recalls those difficult times, he feels that the inevitable rebuffs were actually salutary, basic experiences because, through them ". . . the Dance Theatre of Harlem was really built from the ground up."[1]

Throughout this early period, the dance school and company remained unaffected by the difficulties experienced by their illustrious Director. Under the expert leadership of Associate Artistic Director, Karel Shook, the dancers were making daily progress and the enrollment in the school increased rapidly to capacity. Wednesday afternoon "open-rehearsal sessions" were initiated as a means of establishing community contact and of promoting good public relations. The viewing deck adjacent to the dance studio was ideal for this purpose as it facilitated seating accommodations for approximately sixty persons. It was not long before these sessions provided the children who attended the school an opportunity to associate with such celebrities as

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[1] *Ibid*.

Leontyne Price, Lucchine Visconti, Lord Snowden, Pearl Lang, John Christian, and Lydia Joel, who attended these rehearsals and mingled freely with the children. Many personages who first visited out of curiosity left uttering such words as "astounding," "incredible," and "miraculous." Mr. Shook received congratulatory letters from colleagues in all parts of the world, one of whom stated that he was

> . . . amazed and intrigued with the idea that in the heart of Harlem, one of the world's most notorious ghettos, one of the most important movements in contemporary dance was taking place.[1]

On December 4, 1969, the dreams associated with the initial affiliation with the Church of the Master began to fade when the minister of the Church informed Mitchell of an increase in rent from $170 per month to $600 per month. Shook feels that this increase in rent might be attributed to the fact that the minister knew that the Dance Theatre of Harlem now had the support of the Ford Foundation as well as that of the large number of children enrolled in daily classes. When he first moved into the building, Mitchell had realized that necessary renovations and proper conversion of the facilities to his purposes would cost many thousands of dollars. The exorbitant increase in rent in addition to the proposed cost of renovations made it evident

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[1]Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 30.

that the Church of the Master was to provide only a temporary home for the Dance Theatre of Harlem.[1]

Mitchell began a discreet search for a new location for the Dance Theatre of Harlem--discreet because he knew that the organization must remain housed at the Church of the Master until it could be moved to a building of its own. He soon found such a building and tells the following story concerning its discovery:

> There is this taxi driver with whom I often ride, who drives a gypsy cab. He knew that we were looking for a building. One morning about 3:00 a.m., he called me and said, "Mr. Mitchell, I have found a building." Apparently he had heard that the garage man who kept his car was moving to a larger place and that the building which housed the garage would soon be available. I got out of bed and went with him to look at the building. It was perfect.[2]

The structure was perfect, the location was ideal, and arrangements began in June of 1970 for its purchase and donation to the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Mrs. Alva Gimbel, a member of the family controlling Gimbel's Department Store organization was the generous benefactor. Mrs. Michael Winter, Chairman of the Friends of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, had brought Mrs. Gimbel to the Church of the Master to attend one of the Wednesday afternoon open-

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, August 20, 1970.

rehearsal sessions. Mrs. Gimbel was most impressed with what she witnessed, and has since been very generous in her support of Mitchell's project.

A long period of negotiations for the new building ensued, and from these transactions Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem emerged as the proud owner of its own home located at 466 West 152nd Street in Harlem. No longer oppressed by the lack of a permanent home, Mitchell busied himself with laying the groundwork for a renovation necessary to convert the building into a combined dance theatre and dance school such as he had begun at the Church of the Master.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem continues to provide a magnetic atmosphere for students of varied backgrounds and abilities. For some, it has opened the doors to an artistic world which had heretofore been alien to them. For others, it is a constructive channel through which they may direct their creative energies. For still others, it affords an opportunity for professional performances which might otherwise be unavailable. To meet the varied needs of his students, Mitchell has assembled a staff well suited for the multiple tasks involved.

Although the core of study in the school is classical ballet, each member of the diversified staff is a

specialist in his own right and contributes a personal touch to the students' experiences in ethnological and modern dance styles as well as in ballet. From time to time, guest artists are employed or contribute freely of their talents in order to enrich the learning environment at the dance school with unforgettable experiences which excite the children to the point of believing, as Mitchell believes, that: "A dancer is an actor and a musician, and he's a person who has developed his body in the most disciplined art form there is. He's a thoroughbred, the best of the human race."[1] At the school of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, one can see daily hundreds of "little thoroughbreds in the making"--a fact that often makes Arthur Mitchell sad whenever he thinks of the years of untapped talent which, in his words, have "gone down the drain." It is the enthusiastic response of these young girls and boys which makes Arthur Mitchell more determined than ever that this school must remain in Harlem where the material already exists--the same material which prompted Shook to say, "The Dance Theatre of Harlem [is] springing out of the community, existing in the community, and being reabsorbed by the community."[2]

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[1]Barthel, "When Mitchell Dreams, He Dreams Big."

[2]Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, p. 13.

The Professional Dance Company

The dance company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem has progressed through various stages of development since Arthur Mitchell initiated his project in 1968 in association with the Harlem School of the Arts. Determined to develop a dance school and a dance company simultaneously, he started with a small nucleus comprised of Gerald Banks, Llanchie Stevenson, Walter Raines, and Lydia Abarca. Banks, Stevenson, and Raines had performed professionally prior to this time, but Abarca had merely taken some classes in ballet two years prior to coming to the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Upon viewing the three-week old company for the first time, Shook, their new Associate Artistic Director, described them as ". . . all terribly weak and technically very poor."[1]

Inspired by the enthusiasm of their leader, however, these young members of the dance company did not allow themselves to be discouraged by their technical weaknesses. They subjected themselves to an unbelievably rigorous schedule designed for their physical and artistic improvement. For the most part, they worked from 10:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. each day while Mitchell continuously ". . . preached his gospel of individual determination and

[1] Ibid., p. 10.

the fact that one reaps the benefits of one's efforts."[1] His protégés believed wholeheartedly in his regimen and gave to him their best efforts. They apparently never doubted that his was "a gospel of truth" inasmuch as he personally set for them an example of tireless work and unflagging determination. His teaching by both precept and example prompted Charles DeRose to say,

> Arthur oversaw everything. After he had worked all day with his students and company, we then worked practically all night every night; we worked on building an organization of excellence; on building a school and a company of excellence simultaneously. The hours, the work, the dedication that have gone into this project disproves any theory that one can set a certain time period upon human performance. Sometimes the right proportions of effort, work, and dedication can produce the results in two years that would normally take ten. This is exactly what has happened with the Dance Theatre of Harlem.[2]

The company comprised of four members was scarcely a month old when it was required to present a lecture-demonstration on August 6, 1968 in Rensselaerville, New York, which was arranged through the Harlem School of the Arts. Mitchell was in Vancouver, Canada, at the time, busy with the production of the musical entitled Noël Coward's Sweet Potato, so Shook directed the lecture-demonstration,

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[1]DeRose, personal interview, January 15, 1971.

[2]*Ibid*.

assisted by his accompanist, John Childs.[1] The program began with barre and centre work, and ended with a pas de deux by each couple. Abarca and Banks danced what later became the first movement of the ballet entitled Tones, and Stevenson and Raines danced what was incorporated later into the Holberg Suite. Raines recounts his feelings concerning this performance:

> . . . By no stretch of the imagination could one have called this a good performance. The four of us could hardly stand up, let alone dance. Llanchie and I had danced more than Lydia and Jerry but that made little difference as we were literally falling all over the place. It was the reaction of the people after we had finished that struck me. It was the look on their faces--expressing that they had just witnessed one of the most beautiful things that they had ever seen in their lives.[2]

Raines was even further impressed because he knew that these viewers were well versed in the arts and that they must have recognized some genuine promise in the four young dancers. Raines had terminated his dancing career prior to this time, but he had been persuaded to resume it and join the Dance Theatre of Harlem. He recalls that he ". . . was now very happy that he did return to his first love."[3] Shook was also pleased with the performance and

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[1]Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 12.

[2]Walter Raines, personal interview, held in New York City, January 13, 1971.

[3]Ibid.

spoke of the fact that the "rather elite public" was both "appreciative and complimentary."[1]

Cognizant of the fact that the majority of the students enrolled in the school might not become professional dancers, Mitchell originated a system whereby the most promising students were channeled into a special apprentice group preparatory to their becoming full fledged members of the dance company--a practice which he still continues. Following the lecture-demonstration at Rensselaerville, and while Mitchell was still in Canada, Shook began very intensive work with both the members of the company and with the apprentice group. He has described their daily progress as "astonishing."[2] Black dancers throughout the City of New York soon heard about the project in Harlem and, by September of 1968, four more dancers--Gayle McKinney, Patricia Ricketts, Arturo Vivaldo, and Derek Williams--had joined the company. The apprentice group, which was comprised of Valerie Bower, Laura and Susan Lovelle, Yvonne Hall, Cassandra Pheifer, and Jewel Melchior, engendered great satisfaction in Shook, its famous Ballet Master, whose feelings are expressed in the following words:

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[1]Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 11.

[2]*Ibid*.

> For many years, I had not had the privilege of working with students possessing such energy, discipline, and capacity for hard work; not to mention talent. The ever growing need that I had been feeling that my work must bring moral, social and spiritual satisfaction was beginning to be fulfilled. I abandoned all intention of returning to the Dutch company even temporarily.[1]

The performances of the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem during the period preceding its official début were limited to lecture-demonstrations and an occasional "one-night stand." The lecture-demonstrations were highly successful and, according to many of their hosts and hostesses, the response of their audiences was far superior to that given other dance companies.[2] The "one-night-stands" provided their own special meanings to the individual members of the company. Gerald Banks recalls the program on March 7, 1970, at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York, where the company performed for the first time in costume. He explains:

> We received a standing ovation and I was almost in tears on stage when the entire audience just rose *en masse*. They applauded and just would not stop. This, to me, was the most exciting thing that has happened.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[2] Raines, personal interview, January 13, 1971.

[3] Gerald Banks, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 21, 1971.

Another phase of Mitchell's project included a scholarship stipend for promising young students in his school and for members of his dance company. The source of funds for this purpose presented one of his most harassing "growing pains." He feels that such a problem existed because ". . . it is so hard to get others, especially persons with money, to believe in a new cause."[1] He deplores the difficulty of obtaining financial assistance when it is needed most during the infancy of a project and the ironical fact that such assistance ". . . seems to be offered readily on the heels of success."[2] In the final analysis, however, Arthur Mitchell considers himself very fortunate because there were such persons as McNeil Lowry, with the Ford Foundation, who "took a chance on my project"--perhaps because of his own (Mitchell's) established reputation. He also had the support of Lincoln Kirstein, who later became Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, and of George Balanchine, his own personal mentor and Vice-Chairman of the Board.

Since the official formation of the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, on October 15, 1969,

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview held in New York City, January 14, 1971.

[2]*Ibid*.

the organization has been a source of pride and of abundant rewards for all individuals associated with it. Mitchell considers the series of lecture-demonstrations as the company's most important medium of contributions to the dance as of January, 1971. Presented in public schools throughout the State of New York and neighboring states and before various community groups such as the Young Men's Christian Association in West Orange, New Jersey, and the Middlesex County Regional Arts Council in Middlesex County, New Jersey, the series of lecture-demonstrations introduced a whole new public to the theatre and to the arts. This is particularly true of the black public. Several performances were presented in the Guggenheim Museum to which children from the inner city were brought. For many of them, it was not only their first trip to a museum but the first time that they had seen or heard of a ballet.

In conjunction with his lecture-demonstrations, Mitchell often involved those comprising his young audiences by having volunteers demonstrate current popular dance steps which he would translate into balletic movements. He encourages children to study ballet by showing them what the thirteen and fourteen-year-old members of his company have accomplished. The atmosphere is magnetic and exciting, and these demonstrations often end with the children in the

audience "applauding and screaming for more." Mitchell re-emphasizes the fact that, ". . . we, in the arts, have to stop waiting for the people to come to us; we must take the arts to the people." He further points out that ". . . the art of being an artist is to make it an integral part of our daily lives--this is a major goal for the Dance Theatre of Harlem--to get the community involved."[1] In addition, the free lecture-demonstrations presented at the studio of the Dance Theatre of Harlem every Wednesday afternoon have grown into a unique attraction which impels individuals from all walks of life to travel to Harlem to share their mutual appreciation of the arts.[2]

An important achievement for the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem during the year 1969-1970 was its acceptance on October 7, 1969, as one of the touring companies sponsored by the New York State Council on the Arts, and on October 17, 1969, by the National Endowment for the Arts. To be recognized and included in the touring programs of these two organizations was a rare and exciting assignment for a company so young, especially since it had not yet made an official début in New York City. The by-laws

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[1] Ibid.

[2] The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Information Sheet for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

governing both touring programs state specifically that a dance company should have been in existence for a period of five years prior to its selection. The demand for Mitchell's company was so great, however, that it was accepted when it was only one year old!

Following its emergence as an official dance company, the Dance Theatre of Harlem made several appearances throughout the United States. As early as November 2, 1969, the company of young men and women appeared at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on the same program with such celebrities as Edward Villella and Patricia McBride. The company of fifteen dancers performed Rhythmetron; its success is attested to in the following review:

> The dancers in form-fitting costumes--the women in white, the men in black--performed superbly. The ensemble was unified and free-flowing, and each dancer has a good technique. . . . The Harlem company was roundly applauded.[1]

Very important for the company were its performances at Spelman College and at Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 28 and 29, 1969, respectively. Mitchell and the members of his company conducted master classes for the Department of Physical Education at Spelman College. It

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[1]Samuel L. Singer, "Ballet's Greatest Moments Presented," The Philadelphia Inquirer, November 3, 1969.

was here that Mitchell discovered Clover Mathis and Rosalyn and Rhonda Sampson. They were offered and accepted scholarships to study at the Dance Theatre of Harlem and to perform with the company.[1] The three dancers have since proved valuable assets to the organization.

An invitation to perform as the major attraction in conjunction with the First Bermuda Arts Council Summer Festival held in Hamilton Proper, Bermuda, June 17 through 20, 1970, opened the door for the first major tour for the young company of dancers. Other engagements in the Caribbean included those in Nassau, the Bahamas, on June 24 through 27, 1970, and in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, June 29 through July 1, 1970.[2] The repertory which the members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem performed during this Caribbean Tour was comprised of Mitchell's Holberg Suite, Biosfera, Tones, Ode to Otis, and Rhythmetron, and George Balanchine's Concerto Barocco.

Holberg Suite is choreographed in the neo-classic style to the music of Edvard Grieg. The suite is comprised of an opening, a pas de neuf, a pas de trois, a pas de deux, and a finale. Arthur Mitchell considers this

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[1]Clover Mathis, Rhonda Sampson, and Rosalyn Sampson, group interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 19, 1970.

[2]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Performance Schedule for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, 1970-1971," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

ballet a very light, romantic work which is suitable as a beginning dance for an evening's performance. The picture of a tapestry and the imaginary activities in which the members of the community were engaged during the time when the tapestry was woven served as the thematic source for the choreographer.

Biosfera is a pas de deux performed to music by the Brazilian composer Marlos Nobre which exemplifies Mitchell's obsession with line and form in movement as a means of expressing an aspect of his basic philosophy which is centered around the fact that life is a continuous cycle of events evolving from a given point and always returning to that point. The ballet, which begins with two dancers on separate transparent platforms, may be considered representative of two worlds, two colors, two individuals, or two anything. The dancers unfold and descend from their platforms in a fashion suggestive of moving sculptured figures. Briefly, the two figures relate to one another in perfect harmony only to return to their separate platforms where each poses in a sculptural design.

Tones was inspired by the atonal score composed specifically for the Dance Theatre of Harlem by Mitchell's Musical Director, Tanya Leon. The choreographer again turned to the distinct lines of sculpture in structuring

this ballet. Mitchell states that:

> Tones is somewhat like abstract sculpture come to life. It flows from different poses, patterns, and angles throughout the three movements of which it is comprised. The line is smooth, and the design is clear.[1]

The choreographic inspiration for the ballet, Ode to Otis, came from the late Otis Redding, popular singer from Georgia who died in a plane crash at the peak of his career. The score for the ballet was composed by Coleridge Taylor Perkinson; it is introduced with an interesting arrangement of Redding's "Sitting on the Dock of the Bay." Contrary to popular belief, the ballet is not about the life of Otis Redding. The choreographer pays tribute to Redding by relating through dance the futility of man's search for "greener pastures" together with the "glorification of women" which Mitchell feels was the essence of the work of the late musical artist.

In Rhythmetron, Arthur Mitchell fuses movements which are characteristic of jazz, primitive, ethnic, and modern dance into a classical base. The ballet is performed to a score by the Brazilian composer, Marlos Nobre, which requires the use of thirty-three percussive instruments. Based upon abstract African ritual, the ballet is comprised

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, January 14, 1971.

of three sections, entitled respectively, "The Preparation," "The Chosen," and "The Ritual." During the first section, the High Priestess purifies a circular area in which all who wish to participate in the ceremony may become cleansed. In the second section, the dancers who are "The Chosen" perform a precision pas de six which is in celebration of their high position. Again, Mitchell's concentration upon line and design is evident in this section of the ballet. The dancers move easily from one sculptural pose to another without losing the continuity of the dance. In the third section of the ballet, all of the participants in the ceremony have entered into a "trance-like" state and have become "possessed." Mitchell has the curtain lowered while the dancers are at the height of their "possession" in order to communicate the idea that ". . . the dance goes on and on."

The invitation extended to the Dance Theatre of Harlem to perform in Bermuda in 1970 had a most interesting origin. A black woman from Philadelphia, married to a Bermudian, was working on the committee responsible for the selection of artists for the First Bermuda Arts Council Summer Festival. All of the artists selected were Caucasian, and she wished to have blacks represented on the program. She had never heard about Mitchell's company but, when she

happened to read the March, 1970, issue of Dance Magazine which featured a story about Arthur Mitchell and his company, she decided that this group should be invited to appear in the Festival and recommended its selection to the members of the Arts Council. Through a bit of "political blackmail"--specifically, by threatening a major riot in the black section of town unless her recommendation was acted upon favorably--she was very convincing.[1]

The young company arrived in Hampton Proper, Bermuda, on June 15, 1970, where they were greeted by a very nervous hostess who hoped that they would live up to her expectations and to those of the members of the Council. Her worries were soon dispelled as those comprising the company were indeed ready to perform. Walter Raines explains the prevailing atmosphere in the following manner:

> The company was very calm--mainly because the majority of the members were so young and did not know any better. We older ones were a bit nervous at first, but somehow, the vibrations felt good. We knew that this tour would be a great success.[2]

The Dance Theatre of Harlem was the first of the groups of performing artists presented at the Festival.

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[1]Unless otherwise documented, all of the following information concerning the major tours of the company is taken from an interview with Walter Raines, one of the original members of the company, held in New York City on January 13, 1971.

[2]Ibid.

They danced in a small theatre in the City Hall but, on the opening night, the theatre was not full--perhaps the unknown company had to prove itself worthy of a capacity audience. For each performance thereafter, however, it was almost impossible to obtain a seat. Concerning this situation, Mirian Robb, of the Royal Gazette, made the following comments:

> Word must have got around of the excellence of Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem, which is proving a bright star in the crown of the Bermuda Summer Festival. When their second programme opened last night at City Hall, people alerted too late to what they were missing were standing around the lobby hoping wistfully for cancellations.[1]

During the days which followed, special seminars were scheduled each day in order for Bermudian teachers of ballet to bring their students to meet and to dance for Arthur Mitchell. These teachers wished to have him evaluate their work and to make suggestions for improvement in their instructional techniques. It was obvious that the Bermudians were deeply moved by this company of young black dancers.

An important première performance for the company while in Bermuda was on June 19, 1970, when its members danced George Balanchine's Concerto Barocco, choreographed

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[1]Mirian Robb, "Excellence of Harlem Dance Theatre," The Royal Gazette, Hamilton Proper, Bermuda, June 20, 1970.

to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Given only two weeks in which to learn the ballet--which ". . . has no subject matter beyond the score to which it is danced"[1]--the dancers performed flawlessly. It was here that Arthur Mitchell sat in the audience and saw his "beautiful black children" in soft white costumes, dancing with the expertise of a seasoned company one of the best ballets of one of the greatest choreographers living today. Mitchell states further "It was like a culmination to so many things that have all become a part of me. I sat there and cried like a baby."[2] Llanchie Stevenson believes that it was the best received ballet of the Caribbean tour.[3]

From Bermuda, the company went to Nassau, The Bahamas, where it appeared under the auspices of the Nassau Civic Ballet, directed by Hubert Farrington, a friend of Arthur Mitchell's for many years. Here, in the Dundas Civic Center, the story pertaining to attendance was repeated; the audience was small at the opening performance of the engagement; but, thereafter, every seat in the theatre was

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[1]Balanchine, Balanchine's New Complete Stories of the Great Ballets, p. 93.

[2]Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, August 20, 1970.

[3]Llanchie Stevenson, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 21, 1970.

occupied. Here the young company received high critical acclaim evidenced in the following review by Winsome Lane:

> These Negro dancers have a primitive virility in movement that makes a company of white dancers look decadent by contrast. With perfect muscular control and coordination they seemed to fly across the stage. . . . Never has the fluidity of the human body, and its power to express the spirit been better illustrated. . . . the magnificent dark-skinned bodies looked superbly in place. One could not help thinking--these are the new people. It could be the future of the world belongs to them.[1]

The company performed four nights in Nassau from June 24 through 27, 1970, before departing for Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, where they had three performances scheduled on June 29, 30, and July 1, 1970, respectively.

In Curacao, at the Centre Pro Arte Theatre, the company received its warmest reception of the tour although, by this time, the dancers were quite fatigued and beginning to show the strain of their first strenuous tour. According to Walter Raines, ". . . . the audience stamped, hooted, and screamed . . . it was an unforgettable experience."[2] Dutch critics had only words of praise for the company as evidenced by the following excerpt from an article in a Curacao newspaper:

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[1]Winsome Lane, "Locals Fail to Support Ballet," Nassau Guardian and Bahamas Observer, June 26, 1970.

[2]Raines, personal interview, January 13, 1971.

> At seeing such a sublime interpretation of ballet, which can be undoubtedly considered of the highest level and which is performed with such effortlessness and suppleness, one asks oneself if the Negro is not the right person to interpret this form of dancing. In any case the deeply impressed audience has realized, even if only for a fraction of a second, that rigid training, self discipline and incredible perseverance must have preceded this, especially when you realize that the group was formed only in 1968.[1]

Throughout the Caribbean tour, persons had voiced the same reactions with respect to the myth of the unsuitability of black dancers for classical dance. This was the first time, however, that the idea actually appeared in print.

The opening program in Curacao included four ballets--the Holberg Suite, Biosfera, two movements of Tones, and Rhythmetron. Each dance was analyzed and highly praised by the critics. Biosfera was considered the most impressive dance of the evening by one critic who stated that, ". . . the breathless audience, having watched every move of the two dancers in an almost trance-like state, broke out in spontaneous and enthusiastic applause." Concerning the entire evening, he wrote further:

> The ovation to the New York dance theatre came directly from the hearts and souls of the audience

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[1]"Brilliant Performance of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," Beurs En Nieuwsherichten, Curacao, Netherlands, Antilles, June 30, 1970.

> and can only be considered as a dim reflection of the great respect for such a talented dance group.[1]

Still another reviewer stated that, ". . . it was a ballet performance that cannot be described by any pen. You had to be there . . . nothing is left to chance. It is all around perfection."[2] After reading this review, Shook, who had remained in New York City to teach the classes at the school, was prompted to say: "Being familiar with the usual wont of Dutch critics, I was bowled over when I opened the paper from Curacao and read 'Dance Theatre of Harlem: Unbelievable Perfection.' . . . we had it made."[3]

When the company left Curacao at the completion of a most successful tour, each member felt that he or she had reaped his own special rewards over and beyond those of artistic achievement. For the younger members, it had proved exciting socially as well as professionally. Several of the girls made a special effort to play "adult" roles with respect to dress and manners. For some, it had meant the first real opportunity to travel outside of the state of

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "Dance Theatre of Harlem: Unbelievable Perfection," Amigee, Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, June 30, 1970.

[3] Shook, "Recollections of the First Two Years of the Dance Theatre of Harlem," p. 31.

New York.[1] For others, it had meant observation of political and economic environments other than their own for the first time in their young lives. For those who were more mature, it had meant taking a rather long, hard look at their leader and wondering whether or not he had still another role to play of which he was unaware. On each of the three islands on which the company performed, the audiences responded in a similar manner, and special day-time sessions were arranged in order to allow as many individuals as possible to meet and to exchange ideas with Arthur Mitchell. Raines describes the atmosphere which surrounded each performance and each session with Mitchell in this fashion:

> It was like the coming of a Messiah; the air was filled with a kind of electricity. One could just see the anticipation on the faces of the audiences as they awaited Arthur's appearances. At the end of a performance or following a discussion with Arthur, it was as though they were convinced that this was the one man who could unify us as a people. There was nothing political involved. It was as though his presence had been expected for a long time.[2]

The members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem returned to their New York studio, fulfilled but exhausted, to prepare for their next scheduled performances at the

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[1]Lydia Abarca, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 21, 1970.

[2]Raines, personal interview, January 13, 1971.

Saratoga Performing Arts Center in Saratoga Springs, New York, and at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, at Jacob's Pillow near Lee, Massachusetts. August 1 and 2, 1970, found the company participating in the first weekend of "showcase performances" presented by the School of Modern Dance of the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. As they had done in Bermuda, these artists opened the series of "showcase performances." Again, they were placed in a small theatre, and again, the theatre could not accommodate the audiences. Commenting upon this error in planning, Raines states:

> It always appears that we have to prove ourselves. It is almost as if they do not expect us to be good enough and they want to save us the embarrassment of playing in a large theatre to a small and, perhaps, unresponsive audience.[1]

According to Raines, the opposite was always true, however, and often the planning committee was embarrassed by failing to anticipate adequate space for the capacity audiences which sought tickets.

At the Spa Summer Theatre in Saratoga, the company presented the world première of the pas de deux from Mitchell's new work in progress entitled Fun and Games. This ballet is set to the music of Piere Piccioni, and is

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[1] Ibid.

based upon the idea of man's inhumanity to man. Peg Churchill gives the following account of the opening performance:

> Throughout the program, the dancing was strong, precise and well-disciplined. And yet, Mitchell's dancers have about them an earthy, natural sensuality which sets this company apart from others. Especially noteworthy, the men dance with the jazzy movements of Broadway (where Mitchell has frequently performed) and a virile aggressiveness suggesting the streets of the ghetto. . . .
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> . . . . . .
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> . . . the Dance Theatre of Harlem demonstrated that despite what many modern dancers may think, their dance form and the toe shoe do mix. Not only well, but sensationally.[1]

Again, as in Bermuda, an extra dance seminar was scheduled. Many persons in the audience were participants in a summer program for teachers of dance which was in progress in Saratoga. They demanded and received an opportunity to meet and to talk freely with Arthur Mitchell. The meeting developed into a question and answer session concerned primarily with organizational problems. The teachers were all fascinated with the efficiency of operation exemplified by the Dance Theatre of Harlem.[2]

Arthur Mitchell considers the week of August 18 through August 22, 1970, a special landmark in the brief

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[1]Peg Churchill, "Harlem Dance Group in Superb Program," Schenectady Gazette, August 3, 1970.

[2]Raines, personal interview, January 13, 1971.

history of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. It marks the first "real engagement" of the company in the United States. In the Ted Shawn Theatre, in conjunction with the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, near Lee, Massachusetts, this two-year-old company had the unusual honor of being the only performing group scheduled for the ninth week of the Festival.[1] Since the original typical program each week of the season of the Festival was shared by two or more performing artists or groups, this was a special honor which exemplified the respect which the late Founder-Director, Ted Shawn, paid to Mitchell in a personal letter to the investigator when he wrote, "I must write this extra note to say that there is really no black male dancer in the field of ballet except Arthur Mitchell who is, or has been influential."[2]

The program at Jacob's Pillow had to be especially challenging for the dance-oriented audience at the famed University of the Dance. The response of the audience there would be indicative of audiences throughout the United States. Mitchell, who had first performed at Jacob's

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[1]Programme, "Dance Theatre of Harlem," Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Lee, Massachusetts, August 18 through 22, 1970.

[2]Ted Shawn, personal letter to the investigator, February 16, 1970.

Pillow with the all-black modern dance company of Donald McKayle, decided that everything about these performances had to be black. The program was comprised of the Holberg Suite; the pas de deux entitled Biosfera, alternating with the pas de deux from a work in progress entitled Fun and Games on evening and matinee performances; Ode to Otis; and Rhythmetron. Because it was important that the new all-black classical dance company perform the ballets of its black choreographer, Arthur Mitchell carefully selected the dances to be presented.

Opening night for the Dance Theatre of Harlem in the Ted Shawn Theater was a "sell-out." The appreciative audience gave the young dancers a standing ovation and demanded nine curtain calls. The remainder of the week was equally successful as the capacity crowds kept coming for both the matinée and evening performances. Critics and photographers came from New York City and from neighboring towns, and the reviews were more than favorable. The excerpts which follow represent examples of the critical response to the company. Richard Happel of the Berkshire Eagle writes:

> This company of nearly 20 performers has obviously been trained beautifully, and we rather suspect, relentlessly. Good dancing isn't come by easily; and superb dancing such as this comes

of long gruelling hours of stress, strain, trial and error until the fine finished product emerges.[1]

Susan Daniels, of the Patriot Ledger states, "Black is beautiful and ballet is too, especially when combined into the Dance Theatre of Harlem."[2]

A writer for Dance News reports:

> A highspot of the summer [programs presented in conjunction with the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated] was reached in the ninth week, with the appearance of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. . . . Watching this youthful but already skilled troupe perform, many visitors came away with the impression that Mr. Mitchell and his associate director have created an important dance company on the American scene.[3]

Walter Terry, formerly Dance Editor of the Saturday Review, writes:

> The program that the Dance Theatre of Harlem presented at the Pillow was choreographed by Mitchell and ranged from the purest and most elegant examples of classical ballet to dance episodes that echoed ancient rituals. In all, the Mitchell-Shook dancers performed beautifully and gave pleasure to the seven sets of audiences who had traveled from near and far to see them. Now, how about a New York "engagement"?[4]

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[1]Richard V. Happel, "Harlem Dancers at Pillow," The Berkshire Eagle, August 19, 1970.

[2]Susan Daniels, "A Classical Discipline for Translating Black's Beauty," The Patriot Ledger, Quincy, Massachusetts, August, 1970.

[3]"Lively 38th Year at Jacob's Pillow," Dance News, October, 1970.

[4]Walter Terry, "Black Dance," Saturday Review, September 26, 1970, p. 26.

Judging from the reports of the critics, Rhythmetron, the closing ballet for each of the performances, appeared to be the favorite. This obviously brought pleasure to Mitchell as can be detected in his explanation of the ballet to Newsweek's Abigail Kuflik:

> Rhythmetron is the basic style or line that I would like to develop for the company. I want to take all things inherent to black dancers--rhythmic quality, attack, feline quality, a certain freedom--and combine them. Put these things in the confines of ballet and you have something very exciting: classical ballet with soul.[1]

If the reception at Jacob's Pillow was any indication of what the future holds for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Mitchell has every reason to be very pleased. Following its success at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, the company completed 1970 with a continuation of the series of lecture-demonstrations, several memorable performances in New England and in the Mid-West, a tour which took the company to the West Indies, and two television appearances.

In the West Indies, the Dance Theater of Harlem performed in San Fernando, Trinidad, on October 26, 1970, at the Naparima Bowl; in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, October 28 through 31, 1970, at Queens Hall; and in Kingston, Jamaica, November 4 through 7, 1970, at the National Theatre

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[1] "Ballet with Soul," Newsweek, August 31, 1970.

Trust. This tour was as successful as the first one--a source of pride for Mitchell and for the members of his staff. An important outgrowth of the tours was the decision of representatives of each of the Islands to send students to Harlem to study at the school. This response is typical of the attraction which the company emanates as it appears throughout the United States. Students and potential company members seem drawn magnetically to the unique atmosphere of the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Television appearances for the Dance Theatre of Harlem came early in the career of the company at the end of its second year of existence. The first television appearance of the company was presented on October 22, 1970, in the form of a master class which was taped for viewing for Cincinnati, Ohio's Educational Television Station WCET. On December 24 of the same year, four members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem--Llanchie Stevenson, Sheila Rohan, Pamela Jones, and Clover Mathis--danced an excerpt from Mitchell's Holberg Suite on the Polaroid Television Special entitled "A Holiday Celebration with Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee" and presented on New York City's WOR-TV.[1]

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[1]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Radio and Television Interviews and Appearances for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, 1970-1971," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem opened its 1971 season of performances with an official New York City début at the Guggenheim Museum. Two nights prior to this performance on January 8, 1971, Leonard Harris of New York City's local television network, WCBS-TV, taped the company in rehearsal for a later showing during the nightly news. This date was significant also because Patricia McCann, of Radio Station WOR in New York City, conducted an interview with Arthur Mitchell; and Gian Carlo Menotti, representing the Committee for the Fourteenth Festival of Two Worlds at Spoleto, Italy, viewed the company in a dress rehearsal prior to extending a definite invitation to the members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem to participate in the Spoleto Festival during the months of June and July of 1971.

The members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem performed at the Guggenheim Museum on the evenings of January 8 through 10, 1971, and presented two lecture-demonstrations on Monday, January 11, 1971. The Guggenheim Museum is a magnificent edifice designed by the late Frank Lloyd Wright with its main museum area built in the round. Overlooking Central Park at 1071 Fifth Avenue, it was, according to Clive Barnes, ". . . built for dance performances."[1] He

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Lovely Dancers--Black, White, or Green," New York Times, January 24, 1971.

describes the setting surrounding the performances of the Dance Theatre of Harlem in the following manner:

> The stage was set up in what I can only describe as the well of the building, the heart of its onion. Seats decently raised, were placed in this central Guggenheim space, and other spectators crowded the apple-peel galleries, some with seats, some staring down behind. It was a perfect setting. Perspectives changed but sight-lines at least were faultless, and from beyond the stage area you could see desultory yellow cabs meandering about their business on Fifth Avenue. These glimpses, fugitive and peripheral, of an outside world, gave a special reality to the inside world of dance.[1]

A generous gift from Mrs. Alva B. Gimbel made the use of this unusual setting possible.[2] The program for the performances on January 8 through 10, 1971, was comprised of three ballets by Mitchell--Tones, with music by Tanya Leon; the première of Fête Noire, with music by Shostakovich; and Rhythmetron, with music by Marlos Nobre.

The new ballet, Fête Noire, presented at Mitchell's official New York City début, was dedicated to Mrs. Alva B. Gimbel who, along with many other elite members of New York society, was present for the gala première. Comprised of three movements, the ballet, according to Mitchell, ". . . has no great story." He found Shostakovich's music very "dancy," however, and choreographed a ballet reminiscent of

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Programme, "The Dance Theatre of Harlem at the Guggenheim Museum," New York City, January 8-10, 1971.

a graduation ball where young cadets are visiting a local girls' school--or, as Clive Barnes interpreted it, ". . . a very grand court ball set, say, in Liberia, at the time of St. Petersburg." Each performance ended with standing ovations and cheering crowds--a welcome reaction from the New York City audiences which can, at times ". . . be harsh and cruel."[1]

Students from thirty schools throughout New York City were transported by bus to the Guggenheim Museum on Monday, January 11, 1971, for the lecture-demonstrations. The total student attendance for that one day numbered one thousand.[2] Although the students, the majority of whom were from local public elementary schools, appeared to be excited about actually being in the Museum, it was obvious that the main attraction was Mitchell and his dancers. The students responded even more enthusiastically than the adult audiences which attended the weekend performances preceding the lecture-demonstrations. Both the morning and

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Dance: Finale in Harlem," New York Times, March 13, 1971.

[2]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Attendance Report of Major Lecture-Demonstrations Presented by the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, 1970-1971," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, January, 1971.

the afternoon sessions ended with the children in the audiences shouting for more.[1]

The touring program of the Dance Theatre of Harlem was expanded in 1971 to include many more appearances outside of the State of New York than filled in the previous season. During the month of February, the company made a trans-continental tour of the United States which included appearances at the Loeb Drama Center of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on February 5 and 6; at the Fairchild Theatre of Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan, on February 9; at the Ford Auditorium in Detroit, Michigan, on February 12; at the Inner City Cultural Center in Los Angeles, California, February 18 through 20; and at the Memorial Auditorium of Ohio State University in Athens, Ohio, on February 23, 1971.[2] As a direct result of the performances in Detroit, a benefit for the Dance Theatre of Harlem was planned by the LINKS of Detroit, a branch of a nationwide organization of Negro professional women.[3] In addition to the laurels earned by

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[1]Personal observation by the investigator, the Guggenheim Museum, New York City, January 11, 1971.

[2]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Performance Schedule for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, 1970-1971."

[3]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Progress Report of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, 1970-1971," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

the company in Detroit, Mitchell was interviewed as a special guest on the "Focus Show," a feature of the Motor City's famed Radio Station WJB.[1]

Upon its return to New York City at the end of the month of February, the Dance Theatre of Harlem began rehearsals for its Broadway début at the American National Theatre and Academy on March 8, 10, and 12, 1971, under the auspices of the City Center of Music and Drama, Incorporated. The repertory selected for the Broadway début of the company included George Balanchine's Concerto Barocco, Jerome Robbins' Afternoon of a Faun, John Taras' Designs for Strings, and four of Mitchell's ballets--Biosfera, Fête Noire, Rhythmetron, and the première of the complete ballet Fun and Games.

The New York City drama critics responded favorably to all of the ballets performed by the Dance Theatre of Harlem at the ANTA Theatre with the exception of Mitchell's Fun and Games, with music by Piero Piccioni. The première of Fun and Games took place on opening night. Based upon the theme of "man's inhumanity to man," the ballet evoked similar comments from the critics. They were disappointed with the story line of the ballet rather than with the

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[1]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Radio and Television Interviews and Appearances of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, 1970-1971."

dancing of it. Douglas Watt referred to the ballet as "a misstep" and ". . . a terribly pretentious piece set to an equally pretentious score . . ." He even ventured to offer a possible explanation for the ballet as he stated, "Maybe Mitchell has danced 'Slaughter on 10th Avenue' too often."[1] Frances Herridge compared the ballet with ". . . an underworld inferno peopled with sensuous evil people." She added, however, that she thought that ". . . it was a powerful work."[2] The following excerpt from the review by Clive Barnes offers a vivid description of the ballet as well as his impression of it:

> "Fun and Games" was a rather overheated ballet that contained more violence than invention. With costumes and a striking setting designed by Bernard Johnson, it was intended to be neither fun nor games. It is set in the Ghetto. A gang of hippies--or nowadays we had better call them street people--is playing around. A straight young girl and boy enter, while the gang hides. The lovers dance together until they are interrupted by the gang. The gang leader rapes the girl while the boy is held helpless. Then they beat the boy, play with him, and finally hang him.
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> The same idea was used, to better effect, by Talley Beatty in "The Road of the Phoebe Snow," and Mr. Mitchell's choreography, although already very individual here, has a far too monotonous pulse. Admittedly he was not too much helped by the music

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[1]Douglas Watt, "Harlem Dance Theatre Young, Vibrant Group," Daily News, New York, March 9, 1971.

[2]Frances Herridge, "Ballet from Harlem at the ANTA," New York Post, March 9, 1971.

> by Piero Piccioni, but the performances were strong and spirited.[1]

Doris Hering called the ballet ". . . perfectly dreadful in some ways," but added that, "In daring to be dreadful, it generated a strange honesty." She questioned the intent of Fun and Games and commented upon the mission of Arthur Mitchell and his ballet company in the following manner:

> Does it [Fun and Games] reflect the bitter side of a young man who utterly charms audiences during the infinity of lecture-demonstrations that he and his dancers are required to do? If so, his courage and sense of mission are all the more heroic. That five-year [period of time that she feels that it will take his company to mature as classical artists] road toward proving the undeniable value of the black dancer in the rarified world of classical ballet could well be as triumphant as a Martin Luther King peace march--and as inspiring to our muddled world.[2]

Perhaps Doris Hering came closer to the true meaning of the ballet than she realized because it is a ballet which Mitchell felt that he had to choreograph.

The performances presented by the Dance Theatre of Harlem of the three ballets which had not been choreographed by Mitchell were all highly acclaimed by the critics. Upon numerous occasions, the company had already performed successfully Balanchine's Concerto Barocco. Considered a test

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[1]Clive Barnes, "The Ballet: Dance Theatre of Harlem," New York Times, March 10, 1971.

[2]Doris Hering, "Reviews: Dance Theatre of Harlem ANTA Theatre, NYC, March 8, 9, 10--1971," Dance Magazine, June, 1971, p. 22.

for any company, even the New York City Ballet, Clive Barnes praised the performance by the Dance Theatre of Harlem when he wrote, ". . . these young Harlem dancers sailed through it [Concerto Barocco] giving it a flavor all their own. They attack the music with a certain zest, the girls smile more, perhaps give more than say, City Ballet . . ."[1] The Broadway début of the company marked its first public performances of both Robbins' Afternoon of a Faun, with music by Debussy, and Taras' Designs for Strings, with music by Tchaikovsky. The critics were in agreement that Lydia Abarca and Clover Mathis danced Afternoon of a Faun beautifully. John T. Elson called Abarca's performance "especially entrancing" and added that, "Lithe and feathery, she exuded a quality of virginal nubility--and she displayed the eye-commanding presence that is the mark of a potential star."[2] Although Taras' Designs for Strings is more than twenty years old, Clive Barnes thinks that its theme of young love and heartbreak is still as effective as it was when first performed. He paid the Dance Theatre of Harlem a high compliment when he wrote, ". . . these Harlem dancers gave

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Ballet: Mitchell's Troupe," New York Times, March 9, 1971.

[2]John T. Elson, "Doing the Thing You Do Best," Time Magazine, March 22, 1971.

the work with a zest that recalled the original cast--including Svetlana Beriosova and Erik Bruhn--way back in 1948."[1]

Mitchell's Biosfera, Rhythmetron, and Fête Noire were well received by audiences and critics alike. The clarity of line in Biosfera, the piquancy and precision with which the dancers performed Fête Noire, and the brilliance of the entire company in Rhythmetron prompted Clive Barnes to compliment Mitchell with respect to his choreographic achievements and to predict that he had ". . . the makings of a first rate American classic ballet company."[2] The Broadway début of the Dance Theatre of Harlem seemed to be an excellent indication of the future success of the company. Each performance was "sold out," and each performance ended with cheering and the ". . . crackle of affectionate applause."[3]

For the first time in the history of the New York City Ballet, its annual benefit performance was presented in conjunction with another ballet company--the Dance Theatre of Harlem. The eighth annual spring gala was held

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[1]Barnes, "Dance: Finale in Harlem."

[2]Ibid.

[3]Hering, "Reviews: Dance Theatre of Harlem ANTA Theatre, NYC, March 8, 9, 10--1971," p. 20.

at the New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center of the Performing Arts, on May 6, 1971. George Balanchine and Arthur Mitchell served as Co-Choreographers of a new ballet entitled Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra with the original score by the Swiss composer, Rolf Liebermann. Balanchine, Artistic Director for the New York City Ballet, wished the audience for this gala to ". . . have something special--a chance to see a one-time-only performance, not just the preview of a new ballet."[1] As the title implies, the musical score by Liebermann requires the use of two orchestras. Balanchine, whose choreography usually follows the structure of the music, had considered staging the ballet on previous occasions, but he wished to use a second company to coincide with the jazz band. He needed, however, dancers who were trained in classical ballet and were also proficient in jazz dance. At an informal gathering at the home of Arthur Mitchell on September 13, 1970, Balanchine introduced the idea of the two companies' performing together.[2]

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[1]"Concert for Jazz Band and Orchestra," New York Amsterdam News, May 1, 1971.

[2]George Balanchine, informal discussion at a dinner party at the home of Arthur Mitchell and attended by the investigator, New York City, September 13, 1970.

Mitchell considered the opportunity to co-choreograph with his famous Director a great honor.[1] Especially significant to him was the fact that his Dance Theatre of Harlem was less than two years old when the invitation was extended to it to perform as co-equals with one of the world's greatest ballet companies, the New York City Ballet. To Mitchell, this demonstrated further the fact that his company had a place of prominence in the world of classical ballet.[2]

The one-time-only performance of Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra with the merging onstage of the all-white New York City Ballet and the all-black Dance Theatre of Harlem companies was, in the words of Marcia Marks, ". . . a fascinating comparison of style. . . ."[3] In the pit, Robert Irving conducted the New York City Ballet Orchestra while "Doc" Severinsen conducted the National Broadcasting Company's "Tonight Show" Orchestra upstage of the dancers. The ballet began with the Dance Theatre of Harlem's performance of the jazz sections and the New York City Ballet's performance of the symphonic interludes. Later, there was

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[1]Anna Kisselgoff, "Harlem Company to Share Stage with City Ballet," New York Times, May 3, 1971.

[2]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Progress Report of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, 1970-1971."

[3]Marcia Marks, "Reviews: New York City Ballet," Dance Magazine, July, 1971, p. 24.

an overlap in the music and in the ballet during which all forty-eight dancers--twenty-four from each company--shared the stage. The individual members of the New York City Ballet became partners of the members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem for the duration of this section. In discussing this portion of the ballet, Mitchell remarked:

> We wanted a truly integrated feeling, not a black company here and a white company there. They just happened to be black and white. That is the way it should be in the arts, and in life, period.[1]

According to Marcia Marks of Dance Magazine, this section of the ballet afforded the audience an opportunity to observe a "striking difference" in the way in which the dancers moved. She was particularly impressed with the natural way in which the black dancers performed the jazz movements while the white dancers appeared to be more comfortable with the balletic movements. She felt, however, that the closing Quartet--which was danced by Gloriana Hicks and Victor Costelli of the New York City Ballet, and by Llanchie Stevenson and Homer Bryant of the Dance Theatre of Harlem--was "nicely matched."[2]

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[1]Kisselgoff, "Harlem Company to Share Stage with City Ballet."

[2]Marks, "Reviews: New York City Ballet."

Although the critics did not consider the performance of Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra an outstanding contribution to dance, it accomplished its purpose. It was planned for the entertainment and enjoyment of those who attended the ballet benefit. The performance was designed to generate the feeling of a "block party." Following the performance, a "block party" was held on the promenade level of the New York State Theatre for all holders of tickets to the benefit gala.[1] As Marcia Marks pointed out, ". . . it was a fun show--young and lively."[2] For the Dance Theatre of Harlem, it also opened the door to a direct invitation from Doctor Rolf Liebermann, composer of the music for Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra and now the Director of the Hamburg State Opera, to undertake a two-month European tour under his personal auspices. Previous commitments precluded the acceptance of this invitation during the 1971-1972 season, but Mitchell was hopeful that such a tour might be arranged at some future date.[3]

During the month of May, Arthur Mitchell and his Dance Theatre of Harlem provided audiences in the State of

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[1]Kisselgoff, "Harlem Company to Share Stage with City Ballet."

[2]Marks, "Reviews: New York City Ballet."

[3]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Progress Report of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, 1970-1971."

Illinois with what Ann Barzel called ". . . one of the most successful dance events of the year . . ."[1] The company spent a two-week residency in the state--May 9 through May 22, 1971--under the auspices of the Illinois State Council on the Arts. The Auditorium Theatre in Chicago was the site of the first three performances of the company in Illinois. The first performance at the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago was a benefit sponsored by the local chapter of the Urban League in memory of its late leader, Whitney M. Young, Junior. Performances, lecture-demonstrations, and master classes were held in many communities in the State of Illinois. The success of the company was so phenomenal during its residency in the state that it received more requests for return engagements than its 1971-1972 touring schedule permitted.

McMillan Hall, on the campus of Columbia University in New York City, was the site on June 2, 1971, of lecture-demonstrations of future significance. On that date, over 3,000 school children attended two such performances which were open without an admission fee to the schools and community centers of the inner city. As a result of the enthusiastic response by the large numbers of students who attended, the Dance Theatre of Harlem was invited to

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[1]Ann Barzel, "News from Chicago," Dance Magazine, July, 1971, p. 15.

undertake a series of lecture-demonstrations at Columbia University during the academic year of 1971-1972. The school of the Dance Theatre of Harlem was invited also to participate in the student teaching program whereby students of dance from the University might fulfill their student-teaching assignments at the school of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. In addition, representatives from Columbia University agreed to assist Mitchell in attaining accreditation for his school.

At the top of the list of unforgettable experiences for the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem is a recent triumphant European tour. The tour began on June 25, 1971, at the Teatro Nuovo in Spoleto, Italy, with performances in conjunction with the Fourteenth Festival of Two Worlds. The company presented ten performances from the opening date through July 11, 1971. Subsequent performances during the European tour were presented at the Villa Rignon Park in Toreno, Italy, on July 14; at the Teatro Romano in Verona, Italy, from July 17 through 19; at the Teatro Romano in Florence, Italy, on July 21; at the Corre Theatre in Amsterdam, Netherlands, July 24 through 31; at the Casino in Knokke, Belgium, on August 3; and at the Kurzall Opera House in Ostende, Belgium, on August 4, 1971.[1]

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[1]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "European Performance Schedule for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, June 25-August 4, 1971," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, August, 1971.

The audiences at Spoleto responded to the Dance Theatre of Harlem with twenty-minute standing ovations and insistent, rhythmic chantings of "Bis! Bis!"[1] which is equivalent to the American "More! More!" This provided an unforgettable experience for the company which a local dance critic described as having ". . . a recognizable personality, a spirit of its own, a welcome and unusual mixture of youthful freshness and dedicated intensity."[2]

In Amsterdam, the entire engagement was "sold out," and the original schedule of performances was extended for an additional two days. These experiences, new and unique for the members of the young company, served to strengthen their confidence and to impress upon the individual dancers that their company was well "on its way" and would soon assume its place among the world's foremost ballet companies.[3]

The company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem returned to New York City to prepare for the occupancy of its new and permanent home at 466 West 152 Street in New York City during the week of September 20, 1971. What was once a

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[1]Ibid.

[2]William Weaver, "Grateful Balletomanes," International Herald Tribune, Spoleto, Italy, June 29, 1971.

[3]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "The Dance Theatre of Harlem Company Narrative, 1970-1971," prepared for submission to Foundations, from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

garage had been renovated completely and transformed into three dance studios, a workshop, a music room, a costume room, dressing rooms, offices, and lounges.[1] Above all, the Dance Theatre of Harlem had acquired a permanent home. Located in an area where the youth are constantly exposed to drug traffic, to outbursts of destructive violence, and to the absence of hope for the future, the Dance Theatre of Harlem is now in a position to offer, on a permanent basis, a functional program of uninterrupted service to the community. It is equipped to provide those persons with "talent and vigorous imagination" an opportunity to channel ". . . their energies toward activities with creative and social significance."[2]

The Dance Theatre of Harlem finished its performances for the season of 1971 with a continuation of its series of lecture-demonstrations and scheduled performances under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Arts. The lecture-demonstrations rose to a role of such significance that a "two company system" was initiated at the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Whenever the professional company

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[1]Arthur Mitchell, personal letter to the investigator, September 8, 1971.

[2]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Five Year Proposal of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

was on tour, the series of lecture-demonstrations continued with Karel Shook, Associate Artistic Director of the company, acting as host. The young scholarship students demonstrated the skills and techniques learned in the school with the same verve and professionalism as the most seasoned performers in the professional company. The administrators of the school have found that this policy of a second company serves two highly significant purposes in that it provides an uninterrupted continuation of the free "Open-House" programs for the community and it affords performance opportunities for the younger students.[1]

Arthur Mitchell's company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem is an outward manifestation of his Harlem school. In two short years it achieved international recognition. Lincoln Kirstein, one of the sternest spokesmen for the world of classical ballet, pays tribute to the Dance Theatre of Harlem in the following manner:

> To pretend that this company is comparable to older, established ones is remote from its intentions. But the efficiency, discipline, talent and promise of [the] Dance Theatre of Harlem is incontestable. Historically, it is an important step in the cultural accommodation of this country at a critical moment. Morally, it proves that the focused will, whatever the restricted sector, can triumph. This achievement stands as a metaphor

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[1]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "The Dance Theatre of Harlem Company Narrative 1970-1971," June, 1971.

> for all that is most hopeful in the United States today. These performers are, first of all, dancers trained in the classic school. Secondarily, they derive from the ghetto, the inner city of Harlem, New York. Incidentally, they are black. But let it be remembered that they are first, last and all the time artists, and this does the more honor to their race.[1]

The Dance Theatre of Harlem is indeed a source of pride to the community in which it is nurtured. It has moved easily from one engagement to another, enjoying remarkable success. Its outstanding reception and critical acclaim have served to bind together the young members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem and to make them increasingly determined to foster pride in and an artistic appreciation of the ballet in the community of Harlem.

A Look at the Mature Artist and at the Uniqueness of His Project

Arthur Mitchell has envisioned and developed a unique project in Harlem. Founded upon the premise that all children should be given an equal opportunity to reach their own levels of artistic performance and to make their own contributions to society, it is unique in that Mitchell chose one of the world's best known ghetto areas as his locale for "taking dance to the people." For years the

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[1]Lincoln Kirstein, Souvenir Program, Festival di Spoleto, Spoleto, Italy, June, 1971.

cry, "give us the opportunity," has resounded through the streets of the ghettos, and now, in Harlem, Mitchell provides that opportunity through his own areas of specialization--love, hard work, and the art of dance.

Mitchell is a man of extraordinary dedication and stamina. Not only is he an eloquent performer, but he is also at one and the same time an energetic teacher, a sensitive choreographer, a dynamic director-businessman, and a dependable friend and father-image. He fulfills each of his roles with ease and personal aplomb--characteristics which have won him the reputation of having ". . . one of the sunniest dispositions in the ballet business."[1]

Mitchell loves to teach and he adores children. He considers his career as a performer and his role as a teacher complementary to each other and prefers not to separate the two. In this regard, he told Joan Barthel:

> I love working with the kids, and every time I work with them I learn more. Through teaching I am also learning and growing, and I am doing choreography [and] directing. It enhances my dancing, makes me more aware. A dancer must be aware.[2]

Long before the Harlem project developed, Mitchell devoted much of his time and attention to the encouragement of

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[1]Hughes, "Without Regard for Color."

[2]Barthel, "When Mitchell Dreams, He Dreams Big."

black children to emulate his success in the ballet.[1] He now finds that the series of lecture-demonstrations provides one of the most exciting methods of reaching the children both in terms of reaching vast audiences and of engendering increased interest in the activities of the Dance Theatre of Harlem.[2] He conducts the programs with the greatest of ease and excites his young audiences to the point of genuine involvement--the type of involvement which has prompted letters of appreciation from these young members of his audiences containing expressions such as:

> . . . at first I thought it was all a big joke and expected to fall asleep. [After taking our seats in the auditorium,] I thought I might watch [the ballet] just for kicks but I was shocked when I found out how interesting and good it was . . . . I will never knock a ballet again unless I see it and make sure I do not like it.[3]

Arthur Mitchell, the artist, states that he is basically a child at heart and finds it very easy, therefore, to communicate with those who are young. His constant desire is to give freely of what he has--his art--to provide gifted children with the opportunity for the early

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[1]Hughes, "Without Regard for Color."

[2]The Dance Theatre of Harlem presented ninety-eight lecture-demonstrations during the 1969-1970 season and on January 22, 1971, performed for 7,589 students at the Mime and Masque Theatre for Youth, Incorporated, Washington, D. C.

[3]Robert Zsilaveth, personal letter to Arthur Mitchell, Schull School, Perth Amboy, New Jersey, March 18, 1970.

training requisite for the development of excellence.[1] Mitchell is as successful at the level of his professional company as he is with the children enrolled in his school. He radiates an energetic force which makes him a teacher par excellence, a force which Rodney Swann, a member of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, explains in these words:

> Arthur is more than a classroom teacher. It is obvious that his main mission in life is to serve others. He transmits so much drive and energy--like body heat--that it affects everyone around him. It makes them [his students] wish to learn everything that he has to teach.[1]

Mitchell brings out the individual potentialities in each member of his company. The dancers find it very exciting that, under his tutelage, they are making progress at an astonishing rate. Gerald Banks says, ". . . he makes you perform movements that you never realized were possible. You try things simply because he wants you to do so and they always work--it is fantastic."[3]

According to Cassandra Phifer, the very young dancers have a tendency to think that Mitchell is sometimes insensitive to their feelings.[4] He often finds it necessary

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[1]Geri Trotta, "Not to Be Missed," Harper's Bazaar, December, 1970, p. 130.

[2]Rodney Swann, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 22, 1970.

[3]Banks, personal interview, August 21, 1970.

[4]Cassandra Phifer, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 21, 1970.

to be extremely personal in his open criticisms, a fact which seventeen-year-old Edward Moore explains with authority:

> As a teacher, he has to have discipline. One way of accomplishing this is by making criticisms in the group. If he does it privately, it will probably go in one ear and out the other. If he criticizes out in the open, it will cause embarrassment and invariably get the job done.[1]

Once they are members of the professional dance company, Arthur Mitchell drives his dancers toward the development of the same degree of excellence which he has achieved as a performer. He seeks for them that degree of excellence which brought the Russians to their feet in 1958, and caused them to single him out from among those comprising the New York City Ballet, to throw flowers at his feet as they chanted in cadence with their applause, "Mit-chell, Mit-chell, Mit-chell." He seeks for them that degree of excellence to which Lincoln Kirstein referred when he said, "Why has Arthur Mitchell been the only successful black ballet dancer thus far? Because he understands elegance--no, Arthur Mitchell <u>is</u> elegance."[2]

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[1]Edward Moore, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 21, 1970.

[2]Lincoln Kirstein, personal interview held in New York City, September 9, 1970.

As a teacher, Mitchell concentrates upon bringing much more than superior technique to the movements of his dancers. He works diligently with the upper part of the body because he feels that this section of the anatomy gives life to the dancing.[1] He is also a fanatic with respect to details and detects the slightest misalignment of any part of the body.[2] Persons who have watched Mitchell teach a lesson or who have seen his company perform are equally impressed with his dedication to his art and his expertise in inculcating it in those under his tutelage. Joan Barthel describes him as being ". . . as tough on himself as he is on the dancers." She relates the following scene which she observed in the studio:

> . . . suddenly he flings himself down on his stomach, his face within two inches of somebody's foot, and intently scrutinizes the movement. "That's IT!" he yells happily. "Good girl!"[3]

An excerpt from an unsigned article in the Lakeview Journal expresses the idea which is conveyed upon viewing a performance of Arthur Mitchell's dancers:

> Individually and collectively, the dancers reflect Mr. Mitchell's rigorous and disciplined training in classical ballet, which he believes every

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[1]Jewel Melchoir, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 21, 1970.

[2]Stevenson, personal interview, August 21, 1970.

[3]Barthel, "When Mitchell Dreams, He Dreams Big."

> professional dancer should have as a basic technique. It is the technique upon which he also builds his choreographic works.[1]

The older dancers--Walter Raines, Llanchie Stevenson, and Gerald Banks--find it difficult to describe their teacher. They invariably become very emotional and refer to him as "phenomenal," "a genius," "fabulous," and "exciting." Walter Raines feels that there is nothing which Mitchell does not know about classical dance or about the human body.[2] For Llanchie Stevenson, Mitchell is the source of the spirit and drive which she needs to continue dancing. She says, "I have never had a teacher as exciting as Arthur--I really feel that I cannot dance without him now."[3] Gerald Banks states "I like him so much and I will do anything for him--anything."[4]

The dancers find Mitchell's choreography unique and exhilarating. They find it so because it combines all idioms of dance and is executed in the classical style.[5]

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[1] "Harlem Dance Theatre at Pillow," The Lakeview Journal Vacation Supplement, August 20, 1970.

[2] Walter Raines, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 21, 1970.

[3] Stevenson, personal interview, August 21, 1970.

[4] Banks, personal interview, August 21, 1970.

[5] Clover Mathis, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 22, 1970.

Referring again to the unsigned article in the Lakeview Journal, the author supported the opinion of the dancers in comments relevant to provision of the opportunity to view the idioms of ballet, ethnological, and modern dance under the same roof at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, each year. Specific reference to the Dance Theatre of Harlem follows:

> The program this week is a "typical" one presenting a combination of these three dance forms [ballet, ethnologic, and modern]. It is uncommon in that all the works are danced by one company--the Dance Theatre of Harlem.[1]

Using the classical technique and choreographing in contemporary style, Mitchell is always sensitive to the special qualifies and abilities of each of his dancers. In his choreography, he presents each dancer to his own best advantage. To achieve this, he either choreographs to emphasize the fortes of the dancer or he pushes him to the point of overcoming any inadequacies.[2]

The business affairs of the Dance Theatre of Harlem are directed with the same verve as are the artistic aspects of the organization. To assist him with this task, Mitchell has assembled an excellent administrative staff. Because

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[1] "Harlem Dance Theatre at Pillow," The Lakeview Journal Vacation Supplement, August 20, 1970.

[2] Stevenson, personal interview, August 21, 1970.

his project is so volatile, however, Mitchell personally oversees every decision concerning the Dance Theatre of Harlem, monetary or otherwise. He has learned to make schedules and to write reports, to keep books and to balance budgets, but perhaps, most important of all, with the assistance of his Treasurer and Financial Consultant, Charles DeRose, he has learned how to make a non-profit organization finish the fiscal year with its figures "in the black."[1]

Arthur Mitchell defies the legendary belief that artists are temperamental, egocentric, and lacking in compassion for humanity inasmuch as his altruism is exemplified daily. As a friend and father-image, he watches dutifully over everyone associated with the Dance Theatre of Harlem as if he or she were indeed his own child. He is asked often whether or not he is married--a question to which he replies laughingly, "No, but I have thirty-one children." He is referring not only to the dancers but to his entire administrative and production staff. His concern for the younger members of the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem is well-founded as he has teenage girls from as far away from home as Atlanta, Georgia, and Kansas City, Kansas. Mitchell locates suitable housing for his out-of-town

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[1]DeRose, personal interview, January 15, 1971.

dancers, and arranges for them to attend the Professional Children's School along with the other young members of the company and those comprising his apprentice group. It is not feasible for the school-age members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem to enroll in public school because the rigors of their dance studies present a conflict with the regular school schedule. The Dance Theatre of Harlem pays the full tuition of all of its students who attend the Professional Children's School (a private preparatory school in New York City with its curriculum designed to meet the needs of boys and girls who are professional performers[1]). During the school year of 1970-1971, fourteen students from the Dance Theatre of Harlem attended the Professional Children's School, three of whom graduated on June 5, 1971. Mitchell also arranges tutorial services for those students with academic deficiencies. This practice has proved thoroughly rewarding inasmuch as, among his students, the former high school drop-out has returned to his studies with improved grades, and the former "D" student has raised his average to a "B+".[2]

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[1]Pamela Jones, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 21, 1970.

[2]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated: History of the School," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

Arthur Mitchell's compassion is not limited to the official members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Isaiah Ruffin, part-time Registrar at the Dance Theatre of Harlem, relates the following story from the days when he served as the Registrar at the Harlem School of the Arts:

> One day a little boy came into the school and told me he wanted to dance. I explained that it would cost ten dollars for the course. He did not have ten dollars and neither would he go away. Arthur, sensing that something was amiss, came up and invited the youngster in to watch the class. Very shortly the boy returned, excitedly waving his ten dollar bill, and registered for the summer course.[1]

The source of his fee was not difficult for Ruffin to surmise! DeRose, Treasurer and Financial Consultant of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, summarizes the concern beyond the call of duty which Mitchell as an indefatigable artist has for the Dance Theatre of Harlem when he says, "Just as a father would do, Arthur does not eat until everyone there is fed; he does not sleep until everyone else is in bed."[2]

Another admirable characteristic of the Dance Theatre of Harlem is that Mitchell's dancers care about each other. They maintain a familial atmosphere and their relationships are based upon love for each other. During performances, those who are not dancing watch each dance

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[1]Isaiah Ruffin, informal discussion with the investigator during a performance of the Dance Theatre of Harlem at the Guggenheim Museum, New York City, January 8, 1971.

[2]DeRose, personal interview, January 15, 1971.

from the wings in order to offer those performing encouragement, instruction, moral--and, at times--physical--support. They learn each other's dancing roles, not to achieve personal glory, but to be ready to substitute in the event that they are needed. Mitchell recalls that, as he watched the performance from the audience one day, Samuel Smalls made an exit with one of the girls and Gerald Banks re-entered with her. Upon going backstage, he found that Smalls had suffered a dislocated shoulder during the dance and that Banks had simply stepped into the role, completely unrehearsed. The transition from one dancer to the other was so smooth that it was wholly undetected by the audience. Most of the dancers feel that, in the Dance Theatre of Harlem, they have found their place in life. They learn all about the professional world of dance, and yet, they maintain a concern for humanity.[1] Their lives have taken on a new purpose; they feel that they are needed and that they belong.[2] Shiela Rohan explains this feeling in the following manner:

> Working with the company means working with your mind and heart as well as your body. Sometimes

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[1]Virginia Johnson, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 22, 1970.

[2]Samuel Smalls, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 22, 1970.

> it is awfully frustrating and you feel that it is "do or die," but we all complement each other and give each other strength. We have a sisterhood and a brotherhood that is equally as strong as that which exists in my own home. I am very emotionally involved with this company--sometimes it can get to be a bit much--but I need it.[1]

Arthur Mitchell's project is unique in that he endeavors to provide through it, every interested child with the opportunity to study classical ballet. Believing that most individuals do not desire gifts which resemble charity, the Dance Theatre of Harlem charges a small fee for those who can afford to pay for their classes. For those who cannot afford to do so, arrangements are made through foundation monies for their lessons. Mitchell's dream precludes denial of anyone who wishes to study dance.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique in that it is the only successful all-black classical ballet company ever to exist.[2] In addition, it has scaled all of the barriers which for years have excluded black dancers with the physical requisites from classical ballet. According to established customs, it takes ten years to become a classical dancer--a discouraging factor for most blacks who

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[1]Shiela Rohan, personal interview held in Lee, Massachusetts, August 22, 1970.

[2]In 1971, when these data were collected, Mitchell's dance company was comprised of blacks only. Today, however, the members are predominantly black but the dance company is integrated.

cannot endure the economic pressures of such a long period of study. Arthur Mitchell has produced his dancers in two years. He felt the necessity to produce professional dancers with great rapidity in order to establish a company of young black dancers through which they might earn their livelihoods. In Mitchell's own words, "The time for this company is now--not ten years hence."

The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique in its youth. Mitchell believes that the dancers have no preconceived idea of what is "arty," classical, right, or wrong. They are just a group of young persons who love to perform, and they do so with their hearts and souls. He feels that it is incredible in this day of youthful indecision that these young dancers have already made their choices and have dedicated their lives to their art. Whether or not they are the greatest dancers in the world is irrelevant; he believes that, historically, the Dance Theatre of Harlem will prove of worldwide significance.

That Mitchell would become a leader of youth was evident early in his career. He has always tried to help children by "getting them off the street" through involvement in dance.[1] Hanne-Marie Conforti, former ballerina

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[1]Hanne-Marie Conforti, personal letter to the investigator, March 13, 1971.

with the New York City Ballet and a close friend of Mitchell's since 1961, has the following to say of this artist, "Arthur's love for children always indicated the eventual course of his life . . . I personally thought that he would develop his own private United Nations."[1]

The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique in that it has Arthur Mitchell as its leader. According to Tanaquil LeClerq, ". . . he generates a contagious energy; he is persistent and stubborn--both admirable traits requisite to success."[2] He possesses a power which attracts a wide variety of individuals to him and, once they are touched by him, their lives assume a sense of direction which they formerly lacked. According to Conforti,

> Whatever Arthur has done in his professional or private life--people are drawn to him; they always want to touch him. He is totally self-sufficient in mind and body. He knows what he wants and he waits for it--more importantly, he gets it. He is very intuitive and has an uncanny way of always being right. Arthur is never down--he is full of love and courage.[3]

Lorenzo James, a long-time friend of Mitchell's, is convinced that the secret of Mitchell's success is his deep

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] Tanaquil LeClerq, personal interview held in New York City, July 10, 1970.

[3] Conforti, personal letter to the investigator, March 13, 1971.

and all-pervading spirituality.[1] Charles DeRose echoes this conviction of James' and elaborates upon it in the following manner:

> To do what Mitchell has done takes inhuman strength and will-power. There is only one source that could give him this additional strength and energy, and that is his God--to whom he is dedicatedly devout.[2]

For his outstanding dedication to his unique project, Arthur Mitchell was honored by being the recipient of the Twentieth Annual Capezio Dance Award. The formal presentation of the award took place at the St. Regis Hotel in New York City on May 26, 1971.[3] The June, 1971, issue of Dance Magazine contained the following announcement.

> To Arthur Mitchell
> The Twentieth Annual Capezio Dance Award
>
> One could honor Arthur Mitchell for his extraordinarily accomplished performing as a ballet star in a variety of challenging roles seen and admired over the years. As a human being and a leader in the world of dance, one also honors him for representing a constantly positive force in a sometimes negative world. His very newest accomplishment, for which we especially honor him today, is the creation, and building to a remarkable degree of professionalism, of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the first permanent black classical ballet troupe in history, a young and vital company which he and his associate, Karel Shook, have guided (in classroom,

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[1]Lorenzo James, personal interview held in New York City, August 2, 1970.

[2]DeRose, personal interview, January 15, 1971.

[3]"Presstime News," Dance Magazine, June, 1971, p. 7.

rehearsal, and on stage) to the degree that it now serves not only a community but also the world at large.[1]

Future Plans for Arthur Mitchell and the Dance Theatre of Harlem

As he views the future, Arthur Mitchell envisions the complete fulfillment of his dream. In 1971, the Dance Theatre of Harlem moved into its new facility at 466 West 152 Street in Harlem. The curriculum at the school, which comprises a basic core of classical ballet, ethnological, and modern dance idioms, will be broadened to include tap dance, additional ethnological forms such as authentic African and Spanish dance as well as the traditional national and folk dances of various countries.

In addition to the encouragement of young black choreographers, designers, and composers at the new school, Mitchell hopes that the addition to the curriculum of a course in acting will serve to encourage the development of young black actors and playwrights. He plans to develop this class as a natural outgrowth of the already established classes in dramatic movement and improvisation, and to co-ordinate it with a Dance Workshop which will provide a performance vehicle for students of all ages.[2]

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[1] Advertisement, "Capezio," Dance Magazine, June, 1971, p. 7.

[2] The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Five Year Proposal of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated," June, 1971.

The present Department of Music will be expanded with the intention of stimulating the interest and curiosity of the students in the area of classical music. Classes in percussion, orchestra, wind instruments, and choral singing will be added to the curriculum. As an additional feature, a portion of the transportation budget will be used to provide the students with the necessary means to attend concerts presented by classical musical artists as well as performances by other recognized dance companies.

Perhaps Mitchell's most ambitious plan for the Dance Theatre of Harlem is the establishment of a fully accredited academic school. A fifty-year lease has been acquired from the State of New York on the property at 468 West 152 Street, directly adjacent to the present home of the organization. Mitchell is taking the necessary steps to have erected on this property a school-dormitory building to house additional music studios and classroom facilities as well as housing accommodations for out-of-town students. The administrators of the Dance Theatre of Harlem are working closely with representatives from Columbia University in order to ascertain that the proposed school meets the standards for accreditation by the State of New York. The projected opening date for the additional facility is September of 1973.[1]

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[1] *Ibid*.

Plans for the performing company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem project an expansion of its repertoire to include the works of many other choreographers. In recognition of the excellence of the company of young black dancers, George Balanchine has granted performance rights of Agon--the ballet which brought Arthur Mitchell to the forefront of the New York City Ballet--to the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Other projected additions to the repertoire during the coming season include Lester Horton's The Beloved, Doris Humphrey's The Shakers and Laurencia Pas d'Action, and Ruth Page's Carmen. The Dance Theatre of Harlem has commissioned new ballets to be created by black choreographers, Donald McKayle and Louis Johnson, and has made application to the National Endowment for the Arts for a grant to create a new jazz ballet to an original musical score by the black composer-arranger-director, Quincy Jones.[1] Foundational support is being sought to underwrite the production costs of future ballets which will be added to the repertoire.

Beginning with the 1971-1972 season, the Dance Theatre of Harlem expanded its performance schedule to include a number of benefits to aid the socially and

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[1]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Progress Report of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated," June, 1971.

economically deprived individuals. A New York City benefit performance in the memory of Whitney M. Young, Junior, under the sponsorship of the New York City Branch of the Urban League, was scheduled for the early autumn. In December, a performance for the benefit of Reality House in New York City was planned.[1]

In conjunction with the Capital Cities Broadcasting System, plans were being made to film a Television Special of the Dance Theatre of Harlem in performance in the National Cathedral in Washington, D. C. Milton A. Fruchtman, who received international critical acclaim for his direction of "The Secret of Michelangelo--Everyman's Dream," was selected to direct the program.[2]

Arthur Mitchell expected to become personally involved in an increasing number of symposiums and master classes in the immediate future. During the academic year of 1970-1971, he had conducted five symposiums on black dance and twenty-three master classes[3] which have resulted in innumerable requests for his services at colleges and universities throughout the United States during 1971-1972.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Symposiums and Master Classes Conducted by Arthur Mitchell, October 22, 1970-May 21, 1971," from the files of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, June, 1971.

Because of his interest in various religions and his fascination with the fertile religious atmosphere which he found in Brazil, Mitchell has entertained the idea of writing a book as soon as time permits him to do so. In so doing, he wishes to describe the similarities of the gods to whom homage is paid in different countries. He readily points out that the major difference, in his opinion, may be found in the naming of these gods only. He further believes that most religions are based upon tenets or creeds which parallel closely those professed by Christians.

With respect to his own future plans as a performing artist, Arthur Mitchell proposes to continue dancing with the New York City Ballet whenever his schedule permits him to do so, and to direct the Dance Theatre of Harlem which epitomizes his lifetime commitment. Although this organization is basically black and located in a black community, the Dance Theatre of Harlem will continue to exist for all individuals in keeping with Mitchell's belief that: "The enrichment, hope, and belief in the natural dignity of men that the arts bring into a person's life, regardless of his economic or social status, must be available to everyone in superior manifestation."[1] Mitchell further states that,

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[1]The Dance Theatre of Harlem, "Five Year Proposal of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated," June, 1971.

". . . for everyone who is interested, there is a place for him at the Dance Theatre of Harlem." Of special importance is the fact that Arthur Mitchell feels the need to continue to help the children--all children--and to provide them with opportunities to do something constructive with their lives. He will provide even more opportunities in the future than in the past because of the permanent location of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Although Mitchell's project may appear to be overly ambitious, it is proving to be economical, both financially and humanistically. The Dance Theatre of Harlem adheres to the premise that:

> It is much less costly to habilitate than to rehabilitate; it is more economical to prevent dangerous wounds than to heal them; it is better to watch a young dancer, or listen to a singer, than it is to mourn the lifeless body of a young victim of an overdose.[1]

According to Arthur Mitchell, Harlem was once "the Mecca of the Arts" in the United States and he is ". . . just bringing it back home where it all began."[2] The actions of this artist "speak louder than words" and, if his past achievements are any indication of his future achievements, then Charles DeRose adequately describes this enterprising and

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Arthur Mitchell, personal interview, January 14, 1971.

dedicated artist when he states that "Arthur Mitchell is more than an artistic minister; he is a 'Messiah' of hope."[1]

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[1]DeRose, personal interview, January 15, 1971.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY: ARTHUR MITCHELL, BLACK HARLEM'S ARTISTIC MESSIAH

Arthur Adams Mitchell, Junior, was born the second child of Willie Mae Hearns and Arthur Adams Mitchell, Senior, on March 27, 1934, in New York City. His parents, both from Savannah, Georgia, had moved to the community of Harlem in New York City sixteen years prior to his birth. Although Arthur, Junior, was fourteen years younger than his sister, Frances Marie, within the next four years the Mitchell family increased appreciably with the birth of Charles William, Laura Mae, Herbert Jerald, and Shirley Elizabeth, respectively.

Mr. Mitchell was employed as a riveter, but he was equally adept at carpentry, plumbing, and automotive mechanics--additional aptitudes which were called upon frequently to supplement the family income. Periodically, he found it necessary to move the family residence further uptown in order to be nearer to his work or to find a location where he could maintain a workshop in the basement of his home.

Arthur Mitchell, Junior, entered the public elementary school on 139th Street between Seventh and Lenox Avenue at four years of age. Showing his independence at this early age, he chose to follow the kindergarten children into class each day rather than to remain on the playground of the schoolyard where his mother had placed him. His first teacher was a young white girl who provided for her students' participation in many varied and interesting activities. Arthur chose to play the maracas with the rhythm band and thus began his official participation in a musical environment.

As the eldest son, Arthur assumed economic responsibility and independence at an early age. When he was seven or eight years old, he sold newspapers and shined shoes; when he was twelve years old, he had his first "real" job where he was actually on the payroll in the neighborhood butcher shop. Employment in the butcher shop set the stage for what was to become an obligatory pattern of young Arthur's life. From the very beginning, the money which Arthur earned was turned over to his mother to supplement the family budget. As he grew older, the burden of economic responsibility grew heavier and heavier until it was completely his own at the age of fifteen when Arthur Mitchell, Senior, became ill.

Because young Arthur had supplemented the family income from the time that he was quite young, he had little time for socializing outside of his home. The Mitchell family was comprised of individuals who, despite distinctive personalities, got along with each other unusually well. This uniquely harmonious situation was particularly admirable with five children in a small apartment in Harlem. During his junior high school years, however, Arthur sang in the Convent Avenue Baptist Church Choir and he ". . . occasionally shot a few baskets" in the park during his rare moments of leisure. As he grew older, he chose to spend these free moments in solitude, enjoying his daily cone of ice cream and reading a book in a small room situated in the center of the apartment. His mother, who had hoped that her eldest son would become a physician, soon found out that these books were about history.

Arthur was in the second grade when his family moved into an apartment on 143rd Street where his father was employed as the superintendent of the building. Arthur, Junior, attended Public School 186 for the remainder of his elementary school years and Public School 143 from grades seven through nine. His musical interests again were brought to the foreground during his junior high school years. He joined the Police Athletic League Glee Club at

the age of ten and thus began his training in the arts. He recalls that he received no formal education in dance during his early years; he was, in fact, the only member of his family even remotely interested in the theatre. The extent of his early dance exposure was a series of tap dance lessons in 1944 when he was ten years of age.

While still enrolled in junior high school, Arthur's life assumed a new direction as the result of his participation in a general party held at the end of the school term. His guidance teacher noticed his "hamming it up" with one of the girls and recognized that he possessed a definite talent in dance. She began immediately the procedures necessary to obtain for Arthur a scholarship to the High School of Performing Arts. After securing the applications for admission, Arthur learned that he would have to prepare a three-minute dance routine for an audition as a part of the admission procedures. With no formal training in dance, Arthur sought the help of Tom Nip, an old black vaudevillian who taught him a tap dance routine to "Stepping Out With My Baby." His number was quite different from those of others auditioning for scholarships who were performing classical ballet studies or intense modern dance compositions. In spite of his unorthodox performance, however, he was accepted although he feels that it was probably because the School needed male dancers.

Arthur Mitchell entered the High School of Performing Arts in the fall of 1949 with a major sequence in modern dance. Although Nanette Charisse, an instructor at the School, pointed out repeatedly that he was a "ballet dancer gone wrong," he disagreed with her because he had become deeply enamoured with modern dance and felt that he had a "message to the world." His first year at the High School of Performing Arts was not an easy one. In fact, near the end of the year, one of his teachers suggested that he give up dance altogether because he lacked the flexibility and the physical characteristics of a dancer. Her very words motivated this little black boy from Harlem to decide not only to become a dancer, but to become one of the best dancers in the world.

Concurrent with his professional preparation, Arthur Mitchell launched his professional career. He joined the Repertory Dance Company of the High School of Performing Arts where he worked with Natanya Neumann and Shirley Broughton. In addition to performing, he began experimenting with choreography. Although he choreographed a solo for himself entitled Primitive Study in 1957, his primary interest was directed toward becoming a performing artist. He danced, therefore, with several modern dancers who are noted today for their outstanding works. Among

these artists are Donald McKayle, John Butler, Louis Johnson, Sophie Maslow, and Anna Sokolow.

During Arthur's senior year in high school, he had the good fortune of making his Broadway début as an angel in the revival of Four Saints in Three Acts, an opera with text by Gertrude Stein and music by Virgil Thomson. Originally presented in 1934, the opera was revived for a Broadway season at the American National Theatre and Academy during the spring of 1952. Following the Broadway season, the cast left for Paris, France, to represent the United States in the International Festival of the Arts. For Arthur Mitchell, his participation in Four Saints in Three Acts affords many meaningful memories. It not only marked his first professional appearances but also his Broadway début, his first real travel experience, the romantic excitement of Paris, and the opportunity to meet and work with such outstanding personalities as Rawn Spearman, Billy Daniel, Leontyne Price, Louis Johnson, and the producer of the show, Gertrude Linder Reiner.

Mitchell returned from Paris, proud and happy, to receive his certificate in modern dance from the High School of Performing Arts. Upon graduation, he became the first male to receive the Dance Award from the School. Following his graduation, he was faced with the most important

decision of his career--which of two scholarships to accept. He was offered a scholarship to Bennington College which would afford him the opportunity to complete a college degree; and he was offered a scholarship to the School of American Ballet which would enable him to attend the School belonging to one of the world's most famous ballet companies--the New York City Ballet. After much deliberation, Arthur decided that, if he could utilize his unique qualities as a black dancer--a sense of rhythm, style, and a characteristic way of moving--and combine them with the discipline and training of classical ballet, he would be in a class totally different from that of any other dancer. Having made this decision, he accepted the scholarship to the School of American Ballet and began his work toward becoming a performing artist in classical ballet.

Shortly after his enrollment in the School of American Ballet, Mitchell met and began studying with Karel Shook, a superb Ballet-Master then teaching at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts in New York City. This meeting was an exciting stroke of good luck for Arthur Mitchell because Shook developed a special interest in the young student and became, therefore, his friend and advisor as well as his teacher.

At the time that Mitchell began his association with Shook, he was eighteen years of age and had assumed

full responsibility for the support of his mother and four sisters and brothers. Because his schedule included classes at both the School of American Ballet and the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts, he needed employment which would not interfere with his total dedication to dance. This problem was quickly resolved for him because Dunham's School closed soon after Mitchell enrolled in it, and Shook opened his own Studio of Dance Arts. There, in the Studio of Dance Arts, Mitchell was able to study and to teach dance in a stimulating environment which attracted such extraordinary students as Mary Hinkson, Matt Turney, Geoffrey Holder, and Alvin Ailey. With tap dance, modern dance, and ethnological forms of dance in his background, Mitchell was, at the age of eighteen, deeply immersed in his study of classical ballet.

In addition to his intensive schedule of study, Mitchell still danced with anyone who asked him to perform regardless of the dance idiom entailed. Many times he was not reimbursed for his performances, but it was the experience which he sought and valued. During this period, Mitchell received special critical acclaim for his performances in Shirley Broughton's Quartet, Louis Johnson's Lament, Donald McKayle's Games, The Street, and Nocturne, William Dollar's Concerto, and Hubert Farrington's Out of

Eden. He also performed with the New Dance Group which afforded him the opportunity to meet, work, and study with other outstanding dance personalities--Mary Anthony, Joseph Gifford, Daniel Nagrin, Eve Gentry, Ethel Winter, and William Bales.

During June of 1956, Arthur Mitchell was the only black performer in a cast of 200 in the Guy Lombardo production of Arabian Nights. The show was presented at the famous Jones Beach Marine Theatre at Wantagh, New York. Lombardo was so impressed with Mitchell's performance in the sword dance that he began integrating his future casts.

After three years of study at the School of American Ballet, Mitchell made his second appearance on Broadway. He danced in the Truman Capote-Harold Arlen musical House of Flowers, where he worked with such exceptional black artists as Pearl Bailey, Dianne Carroll, Geoffrey Holder, Alvin Ailey, Carmen de Lavallade, Frederick O'Neal, and Josephine Premice. During the three-month run of House of Flowers on Broadway, Mitchell was invited by John Butler to join his newly formed John Butler American Dance Theatre which was then making preparations for a European tour. After three years of study at the School of American Ballet associated with the New York City Ballet, Mitchell's optimism concerning becoming a member of that famous company

had begun to fade. He accepted, therefore, John Butler's invitation to join his company.

Before embarking upon its European tour, the John Butler American Dance Theatre presented as many performances in the United States as possible. Important on the list was its participation in a three-week presentation of contemporary dance in the City of New York at the American National Theatre and Academy in May of 1955. Mitchell was again on Broadway, dancing in Butler's Three Promenades With the Lord. In July of the same year, the company appeared at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, where Mitchell danced in Butler's Maloccio and Clowns and Angels.

Initially, the John Butler American Dance Theatre went to Europe to participate in the Festival Internationale Del Balletto at the Piccolo Theatre in Geneva during the midsummer of 1955. Following the Festival performance, the company "barnstormed" over Europe, securing engagements on the merits of previous performances. The company was often without work, and Mitchell encountered his first real taste of the less than glamorous life and of the hardships often experienced by touring companies. Although many days were lean ones from a materialistic point of view, the rewards of the experience were far-reaching. Mitchell did not

realize it at the time, but he was receiving invaluable training for his eventual role as director of his own dance company.

While Arthur Mitchell was touring Europe during the summer of 1955 with the John Butler American Dance Theatre, he received a cable offering him a position as a permanent member of the New York City Ballet. Although Butler's company was in financial trouble when Mitchell was invited to join the New York City Ballet, he was again faced with a delicate decision concerning his future--whether to finish the tour with John Butler and his company or to return to New York City and fulfill his own dream of becoming a classical dancer. This was a difficult decision for Mitchell to make because he has always accepted completely the obligation of fulfilling his commitments. After giving the matter much thought, he finally decided that he should choose advantageously with respect to his own future as a professional dancer. He returned, therefore, to New York City to become the first black dancer to serve as a permanent member of a major ballet company in the United States.

Although Arthur Mitchell joined the New York City Ballet as a member of the Corps de Ballet, during the first week of his opening season with the Ballet, he experienced

an unexpected début as a featured dancer. George Balanchine cast him in the Fourth Movement of Western Symphony as the partner of Tanaquil LeClerq, a prima ballerina with the company at that time. Because Mitchell wished to be recognized only on the basis of his merits as a dancer, no advance notices pointing out the fact that he was black were released. The reaction of the audience at Mitchell's first performance with the New York City Ballet was somewhat dramatic with such audible comments as "My God, they have got a Nigger in the company," and ". . . he's not bad at all" being heard onstage during the performances. Once the initial shock of his being black had been overcome by the audience, however, Mitchell was judged solely from the standpoint of his ability as a dancer which had been his original desire.

In addition to Western Symphony, Mitchell danced in Jerome Robbins' Fanfare and Pied Piper during the first week of his opening season with the New York City Ballet. For all of his performances, he received complimentary reviews--a response which was highly pleasing to his famous Director, George Balanchine. Balanchine had observed that Mitchell had the physical qualifications of a classical dancer when the youth first came to the School of American Ballet to study. Being a patient man, however, the Director

waited for Mitchell to prove to him that he wished to dance for the right reasons--for Balanchine's pleasure and for the pleasure of the audience--rather than for his own pleasure.

During the late summer of 1956, Arthur Mitchell made his first European tour with the New York City Ballet. Although he had been to Europe with John Butler, this was his first tour with a large dance company. He envisioned a fictionalized, fairy-tale existence in his day-dreams only to awaken to the unpleasant task of packing, moving, and always searching for inexpensive places in which to live. Many of these touring experiences were lonely ones for Mitchell as the only black person in the company, and he had long hours of time in which to reflect about his future. It was in Europe, on this particular tour, that Mitchell decided that his "off-stage" role with the New York City Ballet would have to be as important as any role which he might perform onstage. He resolved that, regardless of the personal sacrifices entailed, a black person must remain in ballet in the United States so that aspiring young black dancers might have someone about whom to say, "Well, if he made it, so can I."

During the summer of 1957, the opera entitled The Unicorn, The Gorgon and the Manticore, written by Gian

Carlo Menotti, choreographed by John Butler, and performed by twelve dancers from the New York City Ballet, provided Mitchell with another exciting performing experience. He danced the role of the Unicorn in a manner which Ann Barzel, noted Dance Critic in Chicago, described as "most evocative" in a ballet which was an intriguing theatrical experience.

Arthur Mitchell considers the year of 1957 as one of the high points in his career with the New York City Ballet. Balanchine choreographed Agon to the music of Stravinsky as the third of a trilogy of ballets which he had begun in 1928 with the ballet Apollo, and continued in 1948 with the ballet Orpheus. Mitchell was selected for the leading role and danced the only pas de deux included in the three-part ballet--a pas de deux created especially for him. His partner was Diana Adams in the official première of the Stravinsky-Balanchine ballet on December 1, 1957. Of the pas de deux danced by Mitchell and Adams, the critics as a whole had nothing but praise in their respective reviews.

From mid-April through mid-August of 1958, Arthur Mitchell toured again with the New York City Ballet, performing in Japan, the Philippine Islands, and Australia. During this tour, Mitchell's assignments included leading roles in Stars and Stripes, Bourrée Fantasque, and The Four

Temperaments. Of these ballets, his most exciting role was that of Phlegmatic in The Four Temperaments. This role was particularly enjoyable to him because it is necessary for the dancer to portray dramatic quality through classical movement. For his performances of this role, Mitchell received enthusiastic critical acclaim. He was also the subject of many complimentary newspaper articles in Sydney, Australia, where the company spent the greater portion of the tour.

In December of 1959, Mitchell danced his first wholly dramatic role, that of Jason in Birgit Cullberg's ballet entitled Medea. For him, the leading male role in this dramatic and tragic ballet was a challenge because it requires the dancer to project a strong, heavy quality. Initially the critics thought the dancing lacked dramatic style, a criticism which Mitchell took seriously as he worked to develop increasing intensity in his style of dancing and made a dedicated effort to discover all of the dramatic aspects of the part.

In the spring of 1960, Balanchine asked Mitchell to find a black girl with whom he might dance a pas de deux in a new ballet entitled The Figure in the Carpet. Mitchell asked Mary Hinkson, a Martha Graham dancer, to appear as his partner and the two danced the roles of representatives

from Africa. The ballet was received enthusiastically; more important than the laudatory reviews, however, was the fact that Hinkson was the first black girl ever to dance with the New York City Ballet. Mitchell considered this the lowering of another racial barrier in the world of classical ballet.

Mitchell began performing pure classical ballets such as Symphony in C and Allegro Brillante during the fall of 1960. He cherished this new challenge because, on the basis of these roles, he could be referred to officially as a classical dancer. He was soon completely at ease performing the "white ballet." At approximately the same time, he was involved in other special assignments, such as the principal pas de deux in John Taras' Ebony Concerto and the role of the snake in Todd Bolender's Creation of the World. The latter role gave him an extraordinary opportunity to explore and to utilize all of the other forms of dance which were a part of his educational background.

The next major step in Mitchell's career came in 1962 when Balanchine asked him to perform the role of Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream. He was given choreographic freedom and was permitted to interpret the role from a dramatic standpoint as well as from that of dance alone.

Because Mitchell realized that many qualities which were inherent in Puck were also characteristic of himself, this role soon assumed an increasing significance for him. His performance of Puck was photographed repeatedly and drew complimentary appraisals wherever the ballet was performed. A Midsummer Night's Dream, which premièred in January of 1962, was a source of "rave" reviews for Mitchell for years to come. He considers this one of his most rewarding roles to date because he not only has "great fun" dancing it but he also has the opportunity to use his own creativity, to employ acting and timing techniques, and to draw upon his previous experiences outside the realm of classical ballet in order to perfect the role.

The role of Puck is the most recent role created by Balanchine specifically for Arthur Mitchell. Since its creation in 1962, however, Mitchell has danced in practically every ballet in the repertory of the New York City Ballet. Other roles which he particularly enjoys performing include the Ragtime pas de deux in Ivesiana and the Bridegroom in Bugaku. Although Mitchell's involvement in many activities during the late 1960's caused him to spend less time with the New York City Ballet, he still danced with the company whenever his schedule permitted. In no way have Arthur Mitchell's stellar performances been

confined to activities with the New York City Ballet. He has kept his technique polished in types of dance other than ballet by performing in musicals, making guest appearances, and accepting engagements whenever the New York City Ballet was not performing.

Since he first appeared on Broadway in House of Flowers during the spring of 1955, Mitchell has performed in four other Broadway musicals entitled, respectively, Carmen Jones, Kiss Me Kate, Shinbone Alley, and Nöel Coward's Sweet Potato. During his appearances in Nöel Coward's Sweet Potato in 1968, Mitchell was involved in several of the many projects which have since earned him the popular title of "The Man Who Never Sleeps." On weekdays, he worked with the children at the Harlem School of the Arts; on Sundays, he danced with the New York City Ballet; and at night, he sang, acted, and danced at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

Arthur Mitchell's association with performing artists other than those affiliated with the New York City Ballet often led to lasting friendships and additional opportunities for performing. During the production of Shinbone Alley, he formed a friendship with Eartha Kitt which led to an invitation for him to appear with her in the 1959 Newport Jazz Festival.

Gian Carlo Menotti observed Mitchell in his portrayal of the Unicorn in the opera entitled The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore, and invited him to form a company to participate in the Third Festival of Two Worlds held in Spoleto, Italy, during June and July of 1960. Mitchell made such an impression upon Festival audiences that he was invited to return the following year and perform at the Fourth Festival. Instead of presenting an entire company of dancers, he returned to Spoleto with a partner only, Akiko Kanda. During the Festival in 1961, Mitchell choreographed the three dances which he and Akiko Kanda presented as well as the "Dance of the Seven Veils" for the Luchino Visconti production of Salome, the opera by Richard Strauss.

The summer of 1961 held still another interesting experience for Arthur Mitchell in Spoleto, Italy--the writing for him of a one-act play entitled Il Pagno by Gian Carlo Menotti. Mitchell, who does not speak a word of Italian, learned the play phonetically and made such an extraordinary impression upon his audiences that, following one performance, a director of a French company of actors extended to him a standing invitation to come and join the French company in Paris at any time that he so desired.

Arthur Mitchell takes an impish kind of delight in remembering the spring of 1962 as the season during which he replaced Dame Alicia Markova at the Metropolitan Opera. Markova became ill, and Arthur Mitchell and Violette Verdy, both of the New York City Ballet, were asked to appear as guest artists in the opera Orfeo ed Euridice. Although the dancing failed to receive any sensational reviews, the performances were exciting for Arthur Mitchell because they comprised his first experience as a premier danseur with the Metropolitan Opera.

In the years which followed Arthur Mitchell's success at Spoleto and his performances at the Metropolitan Opera, he has made innumerable appearances as guest artist--both as a soloist and in conjunction with special presentations of the New York City Ballet. One of his most memorable experiences was that of dancing the role of Mercutio in John Cranko's version of Romeo and Juliet in the annual gala ballet celebration given by the Stuttgart State Opera Ballet in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1963. Following that performance, he was invited to Munich, Germany, where he danced in Heinz Rosen's Othello and Dance Panels in Seven Sections as well as in George Balanchine's Donizetti Variations and John Taras' Orpheus. Other memorable guest performances included Mitchell's appearances in choreography by George Balanchine.

He danced in Agon and in the role of the Dark Angel in Orpheus at the Hamburg Stravinsky Festival in Germany; he appeared with the New York City Ballet in Stars and Stripes at the inaugural program for President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in 1961; and in Western Symphony at the inaugural program for President Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1965. He danced in Agon at the Geneva Opera during the week of October 10 through 15, 1970, in conjunction with a complete program of Balanchine's works presented as a tribute in honor of the famous choreographer.

Arthur Mitchell has made individual appearances before television viewing audiences in the United States on the Jinx Falkenburg Show, the Jackie Gleason Show, and the Harry Belafonte Specials. His television appearances, for the most part, however, have been in conjunction with the various dance companies of which he has been a member. While dancing with Donald McKayle in 1953, the company filmed Games, Nocturne, and Rainbow Round My Shoulder for presentation on "Camera Three." Later, when he became a member of John Butler's American Dance Theatre, he danced in Butler's Three Promenades With the Lord for audiences in this country and again in Italy while the company was touring Europe. In 1960, Mitchell's own company was filmed for Italian audiences while it was appearing at Spoleto.

Although Arthur Mitchell has danced with the New York City Ballet without regard for color, his television appearances with the company have not been altogether pleasant. The administrative personnel of various television stations in the United States refused to allow him to dance with white girls lest southern stations might ban the program. The response of Balanchine to such a request was that either Mitchell danced or the New York City Ballet did not appear. Major television appearances with the New York City Ballet include Stars and Stripes for presentation on the "Bell Telephone Hour," and The Nutcracker Suite for presentation on the Columbia Broadcasting System television network.

When Arthur Mitchell reflects upon his pioneering experiences as the first black permanent member of a major ballet company in the United States, he is even more determined to give to the world black classical dancers who have instilled within themselves the attitude that the major distinction between performing artists lies not in the color of their skin, but in their ability to perform. This is the reason that today he devotes the majority of his time to the preparation of such black artists.

The multi-faceted role which Arthur Mitchell was to play eventually began to manifest itself in 1953 at

approximately the same period in his life as the beginning of his education in ballet. His teacher, Karel Shook, recognized Mitchell's ability to teach and often delegated certain of his own classes to the aspiring young dancer. Mitchell's first teaching experiences occurred in the Katherine Dunham School in New York City where Shook was employed also; later experiences were afforded at the Studio of Dance Arts, also in New York City, which Shook owned and operated. Further opportunities for teaching resulted either directly or indirectly from Mitchell's association with the New York City Ballet. He taught for a short time at the Melissa Hayden School of Dance in Cedarhurst, Long Island, before becoming associated with the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C., in 1957--an association which lasted until 1963.

The First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal, in April of 1966 led to the recognition of Mitchell's organizational capabilities. Serving as Dance Chairman for the committee representing the United States, Mitchell organized a company of thirty-one black dancers which included such personalities as Paula Kelly, Claude Tompson, Carmen de Lavallade, Llanchie Stevenson, Sarah Yarborough, and William Louther. The members of the new company worked daily without any compensation and soon

reached a high level of skill and artistry in performance. This company of able dancers failed, however, to realize the rewards of their labors because, at the last moment, the members were informed that the budget of the Festival Committee had been reduced and that the money for Arthur Mitchell's dance company, therefore, was not forthcoming. The disappointed director had to disband his company of fine dancers.

Mitchell's organizational capabilities, however, did not go unnoticed. Following the collapse of the company which he had assembled for the Festival of Negro Arts, the United States government invited him to serve as one of a trio of representatives from the United States to participate in a cultural exchange program with the Brazilian government. Mitchell accepted the assignment and, in March of 1966, left for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to assist in organizing the first National Ballet Company of Brazil. Although this newly-formed company was quite successful, internal politics forced its disbanding within a few months. Good fortune was with the dancers, however, since one of the young women in the company was married to a wealthy Brazilian who asked Mitchell to return the following year and to form a private ballet company.

In early January of 1967, Mitchell began traveling to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, whenever he was not appearing with the New York City Ballet. It was here that he began to develop serious choreography. The Brazilians provided him with an environment for dance which was rich in folklore and religious rituals which led to the choreography of several ballets in the classical idiom for the Brazilian company using Brazilian themes, ideas, and music.

Mitchell received such personal gratification through his work with the Brazilian company that he might have remained in that country had it not been for the assassination of Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior, the famous non-violent leader of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. On the day of King's assassination, Mitchell, en route to Brazil, decided to pay homage to the great leader by teaching ballet to his own people in his own country--the United States of America.

Dorothy Maynor, the Founder-Director of the Harlem School of the Arts, had plans for extending her cultural program to include a Department of Dance during the summer of 1968. Mitchell's decision following the assassination of Doctor King prompted him to call Miss Maynor and to offer his services to the established Harlem School. The Department of Dance at this School was still in the

embryonic stage when Mitchell agreed to join the faculty, and Miss Maynor had no money for financing the project. Mitchell, therefore, set his organizational abilities in action and promptly raised $25,000 for operating expenses. He opened the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts on July 8, 1968, three months after the assassination of Martin Luther King.

Prior to the opening of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts, Karel Shook, former teacher and friend of Arthur Mitchell, had been the Associate Artistic Director for the National Ballet of Holland for nine years. As unusual as it may seem, the death of Doctor King crystallized for Shook the conviction that he must return also to the United States to make his contribution to the arts. He felt that from the ashes of a great man, meaninglessly assassinated, some kind of phoenix should arise. A few days following the assassination, Mitchell telephoned Shook in Amsterdam, Holland, and invited him to return to New York City as Ballet-Master and Associate Artistic Director of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts. Feeling a compulsion to accept the invitation, Shook left his position in Holland and joined Mitchell in New York on July 31, 1968.

The Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts, which began with about thirty students in July, had grown to an enrollment of 250 by September of the same year. The news of the School had spread throughout New York City. Students from downtown came to Harlem to study with Mitchell and Shook, and several additional dancers became members of the embryonic company. Shook decided not to return to Holland but to remain with the project with full responsibilities as Ballet Master and Associate Artistic Director. His decision freed Mitchell for his necessary concentration upon the development of choreography for the repertoire of the evolving dancers. He soon choreographed and produced Ode to Otis, the first movement of Tones, and Rhythmetron for performances by his young company of black dancers. These dancers were eager to learn and, within a few weeks, they were ready for public presentation as a performing group. As a method of involving the community with the newly-formed Department of Dance of the Harlem School of the Arts, Mitchell and Shook initiated a series of lecture-demonstrations presented at Open House sessions held in conjunction with each program presented at the Harlem School of the Arts.

The success of the Department of Dance appeared to constitute a threat to the other programs at the Harlem

School of the Arts inasmuch as it attracted the majority of the students and the attention of the patrons. During the summer of 1969, therefore, Miss Maynor ordered Mitchell and Shook to leave her premises by the middle of August. The two artists left, but with the conviction that they must return to Harlem soon to continue their work. In keeping with Mitchell's philosophy that "out of death comes birth," the closing of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts initiated the official birth of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. This birth took place in mid-August, away from its Harlem home, at the Glen Tetley Studio in Greenwich Village in New York City. This studio was not properly insured to accommodate a school situation, and the Dance Theatre of Harlem was forced, therefore, to move again. On September 23, 1969, Mitchell and his organization moved into the Church of the Master at 86 Morningside Avenue which became the Harlem home of the Dance Theatre of Harlem until September 20, 1971.

The Church of the Master appeared to provide adequate space for all which Mitchell hoped to accomplish with his school and company. At first, he found it necessary to use personal funds in order to reimburse the members of his staff and to provide the students with their scholarship stipends. Fortunately, however, he had already placed the Dance

Theatre of Harlem on a non-profit status and had submitted an application to the Ford Foundation for a grant to cover operational expenses throughout the year. On October 1, 1969, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, received a grant of $315,000 from the Ford Foundation. The total budget estimated for the needs of the organization was $466,000--$151,000 of which had to be earned independently through performances by the young company of dancers. The sources of the company's income comprised personal contributions and ticket sales for performances and lecture-demonstrations--a somewhat hazardous gamble for a young company which had not yet made its formal début, but Mitchell was confident that he would find a way in which to reach his goals.

Under the expert leadership of Associate Artistic Director Karel Shook, the dancers made daily progress and the enrollment in the school increased rapidly to capacity. Wednesday afternoon "open rehearsal sessions" were initiated which provided the children at the school the opportunity to become acquainted with such celebrities as Leontyne Price, Lucchine Visconti, Lord Snowden, and John Christian, who were among the interested spectators.

In early December of 1969, the minister of the Church of the Master informed Mitchell of an increase in

rent from $170 per month to $600 per month. This exorbitant increase sent Mitchell on a discreet search for a new location for the Dance Theatre of Harlem--discreet because he planned for his organization to remain at the Church of the Master until it could be housed in a building of its own. Mitchell found his building at 466 West 152nd Street and was able to purchase it through a generous benefactor. Following the purchase of the building, Mitchell busied himself with the plans necessary to convert it into a combined dance theatre and dance school such as he had begun at the Church of the Master.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem continues to provide a magnetic atmosphere for students of varied backgrounds and abilities. Although the core of study at the school is classical ballet, each member of the diversified staff is a specialist in his own right and contributes a personal genius to the provision of experiences in ethnological and modern dance as well as in ballet. Mitchell makes a special point of having his students believe that a dancer is ". . . a thoroughbred--the best of the human race."

The dance company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem has existed in various stages of development since Arthur Mitchell initiated his project in 1968 in association with the Harlem School of the Arts. Determined to develop a

dance school and a dance company simultaneously, he began with a nucleus of only four dancers who subjected themselves to an unbelievably rigorous schedule of physical and artistic improvement. Cognizant of the fact that the majority of the students enrolled in the school might not become professional dancers, Mitchell channeled the most promising students into a special apprentice group, preparatory to their becoming full-fledged members of the company.

Since the official formation of the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the organization has been a source of pride and of abundant rewards for all individuals associated with it. Mitchell considers the series of lecture-demonstrations--both those presented at the Wednesday afternoon open house sessions at the studio, and those presented at various schools and community groups as the most important medium of contributions to the dance which his organization could offer. During these demonstrations, Mitchell often involves the young audiences by having volunteers demonstrate current popular dance steps which he translates into balletic movements. He encourages children to study ballet by showing them what the thirteen and fourteen-year-old members of his company have accomplished. Most of these lecture-demonstrations are conducted under the auspices of the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

An invitation to perform as the leading attraction of the First Bermuda Arts Council Summer Festival, held in June of 1970, opened the door to the first major tour for the young company of dancers. Other engagements in the Caribbean included Nassau, The Bahamas, Curacao, and Netherlands Antilles. The repertory which the Dance Theatre of Harlem performed during the Caribbean Tour was comprised of Mitchell's Holberg Suite, Biosfera, Tones, Ode to Otis, and Rhythmetron, and of George Balanchine's Concerto Barocco. Significant during the Bermudian portion of the tour was the company's première performance of Concerto Barocco. Here, Mitchell sat in the audience and wept as he saw ". . . his beautiful black children" in soft white costumes, dancing one of the best ballets of one of the greatest choreographers living today with the verve and expertise of a seasoned company.

Arthur Mitchell considers the week of August 18 through 22, 1970, a special landmark in the brief history of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. It marks the first "real engagement" of the company in the United States. The company had the honor of being the only dance group presented at the Ted Shawn Theatre during the ninth week of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated. The response of the audience at "the Pillow" was especially

significant for it was indicative of the reactions of dance audiences throughout the United States. Because it was important that the new all-black classical dance company perform the ballets of its black choreographer, Arthur Mitchell selected carefully the dances to be presented. Opening night in the Ted Shawn Theatre was a sell-out. The appreciative audience gave the young dancers a standing ovation and demanded nine curtain calls. The remainder of the week was equally successful and capacity crowds kept coming for both matinee and evening performances. Critics and photographers alike were in attendance from New York City and the surrounding towns, and the Dance Theatre of Harlem was warmly received at every performance.

In October of 1970, the Dance Theatre of Harlem traveled to the West Indies where it performed in Trinidad and Jamaica. The company was again a source of pride for Mitchell and the members of his staff. A continuing source of pride is the fact that students and potential company members seem drawn magnetically to the unique atmosphere of the Dance Theatre of Harlem wherever the company has appeared throughout the United States and abroad.

The first television appearance of the Dance Theatre of Harlem was in the form of a master class presented at the completion of its second year in existence. The class

was filmed in October of 1970 for viewing on Cincinnati, Ohio's Educational Television Network. Later, on December 24 of the same year, four members of the company appeared on the Polaroid television special entitled "A Holiday Celebration With Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee."

The Dance Theatre of Harlem began its performing season of 1971 with its official New York City début at the Guggenheim Museum, January 8 through 10, 1971. The program was comprised of three ballets by Mitchell--Tones, Rhymetron, and the premiere of Fête Noire. The new ballet, Fête Noire, was dedicated to Mrs. Alva B. Gimbel, who, through a generous gift, made the performances at the Guggenheim Museum possible for the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Each performance ended with standing ovations and cheering crowds. On the Monday following these performances, students from thirty schools throughout New York City were brought by bus to the Museum for lecture-demonstrations. The total number of students attending during that one day was 1,000.

The touring program for the Dance Theatre of Harlem was expanded in 1971 to include many more appearances outside of the State of New York. During the month of February, the company made a transcontinental tour of the United States which included appearances in Massachusetts, Michigan, California, and Ohio. This tour prompted the

Detroit, Michigan, branch of a nationwide organization, the LINKS, to initiate benefit performances for the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Upon its return to New York City, the company began rehearsals for its Broadway début at the American National Theatre and Academy on March 8, 10, and 12, 1971. New additions to the repertory included Jerome Robbins' Afternoon of a Faun, John Taras' Designs for Strings, and the première of Mitchell's new ballet entitled Fun and Games. The critics in New York City responded favorably to all of the ballets performed by the Dance Theatre of Harlem with the exception of Fun and Games. They seemed disappointed with the story line of the ballet rather than with the dancing of it. The outstanding critical approval awarded to the remaining ballets on the program appeared to be an excellent indication of the future success of the company. Each performance was "sold out" and each performance ended with cheering and enthusiastic applause.

On May 6, 1971, the New York City Ballet presented its annual benefit performance in conjunction with Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem; this was the first time in its history that the New York City Ballet performed in conjunction with another group. Co-Choreographers George Balanchine and Arthur Mitchell offered their audiences a

"one-time only" performance of Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra. The critics called the merging onstage of the all-white New York City Ballet and the all-black Dance Theatre of Harlem a "fascinating comparison of style." Although the performance was not considered an outstanding contribution to dance, it accomplished its purpose--that of entertaining those who attended the ballet benefit.

During the month of May, Mitchell and his Dance Theatre of Harlem spent a two-week residency in the State of Illinois under the auspices of the Illinois State Council of the Arts. The success of the company was so phenomenal during this residency that it received more requests for return performances in Illinois than its 1971-1972 touring schedule would permit.

Unforgettable among the experiences for the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem is the recent triumphant European Tour. This tour began on June 25, 1971, with performances for the Fourteenth Festival of Two Worlds at Spoleto, Italy. The company performed also in the Netherlands and in Belgium. The audiences at Spoleto responded to the dancers with twenty-minute standing ovations and insistent, rhythmic chanting of "Bis! Bis!" In Amsterdam, the entire scheduled engagement was "sold out" and the original number of performances was extended. These

experiences, new and unique for the young company, served to impress upon the individual dancers the fact that their company was well on its way and would assume ultimately its place among the world's foremost ballet companies.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem returned to New York City from its European Tour to prepare for the occupancy of its new home during the week of September 20, 1971. A building which was formerly a garage had been completely renovated and transformed into three dance studios, a workshop, a music room, a costume room, dressing rooms, offices, and lounges. The Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, could now offer, on a permanent basis, a functional program of uninterrupted service to the community. The company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem is an outward manifestation of the Harlem School. In a phenomenally short period of time it has achieved worldwide recognition, moving easily from one engagement to another, enjoying remarkable success, and becoming increasingly determined to bring pride in and artistic appreciation of the ballet to the community of Harlem.

Arthur Mitchell has envisioned and developed a unique project in Harlem. Founded upon the premise that all children should be given an equal opportunity to reach their own levels of artistic performance and to make their

own contributions to society, it is unique in that Mitchell chose one of the world's best-known ghetto areas as his locale for taking dance to the people.

Mitchell is a man of extraordinary dedication and stamina. He is an eloquent performer and an energetic teacher. He considers his career as a performer and as a teacher complementary to each other and prefers not to separate the two. Lincoln Kirstein has described Mitchell as "elegance itself"; Mitchell seeks for his students the same degree of excellence which he has achieved.

Arthur Mitchell's dancers find his choreography unique and exciting because it combines all forms of dance and is executed in the classical style. In addition, Mitchell is sensitive to the special qualities and abilities of each of his dancers and either choreographs to emphasize the strengths of each dancer or pushes him to the point of overcoming any inadequacies.

The business affairs of the Dance Theatre of Harlem are directed with the same amount of verve as are the artistic aspects of the organization. Although Mitchell has assembled an excellent administrative staff, he personally oversees every decision concerning the Dance Theatre of Harlem, monetary or otherwise. He has learned to make schedules and to write reports, to keep books and to balance

budgets but--and perhaps most important of all--he has learned how to make a non-profit organization finish the fiscal year within the limits of its budget.

As a friend and father-image to the individuals in his organization, Mitchell watches dutifully over everyone associated with the Dance Theatre of Harlem as if he or she were indeed his own child. His concern for the younger members of the company is well-founded as he has teenage girls from as far away from home as Atlanta, Georgia, and Kansas City, Kansas. Mitchell finds suitable housing for his youngsers, sends them to the Professional Children's School, and arranges tutorial services for those with academic deficiencies. The dancers maintain a family atmosphere, and their relationships are built upon a genuine love for each other. As members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, their lives have taken on a new purpose; they feel that they are needed and that they belong.

Arthur Mitchell's project is unique in that it provides for every interested child the opportunity to study the classical dance. For those who cannot afford to pay for their classes, arrangements are made for lessons through Foundation funds. Mitchell's dream precludes denial of anyone who wishes to study dance. The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique in that it is the only permanent black

classical ballet company ever to exist. In addition, Mitchell has produced his dancers in two years although normally it takes ten years to prepare the professional ballet dancer. He recognized the necessity to produce dancers in a short time in order that young blacks could have a company to which they might aspire and through which they might earn their livelihoods.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique in its youth. The dancers are a group of young persons who love to perform, and they do so with their hearts and souls. Already they have made their choices and have dedicated their lives to their art. Whether or not these young boys and girls are the greatest dancers in the world is irrelevant; Mitchell believes that, historically, the Dance Theatre of Harlem will prove to be of worldwide significance.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique in that it has Arthur Mitchell as its leader. He generates a contagious energy which appears to attract individuals to him. Once these individuals are influenced by him, their lives assume a sense of direction which they have formerly lacked. Mitchell's success has been attributed to his deep and all pervading conviction of spirituality. He has an almost superhuman strength and will-power coupled with a devout belief in God. For his outstanding dedication to his

unique project, he was honored on May 26, 1971, as the recipient of the Capezio Dance Award.

As Arthur Mitchell views the future, he envisions the fulfillment of his dream. The Dance Theatre of Harlem has moved into its new facility at 466 West 152nd Street in Harlem where the curriculum will be broadened to include additional forms of dance, acting, and music. Perhaps the most ambitious projection for the Dance Theatre of Harlem is the establishment of a fully accredited academic school. The administrators of the Dance Theatre of Harlem are working closely with representatives from Columbia University in New York City to ascertain that the school meets the standards for accreditation by the State of New York. The projected opening date for the additional facility is September of 1973.

Plans for the future of the Dance Theatre of Harlem company encompass an expansion of its repertoire to include the works of many other choreographers. Among the projected additions are George Balanchine's Agon, Lester Horton's The Beloved, and Doris Humphrey's Shakers. In addition, the performance rights for the ballet Carmen have been acquired by the Dance Theatre of Harlem, for which the Ruth Page Foundation will underwrite the entire production costs. The company will expand also its schedule of performances to include a number of benefits.

With respect to his own plans for the future, Arthur Mitchell will continue to dance with the New York City Ballet whenever his schedule permits him to do so, and he will continue to direct the Dance Theatre of Harlem which is his lifetime commitment. Although the Dance Theatre of Harlem is basically black and located in a black community, it will continue to exist for all people--to provide through the arts enrichment, hope, and a belief in the natural dignity of man regardless of his economic or social status. To many, this enterprising and dedicated artist, Arthur Mitchell, represents more than an artistic leader; he is, as Charles DeRose calls him, a "Messiah of Hope."

CHAPTER VIII

ALVIN AILEY: THE FORMATIVE YEARS[1]

The life of Alvin Ailey epitomizes the proverbial "from rags to riches" story provided that the term "rags" is interpreted to mean an almost complete absence of artistic exposure and the term "riches" to mean his present position as one of the outstanding black exponents of modern dance in the United States of America. From early childhood, Ailey's destiny seemed to be pre-determined. Beginning with that childhood, his innumerable interests and his intellectual curiosity--which ranged from inquiries concerning the most minute creatures of nature to his fascination with the indigenous customs, folkways, and mores of southern blacks--motivated his search for answers. With maturity, his explorations impelled him to increase the depth and to widen the scope of his research into the roots of his people. As a result, an inquisitive man from Southeast Texas has given to the United States a form of modern dance thematically and choreographically based upon

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[1]Unless otherwise documented, all data included in this chapter were obtained through personal interviews with Alvin Ailey in August and September of 1970, and through personal interviews with his mother, Mrs. Lula E. Cooper, in April of 1971 and throughout the year of 1972.

the indigenous experiences of native black folk. Because of his self-motivated efforts and of his determination to satisfy his innate curiosity, this young Texan has achieved the status of Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts--a degree conferred upon him by the President of Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey, on June 6, 1972, for his outstanding achievements as a dancer, choreographer, and director in the idiom of modern dance.[1]

The Early Life of Alvin Ailey

On September 26, 1929, Alvin Ailey, Senior, and Lula Elizabeth Cliff were married in Rogers, Texas. Since the bride was only sixteen years old, and the newlyweds had only a meager income, they began their life together by sharing the home of her father, Norman Cliff, in Rogers. After residing there for three months, they moved into the home of Henry Ailey, the father of Alvin, Senior, who also lived in Rogers. In this house--shared by Henry Ailey's daughter Nettie Corouthers, her eight children, and one son-in-law--Alvin Ailey, Junior, was born.

It was a cold afternoon in January when F. F. Flanagan, M. D., arrived at the Ailey household and announced that the mother-to-be was not yet ready to deliver

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[1]Program, "The Two Hundred and Twenty-fifth Commencement," Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, June 6, 1972.

her baby. After placing a plate underneath her back to help ease her labor pains, the Doctor helped himself to a generous dip of snuff, removed his boots, and fell asleep upon a cot which, along with the bed and a "pot-bellied" stove, comprised the only furnishings of the "delivery room." The Doctor awoke around 4:00 a.m. and ordered a pan of hot water. Alvin Ailey, Junior, was born an hour later, on January 5, 1931.

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Alvin Ailey, the future dance artist, were far from ideal. In addition to the fact that he was born into such an over-crowded household, the construction of the house itself was far below standards required for adequate protection against the cold Texas winter. The "pot-bellied" stove, even when "red hot," was inadequate for providing the necessary warmth for the room in which young Ailey was born. Following the birth of the baby, Grandfather Ailey attempted to alleviate the situation by ripping an old mattress apart and using the filling to seal the cracks in the single-walled room in order to provide added protection against the winter wind.

Food in the Ailey household was rarely sufficient to feed the thirteen persons comprising it. Lula Ailey was so under-nourished at the time of the birth of her child

that she was unable to produce milk for him. She did, however, have the foresight to become a member of a group of ladies called The Benevolent Society. This group was comprised of about twenty members whose function was to provide food in time of need for other members of their Society. Each member contributed a pound of some staple food each month until the recipient was able to return to work. From the sugar provided by members of the Society, along with a clean cloth, a contrivance commonly called a "sugar tit" was devised for young Alvin to suck in order to provide nourishment for him until he could eat the food from the table which his mother crushed with a spoon until it was of a consistency which he could swallow.

When Alvin, Junior, was three months old, his parents moved to a one-room cabin located about eight miles outside of Rogers on the property of Horace Crouth, a white landowner. Their move was made in anticipation of working on Crouth's farm in return for free living quarters. Their cabin was furnished with one cot and the previously mentioned "pot-bellied" stove which provided the only source of heat for the household as well as the surface upon which all of their meals were prepared. For the first three months after they moved into their new living quarters, meals for the Aileys were comprised of milk obtained from a cow which

belonged to the owner of the property, and bread which was prepared from handcrushed corn and water. Their drinking water came from an unsanitary tank which contained mud and other forms of debris.

The pattern of survival for the Aileys remained the same until Alvin, Junior, was six months old. At this time, because there was no source of outside remunerative employment, Ailey, Senior, abandoned his wife and infant son, leaving them to provide for themselves. Lula Ailey, a woman of strong will and great love for her child, decided that the two of them would remain in the cabin on Horace Crouth's farm, and manage to live in a better way than that to which they had been subjected with her husband as their provider. She went out and solicited washing and ironing from the white residents who lived within walking distance of her home. She also planted a bean garden in which she raised every kind of bean which she could find. Mrs. Ailey cultivated her garden with a hoe and allowed the beans to dry in order to store them for future use. Ultimately, this bean garden initiated their next residential move.

One evening when Alvin was two years of age, his mother had prepared a large quantity of dried beans and bread. While the meal was in the process of preparation, Alvin, Junior, was quite hungry; when he finally sat down

to the meal, he ate too rapidly without chewing his food properly. At approximately nine o'clock that night, the small boy became so ill that his mother placed him upon her back and walked the eight miles into town to seek the services of a physician. In accordance with the custom of blacks in those days, she went to the back door of Dr. L. E. Etter's house and gained admittance. When the circumstances surrounding the illness were described to the doctor, he gave young Alvin an enormous dose of castor oil and invited mother and child to spend the remainder of the night in his home. The following morning, the doctor was appalled to learn that Mrs. Ailey had walked eight miles in the darkness to bring her child to him. He took them back to their home in his car and was even more horrified upon seeing the unsanitary and inadequate conditions of their living quarters.

Dr. Etter returned to the Ailey home the following day and invited Mrs. Ailey to return to Rogers to work for his wife, explaining that they had servant quarters in which he thought that she and her son would be quite comfortable. Mrs. Ailey requested a week during which she might think about the offer; she then packed their meager belongings in an empty flour sack and again, with her child, walked the eight miles into town to the physician's house.

The Aileys were comfortable in their new living quarters, and they continued to be so for about two years. In May of 1935, however, Alvin's father returned to Rogers to live again with his wife and son. The arrangement proved as unsatisfactory as it had three and one half years earlier; Mrs. Ailey chose, therefore, to take her son and leave the home and position which Dr. Etter had provided for her. One night she walked to the railway station in Rogers, Texas, and boarded the midnight train after requesting the ticket agent to sell her a ticket to a destination as far away from Rogers as her meager savings of eight dollars would purchase. The following morning Mrs. Ailey and young Alvin were sitting in the railway station in Wharton, Texas, penniless and alone, when Mrs. Maggie Earl, a kind, soft-spoken, black woman who had arrived in Wharton also on their train, inquired about their destination. Upon learning of their plight, Mrs. Earl invited the Aileys to her home in Wharton where they lived for the next three weeks. This episode occurred during the early part of September, 1935, when the cotton was ready to harvest in Southeast Texas. Mrs. Ailey not only assisted with the chores in the Earl household but she also took her son with her as she joined other workers who picked cotton on a day to day basis. The farm on which the cotton grew was owned

by another Wharton black woman, a Mrs. Fannie Warfield. After noticing Mrs. Ailey and her young son in the fields each day, Mrs. Warfield invited mother and child to live and to work upon her place. The invitation was accepted, and, for the next nine months, Wharton became their home and the town in which they attended regularly the religious services in the Good Hope Baptist Church.

When Christmas arrived during their sojourn in Wharton, three-year-old Alvin scanned the nearby wooded areas in search of a gift for his mother. He presented to her a forked stick from which he had removed the bark, "spit-polished" it, and named it "Cottee." Alvin's mother has kept this gift throughout the years as she was impressed with the ingenuity and creativity of her son at such an early age. Alvin loved to walk in the woods. He and his mother often went for long walks during which they gathered wild berries and nuts. In addition, the youngster often gathered flowers which he presented affectionately to his mother. One day, on such a walk, the Aileys passed a store on which they saw a sign, "Athall, Texas." They continued their walk and soon discovered an old, empty frame house. Alvin immediately said, "I like this [house] Mama; we could live here." His mother agreed that it would be pleasant to have a home of their own, and informed Mrs. Warfield of her

decision; her generous friend, in turn, not only accepted the decision but practically furnished the new home for the Aileys.

The house in Athall, Texas, was near the Brazos River and was, therefore, built upon a high, relatively sound, foundation. Lula Ailey began to pick cotton again each day, and her earnings enabled her to purchase sufficient food for mother and son to eat three meals each day. At each meal, Alvin finished a portion of his food at the table and took the remainder underneath the house with him. His mother soon discovered that he was feeding, directly from his hand, the largest chicken snake which she had ever seen. Because of this discovery, they departed the following day for Rogers, Texas, with a promise to Alvin that they would return later for his pet. His mother never revealed, however, that she had discovered the identity of his pet nor did they ever return to live again in Athall.

The following six months were restless ones for the Aileys. Mrs. Ailey obtained a position with Mrs. Dorothy Ball, a white lady in Rogers, and she and Alvin lived in the servant quarters on Mrs. Ball's property. Alvin was now almost five years of age and self-reliant enough to cross town to spend each day with his twin cousins while his mother cleaned the house and prepared the meals for Mrs.

Ball. Soon, however, young Alvin and his mother moved into the house with his Aunt Nettie Corouthers, the mother of the twins, thus sparing young Alvin from the daily trip across town. With the coming of winter and inclement weather, the Aileys moved south to live with Lula's sister, Inez Douglas, in Milano, Texas. In May of 1936, they moved back to Rogers, however, to share again the home of Alvin's Aunt Nettie. By this time, the twins were enrolled in school, and the teacher, Bea Walker, a distant cousin of Mrs. Ailey's allowed Alvin to attend classes with his cousins. Although not old enough to enroll officially, he was an eager learner and progressed rapidly through the "five times" multiplication tables.

During the summer of 1936, opportunities for remunerative employment were advertised in the local newspaper. A new highway was being developed in Navasota, Texas, and a team of workers was needed to prepare lunches for the laborers who were employed on the highway project. Frankie Davis, an older sister of Mrs. Ailey's who lived in Rockdale, Texas, persuaded the latter to leave Alvin, Junior, in her care and to seek work in Navasota. This plan failed to prove satisfactory, however, because Alvin and his little cousin, Lula Belle, disliked each other intensely. About three weeks passed before the small boy decided to "hitchhike" to his

Aunt Inez's home in Milano, where he had spent the previous winter. Mrs. Ailey returned immediately for her son and took him back with her to Navasota.

After working in Navasota for about six months, Lula Ailey underwent an emergency appendectomy followed by an iridectomy, events which brought about several new experiences in her life. Alvin was left alone for the first time, and Lula Ailey became the first black patient assigned a bed in the Navasota Hospital. In those days, blacks were treated as out-patients at this Hospital, but they were placed in separate cottages if their illnesses or periods of recuperation required hospitalization. At the Navasota Hospital, Mrs. Ailey met Drs. C. H. Coleman, E. D. Stewart, and I. M. Ketchums who were partners in their ownership and operation of the Coleman, Stewart, and Ketchums Medical Clinic in Navasota. To enable her to pay the costs incurred by her period of hospitalization, these three physicians offered her employment at their clinic. She became, therefore, the first black person employed at the Coleman, Stewart, and Ketchums Medical Clinic, a position which led to her employment three weeks later as the first black employee at the Navasota Hospital. Her duties at this Hospital included the sterilization of surgical instruments as well as the offering of assistance and companionship to the elderly

patients. Her remuneration for this position was $12.50 per week--more money than she had ever earned in the previous positions which she had fulfilled.

In Navasota, the Aileys lived on the property of a black man, Amos Alexander, who was considered an individual of considerable financial means. He not only owned a large amount of private property and a recreation hall but he worked also at the local cotton gin for an additional source of income. During the period of Mrs. Ailey's hospitalization, Alexander developed a fatherly attachment to young Alvin and became his official guardian for the next six years.

The Alexander house, located just at the edge of town, gave to Alvin Ailey an exposure to both town and country living. Here, he experienced his first real responsibilities with respect to the execution of daily chores. He fed the fowl and the hogs, rounded up and staked the milk cows, and weeded and watered the plants in the two-acre garden. Alexander taught Alvin to ride horses and gave him his first dog. The boy was allowed to plant fruit and pecan trees on the property and to nurture these trees as his own. At last, young Alvin had a real sense of belonging except, as he later recalls,

> When Mr. Alexander's sister came to visit him and brought along her small children, I always felt very alone and left out. Although they were extremely nice to me, I was always reminded at those times that he--this man--was not my real father and that I was existing in a make-believe situation. I was miserable then and felt very alone. These feelings later influenced my choreography of Knoxville: Summer of 1915.[1]

Life in Navasota for Alvin was rather full and, for the most part, satisfying. He enrolled in classes at the Navasota Colored School, later called the George Washington Carver School, where, as a pupil in the elementary grades, he participated in many of the high school activities. The principal of the combined elementary and high school, J. C. Madison, was the first black principal to initiate a program of music in the black schools in Southeast Texas. When Alvin was in the fourth grade, he displayed an interest in playing the tuba. The principal approached the boy's mother concerning the matter, and she explained that the purchase of the instrument was a financial impossibility. A few days later, however, Alvin brought home a shiny, new tuba. The principal, who was very fond of Alvin, had provided this instrument for him in order to facilitate his becoming a member of the Navasota High School Band.

Alvin's artistic interests were not limited to music during those early years. Wherever he went, even while he

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[1]Alvin Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

was executing his daily chores, he carried with him a "Big Ben" writing tablet and a pencil for drawing sketches of small, living things--especially ants, bugs, and the praying mantis. Underneath these drawings, he scribbled descriptions which were incomprehensible to anyone other than himself. Upon his tablet he recorded also verses which he composed about interesting things which he either saw or imagined.

Sundays for the Aileys were filled with attending church and engaging in church-related activities. They became members of the True Vine Baptist Church shortly after their arrival in Navasota and attended Sunday School and all subsequent services held there each Sunday. Mrs. Ailey also sang in the choir. In the 1930's, this segregated church for black residents was equipped with special facilities for the children which were located in the basement of the church. The arrangement not only precluded the normal restlessness of children forced to sit through long church services but provided many enriching experiences for them also. Following their Sunday School classes, they engaged in religious activities designed especially for them by the local elementary school teachers who, the members of the congregation felt, were best suited for the leadership and guidance of these young boys and girls.

In southern Baptist churches such as True Vine, baptismal ceremonies were held in rivers or ponds in the vicinity of the church. All of those to be baptized wore white clothing and were marched to the baptismal site with dignity and solemnity; the ceremony itself was followed by joyous singing, shouting, and expressions of praise. During the late summer, revival services were conducted at the various churches; the most colorful of these revival services were observed at the Church of God in Christ--the religious sect commonly referred to as "Holy-Rollers." Here, the renewal of faith in Christ was accompanied by singing, music-making, dancing, and speaking in an unfamiliar vocabulary referred to as "unknown tongues." Ceremonies such as these later influenced Ailey in the choreography of his first major suite of religious dances, entitled Revelations.

During his childhood, Alvin Ailey was aware of the racial friction which existed between southern blacks and whites, but he did not understand its implications. He remembers vividly the white public school which, in his own words, ". . . sat on the hill like a glowing tower and, if one was black, he knew that he was never to approach those walls. It was something which you just accepted." Other memories from his early childhood which have been reflected

in his choreography center around an atmosphere of fear which seemed to prevail among the blacks in Southeast Texas. It appears that, as young Ailey moved from place to place, there was always talk among the grown-ups about black persons being sent "to the pen." He recalls that, "At one time in my life, it appeared that every adult black male had either been to the penitentiary or lived in constant fear of being sent there." He remembers also that there were frequent discussions among black adults of the lynching of blacks by whites, and of fights and shootings within the black community. Although Ailey failed to understand these discussions as a child, they became indelibly impressed upon his memory and later influenced his choreography in such major works as Blues Suite and Masekela Langage.

Another phase of life among the blacks in Southeast Texas which made an impression upon young Ailey was the pattern of their social life. He remembers vividly the flashing NEHI and DR. PEPPER signs which advertised soft drinks at local places of refreshment and entertainment; he recalls that he enjoyed periodically the performances of traveling folk singers and minstrel shows which included in their cross-country tours the small towns in which he lived, thus providing welcome breaks in the normal routine of the local blacks. Saturday nights were particularly important

on the calendar in these small towns; since they did not have to rise early for work the following morning, Saturday afforded the blacks an opportunity for a "night on the town." For the blacks in Navasota, this meant "dressing up" and patronizing the segregated cafes and dance halls. Alvin Ailey recalls these social Saturday evenings in the following manner:

> I remember a place called the Dew Drop Inn. This was a kind of "Honky-Tonk" night place. I remember the music and the dancing--an atmosphere of sensuality always accompanied by fear or a sense of impending trouble. There were always fights and talks about so and so's love affair--there were killings. All of this was later to influence my choreography of Blues Suite.[1]

During the first twelve years of Alvin Ailey's life, there was no indication of the direction which his career would take eventually. Rarely was he exposed to any form of fine art per se, but he attempted to express some of his inner feelings through his drawings and his poems. Ailey offers a brief summary of this period of his life in the following words:

> My whole early life in Texas was a kind of rambling, rural life. We lived around with a lot of people. We were always on the go. I began to feel as if there were a lot of trains in my life. I also remember that I felt very alienated--never really having a father. I always felt like an outsider around kids who did. I was always very lonely--I knew that I was loved, but I never felt understood.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

If Lula Ailey failed in her understanding of her son, however, it was because she was so preoccupied with the ordeal of survival for him and for herself that she had little time during which to develop the finesse in being demonstrative in her personal relationships which her restless young son desired and needed.

During the autumn of 1942, Agnes and Harold Booker, who were friends of Lula Ailey's, acquainted her with their plans to move to California. Having wished for some time to sever all of her personal ties in Texas, Lula decided to join her friends and to provide a new kind of life for her son--hopefully one with better opportunities for his intellectual advancement than those afforded in a small Texas town. Upon learning of her decision, Amos Alexander requested that Mrs. Ailey leave Alvin with him until she could provide properly for the child; this suggestion proved to be an expedient one as Lula Ailey embarked upon her new life with only eighteen dollars in her possession.

A New Life in Los Angeles

Upon her arrival in Los Angeles, California, on January 2, 1942, Lula Ailey was fortunate in finding lodging in a rooming house, located at the corner of Twenty-Seventh Street and Adams Boulevard, which was owned by a former

Texan, Marie Krenschaw. As a result, Mrs. Ailey was permitted to live there without the payment of her rent in advance until such time when she had secured remunerative employment. In addition, Mrs. Krenschaw, who laughingly referred to herself as "a new Negro," coached Mrs. Ailey both in diction and in the proper use of the telephone for the purpose of making inquiries concerning potential means of employment. Her lack of funds could have been a discouraging factor for Lula Ailey had she been unfamiliar with hardships. Instead of depending upon others for assistance, however, she managed to budget her small amount of cash so wisely that it lasted throughout the month during which she was unemployed. Her room was equipped with an electric hot plate upon which she prepared her daily diet of cabbage greens supplemented with one slice of bread. On Sundays, she ate one meal which she purchased for fifteen cents at Father Divine's Restaurant located across the street from the rooming house in which she lived. Instead of using commercial means of transportation during the day, she walked in search of employment, and, at night, she was permitted to use Marie Krenschaw's telephone.

After spending a fruitless month in Los Angeles and expending all but two dollars of her money, Lula Ailey obtained employment as one of fifteen girls who provided

chamber maid service in the luxurious Everston's Apartments located on Valencia Avenue in the Westlake area of Los Angeles. The housekeeper for the apartment building was a native of Fort Worth, Texas, and cordial to fellow Texans. She invited Mrs. Ailey to "live-in" during her employment, and provided her with a four-room basement apartment suitable for two persons. As soon as the school year ended in Texas, Lula Ailey sent for her son to share the most comfortable living quarters which the Aileys had ever occupied.

Alvin Ailey was twelve years of age when he was placed aboard the train to Los Angeles and a whole new era in his life thus began for him. Remembering the days of hunger in Texas and thinking that his mother might be hungry, the youngster saved his lunch for the entire duration of the long trip by train in order to present it to her upon his arrival in Los Angeles. This tender and moving sacrifice made by her young son was one which Lula Ailey was determined would never recur in the future.

Alvin entered Valencia Junior High School in the fall but, after a few days of attendance, he expressed his desire to leave the school. The location of the apartment on Valencia Avenue necessitated his attendance at an all-white school--a change for which he was not prepared at the

time. Recalling his first experience in an integrated public school, Ailey explains that

> . . . there was a whole strange kind of thing about a black boy having come to this school. It was as if they did not know exactly what to do with me--consequently, I, too, felt very strange about being there.[1]

His mother remembers that he came home one day and tearfully announced, "I am tired of going to school with all of those white folks; I want to go where our people are."[2] Lula Ailey decided that the time had come for them to move again because her major purpose in life was to make her child happy.

Although she retained her position on Valencia Avenue, Mrs. Ailey found lodgings at 912 1/2 East 43rd Place near Central Avenue in Los Angeles--a predominately black neighborhood. To assist with the extra burden of both rent and carfare, Lula Ailey obtained additional means of supplementing her income through the cleaning of three offices in downtown Los Angeles. She was absent from her home, therefore, from seven o'clock each morning until eight o'clock each evening; thus, at twelve years of age, Alvin assumed the responsibilities of cleaning up their apartment, each day shopping for the groceries, and paying all of their bills.

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] Lula E. Cooper, personal interview, April 8, 1971.

One year after moving to East 43rd Place, Alvin's mother again changed her place of employment--a move which necessitated a new schedule for her son. She was employed by the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, and her hours of work were from four o'clock in the afternoon until midnight. Ophelia Wilkes, who lived in the apartment across the hall from the Aileys, looked in upon Alvin periodically as an assurance of his safety. The adolescent Alvin was satisfied with both his duties in his home and the new arrangements made for him because he was now living and attending school in a black neighborhood.

At the George Washington Carver Junior High School in Los Angeles, Ailey remembers that he ". . . began to feel mildly creative." He attributes this awakening to a few stimulating teachers among whom was Mildred Cobbledick, the Director of the Glee Club. As a member of the Glee Club, he developed an intense involvement with singing and with the sound of music, enjoying the spirituals which were a part of the club's repertory--especially "Rocka My Soul" and "Sit Down, Servant" which were later incorporated in the dance suite entitled Revelations. There was also a class in creative writing in which he was enrolled; in this class, he read for the first time poems by renowned poets, but he continued to write poems of his own which, for the most part,

reflected a search for or an examination of what he thought was his own identity. Speaking of this new awareness of himself, Ailey says, "I remember being alone a great deal because my mother was involved with working for the aircraft industry so I became very 'turned on' to myself."[1]

When Alvin Ailey was fourteen years of age, tap was the most popular form of dance in the neighborhood; the teacher was Lavretta Butler and most of the youngsters attended one half-hour lesson with her each Saturday. The fee was fifty cents per lesson, a sum which the Aileys could afford, but Alvin's mother was not pleased about the thirty-five dollars which she spent for the prescribed tap shoes, especially since the activity failed to hold Alvin's interest longer than a two-month period of time.

Alvin Ailey saw his first ballet while he was in junior high school. Periodically, the schools sponsored field trips in order to acquaint the students with sights and events which afforded educational enrichment. On such an occasion, Alvin attended a Saturday matinee at the Los Angeles Philharmonic Hall where he saw Afternoon of a Faun and Scheherazade performed by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. He was disappointed with the whole affair because, for some reason, he had expected it to be very "sexy" and

[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

found it quite the opposite. The trip to the ballet was not a total loss for Alvin, however, because it acquainted him with the theatre district of Los Angeles. By 1945, he had learned that he enjoyed being in the atmosphere of the theatre. Consequently, each Saturday he boarded a bus and rode to the section of downtown Los Angeles in which the Biltmore and Orpheum Theatres were located. There, he collected handbills of all of the coming attractions, and, from some of these advertisements, he discovered that Katherine Dunham and her dancers were to perform at the Biltmore Theatre. It was the first time that he had seen a handbill announcing the appearance of black performers at the Biltmore Theatre, and he knew that he had to attend. He managed to save enough money from his weekly allowance for the price of a ticket and saw the 1945 version of Katherine Dunham's Tropical Revue. The youth was overwhelmed with the performance; he had never before seen dancing such as this. Following the program, he managed to get backstage and to acquire Dunham's autograph. He remembers his fascination with the colorful costumes and with the heavy makeup which was worn by the dancers--theatrical appurtenances which made a lasting impression upon the latent artist.

Throughout junior high school, Alvin Ailey was adept in every subject except mathematics. He maintained his

position upon the honor roll, however, because he earned "A's" in all of his other courses. Because he disliked competitive team sports, he "shot baskets" and practiced the skills of hand ball alone. Alvin Ailey entered the Thomas Jefferson Senior High School in the fall of 1945. Here, he continued to sing with the Glee Club and to write poems, some of which were published in the high school newspaper. There was a brief period when he was encouraged to play high school football because of his size, yet he disliked the game with such intensity that he was permitted to drop out after a brief period. Both gymnastics and track and field events appealed to him, however, but only for his personal enjoyment--never for the sake of competing with others.

In senior high school, Ailey extended his interests to include literature and foreign languages; Spanish was particularly easy for him, and he attributes this facility to the fact that his only childhood friends in Navasota, Texas, were children from a neighboring Spanish-speaking family. He had learned the language of his friends for the purpose of communication as they spoke very little English. As a result of this early experience, it was easy for him to grasp the construction of the languages when he began his study of French and Spanish in high school. He became so fluent in both languages that his services were enlisted as

a substitute teacher whenever the regular high school teachers of Spanish or French were absent for the day. This interest in Spanish was extended to include Spanish literature which, in turn, led to Ailey's choreography of a dance-drama entitled Feast of Ashes, based upon Federico García Lorca's House of Bernarda Alba.

At this point in his life, also, Alvin Ailey began to be aware of persons and things as stimuli to his latent creativity. In retrospect, he remembers that the neighbors in his apartment building were women and that, in his imagination, they became theatrical types which were later to appear in his choreography of Revelations and Blues Suite. There was Ophelia, the marvelous, tall woman who resembled Judith Jamison, a member of the current Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theatre. Ophelia led an exciting life shared with many male friends, one of whom she shot in the leg. Another of these remembered women was Margie who had been a chorus girl in a night club in Chicago; to Ailey, Margie was "very special" because she was extremely pretty, kept her hair neatly dressed, and always wore high-heeled shoes. Ophelia and Margie were friends of Alvin's mother whom he describes as ". . . the most special of all. Mother was very, very beautiful."[1]

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[1] Ibid.

Central Avenue in Los Angeles was the milieu of black social activity during the period of World War II. Bars, hotels, and theatres made the street picturesque and inviting with respect to entertainment. The Bill Robinson, The Florence Mills, The Rosebud, and The Lincoln Theatres were frequented by young Ailey as often as he could afford the prices of admission. It was here on Central Avenue in these motion picture theatres that he viewed the early musicals of Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire; Ailey credits Kelly with the establishment of his respect for the male dancer. Believing that Kelly influenced a whole generation of male dancers, Ailey offers the following comments concerning his own impressions of this dancer: "He was a 'man dancer,' one who did not wear tights. Here was a man who wore a shirt, pants, and a tie and danced like a man!"[1] Prior to his enrollment in senior high school, Ailey's opinion of male dancers was one of low esteem. When he remembers those days, he states, ". . . you know, men just didn't dance anything except popular steps."[2] It was obvious that he had no idea that his own career would become that of a dancer although he had begun to seek activities which brought him closer to the theatre than ever before.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

The Lincoln Theatre featured live entertainment and had a regular chorus line of girl dancers. Here, Ailey saw numerous vaudeville acts including such famous black performers as Pearl Bailey, Lena Horne, Pha Terrell, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Pigmeat Markham, and Billie Holiday. He was attracted to theatrical entertainment in part because he was interested, and in part because ". . . it was just the thing one did, you know--to go to the Lincoln."[1] When Ailey was sixteen years of age, he had another reason for seeking entertainment away from home. His mother met and became attached to a man by the name of Fred Cooper. Ailey heartily disliked this man, whom his mother later married, primarily because Cooper disrupted the pattern of life to which young Ailey had become accustomed. He was also too attached to his mother to share his life with her with another man, and he felt no need for the presence of another man in their home. When Fred Cooper visited his mother, Alvin frequently locked himself in his room and wrote poems or listened to music. Among his extensive collection of 78 rpm phonograph records, a favorite was Leonard Bernstein's music for Fancy Free. He knew that this was the soundtrack from a ballet which was concerned with sailors because of

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[1] Ibid.

the picture on the cover of the record. Other than that, his interest in the ballet was limited to his appreciation of the rhythm and melody of the score. Ironically, he was to choreograph more than twenty years later Bernstein's Mass.

The Orpheum Theatre in downtown Los Angeles afforded a different kind of attraction for young Ailey than that of the theatres on Central Avenue; it was the theatre in which the "big bands" of the 1940's performed. For two years, Alvin saved enough money each week to attend the Saturday matinees at the Orpheum; here he saw and heard such famous entertainers as Count Basie and Duke Ellington perform. Regardless of who was performing, however, Ailey religiously attended the Saturday matinees where he would spend the remainder of the day. He recalls his feelings at this period of life by stating that

> I now knew big names in the black entertainment world. I knew where to go to lose myself in the theatrical setting. I guess it was a kind of escape--I was very unhappy at home.[1]

Whatever his original intent may have been, Ailey gained personal satisfaction from the atmosphere of the theatre and this perhaps began to shape his destiny as a renowned dancer in that milieu.

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[1] Ibid.

At school, the first of his peers whom Ailey saw perform a dance was Ronald Gaffney, a fellow-student who had had no formal training but who was a self-styled performer and choreographer. Gaffney danced at practically every school assembly program and often presented impromptu performances; he simply placed an Afro-Cuban record on the phonograph and ". . . danced all over the place." Ailey was fascinated by Ronald Gaffney but felt that he, himself, was too introverted and shy to do such things. At one of Gaffney's performances, however, Ailey had an unforgettable experience; he saw Carmen de Lavallade dance with Gaffney in Scheherazade.

Carmen de Lavallade and her sister, Yvonne, attended the Jefferson High School although they lived in a different section of the black neighborhood from that of the Aileys' residence. Everyone knew the de Lavallade girls as exceedingly quiet and very beautiful. They wore short dresses, styled their long hair in pigtails, and appeared to be highly intellectual and studious, always carrying their school books with them. When Carmen appeared, therefore, in a dance choreographed by Gaffney, everyone was surprised. Ailey recalls the occasion in the following manner:

> I remember that Carmen came out in a red outfit, and I was astonished! I had never seen anything

> like that before--she was extraordinarily beautiful! I never really knew Carmen personally but I had seen her around--the little sweet girl--and to see her on stage doing high kicks and such! I was completely floored--but approvingly so.[1]

A short time later, Ailey was again surprised by a performance of Carmen de Lavallade. He was sitting in the audience at a high school assembly program when she came on stage in a pink tutu and toe shoes and danced to a classical piece of music by Mozart. In Ailey's own words, ". . . this really blew my mind." He thought Carmen's dance, as well as Carmen, was "perfectly beautiful," and he felt that he had to know this girl and to find out about her deep involvement in dance. He followed this impulse, and Carmen de Lavallade laughingly claims the credit for influencing Ailey's career.[2]

According to Ailey, the person who actually convinced him to study dance seriously was Ted Crumb, a young man who lived around the corner from him. Crumb was, as Ailey describes him ". . . a tall boy who wanted to be a dancer." He was familiar with the status of dance in Los Angeles, took classes at various studios, and practiced in his backyard the techniques which he had learned. Ailey became Crumb's regular audience during these practice

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Carmen de Lavallade, personal interview held in East Hampton, Long Island, New York, August 2, 1970.

sessions and made constant inquiries concerning each new movement which was introduced. Crumb, in turn, gave patient demonstrations and explanations and even persuaded Ailey to try some of the movements himself.

Ted Crumb was a devotee of the techniques of Katherine Dunham and, whenever her dancers came to Los Angeles, he managed to find out where their rehearsals were scheduled. Ailey accompanied Crumb to the rehearsal halls, and the two young men "peeped in the door" and watched the dancers prepare for their performances. Once when Katherine Dunham and the members of her company were in town for an extended period of time, Thelma Robinson, one of the dancers, conducted classes for local persons who were interested. Crumb danced in these classes while Ailey observed. When Katherine Dunham and her company left Los Angeles, Thelma Robinson remained in the city to offer a regular schedule of dance classes which were held in a night club where chairs were pushed back to provide adequate space for the dancers who were accompanied by the drummer of the night club orchestra. Although Crumb persuaded Ailey to enroll in one of these classes, the latter's reactions were altogether negative. Ailey disliked the class, the type of dance taught, the persons enrolled in the classes, and, most of all, the odor within the night club itself. As a result of

these reactions, his pursuit of dance activities waned considerably.

Alvin Ailey was sixteen years of age when he became friends with de Lavallade and Crumb because they stimulated his interest in dance. Throughout his senior high school years, however, he had another friend with whom he shared all of his artistic interests. Ella Hurd lived in the same apartment building as the Aileys, and she and Alvin shared what one might consider a purely platonic, brother-sister relationship from 1945 through 1950.[1] Hurd was a few years older than Ailey and attended Los Angeles City College in which she was a student in music. On Sundays, she played the piano for various churches in the city while Ailey attended the McCoy Memorial Baptist Church located nearby on East 46th Street. Following each Sunday service, the two friends compared notes, discussing why individuals responded in certain ways during the services with Ailey always dramatizing the shouting aspects of the worship. The two friends also visited each other daily; sometimes they simply chatted, yet, for the most part, they were engaged in some phase of an artistic endeavor. Many hours were spent listening to Alvin's records, but they derived their greatest

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[1]Ella E. Hurd, personal interview held in Los Angeles, California, April 12, 1971.

enjoyment from singing together. They sat for hours singing spirituals which Ailey had learned in the daily rehearsals of the Glee Club. Ella Hurd tried to teach Ailey how to play the piano, but he never became proficient as a pianist. In referring to her efforts in this regard, Hurd laughingly added, ". . . but neither did I become proficient at the dance movements which he tried to teach to me out in the yard."[1] In offering a description of her young friend during his teenage years, Miss Hurd said:

> Alvin was moody. Sometimes he was very temperamental--really fiery, then again he would stand at the side of the house for hours and never speak. When this happened, one left him alone to commune with nature or whatever it was he wished to do. I think the yard offered a feeling of serenity--it was a peaceful place. His room, on the other hand, offered a different type of sanctum for him. It was something like a menagerie--only his was a collection of products of his creativity. He had mobiles of his own construction hanging all over the room. There were different head pieces, paintings, and a variety of other collected items which he had artistically arranged. He even had a live snake with which he fought from time to time. His records and his books were kept in that room. He loved to read and often sat in his room and read for long periods of time. He also wrote compositions which he shared with me. Intellectually, he was very "deep." I remember that in 1950, we were in a French class together at Los Angeles City College and he was definitely the best in the class.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

Years later, Ella Hurd saw the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in its performance of Revelations at the University of California at Los Angeles. There she saw the results of his earlier inquiries into religion as ". . . it all came through in his choreography."[1]

One day, early in his senior year of high school, Ted Crumb demonstrated some modern dance techniques to Ailey which, he remembers, evoked the following response and feelings from him: "My God, what is that? I was shocked! I had never seen anyone use his torso like that. I remember I was absolutely tingling I was so excited." Crumb told Ailey that he had learned the movements from Bella Lewitzky who was teaching and dancing in Hollywood at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre. When Ailey asked to see the movements again, Crumb repeated them obligingly, after which Ailey said, "Take me to the Lester Horton Dance Theatre."[2]

Ailey's first trip to the Lester Horton Dance Theatre can only be described as ". . . an experience to remember." Even as he recalled it twenty-one years later, he could not contain his excitement, saying,

> I went to the school and found out that Lester was very receptive to Negroes. There were persons there whom I knew and with whom I could identify. Carmen

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

> was in the class and dancing beautifully; Ted Crumb was there, and James Truitte [another black dancer] was there. I was stunned by all of the dancers at the school. There was a kind of elegance--they all had class. The lesson which I had had with Thelma Robinson, of the Dunham Dancers, was sort of hip shaking and night club stuff but here was sound, clean, beautiful theatre. Lester was a big guy with gray hair, and he had this little theatre where he had painted bear tracks all over the floor. There were bones hanging everywhere and an enormous rack of all kinds of drums. The colors in the theatre were wild with each wall painted a different color. I remember that the ceiling was spattered with a cobalt blue. It just blew my mind--it was like a whole new world to me! There were strange constructions, mobiles, and other things hanging while jerseys were stretched about and stacks of beautiful stuff stood around in strategic, decorative spots. It was just beautiful![1]

Alvin Ailey made many more visits to the Lester Horton Dance Theatre where, sitting in the back of the combination theatre-studio, he watched the company of dancers rehearsing on stage. He recalls that, "The dancers were all doing these wonderful things with their bodies. I used to sit there and 'flip out' completely--and Lester always came to the back of the theatre and said 'hello' to me."[2] It was not hard for Alvin Ailey to decide that he wanted to be a part of this beautiful activity; upon his completion of senior high school, he would return to the Lester Horton School and enroll in dance classes.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

CHAPTER IX

EARLY PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION AND CAREER OF ALVIN AILEY

The Horton Background

The degree of excitement experienced by Alvin Ailey when he visited the Lester Horton Dance Theatre[1] in 1948 can be understood easily when the background of the "West Coast Dance Prophet"[2] is considered. Frank Eng, former motion picture and drama critic of the Los Angeles Daily News and, subsequently, General Director of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, describes this organization during Horton's lifetime as:

> . . . much more than a theatre devoted to dance and dancers and dance lovers--it was a microcosm of the possibilities of the human spirit. It was a world

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[1]In personal interviews with Alvin Ailey, Frank Eng, James Truitte, et al., the dance organization and school originally established by Lester Horton was referred to interchangeably by such titles as the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, the Lester Horton Dance Company, the Lester Horton Dancers, the Horton Theatre, the Horton School, and the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School--hence, the seeming inconsistency of the investigator with respect to the official title of the Horton organization throughout this chapter, and subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

[2]Frank Eng, "Horton: 'West Coast Dance Prophet,'" Inner City: Here and Now, January, 1972, p. 1.

> of individual yet cooperative creativity. It was blind to the divisive fears of race, creed, and color--open to their rich, diverse expression and, indomitably, an island of meaningfulness surrounded by an ocean of absurdity. . . . Horton developed a technique which is a complete, thoroughgoing, profound system of technical training that can prepare the human body as an instrument of movement in space and time. . . . Horton's dance technique is organic in the sense that it is all of one piece, exercises growing logically out of the human skeleton and musculature, stretching, fortifying, and ultimately coordinating that body instrument. Further, this technique honestly embraces ethnic sources, and it is objective, in that the student's personality and style are not subtly or blatantly keyed or tied to that of the mentor.[1]

Eng refers to Horton's technique in the present tense because it is, during the 1970's, the official contemporary dance technique taught by James Truitte, a former Horton dancer, at the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Lester Horton had had little formal dance preparation. He studied as a teenager for two years with Theo Hewes in his native Indianapolis, Indiana, took two classes with Adolph Bolm in Chicago, Illinois, and later spent two summers living and studying with American Indians. In the late 1920's, he became a member of and toured with the company of Michio Ito, a disciple of Dalcroze.[2] Horton's deep concern for human beings was one of the significant

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

factors in his success; he had a genuine interest in the peoples of all cultures and, as he learned from many of such groups, he incorporated their movements into his dance techniques. Although he learned much from his teaching, his primary objective was to elicit the best of his students' personal qualities--to help them grow and to reach the maximum of their creative potentialities.[1] According to Eng, Horton incorporated his work and his beliefs into a way of life which, in turn, became interwoven with his way of treating individuals on a personal basis.

Horton directed his dance company as if it were a family unit; the dancers literally shared his life. After Horton's death, Eng continued the tradition of having the dancers live and eat together. He recalls that during the difficult days immediately following Horton's death, "good days" were those when the menu was comprised of hot dogs; on "poor days," peanut butter and jam sandwiches were served, but the atmosphere was always one of ". . . caring, sharing, and hard work."[2]

Although Eng feels that the Horton techniques are grounded more objectively than any other existing technical

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[1]Frank Eng, personal interview held in Los Angeles, California, April 13, 1971.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>.

system of modern dance, he is convinced also that Horton was a creative genius--insisting that he has not seen any comparable creativity evidenced in works which he has viewed by the leading choreographers in the United States. On one occasion, Eng made the following comparison:

> I once went out of my way to see a production of Firebird staged by one of the leading ballet companies in the United States. There was such a small amount of creativity exhibited until I thought, my God, what Lester could have done with this music! In my opinion, in a three-minute section of Salome, Lester did more choreography than that which was evident in the four sections of Firebird.[1]

Eng's strong feeling toward Lester Horton's work was not unfounded as other leading critics had praise only for this artist on the West Coast. Following a performance in the Philharmonic Auditorium in Los Angeles on November 3, 1939, Isabel Morse Jones wrote that the Lester Horton Dance Company

> . . . proved to be a milestone in the advance of the modern dance. Lester Horton's choreography is distinctly individual of Southwestern America and has the solidity of a firmly grounded modern dance technique.[2]

Concerning the same performance, Viola Hegyi Swisher wrote:

> At dance concerts given by local artists there prevails customarily an audience attitude combining

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Isabel Morse Jones, "Horton Dancers at Philharmonic," Los Angeles Times, November 4, 1939.

> scornful condescension and furiously friendly partisanship. Lester Horton, long a local, has outgrown all that. Staged in any metropolitan dance-wise center, his concert would be accorded the same generally enthusiastic reception it received last night at Philharmonic Auditorium, where, with his excellently trained company, Horton was presented by Merle Armitage. . . . A choreographer of considerable independence and originality, Horton has developed a dance mode that is, within the range of the modern dance, increasingly fluent and flexible.[1]

Two years later, following a performance at the Hollywood Music Theatre on February 1, 1941, the same critic wrote:

> At the Music Box Theater last night the Lester Horton Dance Group vindicated its enthusiasts and put to shame its detractors by offering a program that indisputably placed this company in the top ranks among dance modernists. . . . With the same keen efficiency that is to be found in fine line drawings, Horton has created choreographies alive with vitality, purpose, and legitimate artistic compulsion. And let there be no mistake about this: He has created--not copied--all the way. . . . Noble Comedy, the Lysistrata story again, danced to music by Simon Abel, showed Horton's increasing mastery of form and composition in the realm of the full-length ballet. Its persuasive humor and interesting action were well emphasized throughout.[2]

On March 28 and 29, 1953, the Lester Horton Dance Company presented its début performance on the East Coast at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA, and the dance critics on the East Coast were as impressed as those on the West Coast. Walter

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[1]Viola Hegyi Swisher, "Dance Review," Hollywood Citizen News, November 4, 1939.

[2]Viola Hegyi Swisher, "Dance Review," Hollywood Citizen News, February 3, 1941.

Terry, writing for the New York Herald Tribune, had the following to say:

> New York, recognizing the fact that it is the nation's dance center and pretty certain that its dance events are superior to those anywhere else in the land, sometimes tends to be patronizing and kindly, rather than envious in its attitude toward dance enterprises centered outside of New York. Last weekend, New Yorkers, dancers and dance followers alike, had no reason to assume a patronizing air; rather, they had cause for pride in the dance achievements of another city, for the Lester Horton Dancers, a group from the Lester Horton Dance Theatre in Los Angeles, brought vigor, and polish, and imagination to their programs at the YM-YWHA. . . . the local debut of the Lester Horton Dancers gave cause for pride in the modern dance efforts of the Californians and brought freshness of idea, new faces, fine dancing, theatrical verve, and even, perhaps, a healthy dash of envy to the New Yorkers who attended.[1]

Margaret Lloyd, writing for the Christian Science Monitor, called Horton a "prolific choreographer," a "fruitful teacher," and an "independent artist."[2] An uncredited review in the Dance News read:

> After twenty-five years of hearsay reports and speculation based on the quality of such dancers as Janet Collins and James Mitchell, New York finally had an opportunity to see the Lester Horton Dancers for itself, and it can be said at once that New York was not only deeply impressed but a little humbled. These dancers are terrific both as individuals and as a company. They are completely

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[1]Walter Terry, "Debut of Horton Dancers," New York Herald Tribune, April 5, 1953.

[2]Margaret Lloyd, "West Coast Dancers in New York," Christian Science Monitor, April 4, 1953.

> unselfish in their subordination to the discipline of the group. Every work is presented with a passionate attention to the last detail of movement, costuming, decor and lighting . . .[1]

Because Horton's aims were so high, his productions and the performances of his company often fell short of his choreography and concept. Eng feels that this was not a crucial shortcoming for Horton, however, because he was

> . . . more interested in the creative aspects, his charges, their development, and the tantalizing stimulation of a growing, developing work. Perfection and sleekness of performance were probably tertiary after the creative and the functional.[2]

What Alvin Ailey saw and felt at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, therefore, was the successful result of beliefs and practices which had evolved over a period of twenty-five years.[3]

Early Professional Preparation[4]

Following his first visit to Lester Horton's school in the fall of 1947, Ailey's one dream was to return there as a student of the Horton techniques. Having made no

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[1]"Reviews," Dance News, May, 1953, p. 4.

[2]Eng. "Horton: 'West Coast Dance Prophet,'" p. 1.

[3]Eng, personal interview, April 13, 1971.

[4]Unless otherwise documented, all data included in the remainder of this chapter were obtained through personal interviews with Alvin Ailey held in New York City during the months of August and September of 1970 and January of 1971.

decision, however, with respect to a career in dance, he made plans also to attend college. These plans necessitated searching for full-time employment immediately following his graduation from the Thomas Jefferson Senior High School in Los Angeles on June 18, 1948.[1] Two weeks later he secured employment as a combination clerk-office boy with the Atomic Energy Commission in downtown Los Angeles. His work was classified as "top secret," and he never revealed any details of it to anyone--not even to his mother. Ailey worked with the Atomic Energy Commission from June until the end of December of 1948.[2]

Because the second semester at the University of California at Los Angeles began in February, Ailey devoted January of 1949 to classes at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School. He bought the "package deal" of eight classes per month and began his professional preparation in dance as a member of the beginner's class while wearing the old uniform which had served him in high school classes in physical education. He took a place at the back of the class because, he explains, "I was very shy; consequently, I approached the lessons in a very athletic fashion--like gymnastics."

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[1]Diploma, Thomas Jefferson High School, Los Angeles, California, June 18, 1948, from the personal files of Lula B. Cooper.

[2]Cooper, personal interview, April 8, 1971.

Alvin Ailey found the experience stimulating but left the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School at the end of the month to begin his studies at the University.

Ailey enrolled in the University of California at Los Angeles where he concentrated upon a major sequence in Romance Languages. Classes at the University posed what was an almost impossible schedule for Ailey who, each weekday morning, boarded the city bus at 6:00 a.m. in order to arrive promptly for an 8:00 a.m. class; at 5:00 p.m. he boarded the bus and arrived home at approximately 7:00 p.m. In addition to his lack of money for continuous study at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School, participation in classes there was no longer feasible in terms of the time required.

In mid-February of 1949, Lester Horton telephoned Alvin Ailey and inquired about his reasons for not returning to his dance classes. Ailey explained his class schedule at the University of California at Los Angeles, as well as his financial situation but added that he had enjoyed his month of studies at the Lester Horton School. Horton then expressed his belief that Ailey had the potentiality of becoming a dancer provided that he really had such a desire. He questioned Ailey, therefore, with respect to the seriousness of the latter's interest and intent in seeking a career

in dance. Convinced that Ailey had a genuine interest in dance, Horton offered him a working scholarship which placed him in the position of assisting with the lighting and working as a general "handy man" for the weekly performances of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre. In exchange for these services, he enrolled in those dance classes which could be fitted into his schedule.

Ailey found remunerative evening employment in a restaurant which was located in the vicinity of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, and obtained a room in a boarding house in which several of the Horton dancers lived. His schedule of a full class load at the University of California at Los Angeles and an eight-hour shift at the restaurant still made it impossible for him to enroll in dance classes on days other than Saturdays. Ailey was happy, nevertheless, because he was in the atmosphere of the Horton Theatre and near Lester Horton who was, he says, ". . . teaching these gorgeously creative classes." Ailey was not disturbed by the fact that he could enroll in so few classes at that time as he still had not committed himself to the idea of becoming a professional dancer. He knew that he wished to do something in the theatre--in the Lester Horton Dance Theatre--but he was still searching for his own particular artistic identity.

Alvin Ailey's daily schedule during the spring of 1949, however, proved too strenuous for him as he was physically exhausted most of the time. He was disturbed, also, by the compulsory membership in the Reserve Officer's Training Corps at the University, and by the fact that his grades were not representative of his academic ability. For these reasons, he knew that he was failing to perform any of his responsibilities well and decided, therefore, not to return to the University in the fall.

With the coming of the summer of 1949, Alvin Ailey moved back to his home with his mother and his stepfather. He continued his employment at the restaurant throughout the summer, however, and, for the first time, he was able to attend classes at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School on a regular basis. He enrolled in two classes in Horton techniques each week and in summer school at an extension branch of the Los Angeles City College--a schedule of summer activities which still remained somewhat hectic. He describes the frustrations of his heavy schedule in the following manner:

> It was all very confusing but I loved being at Lester's; he was making dances, and clothes, and doing very creative things. He was always encouraging to me and I became involved in a composition class in which I completed my first study. It was a workshop exercise in which I related sculpture

> and painting to movement. The summer at Lester's was a good one.[1]

Because he was still antagonistic toward his stepfather, Alvin Ailey's summer at home was not as pleasant as it was at "Lester's." He finally decided that he could not make the adjustment in the family situation and that he would simply leave the Los Angeles area in order to continue his studies in the fall. His desire was to attend the University of California at Berkeley but, after learning that he had less than enough transferable credits, he enrolled instead in San Francisco State College in San Francisco, California.

Shortly after his arrival in San Francisco, Ailey obtained remunerative employment at the Greyhound Bus Terminal where he loaded baggage from 4:00 p.m. until midnight. His days were free, therefore, for a full schedule of classes, and he became involved again in a major sequence in Romance Languages at the San Francisco State College. The first semester progressed smoothly but, at the beginning of the spring semester in 1950, Ailey became quite ill. The illness was terminated with surgery for the removal of a non-functional kidney. Luckily, he had adequate insurance to cover his surgical and hospitalization expenses through the bus company where he was employed so that he was not placed in a position of financial strain.

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

During his period of recuperation, Alvin Ailey met and became friendly with Mia Angelou, author of the book entitled I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.[1] She later introduced him to Lon Fonteyne, a dancer-choreographer who had a night club act. Ailey's dance activity had been non-existent since he first came to San Francisco; Lon Fonteyne, however, employed him during the spring of 1953 and thereby provided Ailey with his first opportunity to perform for a paying audience. Fonteyne was performing at the Champagne Supper Club in downtown San Francisco when he learned that Ailey was a dancer. He invited Ailey to audition for a place in his act and employed him immediately. In recalling this incident in his life, Ailey said, modestly, "I am sure that it was because Fonteyne needed a male dancer--any male dancer."

Fonteyne cast Ailey in "strong man" roles and choreographed the dances in which he was to perform to emphasize his physique--a practice which worked well for Alvin Ailey since he had had such limited experience in dance. Fonteyne's group presented three performances each night, which left little time for other activities in which Ailey might have desired to participate. The practice of

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[1]Mia Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (New York: Random House, 1969).

retiring for the night with the sunrise and beginning the day with the sunset did little to motivate Ailey toward pursuing a career as a night club entertainer. Consequently, he remained with Fonteyne for only six weeks. During this period in his life, Ailey became acquainted with several entertainers among whom were the tap dancers, Lawrence Hardaway and Teddy Hales. He also stored in his memory certain jazz steps which he still uses from time to time both in his teaching and in his choreography.

While in San Francisco, Ailey corresponded regularly with James Truitte who kept him informed about all of the activities at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre. Consequently, when Fonteyne took his act to Los Angeles for an engagement, one of the first places which Ailey visited was the Horton Theatre, an occasion which he recollects vividly:

> I was stunned when I saw a whole suite of Latin dances with the big skirts and everything. That did it--I returned to San Francisco and packed all of my things and moved back to Los Angeles. I went straight to the Horton School and began serious study. I had finally discovered that this was what I wanted and that I could not live without it.[1]

When Ailey was finally enrolled again at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School, he participated in two and three classes every day. He became a member, also, of the

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

workshop group and began to learn some of the dances in the Horton repertory. Soon after his return to the School, he was scheduled to dance in one of the demonstrations presented by students in the workshop. In that appearance, he was to perform in a group of nine dancers. Wondering how Horton could subject him to making an appearance before an audience when he was so unsure of himself, Ailey managed to put on his makeup and to get dressed in the proper costume, but he left the theatre before the beginning of the dance. The fact that his position was in back of the other dancers failed to offer Ailey the security which he felt that he needed; he simply walked away from the situation. In reference to his actions on this occasion, he offers the following comments:

> Lester was very quiet and understanding--he never forced anything upon anyone. He was the fatherly type--very warm. Consequently, he did not seem to be too upset by my actions. At least he gave me a chance to work up my courage to perform.[1]

Ailey gradually built himself up to what he expresses as "performance readiness." He choreographed his first complete dance in the workshop that summer and entitled it Afternoon Blues. Having been impressed earlier by the performance of Afternoon of a Faun presented by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, he structured his own first dance in

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[1] Ibid.

this fashion. The composition was three minutes in duration and Ailey danced the role of the Faun.

Alvin Ailey's return to the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School came shortly after an artistic misunderstanding between Horton and several members of his original group of dancers. The departure of the dissenting group from the Horton Theatre gave such dancers as Carmen de Lavallade and James Truitte the opportunity to perform roles heretofore assigned to the original Horton Dancers. De Lavallade and Truitte became leading dancers, and Ailey says of himself, "I was just there in the back." Dancing for the first time with Carmen de Lavallade, however, he performed the male role in the Horton choreography entitled Dedication to José Clemente Orozco. This dance, originally created for Jack Dodds and Carmen de Lavallade, had had its première, prior to Ailey's return to Los Angeles from San Francisco, at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles on March 7, 1953.[1]

While Ailey was in San Francisco, Horton had initiated an annual scholarship fund-raising affair, the Bal Caribe. This was a costume ball with prizes offered for the best costumes worn by the guests, and entertainment provided

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[1]Frank Eng, personal correspondence with the investigator, October 5, 1972.

in the form of a series of Afro-Cuban dances created by Horton. The first Bal Caribe was presented at the Horton Theatre with subsequent ones held at Earl Carroll's Theatre on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, California, in 1953, and at the Hollywood Palladium in 1954 and 1955.[1] The dances choreographed for the Bal Caribe were designed for commercial audiences, and thus provided the members of the company with a repertory of "popular" dances which were performed for remunerative purposes. The Lester Horton Dance Theatre performed commercially at such places as the Coconut Grove and Club Seville in Los Angeles, Ciro's Nightclub in Hollywood, the Hollywood Bowl Jazz Festival, and in motion pictures and television variety shows.[2]

During the late spring of 1953, Carmen de Lavallade, Claude Thompson, and Alvin Ailey were selected by Jack Cole, the well-known choreographer, to dance in his choreography for the motion picture entitled Lydia Bailey, which starred Canada Lee and was concerned with life in Haiti. Cole selected character types for his dance which depicted a Voodoo ceremony and featured a duet in which Carmen de Lavallade was the selected female dancer for the role. De Lavallade was so skilled technically that Cole was unable

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

to cast any one of the black male dancers opposite her. He donned dark colored make-up, therefore, and danced the male role himself. Cole had the following comments to make concerning this ceremonial dance in Lydia Bailey:

> I had to dance with Carmen because Alvin at that time was very unmusical. He got turned on to movement and didn't hear a thing but, he danced marvelously--he was one of the most beautiful men that one ever wanted to see. He had black curly hair and reminded me of a Renaissance Cherub or a 19th century Othello with this very beautiful, muscular, round body. Even if he was dancing the steps incorrectly, he was just so marvelous looking that it was a pleasure to watch him.[1]

Cole cast Alvin Ailey and Claude Thompson as carriers of the sacrificial fowls in the Voodoo ceremony--roles which required the performance of a dance in which they leapt through fire.[2]

Ailey rehearsed with Cole for two weeks but then became ill with mononucleosis which prevented him from appearing in the motion picture Lydia Bailey, as scheduled. Those were two of the most exciting weeks in Ailey's life, and he describes them in the following manner:

> I had heard Lester call Jack Cole the "greatest living male dancer." We reported to the audition for Lydia Bailey and I saw this incredible creature, Jack Cole, for the first time. He conducted this audition in a manner which just blew my mind. Better still, he accepted us, and I was able to

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[1]Jack Cole, personal interview held in Denton, Texas, July 8, 1971.

[2]Ibid.

> observe him at work. This was the first time that I had seen a man dance in something which he himself had composed. To me, it seemed so remarkable that Jack Cole could envision fourteen persons dancing and then put himself into the dance, too. He and Carmen did some incredible things--I mean they literally "danced each other into the ground." Although I did not appear in the film, rehearsals with Jack Cole were just fantastic.[1]

Jack Cole, without knowing it, became one more person who influenced the early professional career of Alvin Ailey. He was, in the future, to resort periodically to Cole's method of composing a dance. Specifically, the processional in Revelations evinces the strong influence of Cole's choreography for the Voodoo ceremony in Lydia Bailey.

Ailey's Professional Career

The Lester Horton Dance Theatre was performing at Ciro's in Hollywood when Horton suffered a heart attack which resulted in his death on November 2, 1953. Horton was the sole choreographer for his company; his death, therefore, left the members in a dilemma. Plans for their annual spring concert which were already in progress projected the choreography of new dances for the opening performance at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles. On the evening of Horton's death, Frank Eng, who assumed immediate directorship of the company, called a meeting which resulted in the decision that the Lester Horton Dance

[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

Theatre would continue in existence and would fulfill its engagements as previously planned. Each member of the company was given an opportunity to submit scenarios of dances which he or she wished to choreograph. According to James Truitte, Eng knew that Ailey had a desire to choreograph and he was, in essence, granting Ailey the opportunity to do so.[1] Carmen de Lavallade, commenting upon Ailey's opportunity to launch his professional career, stated that "Alvin has always been a creative person so, naturally, it seemed reasonable that he would be the one to assume the role of choreographer for the company."[2]

Although Alvin Ailey had choreographed only one dance composition thus far, he had at least eight ideas which he submitted for the approval of the members of Horton's--now Eng's--group of dancers. As fate would have it, the other members of the company were not interested in choreographing for the group and Ailey was the only person who submitted scenarios. Being a neophyte at choreography, he was guided by his emotions and his choreographic plan, therefore, was focused upon three deeply personal factors:

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[1]James Truitte, personal interview held in New York City, July 3, 1970.

[2]Carmen de Lavallade, personal interview held in Southampton, Long Island, New York, August 2, 1970.

he felt a need to pay tribute to Lester Horton, to demonstrate the strength of James Truitte, and to emphasize the beauty and dramatic ability of Carmen de Lavallade. Two of Ailey's ideas, submitted under the titles of According to Saint Francis and Mourning, Mourning, respectively, were approved by Eng and the members of the company, and Ailey was given the freedom to choreograph, direct, and supervise the production of these two works. Based upon the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, According to Saint Francis was a tribute to the late Lester Horton and featured James Truitte as Saint Francis. Mourning, Mourning, inspired by themes used by the playwright Tennessee Williams, featured Carmen de Lavallade as the leading dancer.

Shortly after Ailey became the official choreographer, the Lester Horton Dance Theatre was commissioned through Roger Wagner to choreograph a group work set to the music of Milhaud's Creation of the World and to present it with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra. Ailey choreographed this work for performance during the winter concert season of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra. After this ambitious undertaking, he returned to Los Angeles and began the choreography for his two new works for the Horton Company.[1]

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[1]Eng, personal interview, April 9, 1971.

Alvin Ailey's inexperience in his new role as choreographer for the Lester Horton Dance Company probably led to his magnifying the responsibilities entailed in his position. The chaos which surrounded his first attempts at choreography for the company is best described in his own words:

> I knew nothing about making dances for a group so I put everything about modern dance which I had read or seen into the work. In addition, I did everything the way that I thought Lester would have done it. I had original piano scores written for each work; I had sets constructed to resemble those of Martha Graham. I painted everything myself--like Lester used to do. We had a designer for the costumes but I selected the fabrics. I remember getting in the car and riding to the fabric store--just like Lester used to do. I dug around in Lester's boxes and acted as I had seen him act--then finally I would say, "Well, I guess I will have to dye something." Then, of course, I got out the dye and dyed fabrics. I was just trying to be like Lester because I thought that was the way to be creative.[1]

The members of the company were understanding as long as their patience lasted but, when <u>According to Saint Francis</u> became a forty-five minute composition, they protested that the dance was too long.[2] Ailey, thrilled that he had finally finished the work, responded to their protest with an outburst which was little short of a temper tantrum. He felt that he had put his ". . . very soul into that

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Truitte, personal interview, July 3, 1970.

composition and it just had to be right." He finally conceded that eight minutes of the dance could be cut and, finally, Gershon Kingsley wrote the original musical score. Seventeen years later, Ailey laughingly recalls,

> That was really an impossible dream. The whole thing was kind of an allusion to Lester's life. The dance began with Lester as a child and ran the whole gamut--he did a dance of faith, one to the moon, the stars, just everything. It was all so technical too--there were slow hinges, fast whirls and any movement that I could think of which was extremely difficult to perform. I used every design and floor pattern imaginable. Poor Jimmy--he lost a lot of weight dancing the role of Saint Francis.[1]

James Truitte corroborates this story when he adds, "I was on the stage moving for thirty-four of the thirty-seven minute composition--my weight dropped from 168 pounds to 154 pounds."[2]

The choreography for Mourning, Mourning progressed more smoothly than that of According to Saint Francis. Perhaps it was because Ailey was developing, both personally and aesthetically, or perhaps it was because he was choreographing specifically for Carmen de Lavallade. The artist-choreographer, discussing this work in 1970, did not overlook either possibility as he described the choreography of Mourning, Mourning in the following manner:

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Truitte, personal interview, July 3, 1970.

> This dance was based upon segments of every story that I could find which Tennessee Williams had written. I was just enthralled by the whole Southern idea which he brought to life. I suppose in a way it was a memory which I was trying to express artistically. We built a set which was typically Southern with shutters and rocking chairs--the whole bit. Because we had so many characters to portray, we kept disappearing behind the scenery and emerging in a different costume and dancing another role. Carmen was the star and I had her doing everything which I thought would exemplify her dramatic ability and enhance her beauty. I remember that in one scene she died, and we all brought wreaths, and then she was re-born. In another scene, I made sure she let her long, beautiful hair flow freely--Carmen was so lovely with her hair down. It was all so fantastically strange--but it worked.[1]

It worked, indeed, for Mourning, Mourning, set to a new piano score by Gertrude Rivers Robinson, and According to Saint Francis were presented as planned at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles on June 4, 1954.[2]

Although the dance performance at the Wilshire-Ebell was not an overwhelming success, it meant that the Lester Horton Dance Theatre was "alive and well." Following this first venture with Alvin Ailey as the new choreographer, several decisions were made which influenced further the direction of Ailey's career. Heading the list was the fact that Frank Eng initiated a Children's Theatre at the School associated with the Lester Horton Dance

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Eng, personal interview, April 9, 1971.

Theatre which involved all of the dancers of the company. The basic idea was to choreograph dances for the children based upon ethnological themes. Despite the fact that Ailey felt that he had exhausted his own creativity in the choreography of his first two major works, he found himself involved actively in this new project which he describes as ". . . something of a personal fiasco." The following explanation is revealing:

> I found music and began making dances. I did not know anything about teaching and could not relate to the children. I hated teaching them because they asked too many questions. I was very impulsive and they were too inquisitive.[1]

Fortunately for Ailey, however, after three weeks of work with the Children's Theatre, he noted an announcement sent out from the RKO Motion Picture Studios inviting black dancers to audition for the screen version of Carmen Jones. Again Ailey was successful in his personal audition; the choreographer, Herbert Ross, cast Ailey and de Lavallade as a dance team, and expressed the opinion that he thought they were ". . . an interesting pair."[2] Although the actual filming of Carmen Jones did not generate any unusual excitement, Herbert Ross was so impressed by the young couple

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Ibid.

that he remembered them in his next important choreographic assignment which involved black dancers--the musical entitled House of Flowers.[1]

During the summer of 1953, prior to the death of Lester Horton, the Lester Horton Dance Company had performed at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, in Lee Massachusetts--a trip which Ailey did not make. The late Ted Shawn, Founder and Director of the Festival, invited the company to fulfill a return engagement during the summer of 1954. Concurrent with the filming of Carmen Jones, the members of the company were rehearsing in preparation for this return engagement. The program, shared with Alicia Markova and Milarad Miskovitch during the week of July 22, 1954,[2] included Lester Horton's Latin Suite and Dedication to José Clemente Orozco along with Ailey's According to Saint Francis and Mourning, Mourning. The new dances were received with something short of enthusiasm and, according to Ailey, the late Ted Shawn felt personally insulted. Ailey offers the following comments concerning his first meeting with the "Father of American Dance":

> Ted Shawn hated the new dances and was not fond of me at all. He told Frank Eng that he must be insane

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[1]Playbill, The Alvin Theatre, New York City, week beginning February 28, 1955.

[2]Advertisement, "Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated," Dance Magazine, July, 1954, p. 11.

> to send Lester's company across the country with me. He felt that Jimmy and Carmen should be running the company since they had been permanent members longer than I had. He told Frank that I not only knew nothing about choreography but that I was not even a good dancer. He was really displeased with the whole situation.[1]

Although the trip to Jacob's Pillow was frustrating for Ailey, it opened up new avenues of exposure for him and for Carmen de Lavallade. Monte Kaye, a promoter-producer, saw them perform in the Ted Shawn Theatre and arranged for the company to travel to New York City immediately following the final performance at Jacob's Pillow in order to audition at the Alvin Theatre for a possible future appearance on television.[2] For the audition, the members of the company selected Lester Horton's suite of Latin Dances. At the same time during which the auditions were held for the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, auditions for the forthcoming musical entitled House of Flowers were being held. Arnold Saint Subber, the producer of House of Flowers, saw Ailey and de Lavallade perform and immediately invited them to remain in New York City to join his cast. According to Ailey, they refused his offer by explaining their seriousness with

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]De Lavallade, personal interview, August 1, 1970.

respect to returning to the West Coast to keep the Lester Horton Dance Theatre in existence.

Alvin Ailey and the members of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre returned to Los Angeles the last week in August of 1954 to begin preparations for the annual Bal Caribe which was projected for presentation in October of that year. Again Ailey had to call upon his creative resources in order to structure dances for presentation at this annual fund-raising event. He devised variations on folk and Latin dances and generally imitated what Lester Horton had done on previous occasions--a practice which proved fruitful inasmuch as the Bal Caribe, with choreography by Alvin Ailey, was well received by audiences in Hollywood and in Los Angeles. Ailey wisely concluded the program with a duet performed by de Lavallade and himself which, according to an article in the California Eagle, provided ". . . an exciting moment in the dance program." The author of the article further states that ". . . a capacity audience [at the Palladium] acclaimed the presentation the finest in Horton dance group history."[1]

Following the Bal Caribe in 1954, the attention of the members of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre was focused again upon the Children's Theatre and the teaching of

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[1]"Dancesational," California Eagle, Los Angeles, California, October 28, 1954.

regular classes at their School. By this time, Frank Eng and the members of the company were living in Lester Horton's house which was located at 7469 Mulholland Drive in Los Angeles--a distance not too far from the theatre-studio on Melrose Avenue. The financial gain from paying students at the School was never sufficient to cover operational expenses, but the communal type of living arrangements eased the financial strain to some degree. For Alvin Ailey, who was accustomed to privacy and occasional complete seclusion and who was aware also of the importance of his new position as sole choreographer for the Lester Horton Dance Company, community living was somewhat less than ideal. He was at constant odds with the director of the company, Frank Eng, because of Ailey's obvious attempts to "fill Horton's shoes" in areas which Eng thought were extended beyond the concerns of a choreographer.[1] Eng thought that in his immaturity, Ailey was losing sight of the fact that the title "choreographer" did not give him the liberty to feel as if he owned the company.[2] Ailey, on the other hand, ". . . was just trying to be creative and to represent Lester."[3]

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Eng, personal interview, April 13, 1970.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

On December 11, 1954, Ailey and Eng were in the midst of one of their many heated discussions during which they aired their differences of opinion freely when the telephone rang. Saint Subber, the producer of House of Flowers, was calling from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where this musical was fulfilling its pre-Broadway engagement. George Balanchine had been relieved of his position as choreographer and had been replaced by Herbert Ross[1] who was enjoying success as the choreographer for the film version of Carmen Jones which had its première on the West Coast at the Fox-Wilshire Theatre in Los Angeles on November 1, 1954.[2] Remembering the work of Ailey and de Lavallade in Carmen Jones, Ross suggested that they be brought in as featured dancers in the musical, House of Flowers. Saint Subber, on the other hand, remembered the couple from the auditions which were held in late August of 1954 at the Alvin Theatre in New York City, at which time he had invited Ailey and de Lavallade to join his cast. With the producer and the choreographer of the musical in harmonious agreement with respect to the employment of Ailey and de Lavallade, Saint Subber telephoned the

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[1]Ibid.

[2]"Cinemascope," California Eagle, Los Angeles, California, October 28, 1954.

two young dance artists to extend to them another invitation to join the cast of House of Flowers.

As a dancer, Carmen de Lavallade had received increasing encouragement to broaden her professional range of experiences and to work with choreographers other than those from the Horton School. It was definitely decided, therefore, that she should take advantage of the opportunity to go to the East Coast. Ailey, on the other hand, as sole choreographer for the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, had to consider the fact that his departure would leave the company in a difficult predicament. Tensions were strong between him and Eng, however, and this situation had to be resolved. Perhaps, Ailey thought, the immediate solution required that he pursue his own dance career elsewhere. The invitation was extended to Ailey and de Lavallade as a dance duo, not as two soloists; it afforded an opportunity also for both artists to become featured dancers in a Broadway musical, to receive a regular salary, and to study in New York City with outstanding teachers of modern dance. They decided that they would go to Philadelphia and on to New York City, to Broadway, and thus to the opportunity to study with such persons as Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, and Charles Weidman. They agreed that de Lavallade should remain on the East Coast but that Ailey would return after five months to the

Lester Horton Dance Theatre where he hoped to create new and better dances than formerly as a result of his broadened experiences.

On December 14, 1954,[1] Ailey and de Lavallade arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on a day when the cast of House of Flowers was presenting a matinee performance. On stage that afternoon, Ailey saw such black dancers as Louis Johnson, Arthur Mitchell, Donald McKayle, and Walter Nicks. He offers the following description of his first day of observation:

> Here were the best black dancers in the country all dancing in the chorus. I had never before seen anyone dance that beautifully. Here we were, brought in as featured dancers, and all that talent in the chorus. I never even knew people could dance like that![2]

But the dancers from California had something very special, too--a quality which Geoffrey Holder, himself a featured dancer in House of Flowers, was the first to express:

> Those two brought something fresh and new from the West Coast and did they ever dance--like something you had never seen before! I had a personal interest in Carmen, however, when I first saw her, I knew I had to meet her. She was the model of the women

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[1]Application for Airline Insurance, Los Angeles, California to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 14, 1954, personal files of Lula E. Cooper.

[2]Alvin Ailey, personal correspondence to Lula E. Cooper from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 15, 1954.

> whom I had painted for years without ever having seen her. Carmen was my ideal woman--three days after I first met her, I asked her to marry me.[1]

Of course, Ailey was not too happy with Holder's attachment to de Lavallade because it threatened his position as the "number one" person upon whom she could depend. Concerning this feeling, Ailey recalls:

> The first time Geoffrey laid eyes upon Carmen he nearly fainted. He attached himself to her and I hated him for that. After all, Carmen and I were a team and, as far as I was concerned, this was the way it had to be. We belonged together--when we danced we had something that was uniquely our own.[2]

Thelma Hill, a former member of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, corroborated Ailey's statement when she said, ". . . there has never been another modern dance team like Carmen and Alvin--they were 'where it belongs.' When they danced together, it was like watching the right chemical combination at work."[3]

Between regular rehearsals of House of Flowers in Philadelphia, Herbert Ross worked with Ailey and de Lavallade in preparation for the production of this musical which

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[1]Geoffrey Holder, personal interview held in New York City, July 10, 1970.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[3]Thelma Hill, personal interview held in New York City, July 15, 1970.

opened on Broadway at the Alvin Theatre on December 30, 1954.[1] They went into the cast simple as the dancers "Alvin" and "Carmen," and performed what Ailey described as ". . . a very sexy pas de deux which was received very well by the audiences." The dance was performed to the song "Mardi Gras," sung by Miriam Burton who played the role of "mother" in the musical.[2] Following the opening of House of Flowers in New York City, Ross choreographed another dance for Ailey entitled Slide, Boy, Slide. Performed to the song of the same title which was sung by Juanita Hall who played the role of Madame Tango, the new dance was incorporated in the production in April. Hall and Ailey were supported by the ensemble of singers and dancers, and Slide, Boy, Slide became the third scene of Act II of House of Flowers.[3]

Ailey was befriended by Louis Johnson who, in turn, introduced him to the kind of life to which theatre personnel in New York City were accustomed. Ailey readily admits:

> At first it was all very strange--I did not understand the whole "gypsy" scene. For example, in California we never went to bars to discuss the show at the end of a performance, and we never went around from studio to studio in order to take classes and

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[1]Playbill, The Alvin Theatre, December 30, 1954.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Playbill, The Alvin Theatre, New York City, April 4, 1955.

> to dance with different groups--it took me a while to become accustomed to this.[1]

Ailey did not find the other dancers in the cast of House of Flowers altogether receptive to him. He later learned that they were displeased with the idea of importing relatively unknown talent from the West Coast when the chorus of the musical was literally "overstocked" with expertly trained black dancers. Ailey explains his response to this revelation in the following manner:

> We had no idea that our "backs were against the wall." The only thing which we knew was that we should dance as the choreographer requested us to dance. For example, I did not know that Louis Johnson had already performed with the New York City Ballet or that Arthur Mitchell, who was my understudy, was such an expertly trained ballet dancer. It was little wonder that most of them gave us "the cold shoulder." They had a right to feel that any one of them could have performed anything which Ross choreographed just as well as we performed it.[2]

Ross preferred the couple from the West Coast, however, and so Ailey and de Lavallade continued in their roles of featured dancers.

Shortly after his arrival in New York City, Alvin Ailey initiated his self-improvement program by seeking out those master teachers of modern dance of whom he had heard high praise. He explains his venture and his subsequent

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Ibid.

disappointments in these words:

> I went to study with Hanya Holm and hated it--it was too balletic. I felt that, if I wanted ballet, I would go to a ballet teacher. It was not at all like Lester's dance--it was not creative. I then went to watch Martha Graham, and her dance was finicky and strange. I went to Doris Humphrey and José Limón and I just hated it all. I suppose that I was looking for a technique which was similar to Lester's and I just did not find it.[1]

Through his friendship with Louis Johnson, however, Ailey learned about Karel Shook and visited Shook's Studio of Dance Arts which was located in Greenwich Village. Ailey was surprised to discover that all of the dancers in House of Flowers studied also with Karel Shook. The atmosphere at Shook's Theatre of Dance Arts was one of hard work and dedication, but Shook did not try to force Ailey into enrolling for dance classes. Instead, the two men developed a friendship which led them to many long discussions--often about books and other artistic areas of interest which they both shared. These dialogues, however, invariably came back to dance and to the philosophy of dance. Shook convinced Ailey that if he were serious about choreography, he should study ballet and Ailey, although he was not balletically inclined, followed Shook's advice and came often to his Studio of Dance Arts. Very seldom did he participate

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[1] Ibid.

in the ballet classes; he did, however, observe carefully and learn a great deal.[1]

As soon as Alvin Ailey began to make friends in New York City, he became engulfed in the theatrical atmosphere. Because he felt an obligation to the dancers who were still in Los Angeles at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, he was reluctant to make the decision not to return to the West Coast. His personal feelings concerning the Horton organization are best explained in a proposal which he wrote some years later in an effort to establish his own school. He expressed the following sentiments:

> When I was a very young man in California I encountered a place so creative, so free, so marvelous that it has left an indelible stamp on my life as an artist and as a human being. This place was called the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School and it was created, run, stimulated by the man whose name it bore. Its environment was electric. Its walls held the excitement of all that was organic and creative and positive. Its environment was a celebration of man in his highest state. This man, Lester Horton, is dead--but his spirit lives. The Lester Horton Dance Theatre School and its environment are gone--but its legacy lives. Its legacy lives in the people whose lives were affected.[2]

Without having yet formulated the foregoing impressions, Ailey felt that the time was at hand and that the agent was

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[1]Karel Shook, personal interview held in New York City, July 8, 1970.

[2]Alvin Ailey, "Dance Theatre School," a proposal written in New York City, Spring, 1968.

himself--he had to become prepared to promote the "celebration of man in his highest state." He needed the personal growth, knowledge, and experience for which there is no substitute in a field of professionalism in which he was such a neophyte.

The period from 1955 through 1957 constitutes what Ailey considers his apprentice years. He spent three years dancing for different choreographers, enrolling periodically in various dance classes, visiting rehearsals at different studios, and generally gathering material for his own use in the future. His favorite workshop area was the studio of the New Dance Group which was located in mid-town Manhattan, just off Broadway. At first, he simply watched studio rehearsals conducted by Donald McKayle, Anna Sokolow, and other choreographers. He enrolled in an occasional class when he saw something which interested him--a practice which led to invitations from several of these choreographers for him to perform in their works. He danced in McKayle's Games and in Her Name was Harriette; in Anna Sokolow's Rooms and in Poeme; and in Sophie Maslow's Manhattan Transfer. Among these choreographers, Ailey was impressed most by Anna Sokolow from whom he learned certain facets of design and the bases for the selection of appropriate musical accompaniment for dances choreographed. According to Ailey, Sokolow

had a poetic approach to choreography, and he felt that she was dedicated to her art. In the mid-fifties, it was the practice of the choreographers to present several concert performances during the year, depending upon when the choreographic works were ready for public presentation and whether space to present the concert was available. Ailey performed in these programs at every opportunity afforded him.

In the late spring of 1955, Ailey was one of thirteen dancers featured in a pilot film, with choreography by Geoffrey Holder, for the Colgate Comedy Hour.[1] This pilot was filmed to support a "comeback" on television of the original "Amos 'n Andy" radio program. This was an excellent opportunity for exposure of the talents of the young black dancers, because, had the show been successful, it would have meant thirty-six weeks of filming on the West Coast for the entire group. Unfortunately, the show did not "sell," and only two weeks were spent in its filming in Los Angeles, after which the members of the cast returned to New York City.[2]

Alvin Ailey found that it was not too difficult for him to find remunerative employment following his role as a

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[1]Ella Thompson, personal interview held in New York City, July 26, 1970.

[2]*Ibid*.

featured dancer in House of Flowers. During the fall of 1955, he played the role of a Chinese bandit in the off-Broadway production of The Carefree Tree which was presented at the Phoenix Theatre in New York City.[1] In the spring of 1956, he was featured, along with Mary Hinkson, in the Jay Richard Kennedy production of Sing, Man, Sing, starring Harry Belafonte, with choreography by Walter Nicks.[2]

Sing, Man, Sing was a road show and was taken on a tour of cities in the Midwest for a period of ten weeks. This was a show about which it can be said safely that Ailey remained either for the sake of remuneration or for the privilege of taunting Harry Belafonte who probably would have dismissed him had the show been established in one place. The two men were at odds constantly because Ailey felt that Belafonte was commercializing the calypso sounds and rhythms, and he expressed his adverse criticism in this regard directly to Belafonte. Ailey felt that he knew about "real" black music and songs, and that Belafonte had no innate identification with American blacks and that he was not a serious artist. Of course, at that particular time, Ailey was not impressed by artists who failed either

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[1]Publicity Bulletin, "American Dance Theatre," Musical Artists, Incorporated, New York City, 1959.

[2]Souvenir Programme, Sing, Man, Sing, Kennedy-Belafonte Productions, 1956.

to stimulate his creative interests or to remind him of his West Coast dance background. When asked if he thought the fact that Belafonte was overly attentive to Carmen de Lavallade during the filming of Carmen Jones had anything to do with his antagonism toward Belafonte, Ailey replied:

> I don't know--perhaps it did. I was, however, generally antagonistic at the time. Between Belafonte and me it was probably a conflict of two "super" male egos. As far as everyone else was concerned, I was just different. I hated everything which was the "accepted" thing to do. I insulted everyone because I wore jeans and tee shirts and boots when we traveled; I also slept on the bus. And then there was this thing with Mary Hinkson--she was a Graham trained dancer and was like a prima donna while I was like a rough primitive cat. She said that I was undisciplined and I was; she said that I was gruff and I was; she said that I would never do the same thing twice and perhaps I didn't. But then I didn't really care about dancing with her--I really didn't care about dancing with anyone other than Carmen. She had lovely feet and legs but she wasn't Carmen--she didn't have the softness and the roundness of Carmen. It was a whole new way of dancing and I didn't try very hard to adjust to it.[1]

Although Ailey was not fond of his dancing partner, Mary Hinkson, she did not dislike Ailey during that period of their association. She did admit, however, that she often wished that he had been better disciplined as a dancer. She remembers many anxious moments of their partnership, one of which she recalls in the following manner:

> We had one dance in which it was necessary to make body contact and, in one section of the dance, I

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

had to really hold on to Alvin. When we reached that part on one occasion, my hand kept slipping and I could not get a firm grip. When we finally finished the dance, I asked him what in the world he could have had on his body. He replied very nonchalantly, "Oh, I wanted to see what kind of effect it would have on the audience if I shined my body with baby oil." The audiences really loved him because he looked gorgeous and I really did not mind his trying out new ideas if he had just told me about them in advance. I never knew what to expect from performance to performance.[1]

If Alvin Ailey had any hopes of keeping Carmen de Lavallade as his permanent partner in dance, these hopes were shattered with the Holder-de Lavallade marriage during the summer of 1956.[2] Ailey, however, soon found a replacement for de Lavallade in Christyne Lawson who was a Graham dancer and who stemmed originally from Los Angeles. She and Ailey considered developing a night club act and rehearsed together periodically. Ailey admits that he and Miss Lawson became very devoted to each other and, although he has not said so himself, speculation has it that it was she about whom he wrote the following lines to his mother during the spring of 1957:

I guess it has really happened to me--like a light out of the darkness--and in the form of a wonderful girl whom I have known for a long, long time. She

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[1]Mary Hinkson, personal interview held in New York City, August 27, 1970.

[2]Geoffrey Holder, personal interview held in New York City, July 2, 1970.

> is from Los Angeles, too, and was in Carmen Jones--she's a dancer, she's younger than I am--she's twenty-one (I'm an ancient twenty-six) and she's very dark and beautiful. We have a great deal in common--we understand each other though we fight sometimes--she is very arrogant and would require some taming but I am really very fond of her and I think she is of me--I think I would like to marry her if she would have me--I really love her very much and I think she loves me but we have never discussed it.[1]

Whether or not Ailey and this beautiful young lady ever discussed marriage has not been revealed; Ailey's interest, however, was soon to return to his choreographic endeavors.

Alvin Ailey wrote the above letter to his mother between shows in Brooklyn, New York, where he was performing in a Calypso Revue which was comprised of calypso music, songs, and dance and starred Geoffrey Holder. Produced and directed also by Holder, the Revue opened on April 19, 1957 and was presented four times each day. The production which Ailey described as "a lot of fun" played in Brooklyn for two weeks, after which the company traveled to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and to Washington, D. C. for a week's engagement in each place before the tour was terminated and the company disbanded.[2]

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[1]Alvin Ailey, personal correspondence to Lula E. Cooper from Brooklyn, New York, April 25, 1957.

[2]Ibid.

During the summer of 1957, Ailey danced in the chorus of the Jones Beach production of Showboat for which Donald McKayle was assistant choreographer. This time he must have been dancing only for the remuneration involved as he states that he ". . . hated the whole scene." Although Ailey prefers not to discuss Showboat at all, he may have disliked it because, as Ella Thompson explained, ". . . it was produced as a split cruise having a black cruise and a white cruise, with blacks on one side of the boat and whites on the other side."[1]

Ailey's next major period of employment was one which definitely pleased him. He and Christyne Lawson heard of the auditions for the Broadway musical entitled Jamaica, starring Lena Horne, with choreography by Jack Cole. Being fond of Jack Cole and already familiar with his style of dance, Ailey choreographed a duet for himself and Lawson which was, in Ailey's words, "very Cole-ish." They auditioned for Cole and he employed them to ". . . head the dance brigade in Jamaica."[2] Rehearsals for the musical began on August 7, 1957, in preparation for the opening

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[1]Thompson, personal interview, July 26, 1970.

[2]"Theatre News," New York Mirror, August 5, 1957.

performance at the Imperal Theatre in New York City on October 31, 1957.[1]

Jamaica was an immediate success and, from a financial standpoint, it appeared that it would play for a long period of time. Ailey was content and, for a while, his personal financial security was intact. He decided, therefore, that this was the perfect time during which to prepare for his own concert. Young choreographers at that time usually combined forces and worked on a joint concert, possibly with a guest artist featured on the program. Alvin Ailey, together with Ernest Parham, assembled a group of dancers from Jamaica and began rehearsals in Michael's Studio which was located on Eighth Avenue across the street from the Imperial Theatre where the musical was playing.[2]

Ailey rehearsed his dancers at least three hours each day and prepared them for an afternoon performance at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA on Sunday, March 30, 1958.[3] The program, featuring Talley Beatty as guest artist, was comprised of two major works by Ailey entitled Ode and Homage

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[1]"Lawson and Ailey Dance in Jamaica," New York Post, August 5, 1957.

[2]Dorene Richardson, personal interview held in New York City, July 16, 1970.

[3]Programme, "Alvin Ailey and Company-Ernest Parham and Company," 92nd Street YM-YWHA, March 30, 1958.

and Blues Suite, respectively, as well as four of the five dances comprising Redonda, a suite of compositions based upon Latin themes.[1]

Ode and Homage, set to music by Granville-Hicks, was a solo described in the program notes as "A dance of faith, respectfully dedicated to the memory of Lester Horton, modern dance pioneer and innovator."[2] John Martin, Dance Critic for the New York Times, reporting the dance season in retrospect, had the following to say about Ailey's début in New York City:

> As a performer he has a rich, animal quality of movement and an innate sense of theatrical projection, which have been known before; but as a choreographer he had not previously shown his work here. It was an impressive debut.[3]

Martin described Ode and Homage as a solo ". . . of moving dignity and a naively baroque air of poetry." Redonda, which followed Ode and Homage on the program, was described by Martin as ". . . full of flavor and spirit, and lyric invention as well."[4] Blues Suite, presented as the finale, was performed to music arranged and composed by Paquita Anderson and José Ricci with costumes and decor by Geoffrey

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]John Martin, "The Dance: Review III," New York Times, July 6, 1958.

[4]Ibid.

Holder and lighting by Nicholas Cernavich. It was comprised of seven dances--"Good Morning Blues," "Smokedream," "Fare Thee Well," "New Broom," "Sham," "Careless Love," and "Jack of Diamonds."[1] Concerning this suite of dances, John Martin wrote:

> It is overflowing with variety, is beautifully staged, with excellent decor and costumes by Geoffrey Holder, and on this occasion was superbly danced. An admirable piece of work all around.[2]

Dorene Richardson, one of the dancers in Ailey's first concert, described the success of the opening performance thus:

> The audience went out of its mind! It was the first time, I think, that the New York audience had seen a theatrical presentation of modern dance. At that time, most of the dancers were not involved with costumes and scenery. The performances were usually presented on a bare stage and the dancers wore leotards and tights or something very drab. Alvin had a sense of total theatre--the decor, the costumes, the lighting. All of this enhanced the performance and the audience was struck by it--it was new to those present for the concert and they loved it.[3]

Whatever the reason for the success of Ailey's first concert, it was motivation enough for him. As soon as the opening performance was over, he was already planning the

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[1]Programme, "Alvin Ailey and Company-Ernest Parham and Company," March 30, 1958.

[2]Martin, "The Dance: Review III."

[3]Richardson, personal interview, July 16, 1970.

next one; this time, he would present his concert alone and he would feature Carmen de Lavallade as his guest artist. Ailey felt that he was now ready for New York City and that he must lose no time before creating new dances for his next group of dancers who would be featured as Alvin Ailey and Company.

CHAPTER X

ALVIN AILEY: ARTIST IN NEW YORK CITY

Early Artistic Achievements

Alvin Ailey and Company presented its second performance in New York City on December 21, 1958. This was only nine months after the Company's initial performance on March 30, 1958.[1] With Carmen de Lavallade as guest artist, Ailey presented again Cinco Latinos in which he replaced the one dance choreographed by Earnest Parham with one of his compositions. In addition to the repeat of Blues Suite, Ailey presented his new work entitled Ariette Oubliée.

Cinco Latinos, five dances based upon Latin themes, was intended to establish the mood of the audience. These dances, entitled "Lirica," "Rumba," "Beguine," "El Cigaro," and "Rite," respectively, were choreographed to music by a number of composers of popular Latin melodies and had no specific continuity except the fact that they were derived from the same ethnic source.[2] According to some dance

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[1]Saul Goodman, "Brief Biographies: Alvin Ailey," Dance Magazine, December, 1958, p. 70.

[2]Alvin Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

critics, the most successful of this suite of dances were "El Cigaro" and "Rite." P. W. Manchester, in a review during the fall season of dance in New York City in 1958, describes "El Cigaro" as,

> . . . the wonderful piece of fun demonstrating the subjugation of the confident male by the even more confident female, which Charles Moore and Jacqueline Walcott did hilariously. Miss Walcott has only to clatter across the stage in backless shoes and her audience is rolling in the aisles.[1]

"Rite" was the final number of the suite of Latin dances and featured Alvin Ailey and Audrey Mason in ". . . a primitive ritual which retained a strange delicacy in spite of its unashamedly sexual basis."[2]

The première of the evening, Ariette Oublieé, was set to music by Debussy, with the mood of the beginning and of the ending of the dance established by lines from Paul Verlaine's poem entitled Il pleure dans mon coeur; the accompaniment was sung by tenor Jeff Warren.[3] Doris Hering of Dance Magazine gave Ailey credit in this work for straddling precariously the ". . . thin line between sensuous imagery and chi-chi."[4] With respect to this

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[1]P. W. Manchester, "The Season in Review," Dance News, February, 1959, p. 7.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Doris Hering, "Alvin Ailey and Company," Dance Magazine, February, 1959, p. 27.

composition, she stated that she saw resemblances to Swan Lake, to Martha Graham's Ardent Song, and to Frederick Ashton's Illuminations.[1] The plot of the choreography unfolded as Ailey, "The Man," traded ". . . the flower of reality for the dreams of illusion. . . ."[2] The flower from his hat was traded for a crescent moon from the belt of the "Clown." This moon, through the clever maneuvering of stage props, finally became the beautiful Carmen de Lavallade who, ". . . borne about the stage by her votaries in sweeping crescents, might have been an incarnation of Diana, chaste goddess of the moon."[3] According to Hering, "Carmen de Lavallade performed the 'Moon' with distinction. And Mr. Ailey was appealing as the 'Voyager.'"[4] P. W. Manchester's review of the performance of Alvin Ailey and Company on December 21, 1958, was more favorable than the reviews of the other critics. She expressed her delight in the performance in the following manner:

> After so many modern dance performances in which dancers drift about with blank faces and a general neutralization that denies the existence of sex even in the midst of the most complex entwinings, how

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[1]Ibid.

[2]"Reviews: Alvin Ailey and Company," Dance Observer, February, 1959, p. 21.

[3]Manchester, "The Season in Review," February, 1959, p. 7.

[4]Hering, "Alvin Ailey and Company," p. 27.

> refreshing to enter the stage world created by Alvin Ailey in which the men are men and the women are frankly delighted about it.
>
> Here was an altogether stimulating, exciting, beautiful, funny and original entertainment, meticulously presented, lighted wonderfully by Nicholas Cernovich and brilliantly costumed by Normand Maxon who ranged from the ravishing white draperies for Carmen de Lavallade as the Moon to an amazing pink peignoir for that formidable blues singer, Nancy Redi.
>
> The modern dance season had not offered very much up to this point so perhaps I and the rest of the audience that went wild over this program, are placing a little too high a value on it. But on the whole I am inclined to believe that this was truly an unusual event.[1]

Alvin Ailey was a fortunate young man. Not only was he a gifted choreographer even then but he was able also to assemble some of the most talented black dancers in New York City for the presentation of his works. In his first concert, he had such outstanding artists as Tommy Johnson, Claude Thompson, Charles Moore, Charles Neal, Harold Pierson, Dorene Richardson, Cristyne Lawson, Liz Williamson, and Lavinia Hamilton.[2] The list of dancers for his second concert was equally impressive with many of the same artists remaining with him. Important to mention was the addition of Audrey Mason, Minnie Marshall, and Herman Howell to the Company.[3] Ailey was fortunate in the sense that all of the

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[1]Manchester, "The Season in Review," February, 1959, p. 7.

[2]Programme, "Alvin Ailey and Company--Earnest Parham and Company," March 30, 1958.

[3]Manchester, "The Season in Review," February, 1959, p. 7.

dancers knew and respected the abilities of each other. There was no rivalry between them, and they were all interested in helping Ailey establish himself as a choreographer.[1] Charles Moore, a former dancer with Ailey's Company, expressed the feeling of the dancers when he said:

> We were all young and very much behind Alvin. He brought something new and fresh to the New York scene, and we danced because we loved to dance and because we wanted him to be successful. He was new, and young, and black, and that's all that mattered.[2]

The spring of 1959 found Ailey preparing for a return visit to the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated--this time, not as the fledgling choreographer for the Lester Horton Dance Company, but as the respected Director-Choreographer of his own dance company.[3] Referring to this invitation to appear at the Twenty-seventh Annual Festival of Dance at Jacob's Pillow, Ailey had the following to say, "I guess Ted Shawn forgave me for my earlier unimpressive efforts--perhaps the success of the performances in New York City changed his mind."[4] During the spring of 1959, Ailey choreographed a work set to music by Ravel and

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[1]Dorene Richardson, personal interview, July 16, 1970.

[2]Charles Moore, personal interview held in New York City, July 20, 1970.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[4]*Ibid*.

entitled Mistress and Manservant for Shirley Broughton and her company, and began work on Revelations.[1]

Alvin Ailey, Pearl Lang, and their respective dance companies appeared during the opening week of the Festival at Jacob's Pillow from June 30 through July 4, 1959, on the same program with Ruth St. Denis who, at seventy-nine years of age, danced her own The Blue Madonna of St. Mark.[2] Pearl Lang and Her Company performed one work, Falls the Shadows, and Alvin Ailey and Company presented two selections from Cinco Latinos and the entire Blues Suite.[3] Wayne Smith, writing for the Springfield Union, credits Lang and Ailey with the presentation of, ". . . contemporary choreographies which delved into classical mythology and ethnic material and gave them significance and importance through the evocative powers of artistic creativity."[4] Smith, only mildly impressed with "Rite" from Cinco Latinos, comments that Blues Suite was ". . . a highly stylized version of the birth of the blues."[5]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Wayne Smith, "Jacob's Pillow Annual Dance Season Opens," Springfield Union, July 1, 1959.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

Upon their return to New York City, Ailey and the members of his company began rehearsals for their appearance in Central Park in the new Delacorte Theatre during the week of August 3 through August 7, 1959.[1] Jean Dalrymple, Director of the Theatre, presented a program entitled "The World Dance Festival" in which Ailey and his company represented the United States, with their American Blues Suite, and South America, with a new South American Suite.[2]

Following the concert in Central Park, Ailey met Susan Pimsleur, who was associated with Musical Artists Concert Management, and agreed to allow her to arrange tours and concerts for his company. Because he knew that she had been associated with such dance personnel as José Limón and Jean Léon Destiné, he thought that she might be able to help him.[3] Following this agreement, Pimsleur prepared immediately brochures labeling Ailey's company "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater."[4]

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[1]John Martin, "The Dance: Al Fresco," New York Times, August 2, 1959.

[2]Walter Terry, "Yankees Abroad; Dancing at Home," New York Herald Tribune, August 2, 1959.

[3]Alvin Ailey, personal interview held in New York City, September 1, 1970.

[4]Brochure, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Musical Artists, Incorporated, New York City, 1959.

The remainder of the year of 1959 was spent in rehearsals for Ailey's third concert in New York City--this time as The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater.[1] Ailey renamed his company in an effort to convey succinctly a true concept of his approach to modern dance--that of total theater, a concept which stemmed from his Horton background.[2] He did not yet call his company the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as did Susan Pimsleur.[3]

Ailey's third major concert was presented in the Kaufmann Concert Hall of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA in New York City on January 31, 1960.[4] With the lapse of two years since his last appearance there, Ailey had had ample time to prepare new works for presentation as well as to re-structure in part former choreographic works. Whether or not the intention of the choreographer was to improve his dances by such revisions was an irrelevant factor in those days--it was a necessity.[5] That dancers were transient, as they received no salaries for rehearsals and only nominal fees for major performances, is an explanation

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[4]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Kaufmann Concert Hall, New York City, January 31, 1960.

[5]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

of why Ailey in his third concert had retained only three dancers who had appeared in his first concert--Nancy Redi, Nathaniel Horne, and Dorene Richardson.[1]

The first two works on the program which was presented on January 31, 1960, were excerpts from Ailey's Latin American Suite--dances which he had varied at will and either re-worked or re-named to fit the occasion. Canto Al Diablo was described in the program notes as "An interpretation of an Afro-Brazilian fetishist ritual, exploiting the innate sense of melodrama of primitive rites."[2] Sonera was comprised of three abstract dances based upon Cuban dance forms. Ailey's earlier Blues Suite was revised and listed on the program in a more sophisticated manner than in previous concerts. The accompanying program note read "From the fields, levees, and barrelhouses of the Southern Negro sprang the Blues--hymns to the secular regions of his soul."[3] The sections comprising this suite of dances were no longer isolated titles giving the impression of separate compositions; instead, the entire suite was unified by the entrance of "The Blind Man," "The Woman

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," January 31, 1960.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

Upstairs," "Her Lover," "The Other Man," "Lady Friends," and Their Men," thus giving the Suite greater continuity than it had possessed formerly.[1]

Ailey's first unfamiliar choreographic work introduced to the audience at the Kaufmann Concert Hall was his Creation of the World set to Milhaud's music--a work which he had choreographed while he was associated with the Horton organization in California for presentation with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra during the fall of 1953.[2] Ailey danced Creation of the World with Matt Turney, his guest artist from the Martha Graham Dance Company, and caused a small sensation. According to Ivy Clarke, a personal friend of Alvin Ailey:

> Creation of the World was meant to be danced by Alvin and Matt. I have seen many versions of the dance since their performances but never again anything to compare with that combination. From the moment Matt rose out of Alvin's rib--and it was so constructed that it appeared that she did just that--the audience was spell-bound. You could hear a pin drop! The moment the dance ended, they [the audience] all burst into screaming applause.[3]

But Alvin Ailey was not finished with his audience--he had yet to present the première of Revelations.

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Eng, personal interview, April 13, 1971.

[3]Ivy Clarke, personal interview held in New York City, July 21, 1970.

Revelations was choreographed to traditional music sung by the Music Masters Guild Chorus of the Harlem Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association which was directed by Frank Thomas. The accompanying program note read:

> This suite explores motivations and emotions of Negro religious music which, like its heir, the Blues, takes many forms--"true spirituals" with their sustained melodies, ring-shouts, song-sermons, gospel songs, and holy blues--songs of trouble, of love, of deliverance.[1]

The suite's first section, entitled "Pilgrim of Sorrow," was comprised of six separate dances. The second section was entitled "That Love My Jesus Gives Me," and it, too, was comprised of six separate dances. The third and final section of Revelations, entitled "Move, Members, Move!" was comprised of four separate dances.[2] This concert was far more exhilarating than the Sunday afternoon audience had expected and, to the surprise of Ailey and of the members of his company, in the midst of the applause and cheers, the Director of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA announced that the concert would be repeated as soon as arrangements could be made.[3] This announcement meant success for the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater as the most that dancers and

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," January 31, 1960.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Richardson, personal interview, July 16, 1970.

choreographers could expect to achieve at that time was one major concert each year. The members of the company continued to rehearse together and to perform whenever an occasion arose which offered financial returns. On February 20, 1960, for example, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater appeared at the Village Gate in New York City on the same bill with Yusuf Lateef's Near East Jazz Sextet.[1]

The repeat performance of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater was presented at the Kaufmann Concert Hall on February 28, 1960.[2] Ailey changed the program by adding four dances from the suite Cinco Latinos, and omitted two dances from Revelations, in order to balance the revised program. Two new members joined the company also--Leu Comacho, a dancer whom Ailey had met in House of Flowers, and James Truitte, whom Ailey had persuaded to come to New York City from the West Coast.[3] Following their concert in February of 1960, Ailey tried to keep the members of his company together. Whenever he heard of employment, he gave as many of the members of the company as possible an

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[1]"In Birdland," New York Journal American, February 20, 1960.

[2]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Kaufmann Concert Hall, New York City, February 28, 1960.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

opportunity to perform. He choreographed, for example, the musicals entitled Carmen Jones and Jamaica for summer stock in 1959 and 1960, respectively, and he used in these two shows all of the members of his company who were available.[1] While Ailey was choreographing Jamaica, George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein extended an invitation to young choreographers to show their works for possible use in the repertoire of the New York City Ballet. Ailey choreographed his first work on point--a sextet entitled Sonera to music by the Cuban composer, Caturla. He auditioned at City Center but was not accepted. Because it was not as easy for him to experience success in ballet as in modern dance, Ailey abandoned that time-consuming idea for the moment--but with the determination to return one day from the "realms of the rejected" and prove himself as a choreographer for the ballet.[2]

The spring of 1960 was "special" for Alvin Ailey. Prior to this time, he had costumes, stage properties, and all of the possessions of his company stored at his apartment, at the apartments of friends, or anywhere else in which space was available to him. Through his Stage Manager, Charles Blackwell, he met Edele Holtz, Director of the

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[1]Richardson, personal interview, July 16, 1970.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

Westside Young Women's Christian Association which was located in mid-town Manhattan at 51st Street and Eighth Avenue. Ailey, searching primarily for rehearsal space, received much more than that. The situation which followed is best described in Ailey's own words:

> I met Edele Holtz, this marvelous person who seemed to have all kinds of connections and knew how to shuffle and stretch a minimum amount of funds. She decided to convert the entire second floor of the YWCA building on Eighth Avenue to the performing arts and make us the resident dance company in order that we would have an operational home--a place to rehearse, store costumes, teach classes--thus, the birth of Clark Center for the Performing Arts. Edele bought tape recorders, had mirrors installed, and had closets built for us. She then had the small auditorium renovated and turned into a concert hall in order that we might give concerts and earn money. She was marvelous; we now had a home.[1]

In October of 1960, the Clark Center of the Performing Arts officially opened. The initial plan was

> . . . to begin a program of services to young artists and other young people which will do for the performing arts what the well-known Crafts Students League [already in operation at the YWCA] has done for the applied arts. In addition to classes and informal programs, plans include showcases, seminars, films, and concerts.[2]

Courses were offered in Folk Music, Understanding the Theatre, Drama Workshop, Creative Writing, and Modern Dance.[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Publicity Bulletin, "Clark Center for the Performing Arts," New York City, Summer, 1960.

[3] Ibid.

Immediately after moving into the new Clark Center, Ailey and his company began plans for their first concert in the newly renovated auditorium. Ailey again invited Carmen de Lavallade to appear as his guest artist along with James Truitte, Kevin Carlisle, Glen Tetley, Nancy Redi, and Miriam Pandor.[1] The fact that Carmen de Lavallade and James Truitee were both dancing with him again was instrumental in influencing Ailey to include in this program the choreography of other artists. Lester Horton's The Beloved, which had been choreographed to an original score by Judith Hamilton, was danced by de Lavallade and Truitte. The original intent of the choreography was

> . . . to state in pure dance terms the bigotry and sexual chauvinism that held women subservient in turn-of-the-century New England, a kinetic projection of the social savagery of the double standard.[2]

John Butler's Portrait of Billie, a dance in homage to the late singer, Billie Holiday, was performed by de Lavallade and Glen Tetley. The accompaniment was comprised of recordings made by Billie Holiday.[3]

At the performance on November 27, 1960, Ailey presented his own new ballet entitled Knoxville: Summer of

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Clark Center for the Performing Arts, New York City, November 27, 1960.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

1915. It was based upon a prose poem by the late James Agee and accompanied by music arranged by Samuel Barber and sung by Eleanor Steber.[1] When Ailey read the prose poem which Agee had written, he felt that his soul would not be quieted until he had expressed in dance what Agee had said in words. It reminded Ailey of his own childhood with the following lines having a special meaning for him:

> After a while I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: And those receive me who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.[2]

Ailey felt that during his childhood he was loved but seldom understood.[3]

New members of the company were Yemima Ben-Gal, Merle Derby, Paul Roman, Alton Ruff, and Thelma Hill. Costumes and decor for this performance were designed by Normand Maxon and the music for Revelations was sung by the Howard Roberts Chorale, directed by Howard Roberts. Ves Harper was Stage Manager and Marilyn Bord who has, since that performance, donated her services to the Alvin Ailey

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[1] Ibid.

[2] James Agee, A Death in the Family (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1938), p. 8.

[3] Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

Dance Theater,[1] was Production Assistant.[2] It was through Ves Harper that Alvin Ailey also met Benjamin Jones, a black manager of various entertainment groups, who became Ailey's personal manager. Jones was employed to act as Ailey's liason with Susan Pimsleur, and to work generally in the best interests of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater with respect to the arrangement of concerts and tours.[3]

Following the performance at the Clark Center, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater was invited to appear in the 1961 Jacob's Pillow Festival of the Dance. Summer, however, was in the distant future and, fortunately, the present held yet another stroke of good fortune for Ailey. One day, while teaching classes at the Clark Center, Ailey received a telephone call from Michael Shurtleff, the casting director for producer David Merrick. Shurtleff had written a play with Ailey in mind and was unable to cast it with another actor.[4] Despite the fact that Ailey explained that he was not an actor, he was persuaded to read for the part. The reading was successful and he became one of the cast of

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[1]Marilyn Bord, personal interview held in Brooklyn, New York, July 4, 1970.

[2]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," November 27, 1960.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[4]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

six members for Call Me by My Rightful Name which had its Off-Broadway première at One Sheridan Square on January 31, 1961.[1] The plot centers around two graduate students who are roommates at Columbia University--one white and the other black--and a white girl.[2] Whitney Bolton, drama critic for the Morning Telegraph, explained the playwright's intention in the following manner:

> What Mr. Shurtleff courageously has done, without pretending to find or even suggest an answer, is to show the prickly, stabbing difficulties of completely easeful relations between whites and Negroes even when the protagonists have pretensions of advanced thought and feeling.[3]

Richard Watts of the New York Post wrote that the play

> . . . is an honest, thoughtful and probing study of the racial tensions potentially present even among men of good will, done in straight-forward and unsentimental dramatic terms and admirably acted by a small and notably expert cast. . . . the young Negro is brilliantly played by Alvin Ailey and Robert Duvall is excellent in the difficult and rather too complicated role of the other youth . . .[4]

Ailey's dramatic début was especially encouraging because he had not studied acting prior to his appearance in this play.

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[1]"Tonight's Première Off-Broadway," New York Herald Tribune, January 31, 1961.

[2]James Davis, "Eureka! Off-Broadway Gives Us a Playwright," Daily News, February 1, 1961.

[3]Whitney Bolton, "My Rightful Name is a Spell Binder," Morning Telegraph, New York City, February 1, 1961.

[4]Richard Watts, Jr., "The Arrival of a New Dramatist," New York Post, February 1, 1961.

In the spring of 1961, Ailey was occupied with acting, teaching classes, rehearsing dances, and studying acting with Milton Katselas when an invitation came from the sponsors of the forthcoming Boston Arts Festival for Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade to dance something in the idiom of jazz to "live accompaniment."[1] One day, prior to this time while Ailey had been walking in Greenwich Village in New York City, he had stopped outside a small place called Folk City from which he heard the sounds of a soulful blues singer, Brother John Sellers. After that he had gone often to Folk City, and, upon meeting Brother John, had given him a biographical cross-examination, making inquiries with respect to the singer's heritage. In turn, Ailey had explained that he was a choreographer interested in composing dances in the idioms of the blues and of jazz, and invited Brother John to visit his company in rehearsal to consider whether or not he could arrange and sing the blues for the Ailey dancers.[2] Following this encounter, Brother John made frequent trips to the Clark Center where the two artists began to formulate plans for the "right moment" of collaboration whenever it came. The

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Brother John Sellers, personal interview held in New York City, June 28, 1970.

invitation to perform at the Boston Arts Festival provided "that moment."[1]

When Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade danced the former's Jazz Piece, later retitled Roots of the Blues, at the Tenth Annual Boston Arts Festival during the week of June 12 through 17, 1961,[2] it marked an artistic reunion of the two dancers. Ailey had been busy promoting and directing his new company while de Lavallade had been dancing with John Butler's company.[3] At the Boston Festival, Ailey and de Lavallade danced fifteen minutes together, performing to music arranged by Brother John Sellers and accompanied by him and two of his musicians, Shep Shepard and Bruce Lane. During this time, they literally ". . . stopped the show cold every single night."[4] According to Ailey, ". . . when Brother John sang 'In the Evening When the Sun Goes Down,' the audience just stood up and screamed."[5] The two artists--Ailey and Sellers--complemented each other

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]"America Dances at Boston," Dance Magazine, August, 1961.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[4]Sellers, personal interview, June 28, 1970.

[5]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

perfectly; this was the beginning of what was to develop into a long, fruitful association for both artists.[1]

During the remainder of the summer, Ailey played the role of a college professor in a play entitled Ding Dong Bell for one week in summer stock at the Westport Country Playhouse, made a return trip to appear upon the Dance Festival Program at Jacob's Pillow, and performed Roots of the Blues at the Lewisohn Stadium in New York City.[2] Since Truitte, de Lavallade, and Ailey were together again in the same dance company at Jacob's Pillow, Ailey used the opportunity to present Lester Horton's works. The program at Jacob's Pillow was comprised of Horton's Dedication to José Clemente Orozco, and The Beloved plus Ailey's Roots of the Blues and Revelations.[3] Ailey and the members of his company shared the bill at Jacob's Pillow with Maria Tallchief, Erik Bruhn, Lupe Serrano, and Royes Fernandez during the week of July 18 through 22, 1962.[4]

Immediately following his return to New York City from Jacob's Pillow, Ailey auditioned for and obtained a

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Advertisement, "Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, 1961," Dance Magazine, June, 1961, p. 10.

part in one of two of William Saroyan's plays being cast for Off-Broadway production in the fall. Two By Saroyan was comprised of two one-act plays, Talking to You and Across the Board on Tomorrow Morning, respectively. The plays, which opened at the East End Theatre on October 22, 1961, were described by Arthur Gelb as ". . . off-Broadway at its most gratifying."[1] Ailey played the role of a soft-hearted prize fighter who tries to protect a deaf child from the anger of an escaped murderer. Gelb called Ailey "affecting" in the role.

The performances of Ailey and his company at the Boston Arts Festival and at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, had been observed by members of the Department of State of the United States Government. Early during the fall of 1961, as a result of their observation, Ailey and the members of his company were invited to tour Southeast Asia under the President's Special International Program for Cultural Presentations.[2] This invitation gave Ailey an opportunity to expand from his small company of six dancers to a company of ten which included himself, Carmen de Lavallade, Thelma Hill, Charles Moore, Georgia

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[1]Arthur Gelb, "Two Plays by Saroyan," New York Times, October 23, 1961.

[2]"Theatre News," New York Herald Tribune, January 18, 1962.

Collins, James Truitte, Ella Thompson, Connie Greco, Minnie Marshall, and Don Martin, another Lester Horton dancer.[1] The company included also folksinger Brother John Sellers, guitarist Bruce Langhorne, bassist Leslie Grenage, and percussionist Horace Arnold.[2]

Ailey spent the fall of 1961 rehearsing for and acting in Two by Saroyan; choreographing and rehearsing for his second concert at the Clark Center for the Performing Arts; and preparing for the forthcoming tour of Southeast Asia.[3] He put the finishing touches on three choreographic works which had been in progress during the past two years--Been Here and Gone, Two for Now, and Hermit Songs.[4] Been Here and Gone was inspired by Ailey's early years in Texas when he had had occasion to hear blues singers performing in various traveling Minstrel Shows. The descriptive quotation introducing the dance reads: "Anybody ask you who made up this song, tell'em Jack the Rabbit, he's been here and gone . . ."[5] The following program note describes the thematic source for Ailey's choreography:

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]Sellers, personal interview, September 12, 1970.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Playbill, McCarter Theatre, Princeton, New Jersey, January, 1962.

> The folk bards of the American South wandered in and out of the towns and cities, creating and crying their songs of life's joy and sorrows and then disappearing into the country night--mostly unknown and unrecognized--among these men have been Hudie Ledbetter (Leadbelly), Blind Lemon Jefferson, Big Bill Broomzy . . .[1]

Ailey selected traditional music which was arranged by Howard Roberts and sung by Brother John Sellers and Ella Thompson, one of the dancers. Two for Now was a part of a modern jazz suite which Ailey was choreographing based upon ". . . exploring the inter-relationship between modern jazz music and its influence on the contemporary dance idiom."[2]

The two dances completed in 1961 were entitled, respectively, Gillespiana, to music played by Dizzy Gillespie and his orchestra, and Trane in Three, to music played by the John Coltrane Quintet.[3] Hermit Songs, which had its première at Ailey's second concert at Clark Center for the Performing Arts, on December 10, 1961, was set to music arranged by Samuel Barber and sung by Leontyne Price. This suite, structured in six parts, was a solo danced by Alvin Ailey and inspired by "Small poems of anonymous monks and scholars of the eighth to the thirteenth centuries

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

speaking of the simple life these men lead--close to nature, to animals, to God."[1]

On January 17, 1962, Gertrude Macy, the general manager of the International Cultural Exchange Service of the American National Theatre and Academy, announced officially that beginning January 30, 1962, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater would embark upon thirteen weeks of touring in the Far East, as Cultural Ambassadors for the State Department of the Government of the United States. The company would travel under the President's Special International Program for Cultural Presentations, sponsored by the State Department and administered by the American National Theatre and Academy. Performances of Ailey's company scheduled prior to its departure were at Hofstra College on January 25 and at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey, on January 26.[2] The McCarter concert, which included the newly choreographed Been Here and Gone and Two for Now,[3] marked the last appearance of the company in the United States before leaving for performances

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Clark Center for the Performing Arts, New York City, December 10, 1961.

[2]Stuart W. Little, "U. S. Troupe to Tour Far East," New York Herald Tribune, January 18, 1962.

[3]Playbill, McCarter Theatre, January, 1962.

in Australia, Burma, South Vietnam, Malaya, Indonesia, The Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea.[1]

Prior to the departure of Ailey's company for the Far East, the billing had featured Carmen de Lavallade as a guest star.[2] De Lavallade's husband, Geoffrey Holder, decided, however, that since she was the female star of the company, she was just as important as the male star, Alvin Ailey, and should receive equal recognition. These were the terms under which he would assume the responsibility of caring for their young son, Leo, at the expense of some sacrifice of his personal career while de Lavallade was to be away for thirteen weeks.[3] Because Ailey needed de Lavallade, the only solution was that the company which was to represent the United States of America officially became temporarily the De Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company starring Carmen de Lavallade.[4]

The tour of the De Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company was scheduled originally to begin in India but,

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[1]"Dance Company of Alvin Ailey Coming Tomorrow," Princeton Packet, January 25, 1962.

[2]Playbill, McCarter Theatre, January, 1962.

[3]Geoffrey Holder, personal interview held in New York City, July 11, 1970.

[4]Dick Campbell, "Memorandum to Company Members," January, 1962.

because of internal unrest in that country, Australia was selected as an alternate site for its first engagement. The Company arrived in Sydney, Australia, on February 1, 1962, during the Australian summer which the dancers found delightful after the cold winter in New York City. The American dancers were unknown to the Australians and were booked, therefore, in the small Palace Theatre located in downtown Sydney.[1] A writer for the Sydney Morning Herald who viewed the first rehearsal of the Company made the following comments:

> The elegant nineteenth century gilt and plush atmosphere of Sydney's Palace Theatre was shattered yesterday by the raw rhythms and pungent harmonies of Negro jazz and "blues."
>
> Rehearsing for their opening night, an American dance company--ten dancers, nine of them Negro--brought a new world to the Palace stage, for months past occupied by comedy and musicals.
>
> In worn practice clothes, and mainly barefooted, the company danced its way through work and prison songs, hoe-downs and "blues" to the accompaniment of drums, cello and guitar and the gravel-voiced singing of Brother John Sellers, a noted gospel and folk-song singer.
>
> Leading the company were the principals, Carmen de Lavallade, wearing black tights and multi-coloured stiletto heeled shoes, and Alvin Ailey, bare-footed, and bare-chested.
>
> While they rehearsed Ailey's dance version of "Backwater Blues"--which commemorates a disastrous Mississippi flood--other members of the company went through a series of muscle-knotting warm-up exercises

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

> which were as far from the cold formality of classical ballet as New Orleans is from Leningrad.
>
> As the rehearsal went on, the dancers created a lively picture of life in America's deep south--a share-farmer mourning the loss of a crop ruined by boll-Weevil, a blind folk-singer being led through the streets by his guitarist.
>
> It was a world away from the lunch-hour scramble outside in Pitt Street.[1]

The De Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company opened in Sydney, Australia, on February 3, 1962,[2] to an audience which numbered approximately 300 persons.[3] According to Ailey:

> We blew their minds! They screamed and applauded the first night. The following day, people were lined up for blocks trying to get tickets to the theatre; that night they sat in the aisles as they did for all of the remaining performances. On the closing night, they threw streamers onto the stage--it was a fantastic experience.[4]

The program was comprised of Ailey's Been Here and Gone, Gillespiana, Hermit Songs, Roots of the Blues, and Revelations; Lester Horton's The Beloved; John Butler's Letter to a Lady, a solo for Carmen de Lavallade, set to music by Ravel; and Glen Tetley's Mountainway Chant, a

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[1]"Pitt Street's Deep South," Sydney Morning Herald, February 3, 1962.

[2]Programme, "American Dance Theater," Palace Theatre-Pitt Street, Sydney, Australia, February 3 through 9, 1962.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[4]Ibid.

legend of the Southwest American Indian with music by Carlos Chavez.[1] For each performance the Company danced six works, always concluding each concert with Revelations.[2]

The critics in Sydney appeared to be as excited about the performances of the dance company from America as was their co-director, Alvin Ailey. Norman Kessel of the Sun wrote:

> Entertainment of a rare and exciting quality was brought to the Palace Theatre on Saturday by Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade with their American Dance Theater.
>
> Half-savage jazz rhythms, the lament of the blues and the lilt of Negro spirituals are here brilliantly interpreted in dance form.[3]

According to Frank Harris, theatre critic for the Daily Mirror:

> Cheers and repeated curtain calls were a tribute from a crowd tormented by heat to highly skilled dancers who put over a fine show under tough conditions. It was a case of The Beat beating the heat.
>
> There was nothing dull in the show. Alvin Ailey was brilliant in Roots of the Blues, James Truitte unforgettable with his Eagle Man's dance in Mountainway Chant; Revelations was the most exciting of the lot, with its hepped-up spirituals and choral background.[4]

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[1]Programme, Palace Theatre-Pitt Street, February 3 through 9, 1962.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[3]Norman Kessell, "Lament of the Blues," Sun, Sydney, Australia, February 5, 1962.

[4]Frank Harris, "Cheers for U. S. Dancers," Daily Mirror, Sydney, Australia, February 5, 1962.

Griffen Foley of the Daily Telegraph wrote:

> Alvin Ailey, Carmen De Lavallade and their American Dance Company brought dancing of marvellous fluidity and utmost vigor to the Palace Theatre on Saturday.
>
> The dynamic troupe is as exciting, in its way, as the New York City Ballet was in 1958.
>
> It is devoted to modern, largely jazz, dancing, but the dancers have the foundation of a classical training.
>
> It is fascinating to watch how sharp rhythms and angularities of modern dancing, and postures foreign to the European tradition, have been wedded to the disciplined suppleness of the old technique.
>
> Such a union of disparate schools could easily come to grief in the hands of a less tasteful and imaginative director and choreographer than Mr. Ailey.
>
> Mr. Ailey's inventiveness never seems to flag, for one ceaselessly admires the endless plasticity of the human body.[1]

Ailey, pleased with the beginning of the tour, was in high spirits when the Company arrived in Melbourne, Australia, on February 11, 1962.[2] There, it was met with a repetition of its reception in Sydney with respect to the response of the audiences. The difference in Melbourne was, however, that the dancers from America were scheduled for performances at 5:00 p.m. in a motion picture theatre between the afternoon and evening showing of The Sound of Music. Following the opening performance, which was

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[1]Griffen Foley, "Fluidity and Vigor in Performance," Daily Telegram, Sydney, Australia, February 5, 1962.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

sparsely attended, they danced again, as they had in Sydney, to a capacity audience each day. According to Ailey, ". . . The Australians left their places of employment to attend the 5:00 p.m. dance performances."[1] Writers and critics visited rehearsals and "hung around" the dressing rooms. Sue Collins, a local newspaper reporter, even wrote a featured article about two of the dancers--Thelma Hill and Minnie Marshall.[2]

The first stop in Southeast Asia was Burma, scheduled from February 11 through 18, where the Company danced both in Rangoon and in Mandalay. In Rangoon, the reception of the dancers was quietly intellectual. Monks were in attendance at the performances, and Ailey was fascinated to learn that the response of two hand claps following a dance was considered an "ovation."[3] As cultural ambassadors from the United States, the dancers attended a ceremony for the re-instatement of one of the high officials of the Rangoon Government. The event began at approximately 11:00 a.m. and, to the surprise and dismay of the Americans, lasted for four hours. Not being

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Sue Collins, "They're Dance Teachers, Too," Sun, Melbourne, Australia, February 14, 1962.

[3] Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1972.

accustomed to affairs of this length, especially those held outdoors in intense heat, Alvin Ailey fainted in the midst of the ceremonies. The dancers were advised by the ambassador from America to take Ailey out, very discreetly, but to return themselves in order to preclude offending the Burmese officials. Fortunately Ailey recovered in time for the evening dance performance.[1] In Rangoon, the Americans were taken on sight-seeing tours and were honored by several special receptions which were arranged in order to show them the most colorful customs and events characteristic of the country.[2] The members of the company resided in Rangoon and commuted to Mandalay for several performances. The most exciting thing about Mandalay, with the exception of the beauty of the countryside, was the Mandalay Children Dancers. This group, comprised of children of the elite, was taught the intricate and beautiful steps of indigenous Burmese dances. In order to insure that the dances were authentic, older Burmese citizens, who were authorities in the native dances, were brought down into the city from the

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[1]Sellers, personal interview, June 28, 1970.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970, verified also by photographs which appeared in the Rangoon newspaper Hant Hawaddy, Rangoon, Burma, February 21, 1962.

villages in the hills to teach the steps of the dances to these children.[1]

From Rangoon, the Company went to Saigon, South Vietnam, where they spent the week of March 2 through 7, 1962.[2] Upon their arrival at Tan Son Nhut Airport in Saigon, they were met by a Vietnamese stage actress, Miss Bichson, who presented Ailey and de Lavallade with individual bouquets of gladiolas.[3] On the following day a press conference was held for the two stars at the United States Information Service Auditorium. Here, Ailey is quoted as saying:

> Our main objective is to reach the audience and make them part of the dance. This is a communication of experience. We are always looking for that which will help us find a perfect harmony between the artist, the technique, and the performance.[4]

Ailey was asked, however, to comment upon Rock 'n Roll, the favorite popular dance form of the early 1960's, to which he replied:

> All the beauties of music are lost in the "Rock 'n Roll." How would you like it if people got one piece of your folk songs or spirituals to

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]Dick Campbell, "Memorandum to Company Members," January, 1962.

[3]"Rock 'n Roll Isn't Music, Says Alvin Ailey," Times of Viet Nam, March 4, 1962.

[4]Ibid.

> tear into a mess? Rock is a mess of folk songs, spirituals, or the Blues. I despise it.[1]

The writer of this newspaper article credits Ailey with being a "talent" in the area of Negro folk songs.[2]

The site for the six performances in Saigon was the Quoc Thanh Theatre where the American dancers were received enthusiastically. Following the opening night, one theatre critic said: ". . . the audience did not need to understand the words of the songs to applaud warmly the artists' 'marvellous performances.'"[3] In Saigon, the Company was somewhat nervous, and with good reason which Ailey explains in the following manner:

> At night we could hear gunfire and, although there was no official declaration of war, one knew. In the daytime, however, the soldiers wore flower-patterned shirts and regular pants--just like boys from Ohio on the streets.[4]

Ailey and de Lavallade spoke constantly of their humility and of their desire to learn much from their tour of the Far East.[5] Ailey apparently did his share of work as

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] "American Troupe Perform Marvelous Dance Numbers," Times of Viet Nam, March 5, 1962.

[4] Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[5] Souvenir Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Starring Carmen de Lavallade," Saigon, Viet Nam, March 3 through 7, 1962, p. 10.

an ambassador while he was in Saigon for it was here that he was quoted as saying that

> Modern dance really came from the Eastern school of the dance. . . . the best of everything in the dance comes from the Orient. We learned the real basis of theater, including songs, dance, lighting, costumes--everything that makes for the total theater effect--from the East.[1]

The next stop on the tour of the Far East for the Americans was Kuala Lumpur in the Federation of Malaya where they resided from March 8 through March 19, 1962.[2] The highlight of their visit in Malaya was two nights of performances in Penang from which the proceeds were donated to the Jaycees' Rural Community Service Project Fund, a gesture which one writer refers to as being ". . . as rare and noble as their programme is scintillating."[3] Among the first nighters who attended the performance at the Penang Chinese Girls High School Hall were the Governor of Kuala Lumpur and his consort.[4] Both performances, on March 12 and 13, 1962, respectively, attracted capacity audiences; one reviewer called the second performance ". . . a show

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Dick Campbell, "Memorandum to Company Members," January, 1962.

[3] "American Dance Company's Brilliant Show," Malaya and Straits Echo, Penang, Malaya, March 13, 1962.

[4] Ibid.

that was unique in the annals of entertainment in Kuala Lumpur."[1] The same reviewer wrote:

> The company made its point in its very first number "Been Here and Gone," a setting to a traditional American theme and also an essay in the art of total theatre, with its vocal and instrumental music, its movement, costumes, props, and its dynamic lighting.
>
> But the most captivating work of the evening was undoubtedly "Gillespiana," an abstract work which called to mind Martha Graham's definition of the dance as a composition in space and time.
>
> Dancing as always against the plain cyclorama, but with an imaginative use of colour, the dancers presented sheer movement for movement's sake, but movement that was also a lyrical visual accompaniment to Dizzie Gillespie's music.
>
> The pirouettes, arabesques, and other "pas" were different from those in ballet dancing, and the music was modern jazz music, but the sparkling quality of this work must have made many in the audience yearn to see more of "modern dance."[2]

The week of March 20 through 26 was spent in Djakarta, Indonesia, where the Company performed at Djakarta's Theater Gedung Olahraga, on March 24 and 25, 1962.[3] Ailey said of their stay in Indonesia: ". . . we presented the same kind of program as we had on previous occasions and the people of Djakarta were greatly enriched

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[1]"Americans Show the Splendour of Modern Dance," Malaya Mail, Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, March 14, 1962.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Souvenir Programme, "The De Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company," Gedung Olahraga, Djakarta, Indonesia, March 24 and 25, 1962.

by it. They were beautiful people and Djakarta was a beautiful place."[1]

The De Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Theater went next to Manila in the Philippines where it appeared in concert at the Araneta Coliseum on March 28 and 29, 1962. The Company was presented also at the Philippine American Dance Festival on the same program with the Filipinescas, an internationally known group of dancers concerned with the preservation of the indigenous cultural patterns of the Philippines. Concerning this presentation, the following statement was released by the Philippine American Cultural Foundation:

> In keeping with its deep interest in the development of the performing arts in the Philippines, the Philippine American Cultural Foundation is proud to present to the people of greater Manila the world-famous Dance Company. It is fitting and proper that the PACF, a private, bi-national organization dedicated to preserving and enriching Philippine culture and to strengthening the bonds of friendship and understanding between the people of the United States, should present a joint program illustrating the outstanding performing arts.[2]

Two days after the performances at the Araneta Coliseum, an article appeared in the Manila Chronicle which

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]Souvenir Programme, "The Philippine American Dance Festival," Araneta Coliseum, Manila, The Philippines, March 28 and 29, 1962.

offered a summation of what the local critics were saying about the two dance companies. Of the de Lavallade-Ailey program, Max Soliven of the Evening Post wrote, "The American Dance Company proved in their opening performance last night that the Negro must have invented rhythm."[1] Marquita Perez of the Times offered the following comments:

> Very good too is the de-Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Troupe which brought to Manila audiences the songs and dances of early America. We liked the legend of the Southwest American Indians, the songs of the Southern Negro from the fields, his hymns to secular regions of his soul . . .[2]

Rita Gerona of the Bulletin said:

> What fascinated us most about the de Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company presentation was its unique choreography, a laudable success of having combined the savage and the spiritual into a most absorbing dance form. Its most interesting feature was not perhaps its context but its movements, strong, angular and forceful, which excited and sustained our interest from the beginning of each dance up to its very end.[3]

The Company spent the month from April 7 through May 7, 1962, in Hong Kong, China; in Taipei, Taiwan; and in Tokyo, Japan.[4] The opening performance in Tokyo's Sanki

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[1]"What the Critics Say: A Summing Up of the Philippine American Dance Festival," Manila Chronicle, March 31, 1962.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Dick Campbell, "Memorandum to Company Members," January, 1962.

Hall on April 19, 1962, drew the following response from Edmund C. Wilkes of the Yomiuri:

> Other American Negro musicians and performers that we have applauded have left no doubt about the great skill of their race in certain areas, but this company invades the field of serious ballet and modern dance with startling original results. Their material is largely from Negro sources, but it avoids many of the stereotypes of the musical stage. . . .
>
> The result is not at all like popular musical show dancing. It is art to be taken seriously. The choreography of Alvin Ailey shows off the superbly gifted performers in enormously vital and imaginative fashion. The star performers are only the first among a well-integrated group of dancers of solo potentialities.[1]

Elise Grille, of the Japan Times, was no less impressed than Wilkes. In fact, she may have written the most stimulating review of the performances of the company during the entire tour of Australia and the Far East. Excerpts from her review follow.

> Without any fanfares--in fact, with only the sketchiest advance notices--one of the finest dance performances in my memory appeared on a Tokyo stage. Within five minutes the de Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company won over an audience that obviously had arrived "cold." Half-way through the program some of my Japanese friends still asked what was specifically "American" in the themes and styles of this dance. At the end they were too busy applauding to continue their intellectual cogitations. The vitality, the expression, and the emotional surge swept one along in a mounting wave of enthusiasm. The evening was too short.
>
> There was nothing naive or "folksy" about this performance, and no reportage of things-as-they-are.

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[1]Edmund C. Wilkes, "Stimulating Theater," Yomiuri, Tokyo, Japan, April 21, 1962.

> A large accumulation of ideas and of history was translated into pure motion.
>
> Imagination and discipline, exuberance and control, intellectual themes and physical motion are blended into a language wonderfully suited to an art that transmits into dance the life rhythms of a rich vein of humanity. The confluence of sources from several continents is here organically assembled, for it did thus emerge on a geographical band across the southern United States. This is truly American dance by highly-trained and deeply imaginative artists.[1]

Other Japanese towns in which the de Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company appeared in 1964 included Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Omuta, Nabeoka, and Tokuyama.[2]

Ailey's first tour of the East ended in Seoul, Korea, where the Company was based from May 8 through 12, 1962.[3] The performances in Seoul were presented in the City Hall where the crowd even rioted on the closing night because so many persons who wished to see the performance could not buy tickets as there were none available.[4]

Following the final performance of the tour on May 11, 1962, in Seoul, Korea, the Company returned to New York City via Tokyo, Japan, where Ailey remained for a week

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[1]Elise Grilli, "Fine Dance Company from United States," Japan Times, April 24, 1962.

[2]Michael Lombardi, "De-Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company; Superb Expression of Southern Negro Spirit," Mainichi Daily News, Mainichi, Japan, April 27, 1962.

[3]Dick Campbell, "Memorandum to Company Members," January, 1962.

[4]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

as a guest teacher at the school associated with the Nichigeki Dance Company.[1] Then, eager to visit with his mother, he returned to New York City via Honolulu, San Francisco, and, finally, Los Angeles where he spent a few days renewing old acquaintances and getting to know his little brother, Calvin, who had been an infant when Ailey left Los Angeles for New York City eight years earlier.[2]

Ailey returned to New York City late in May of 1962 with the satisfaction of knowing that his ompany had been successful as Cultural Ambassadors for the United States of America. According to Brother John Sellers, the reports which reached the representatives of the Department of State were more encouraging than those which had been received concerning any other groups of artists serving in a similar capacity. Brother John attributes the rapport of the members of the ompany to the fact that each one was an artist--including the members of the technical staff. There were no novices on that trip.[3]

During the summer of 1962, Ailey taught a course in Jazz Forms at the Connecticut College School of Dance in

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[1]Alvin Ailey, personal letter to Lula E. Cooper, Seoul, Korea, May 11, 1962.

[2]Alvin Ailey, personal letter to Lula E. Cooper, New York City, June 15, 1962.

[3]Sellers, personal interview, June 28, 1970.

New London, Connecticut, during the first two weeks of July,[1] and rehearsed the members of his own company for their scheduled performance in conjunction with the Connecticut College Dance Festival on July 14, 1962.[2] Concurrent with his activities at Connecticut College, Ailey commuted each day to Watch Hill, Rhode Island, where he choreographed Feast of Ashes for the Joffrey Ballet which was in residence there under the auspices of the Rebekah Harkness Foundation. Feast of Ashes was based upon Federico García Lorca's play, The House of Bernarda Alba.[3]

During this period of time, some members left Ailey's company. Upon their return to the United States, he and de Lavallade had an ". . . emotional and artistic parting of the ways . . ."[4] and she no longer danced with him. This "parting of the ways" had been a long time in the making because, although the two artists were intelligent enough to ignore individual differences causing dissension among them during the tour of the Far East, there were those who resented de Lavallade's acceptance as Co-director of

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[1]Raymond Cook, notator, Variations on a Jazz Technique Taught by Alvin Ailey, Connecticut College School of Dance, July, 1962 (New York: Dance Notation Bureau, Incorporated, 1965).

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

Ailey's Company because their original agreement had been to dance under Alvin Ailey's direction only. According to Charles Moore:

> Had de Lavallade been satisfied with the Co-directorship of the company in name only, it would have been easier to take, but she made repeated suggestions with respect to choreographic changes, always supported by Alvin. Although I don't believe Alvin was always in agreement with the changes, he adored Carmen so much--and for the sake of keeping her happy, he bowed to her whims. I personally could not adjust to taking orders from Carmen when I had been taught by Alvin and was dedicated to him as my leader.[1]

It was for this reason that Moore left the company upon its return to the United States. Ella Thompson, his wife, followed, and explained her reason succinctly in the following words, ". . . because I felt that my dedication was to my husband first."[2] Ailey, however, soon found a replacement for de Lavallade in Myrna White, a black dancer from the Broadway stage, and began orienting her to perform de Lavallade's roles.[3]

Immediately following the teaching experiences and performance at Connecticut College, Ailey was asked by

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[1]Charles Moore, personal interview, July 20, 1970.

[2]Ella Thompson, personal interview, July 26, 1970.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

stage director, Josh Logan, to play the lead role in a new play which he was directing, entitled Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright.[1] Meanwhile, Rebekah Harkness, impressed with Ailey's Feast of Ashes, choreographed for the Joffrey Ballet, had invited him to appear with the members of his company in the Rebekah Harkness Foundation Dance Festival scheduled for Central Park in New York City in early September.[2] Harkness provided the necessary funds for whatever Ailey needed in preparation for the projected engagement. Taking full advantage of this financial backing, Ailey requested for Roots of the Blues and Revelations live accompaniment which was comprised of Brother John Sellers and The Howard Roberts Chorale; he ordered new costumes which were designed and executed by Ves Harper; and he re-set, for himself and Minnie Marshall, his Creation of the World. In it, he incorporated an abundance of Russian lifts as a gesture of friendship toward the special guests of the evening.[3] Mrs. Harkness had invited the entire cast of the Bolshoi Ballet, then in New York City for appearances at the Metropolitan Opera House,[4] to see the performance in Central Park.

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Rosalyn Krokover, "At Met, in Park," New York Times, September 2, 1962.

The Rebekah Harkness Foundation Dance Festival was presented by the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park during the week of September 5 through 10, 1962,[1] and was, according to Ailey, ". . . a Festival to remember."[2] Ailey's company, which was now called the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, closed the Festival with its performances on September 9 and 10, 1962.[3] Consequently, Ailey's company was the only one fortunate enough to perform for the members of the Bolshoi Ballet as that company was performing at the Metropolitan Opera House, September 7 through 9, 1962.[4] The program presented by the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater was comprised of Been Here and Gone, Creation of the World, Roots of the Blues, and Revelations. Ailey, who sometimes adjusted his choreography at will, changed his Creation of the World, set to Darius Milhaud's music, from the traditional Adam and Eve story to one based upon a primitive ritual. The new program note read:

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[1]Programme, "The Rebekah Harkness Foundation Dance Festival," Delacorte Theatre, Central Park, New York City, Summer, 1962.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[3]Programme, "The Rebekah Harkness Foundation Dance Festival," Summer, 1962.

[4]Krokover, "At Met, in Park."

> Among certain primitive tribes there is the belief that the creation of man was a whim of certain primitive gods, that the sun, moon, sky, and stars rose from the mist summoned by the Great Shaman, that the first man and woman rose from the mud of the great dark river. This ritual ballet explores this theme as it might have been envisioned by the primitive mind.[1]

What occurred at the performance of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater on September 10 in the Delacorte "open air" theatre in New York City is best described in Ailey's own words:

> The Russians [Bolshoi Ballet Company] came and it rained. Through it all, they sat there, very prim and proper. In fact, nobody left--not a single person was seen leaving the audience. Everything happened to the dancers that night, mainly in Roots of the Blues. The rain had ceased temporarily during my solo, "Jack of Diamonds." I wore very tight knee pants because I performed sequences of runs and jumps together with slides on my knees. In the middle of the dance, my pants split! Then, by this time, the audience, shivering from the rain, had begun to warm up. I finished the dance. Following my solo came Myrna White's dance and it began to "drizzle" again. I was so frightened; I thought she would slip and break her neck! She solved the problem though--she reached down and removed her shoes in the middle of the dance and the audience roared! Myrna had on a gorgeous yellow dress, fishnet stockings, and corn plasters on her toes! Then came "Backwater Blues" where Brother John hollered ". . . it rained forty days and it rained forty nights . . ." and the rain just poured upon us; but the music was just getting good, so we continued to dance. We ended the suite of dances with "Mean ol' Frisco" performed in a driving rain after which the members of the audience jumped to their feet and screamed and applauded--and the Russians just sat there. There was a ten minute

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[1]Programme, "The Rebekah Harkness Foundation Dance Festival," Summer, 1962.

> intermission during which time it stopped raining; and I made a short speech in Russian for the guests--and everything went well for our closing number, Revelations.[1]

The new faces in the company for the performance in the Park were those of Myrna White, who appeared through the courtesy of the management of A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Nathaniel Horne, Altovise Gore, Geri Seignious, and Ray Gilbert.[2] This same program performed by the same dancers was filmed on videotape and also as a presentation of "Camera III" on the Columbia Broadcasting System Television Network, September 10, 1962.[3]

Ailey's experience in Central Park that summer might have been considered hectic but his experience as an actor that fall was traumatic. Joshua Logan, who had seen Ailey perform on several occasions, had told the dance artist that he should be an actor instead. As the Director of the Broadway play, Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright, Logan was determined to give Ailey an opportunity to prove that he, Logan, had been correct in his prediction. Ailey, in the leading role, was supported by a cast which included such experienced and talented actors as Claudia McNeil,

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]Programme, "The Rebekah Harkness Foundation Dance Festival," Summer, 1962.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

Diana Sands, Robert Lee Hooks, Roscoe Lee Brown, Al Freeman, Jr., and Cicely Tyson.[1] Ailey explains his experience in the following manner:

> Here I was with all of these experienced actresses and actors and without any real formal training in acting. The first thing they did was send me to a speech coach. So at seven o'clock each morning, I went to a speech coach for two hours and then to rehearsals. I didn't know what I was doing, and these other artists didn't let me forget it for a moment. They literally "bit me off, chewed me up, and spit me out." The play opened some time in the fall during a newspaper strike and lasted for about a month; I must have blocked the exact date from my mind. It was horrible! Following the close of the play, I vowed that I would never act again.[2]

Ailey decided that both acting and dancing were serious arts and that neither should be engaged in haphazardly. With this experience, his career as an actor ended during the fall of 1962.

The Mature Dance Artist

Early in 1963, Ailey again assembled the members of his dance company and began rehearsals for a concert at the Brooklyn Academy of Music which was being sponsored by the Waltann School of Creative Arts, Incorporated, as a part of its ". . . dedication to provide cultural experience within the community at reasonable fees."[3] The actual performance,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Publicity Bulletin, "The Waltann School of Creative Arts, Incorporated, Brooklyn, New York," February 22, 1963.

a benefit for scholarship students at the Waltann School of Creative Arts, Incorporated, took place on April 28, 1963, at which time the company presented an all-Ailey program.[1] Again, the faces in Ailey's company changed; Thelma Hill, James Truitte, and Don Martin were the only dancers remaining from the group which had made the tour sponsored by the Department of State in 1962. New members of the company were Louis Falco, Sally Stackhouse, Donato Capozzoli, Barbara Alston, Glen Brooks, and Mariko Sanjo. On that Sunday afternoon benefit program, Ailey offered the première of a major work entitled Labyrinth, and two minor works entitled Reflections in D and Suspensions, respectively. The two minor works completed his trio of dances comprising the Modern Jazz Suite.[2] Labyrinth, set to music of Rosenthal-Miller, attempts, according to the program notes,

> . . . to delineate in part the legend of the Greek hero Theseus and his encounter with the Cretan Minotaur--a beast half-bull, half-human to whom annual sacrifices were made. Given a magical red string by Ariadne with which to retrace his steps from the dark and complex maze, Theseus enters the labyrinth, engages the beast in combat and then emerges.[3]

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[1]Souvenir Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Concert," Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, New York, April 28, 1963.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

Reflections in D, to music by Ellington, and Suspensions, to music by Giuffre, were performed along with Gillespiana, now set to music by Schiffrin simply to investigate the interrelationship between the musical scores and the contemporary dance idiom.[1] In a review of the performance, Natalie Jaffee wrote:

> Regrettably, the two new works of the afternoon did not share the integrity of the earlier compositions. Mr. Ailey's fans must earnestly hope that he has not danced himself into a corner and will continue to search for new routes into the motive power of the American Negro, which he exploits with such rich rewards.[2]

Ailey's next two performances were noteworthy. On May 8, 1963, he and six members of his company performed Revelations in New York City's "Sixth Salute to Spring."[3] They presented, according to Edele Holtz, ". . . the best performance of 'Wade in the Water' ever given."[4] Less than a month later, on June 2, 1963, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater presented a special "Benefit for Birmingham Concert,"

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Natalie Jaffee, "Alvin Ailey Offers Two New Dance Works," New York Times, April 29, 1963.

[3] Programme, "A Salute to the New New York," The New York Public Library, Fifth Avenue at Forty-Second Street, New York City, May 8, 1963.

[4] Edele Holtz, personal correspondence with the investigator, June 19, 1971.

from which all proceeds were contributed to the work of Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior, in Birmingham, Alabama.[1]

During the month of July, Ailey and his company performed at Parsons College in Fairfield, Iowa,[2] and in the "1963 Summer Artist Series" at the State University College in New Paltz, New York.[3] These summer performances resulted from arrangements made by Susan Pimsleur and Ben Jones.[4] Thelma Hill and James Truitte remained as the most seasoned members of the company which was comprised of seven other dancers--Loretta Abbott, Michelle Murray, Rosemarie Stevenson, Barbara Teer, Julius Fields, Glenn Brooks, and Mariko Sanjo.[5] Following the program at Parsons College, which was comprised of Cinco Latinos, Three for Now, and Revelations, a reporter of the Daily Ledger in Fairfield, Iowa, wrote:

> Spearheaded by the masterful Ailey, the serious numbers of the program graphically represented the

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[1]Press Release, "Clark Center for the Performing Arts," New York City, May 21, 1963.

[2]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Fry-Thomas Memorial Fieldhouse, Parsons College, Fairfield, Iowa, July 11, 1963.

[3]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," College Auditorium, State University College, New Paltz, New York, July 25, 1963.

[4]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[5]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," July 25, 1963.

> soul of a man or a race writhing in its agony to rise to its own place in the sun. Lighter humorous numbers stated the age old fight between man and woman in new terms.
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> It was the first time dancing of this type has been presented in Fairfield, and the audience was appreciative and responsive. The style of dancing gave an individual's expression of his innermost soul. It can be called an art form, not just a dance like lighter folk dancing which comes from the heart alone.[1]

The program at the State University College in New Paltz, New York, was varied to include The Blues Roll On which was comprised of a combination of dances from Ailey's Blues Suite and Roots of the Blues.[2]

During the week of August 6 through 10, 1963, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater appeared at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, on the same program with the Royal Danish Ballet and Carola Goya and Matteo.[3] Writing about the program of the seventh week of the Festival, Wayne Smith made the following comments:

> The most prolonged ovation of the evening was received by the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater in its contemporary adaptations of Negro religious music in a suite entitled "Revelations." This was a wonderfully choreographed and danced work in which

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[1]"Intense, Moving Dance Program by Ailey Group," Daily Ledger, Fairfield, Iowa, July 12, 1963.

[2]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," July 25, 1963.

[3]Wayne C. Smith, "Varied Dances Please Crowd in Berkshires," Springfield Union, Springfield, Massachusetts, August 8, 1963.

> the movements were sometimes semirealistic and sometimes taken from Negro sources.[1]

Following the week at Jacob's Pillow, the company traveled to Chicago, Illinois, where it joined Duke Ellington and Talley Beatty in the preparation of the production of a musical, entitled My People, for the Black Centennial Exposition which was held at McCormick Place during the latter part of August, 1963. The original plan was for Ailey and Beatty to share responsibilities for staging the show. In the end, however, Ailey had to assume total responsibility and, as a result of this experience, he feels that there has always been a kind of silent understanding between himself and Duke Ellington who was directing the musical.[2]

During that period in Chicago an invitation came to Ailey and his company to participate in a Musical Festival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during the first two weeks in September.[3] This should have been "a paid vacation," for only four performances were scheduled during a two-week period, but instead it turned into a fiasco which Ailey describes in the following manner:

> We began rehearsals for Brazil while we were in Chicago. For a big musical festival we had to have a new ballet so I choreographed Rivers, Streams,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[3] Ibid.

> Doors. We employed singers from Chicago to do Revelations; Myrna White did Roots of the Blues with me, which we hadn't rehearsed in months. In Brazil I had pneumonia, or something gross; the singer stopped in the middle of Revelations; Louis Gossett, a folk singer employed to sing for Roots, forgot the music, and Myrna and I were singing and trying to dance at the same time. Ben Jones, my personal manager, went with us and he didn't know what was going on--I was going out of my mind! After it was over, I went off to Bahia to research the Macumba for Rebekah Harkness.[1]

Despite a situation which seemed obviously chaotic and the fact that the new choreography was not yet ready to present, a workable program was arranged for participation in the Brazilian Festival. Ailey combined selected works from Roots of the Blues and Blues Suite and entitled the suite of dances The Blues Roll On. The dancers presented two other selections--Three for Now and Revelations. On the same program, the singers, whom Ailey had employed in Chicago, sang selected folk songs and spirituals which were characteristic of the American Negro.[2]

Following a week of observing folk dances in Bahia, Brazil, Ailey returned to New York City in order to prepare the members of his company for their first American tour. The tour, arranged by Susan Pimsleur, included many

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Programme, O Teatro de Dances Alvin Ailey, Estadio do Maracanozinho, Rio de Janerio, Brazil, September 6, 1963.

engagements on the East Coast and throughout the South. It began with several performances in upstate New York under the auspices of the New York State Council on the Arts and extended from the late fall of 1963 into the winter months of 1964. Ailey refers to this as their "station-wagon tour."[1] The program for the tour included Three for Now, Hermit Songs, The Blues Roll On, and Revelations--all choreographed by Ailey.[2] The first American tour for Ailey and his company evoked moderate reviews and a few profitable and memorable experiences. For Ailey, the most memorable experience occurred in Jackson, Mississippi, where he and his company met Gilbert Mosley, the Director of the newly organized Free Southern Theatre, and the members of his group. The Ailey company accepted an invitation to dine with these individuals following the dance concert at Jackson State College. Ailey recalls the incident thus:

> The group had to function underground as they were not supposed to be seen. We went to their headquarters--it was an old building equipped with printing presses and lit by candles. Black and white lived together right there in Jackson, Mississippi. It reminded one of Nazi Germany in the late 1930's. They would print pamphlets and take them out to the black farmers in order to teach them how to read because the whites claimed that the blacks were illiterate. They would hold meetings

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Hofstra Playhouse, Hempstead Long Island, New York, November 21, 1963.

> every Tuesday night with these farmers to keep them informed. They said that occasionally a member of their group was shot at. As a form of retaliation, a black guy would ride through the surrounding country-side sporting a white girl in the seat adjacent to him. The atmosphere was one of suspense--totally different from what we in New York City were experiencing.[1]

Another Southern city which afforded Ailey a memorable experience was Atlanta, Georgia. There, at Clark College, Ailey recalls that,

> Esther Jackson was in charge! After she introduced me as Alvin Ailey, choreographer from New York City, she said "Now ladies, I want you to take out your pens and papers." Right then 1200 pens and papers were brought out and she dictated a letter of protest to the President of the Columbia Broadcasting System for the manner in which black persons were kept off the viewing screens in the South. She told them all to sign their names and mail the letters by that afternoon. I believe that they did just that. I was impressed by her complete control.[2]

The stages were often inadequately equipped for dance performances in the southern colleges where Ailey and his company appeared; but, ". . . what they [the colleges] lacked technically, they made up in warmth and appreciation.[3] In comparison, Ailey felt that the shiny, spic and span floors at the northern, all-white universities

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>.

". . . appeared very antiseptic and cold."[1] The artist obviously preferred his southern audiences.

This tour marked the beginning of the end of Ailey's association with Susan Pimsleur and Ben Jones, his concert and personal managers, respectively. It appears that the only financial profits which had accrued went to the managers. According to Ailey, both Pimsleur and Jones received approximately $1,200 each for a six-week tour while he ended up with debts. Feeling depressed over the situation, Ailey severed his relationship with his two representatives. Fortunately, however, Michael Dorfman, an impresario from London, England, had heard of the success of Ailey's company in Australia. He arranged to attend one of Ailey's performances in upstate New York during February of 1964, and decided that the company should tour Europe under his auspices. On the strength of the fact that Dorfman had booked successfully throughout Europe the play entitled Black Nativity, Ailey felt that the impresario was attuned to Black Theatre and that their association could result in financial success. He agreed to let Dorfman arrange a European tour for him, and plans were set in motion for an opening in Paris in September of 1964.

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[1] Ibid.

During the spring of 1964, Joyce Trisler, a white dancer from the Horton days, joined Ailey's company as a guest artist. Her presence in the company extended the range of choreographic presentations as she and James Truitte again danced works by Lester Horton as well as those of their own choreography. Trisler appeared with the company at the University of Buffalo Summer Festival of the Performing Arts where she danced solo variations and a duet with James Truitte. John Dwyer of the Buffalo Evening News wrote the following comments about the Director of the company:

> If Mr. Ailey's forte were literature, instead of dance, he would be known as a great phrase maker. All sorts of visual epigrams, dramatic to satiric, have a tabloid impact of their own in his choreographies, with no less of the total form and larger ideas.[1]

Other highlights of the summer of 1964 for Alvin Ailey and the members of his company were their concerts presented at the Clark Center for the Performing Arts on June 28, 1964,[2] and their participation in the Rebekah Harkness Foundation Dance Festival on September 1 and 2,

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[1]John Dwyer, "Dancers are Artistic in Festival at UB," Buffalo Evening News, June 20, 1964.

[2]Billboard Announcement, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Clark Center for the Performing Arts, New York City, June 28, 1964.

1964.[1] With his company of six dancers, including James Truitte, Loretta Abbott, Rosemary Stevenson, Kelvin Rotardier, Lucinda Ransom, and Joyce Trisler as Guest Artist, Ailey presented two performances on the same day at the Clark Center as a benefit for the YWCA.[2] Commenting upon the foregoing performances, Walter Terry wrote:

> The dancing itself was good, for not only did the husky Mr. Ailey enjoy the first rank contribution of Miss Trisler as guest in his program but he also was given fine support by his company, of which Mr. Truitte is certainly one of the most valued members.[3]

Preparations for the forthcoming concert in Central Park, sponsored by the Rebekah Harkness Foundation, and preparations for the European tour were occurring simultaneously. Ailey again had the opportunity to increase the size of his company. By virtue of the rehearsal funds provided by the Rebekah Harkness Foundation, his company for the concert in Central Park was comprised of twelve dancers. New names or former members re-joining the company included Hope Clarke, William Louther, Joan Peters, Dudley Williams, Morton

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Delacorte Theatre, Central Park, New York City, Summer, 1964.

[2]Billboard Announcement, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," June 28, 1964.

[3]Walter Terry, "Dances Inspired by Negro Heritage," New York Herald Tribune, June 28, 1964.

Winston, and Takako Asakawa, who appeared by special permission of the Martha Graham Dance Company.[1]

When Ailey had met Talley Beatty the previous summer in Chicago, he had been impressed with the latter's choreography. In addition to "Toccata" and "Congo Tango Palace," both of which were dances from Beatty's major work entitled Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot, Ailey acquired for his repertory another classic work, The Road of the Phoebe Snow, choreographed by Beatty to music by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. The accompanying program note reads:

> The Phoebe Snow is a train of the Lackawanna Railroad Line which still passes through the mid-western section of the United States. Legend has it that its name came from a meticulous lady named Phoebe Snow who travelled this line dressed in white satin and lace and looked out on the surrounding countryside with high disdain. Tally Beatty, the choreographer of this work, played as a child near the railroad tracks upon which the Phoebe Snow passed. This ballet deals, first abstractly, then dramatically, with some incidents that may have happened on or near these railroad tracks.[2]

Ailey and his company gave their first performance of The Road of the Phoebe Snow at the Festival in Central Park and merited the following response from Leonard Harris of the World Telegram and Sun:

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Delacorte Theatre, Summer, 1964.

[2]Ibid.

> The most satisfying part of the performance was The Road of the Phoebe Snow choreographed by Talley Beatty. . . . arranged in fluid groupings that move effortlessly from the tremendous solo of Dudley Williams to stunning patterns danced by the entire company, Phoebe Snow in dance, music, and costumes, achieves a tension that is a startling evocation of contemporary life. It also conveys sensuality without sacrificing discipline.[1]

Concerning the performance on September 1 in Central Park, Walter Terry wrote:

> As a choreographer, Mr. Ailey was represented by two of his best creations, the marvelous, low-down "Blues Suite" and the beautiful and spiritually glowing "Revelations" which succeeds triumphantly in projecting its stated theme: "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!" . . . it is enough to report that all of the dancers in this superbly disciplined and cleanly rehearsed interracial company acquitted themselves handsomely in a variety of assignments.[2]

Ailey's Revelations, of which Terry speaks, had finally reached its perfect form as a choreographic work. In addition to the theme mentioned by Terry, the suite of dances was introduced by the following quotation from Langston Hughes:

> The spirituals sing of woe triumphantly, knowing well that all rivers will be crossed and the Promised Land is just beyond the stream. The spirituals ask no pity--for their words ride on the strongest of

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[1]Leonard Harris, "Ailey Dancers Take Giant Step," World Telegram and Sun, New York City, September 2, 1964.

[2]Walter Terry, "Dance," New York Herald Tribune, September 2, 1964.

> melodies, the melody of faith. That is why there is joy in their singing, peace in their music, and strength in their soul.[1]

The first section of the suite, entitled Pilgrim of Sorrow, is comprised of "I Been Buked," "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel," and "Fix Me Jesus." The second section, entitled Take Me to the Water, is comprised of "Processional," "Honor, Honor," "Wading in the Water," "I Want to be Ready," and "Sinner Man." The third section, entitled Move, Members Move, is comprised of "The Day is Past and Gone," "You May Run Home," and "Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham."[2]

The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, under the aegis of Michael Dorfman of London, began a three month tour of Europe on September 7, 1964, at the Theatre des Champs-Elysée in Paris, France, where the engagement extended through September 30, 1964.[3] According to Ailey, the audiences were responsive even though very few persons attended--especially the French because it was at the time of year when the native residents were vacationing and when the city was given over to the tourist.[4] This situation is

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Delacorte Theatre, Summer, 1964.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Press Release, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre Touring Europe With Repertoire of American Dance," The Shaftesbury Theatre, London, October, 1964.

[4]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

verified by excerpts from an article for the New York Times by Jean-Pierre Lenoir which reads:

> . . . audiences for non-French speaking entertainments in Paris tend to be non-French-speaking, especially at this time of year. Perhaps because of this, there is a clear difference between the reactions of the press and the public to the show.
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> The curtain falls every night accompanied by a warm enough burst of applause to satisfy the most exigent of dancers. But published notices of the Alvin Ailey troupe have ranged from "a very fine performance" (Combat) to "an evening of interminable repetitiousness" (Le Monde).[1]

Prior to its London engagement, the company was viewed by Peter Lennon who recorded the following impressions:

> What is remarkable about it [the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater] is that there is here a special refinement in its description of the predicament of the Negro which suggests that we are entering a new phase of Negro theatricals: a sophisticated drawing on plantation spirituals, but with subtle borrowing from other cultures (oriental in particular) which gives the Negro idiom an extraordinary elegance without diminishing its power.
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> When at the beginning of the section called "Revelations" the company appears in sack dresses grouped on a bare stage under a white light, their arms stretched raggedly to heaven like a shivering group from Belsen, and the dance to "I've Been Buked," you remember with a shock just what those familiar spirituals were about: that they were really slaves crying to the Almighty for consolation because no cottonboss white man was going to give it to them.[2]

In an interview with Lennon, Ailey made this revealing statement:

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[1]Jean-Pierre Lenoir, "Troupe of Dancers, Latest U.S. Import, on View in Paris," New York Times, September 10, 1964.

[2]Peter Lennon, "Not Just Hoofers," Guardian, London, September 25, 1964.

> . . . my big ambition is to get together a repertory company--not just like a Martha Graham Company which is nothing without Martha Graham--but a company whose strength will be its repertory. . . . I want to gather together some of the great works that hardly ever get a showing. . . . That's what we need--a repertory company. Concert dancers only get to dance a few weeks a year in America. We have to take any other work that comes along.[1]

Ailey was already well on his way to realizing his goal. The repertory for his European tour included Talley Beatty's The Road of the Phoebe Snow and Congo Tango Palace; Lester Horton's The Beloved and Dedication to José Clementé Orozco; James Truitte's Variegations and Bagatelle; Joyce Trisler's Journey; and Ailey's own Revelations, Blues Suite, Been Here and Gone, Hermit Songs, and Modern Jazz Suite.[2]

The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater opened its six-week engagement in London's Shaftesbury Theatre on October 5, 1964, with a program ". . . that started quietly but ended in triumph."[3] Most of the critics who reviewed the début performance of the company in London seemed to agree with Mary Clarke of The Dancing Times, that the first two selections on the program--Been Here and Gone and Reflections in D--were not strong enough for use as opening dances on the program. Clarke commented that Roots of the Blues was

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Press Release, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Touring Europe with Repertoire of American Dance," October, 1964.

[3]Ibid.

". . . haunting, deeply felt, though over long."[1] In Revelations, however, the last dance on the program, she stated that Ailey ". . . succeeded fully in his aim to show something of the Negros' contribution to world culture."[2] Excerpts from other reviews of the début performance in London follow. Clive Barnes, then critic for the Daily Express, in London, wrote:

> The agony of the Negro blues and the faith of the Negro spiritual were fused searingly together in a great dance experience at the Shaftesbury Theatre last night. It was the long awaited British debut of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and despite a lack of variety in the program the company triumphed.[3]

James Kennedy, of the Guardian in London reported that

> Mr. Ailey's dance idiom is certainly based on the American Negro tradition--jazz, blues, and spirituals; and in his manifesto he insists that this heritage is the heart of his matter. But the special achievement of his best works--if indeed we saw his best last night--is that he has absorbed this heritage into thoroughly sophisticated modern dance--Grahamesque and yet, to my mind, better than Graham; he has done it with the sort of unstrained, simple inevitability which belongs to high art. His production, choreography, and dancers amount to excellent theatre; but they are also an expression of passionate, long-memoried conviction, and that, of course, is ultimately the reason why they are so worthwhile.[4]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Clive Barnes, "Agony and Faith Turn Into Triumph," Daily Express, London, October 6, 1964.

[4] James Kennedy, "Alvin Ailey at the Shaftesbury," Guardian, London, October 6, 1964.

Clive Barnes, writing for The Times of London commented:

> It is not entirely irrelevant that Alvin Ailey is an American Negro, yet it is nothing like so relevant as the other fact that he is an American modern dancer. The excellent Alvin Ailey Dance Theater . . . is, unlike Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus, our previous American Negro dance visitors, primarily concerned with the mysteries of modern dance. . . . Mr. Ailey's company is one of the most exciting ever to visit us from America.[1]

Prior to October 21, 1964, Ailey had not shown the works of Talley Beatty or Lester Horton in Europe. According to Ailey, Michael Dorfman, the sponsoring impresario, thought that these dances were not commercial enough to attract capacity audiences. The company performed these dances, however, for Peter Williams and Clive Barnes at a private rehearsal, and the two critics agreed that the London audiences should certainly view these dances. Beginning with the performance on October 21, therefore, the works of Beatty and Horton were included in each program.[2] Following this private viewing, Williams[3] and Barnes[4] wrote extensive articles in the November issue of

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Exciting Dancers in British Debut," The Times, London, October 6, 1964.

[2]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre," Shaftesbury Theatre, London, October 5, 1964.

[3]Peter Williams, "Blues and All That Jazz: First View," Dance and Dancers, November, 1964, pp. 20-23.

[4]Clive Barnes, "Blues and All That Jazz: Second View," Dance and Dancers, November, 1964, pp. 23-29.

Dance and Dancers in which they gave individual views of each choreographic work. Perhaps Williams' description of Ailey's Been Here and Gone is the best one of the suite of dances based upon a selection of Negro folk ballads as sung by Brother John Sellers. Williams wrote:

> The dancers come running on to "Jump Down, Spin Around" in which they do just that and immediately they make an impact as a lively and attractive group dressed in clean, clear bright colours. It was followed by a convict song for five male dancers in which the tridging of "Working on the Chain Gang" was forceful and suitably weary. Four girls as monstrous schoolgirls bring a raucous sense of comedy to the tongue-twister "Peter Piper picked a pepper . . ." and in this Hope Clarke, looking like a teenage Martha Raye, projects by her sense of timing and expressive gesture. "Dark was the Night" brings back an old friend from Martha Graham's last season, Takako Asakawa.
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> In order to show off William Louther, Ailey inserted after the opening nights of the season, a solo--"Pretty Little Train." A difficult solo in that it contained many pliés and balancés, it was performed with that rippling suppleness that is only possessed by Negro artists. With "Big Boat Up the River," the dancers romp away in pairs.
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> It was a lively opening yet from the various short items it was hardly possible to get the full measure of Ailey's choreographic potential.[1]

The solo for William Louther which Ailey choreographed and inserted into Been Here and Gone afforded Ailey the opportunity to exercise another of his talents. He stepped into the orchestra pit and sang "Prettiest Train"

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[1]Williams, "Blues and All That Jazz: First View," p. 20.

as the accompaniment for Louther's new solo.[1] According to an untitled article by Sydney Edwards, Brother John Sellers refused to sing one of the songs in Been Here and Gone--"I Wonder as I Wander." The article quotes Brother John as saying, "It's white, I don't understand it . . . I don't feel it, so I won't sing it."[2] This same article confirms that Ailey as a singer replaced Brother John in the orchestra pit.

The company received laudatory reviews following the addition of the Beatty and Horton works. Mary Clarke, writing this time for the Dance News, calls The Road of the Phoebe Snow, ". . . the company's most powerful item. Strong, bitter, beautiful and magnificently danced, it is surely American Negro modern dance at its dramatic, emotional best."[3]

The following represent typical reviews which followed the performance at the Shaftesbury Theatre on October 21, 1964. A reviewer from the Evening News and Star in London wrote:

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[1]Sydney Edwards, Evening Standard, London, untitled newspaper clipping from the personal files of Alvin Ailey, October 5, 1964.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Mary Clarke, "The London Scene," Dance News, December, 1964, p. 8.

> Alvin Ailey and his American dancers must surely be the most exciting company to visit London this year. Some new items in their programme at the Shaftesbury Theater last night helped to confirm the striking originality of much of their choreography.
>
> It is capable of considerable strength as in "The Beloved" and "The Road of Phoebe Snow"--a West Side Story-like group of dances to the mood music of Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. The company's best works, however, remain those firmly rooted in the Negro spirituals and blues. And splendid they are.[1]

Elizabeth Frank, writing for the Sun in London stated:

> Marvellous qualities of passion and intensity, violence with subtlety, wit and tearaway gaiety--all interwoven and inconsistent as human behaviour. These make the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, at the Shaftesbury, something unique in dance experience. Their eyes, darting and restless, express as much as their sinuous bodies.
>
> Whether in the traditional "Blues Suite," with its humour and sadness, or in their new offering, "The Road of the Phoebe Snow" (a suite danced to the music of Duke Ellington) the company performed with an almost hypnotic feeling of concentration. Two of the new numbers in the programme are solos by the company's one white dancer, Joyce Trisler. And in a strange little tract, "The Beloved," Miss Trisler and James Truitte gave us ten short minutes of bigotry, love and murder.[2]

A. V. Coton of the Daily Telegraph and Morning Post in London wrote:

> The big new dramatic offering was "The Road of the Phoebe Snow" (a non-revealing title). What occurs is a danced picture of the joys, dreams and

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[1] "Dancing From the Heart," Evening News and Star, London, October 22, 1964.

[2] Elizabeth Frank, "Here's a New Dance Experience," Sun, London, October 22, 1964.

> restrictions of a remembered Negro way of life in a modern American city.
>
> It is the work of Talley Beatty, an American Negro choreographer hitherto unknown to London audiences. It blends some noble and heroic dancing with some better-than-average music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn.
>
> The company danced like people possessed, but possessed of a great and glorious vision in which they wholly believed.[1]

In London, Ailey's company was again called the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; Clement Crisp, critic for the Financial Times in London, pointed out the significance of the word "American" in the title as he emphasized the fact that the program on October 21 reinforced that title by the inclusion of Beatty's work, and of Joyce Trisler's Journey and Lester Horton's The Beloved which were presented also.[2] After stating that Ailey's aim ". . . is to present the cultural heritage of the American Negro" and quoting Ailey as saying ". ... we bring you the exuberance of his jazz, the ecstasy of his spirituals and the dark rapture of his blues, . . ." Clive Barnes makes perhaps the most powerful statement initiated by the London season of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in the following comment:

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[1]A. V. Coton, "Expressive Dancing by Negroes," Daily Telegraph and Morning Post, London, October 22, 1964.

[2]Clement Crisp, "Shaftesbury Theatre: Alvin Ailey," Financial Times, London, October 22, 1964.

> The dance heritage of the American Negro has become, I suppose, in effect, the great American folk-dance, although some claim could also be made for square dances and the like. But the indigenous American style of dancing is basically Negroid in derivation, to an even greater extent than American (and hence international) pop music.[1]

Whether or not it was to spread the cultural heritage of the American Negro or of America itself, Ailey's first European tour with performances in Paris and in London was an outstanding success. It established the trend for Ailey and his company for the next several years--that of becoming a touring company.

Ailey and the members of his company returned to New York City during the latter part of November in order to rest and to rehearse for their second trip to Sydney, Australia, in late December of 1964. Arrangements had been made by Michael Dorfman for the performances in Australia as well as for a second European tour for the company during the spring of 1965.[2] While in New York City, Ailey expanded the repertory of his company by acquiring Louis Johnson's Lament and Anna Sokolow's Rooms; he adapted Talley Beatty's Congo Tango Palace to the members of his company; he prepared again his Hermit Songs; and he lost Joyce Trisler and

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Dancing the Blues," Spectator, London, October 16, 1964.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

Takako Asakawa but gained again Georgia Collins, a former member of the New York Negro Ballet. During this month in New York City, he worked also with the Harkness Ballet for whom he choreographed two-thirds of a new ballet entitled Ariadne, to original music by the French composer, Andre Jolivet.[1]

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater opened at the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney, Australia, on December 30, 1964,[2] ". . . to a tremendous reception by the people and the press."[3] The foregoing words written by Alvin Ailey to his mother are supported adequately by reviews of his concerts. Norman Kessell of the Sun in Sydney wrote:

> By the safe yardstick of audience acclamation alone, Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theatre, now at the Tivoli, may be pronounced a classic exposition of modern dance.
>
> First nighters called for curtain after curtain, shouting for more and refusing to budge from their seats until the company came back for an unscheduled encore.[4]

A review by Billie Burke of the Daily Telegraph in Sydney states that:

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[1]Ibid.

[2]"Ailey Company at the Tivoli," Sydney Morning Herald, December 31, 1964.

[3]Alvin Ailey, personal letter to his mother Mrs. Lula E. Cooper, from Sydney, Australia, January 13, 1965.

[4]Norman Kessell, "Exciting Dance," Sun, Sydney, Australia, January 1, 1965.

> The superb dancing of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater exercised a compelling fascination at the Tivoli last night.
>
> At the end of the programme the excited audience greeted the dancers with wild applause, cheering and repeated curtain calls.
>
> The artists danced as if they were born for nothing else--with great speed, vitality, wit and exuberance, their movements tempered by the wide, dynamic range of the modern dance.[1]

The same Been Here and Gone which the London audience found boring was used as the opening number for the program and ". . . set the [Australian] audience giggling."[2] Norman Kessell called it ". . . a strangely invocative 'talking piece' cleverly danced and spoken by Georgia Collins, Hope Clark, Joan Peters, and Lucinda Ransom."[3] The remainder of the program was comprised of Reflections in D, Blues Suite, The Road of the Phoebe Snow, and Revelations.[4]

On February 3, 1965, Ailey changed the first part of the program to include his own Hermit Songs set to the music of Samuel Barber and the voice of Leontyne Price; Anna Sokolow's Rooms to music of Kenyon Hopkins; Louis Johnson's Lament to music of Heitor Villa-Lobos; Blues

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[1]Billie Burke, "Fascinating and Exciting," Daily Telegraph, Sydney, Australia, December 31, 1964.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Kessell, "Exciting Dance."

[4]Burke, "Fascinating and Exciting."

Suite, and Revelations.[1] According to Billie Burke,

> "Rooms" depicts outwardly conforming people in a large rooming house living out their dark dreams and fantasies in the privacy of their own small room. The work is not pretty, but it is true art. And it was performed with a high degree of artistry by Mr. Ailey's dancers.
>
> The juxtaposition of extreme tension and uninhibited relaxation was superbly suggested in an impassioned study of frustration.[2]

When James Mellen, a writer for the Nation, visited a rehearsal of Rooms, he became depressed and informed Ailey of his feeling. Ailey's reply was,

> That's good. . . . I think theatre should be a reflection of life, the darker side as well as the lighter side. . . . Rooms reflects loneliness and man's inability to communicate with man.[3]

The writer then describes the dance in the following manner:

> In these tiny rooms the dancers act out certain fantasies that the people actually living in them might indulge in although they would be agonised if anyone ever saw them indulging fantasies of aspiration, desire, fear, and frustration. For the sake of theatrical magnitude, the fantasies are expanded in neurotic proportions.[4]

Another writer expanded his imagination and said, "It [Rooms] contains the paralysing introspections, the denials

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[1]Billie Burke, "Stark Art by Dancers," Daily Telegraph, Sydney, Australia, February 4, 1965.

[2]Ibid.

[3]James Mellen, "Rooms," Nation, February 6, 1965.

[4]Ibid.

and negations of life which only a segregated race could experience."[1] The same writer intimated that, since the ballet does not relent, it is possible that the length of it is too great.

Despite the fact that Lament and Hermit Songs did not result in such an impact upon the audience as did Rooms, they did, nevertheless, receive favorable comments. One writer called Lament, which is a balletic pas de deux, ". . . an example of sculptural lyricism," and commented also that in Hermit Songs, ". . . Mr. Ailey was most visually eloquent in his dancing of four poems of monks and scholars of the 9th and 13th centuries."[2] Still another writer said of Lament:

> There was at times a savage melancholy in the superb dancing of Hope Clark and William Louther, . . . the technique here was classic ballet, beautifully executed.[3]

This same writer added that "Alvin Ailey in the solo, Hermit Songs, . . . combined an instinctive sense of poetry with the elusive, unobtrusive brilliance of his dancing."[4] The program ended with Blues Suite and

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[1]"Ailey Dancers," Sydney Morning Herald, February 4, 1965.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Burke, "Stark Art by Dancers."

[4]Ibid.

Revelations, and ". . . again the audience thrilled as it did on the company's opening night."[1]

According to Ailey, the whole atmosphere at the theatre changed once the second program was introduced. He gives the following account:

> In the first program, the audience got black blues and jazz and all the pretty costumes. In the second program, the curtain went up, and there I was in my monks robes crawling all over the floor--then, comes Lament, a ballet! Then fifty minutes of psychosis in Sokolow's Rooms. The art critics called Rooms one of the most important things which ever happened to the Australians--I think the management lost money. The first few weeks, the audience came eating popcorn and so on--after we changed the programs, the audience became very intellectual and the whole affair became an art event.[2]

Ailey and the members of his company performed for six weeks in Sydney where they became, according to Ailey, ". . . just like one of the natives--we fell right into the groove of Australian life!"[3]

On February 16, 1965, Ailey and his company opened at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne, Australia, where they were welcomed enthusiastically.[4] They opened with the same

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[3]Ibid.

[4]H. A. Standish, "Dancing Group a Fine Show," Herald, Melbourne, Australia, February 17, 1965.

program which had been presented in Sydney, and the reviews were basically the same. A typical excerpt following the opening performance reads:

> Judging by the excited enthusiasm which greeted the opening program of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Company at the Comedy Theatre, the four weeks season will be all too short to satisfy its box office potential.[1]

The writer was correct in his predictions as the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater spent six weeks in Melbourne. Ailey's account of the residency in Melbourne was not as enthusiastic as that of the period in Sydney. One reason which the artist gave was that his company followed the play entitled Black Nativity. The theatre-goers in Melbourne had enjoyed the "loud and live" Black Nativity group while Ailey's group had become "more concert."[2] Another disappointment in Melbourne occurred when William Louther injured a cartilage in his knee during the evening of February 24 and Rooms was prematurely presented the following evening in order to give the dancer a rest. That was the only performance seen by the audiences in Melbourne of Rooms as the management of the Tivoli Circuit controlling the Comedy Theatre banned the work, fearing the lack of

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[1]"Dance Company's Haunting Appeal," Listener-in-Television, Melbourne, Australia, February 20 through 26, 1965.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

appeal of Rooms to the general public.[1] Howard Palmer, writing for the Herald in Melbourne, expressed one disappointed viewpoint when he wrote:

> People who saw the only performance in Melbourne of "Rooms" by this company, when it was substitute ballet on Wednesday, saw one of the best things Ailey had done.
>
> It is a pity Ailey was prevailed on to leave out "Rooms" in Melbourne. . . . It is nonsense to think Ailey is not commercial: his dances are clear in extent, beautiful in execution and pleasant and real in subject.[2]

The remainder of the season in Melbourne, however, was opened with the Ailey dancers performing works thought to have greater popular appeal than Rooms.

By the time of the 1965 tour, Alvin Ailey had begun to do less actual performing than was his custom in previous years. Instead, he taught his roles to the younger members of this company and concentrated his main efforts upon the artistic directorship and choreographic problems of his organization. Ailey believes that it is wrong for the star of the show to be both choreographer and leading dancer and says, ". . . this way, one never gets to know whether or not a work is really good."[3] Consequently, it was not hard for Ailey to leave his company in Melbourne

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[1]Howard Palmer, "Top-Line Ballet Off Program," Herald, Melbourne, Australia, February 26, 1965.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

when he was summoned to Paris by Rebekah Harkness in order to complete his ballet entitled Ariadne for its world première. Harkness paid the management at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne a sum of $5,000 for the release of Ailey in order that he might fulfill his obligation in Paris.[1] The Harkness Ballet presented Ariadne on March 12, 1965, at the Opera-Comique in Paris, France.[2] Set to music by the French composer, Andre Jolivet, the ballet is based upon the Greek legend of Ariadne, Theseus, and the Minotaur but with emphasis placed upon the heroine, Ariadne, rather than upon Theseus.[3] The ballet was designed for Marjorie Tallchief and Nicolas Polajenko as the leading dancers. Clive Barnes, already impressed with Ailey's choreography from the previous London season, spoke of Ailey's balletic endeavors in the following manner:

> Mr. Ailey, working in what is for him the quite unfamiliar choreographic idiom of the classical dance, shows enormous imagination but slightly less sheer choreographic fluency. One result of this is that he uses the classical technique with more hesitancy and perhaps more obviousness than he would in his more natural vocabulary of modern dance. Typically with Mr. Ailey, the production is outstanding and tender, yet at the same time the heroic character of

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Clive Barnes, "Tout Paris Sees Harkness Ballet," New York Times, March 13, 1965.

[3] Ibid.

Ariadne provides a splendid chance for the company's guest ballerina, Marjorie Tallchief, who accepts it gratefully.[1]

Cynthia Grenier, special Paris correspondent for the New York Herald Tribune, praised the Paris début of the Harkness Ballet and added:

> The talents of the dancers were best displayed when they were matched with the powerful imaginative choreography of Alvin Ailey and the best score of the evening by Andre Jolivet--in "Ariadne." As the curtain goes up, a 10-foot naked-breasted priestess of Crete, long hair flying about her white face, is revealed, writhing and twisting.
>
> Theseus (Nicholas Polajenko) and Ariadne (Marjorie Tallchief) in rare form discover one another. Under broad red ribbons, representing Ariadne's thread out of the labyrinth, Theseus does battle with a host of minotaurs--done a touch too cutely as toy-shop bulls--in a fine powerful dance that brought spontaneous applause.
>
> For a brand-new ballet company to be blessed with so many fine dancers and at least one strong original choreographer is a most excellent portent.[2]

Ailey, who remained for the première of his new ballet, returned to Melbourne just two days prior to his company's final performance in that city.[3]

Ailey and the members of his company returned to London and performed at the Saville Theatre from March 23 through April 3, 1965.[4] The program for the first week was

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Cynthia Grenier, "A Glittering Paris Debut," New York Herald Tribune, March 13, 1965.

[3] Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[4] Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Saville Theatre, London, March 23 through April 3, 1965.

comprised of Ailey's Gillespiana, Reflections in D, and Revelations; Louis Johnson's Lament; and Anna Sokolow's Rooms. This was the European première of Rooms and Lament, evoking the following comments from Clive Barnes:

> Cheer after cheer reverberated around the Saville Theater here tonight as the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returned to London after an Australian tour. Mr. Ailey is proceeding speedily with his avowed intention of forming a generally representative modern dance repertory. With this in mind he had produced Anna Sokolow's celebrated 10-year-old, modern dance classic, "Rooms," which tonight had its British premiere.
>
> The Ailey company dances this most distinguished addition to their repertory with sensitive eloquence.
>
> Another work new to the repertory is Louis Johnson's "Lament," a sort of Orpheus in reverse legend, which proved to be well-shaped work, excellently danced by a company in peak condition.[1]

One week later, on March 29, 1965, Ailey presented a new program which included Talley Beatty's Congo Tango Palace and The Road of the Phoebe Snow, Louis Johnson's Lament, and Ailey's Hermit Songs and Revelations.[2] Congo Tango Palace, the final section of Beatty's jazz ballet entitled Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot is set to the music of Miles Davis. The choreography suggests a Spanish Harlem dance hall situation and evokes both Spanish and

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Ailey Dance Troupe Returns to London," New York Times, March 24, 1965.

[2]A. V. Coton, "Rare Negro Dancing by United States Company," Daily Telegraph and Morning Post, London, March 30, 1965.

Negro styles of dancing.[1] Hermit Songs was revised for William Louther and, according to Ailey, ". . . The London audiences loved him--so much so that he is still dancing there in 1970."[2] Of the entire performance Barnes said: "The program, like almost everything this wonderfully talented company has offered London, was enthusiastically received."[3] A. V. Coton, writing for the Daily Telegraph and Morning Post in London gave the March 29 performance an even more laudatory review:

> Any messages attached to the Negro ballets shown at the Saville Theatre last night were more artfully hidden than in previous programmes, and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater gave a performance full of exciting dancing of a kind very rare these days.
>
> "Hermit Songs" in Mr. Ailey's pared-down choreography was a marvelous vehicle for William Louther in the guise of a medieval monk commenting in movement on some verse fragments.
>
> Mr. Ailey's invention is, in its own category, as emotion laden and as choreographically pure as the work of a Tudor or a Balanchine.
>
> Like the best work of these masters, this piece speaks with many tongues conveying many meanings.
>
> As an occasion of the finest kind of wholly theatrical and totally professional dancing the evening invited comparison with the first impact here of the Bolshoi Ballet.[4]

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Ailey Dancers a Hit in London Program," New York Times, March 30, 1965.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[3]Barnes, "Ailey Dancers a Hit in London Program."

[4]Coton, "Rare Negro Dancing by United States Company."

The two weeks of the London engagement were the beginning of a European tour lasting three months. There were many one-night stands throughout Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Germany, France, and Italy with these engagements filling the periods between appearances at the European Festivals of Art scheduled for that year--the major reason for the extended tour. On April 12 and 13, 1965, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performed at the Second International Festival of Contemporary Art in Royan, France.[1] The program presented on April 12 was comprised of Congo Tango Palace, Hermit Songs, Lament, The Road of the Phoebe Snow, and Revelations. The following day's program included Gillespiana, Reflections in D, Lament, Blues Suite, and Revelations.[2]

Following the Festival in Royan, the company experienced the highlight of the tour--a four-day residency at the Falkoner Centret in Copenhagen, Denmark.[3] The dancers from America were the subject of many reviews in Copenhagen in which, for the first time, an unfavorable note is

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[1]Souvenir Programme, Zeme Festival International d'Art Contemporian de Royan, Royan, France, April 9 through 14, 1965.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Programme, "Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Falkoner Centret, Kobenhavn, April 19, 1965.

detected. The following excerpt from a translation of a review written by Svend Kragh-Jacobsen summarizes the general tone of the critics of the Copenhagen performances:

> Alvin Ailey's Dance Theater which last night was received with increasing enthusiasm through the first night at the Falkoner Centret, did not pull completely through. Especially during the first part of the rather longish programme you were disappointed not to see anything but an excellent technique displayed by a few of the dancers and artful tricks by Mr. Ailey who even did not prove to be one of the best dancers of his group. But reaching the third part--"Revelations"--although we did not experience the great dancing, we did feel a certain warmth and submission to the dance like what we met only with some few of the best in the beginning and in the middle of the programme had forced its way through a lot of outward virtuosity and arranged effects which seemed to cover an inner emptiness in the dances. You were missing an inner spontaneity in all this superficial vital body glamour and jazz ballet technique. The best dancers also had a fine classical ballet training, which gave them great advantages in preference to the dancers who displayed their temperament "only."[1]

What the Scandinavian critics seemed to be impressed with most was the lighting designed by Nicholas Cernovitch. Anna Greta Stahle, who reviewed the performance of the company in Stockholm on April 25 wrote:

> . . . All [the ballets] are illuminated by a real artist. Such an emotional and stagey lighting you have not seen too often in Stockholm, even if we are very attentive as to the possibilities of the lighting.[2]

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[1]Svend Kragh-Jacobsen, "American Dance Acrobats," trans. unknown, Berlingske Tidende, Copenhagen, Denmark, April 20, 1965.

[2]Anna Greta Stahle, "Alvin Ailey Makes Experiments," trans. unknown, Dagens Nyheter, Stockholm, Sweden, April 26, 1965.

Most memorable of the one-night-stands for Ailey and for the members of his company was in the small town of Muenster, Germany. Ailey recalls the experience in the following manner:

> We played in a nice little Opera House and, at the end of the performance, the audience applauded for forty-five minutes. We bowed slowly; we performed "Rocka My Soul" again and again--they would not go home.[1]

Hamburg, Germany, afforded Ailey another unforgettable experience which he recalls thus:

> We rode all night on the bus and arrived in Hamburg at the theater at 5:00 a.m. for a 10:00 a.m. performance. We were all dragging for who wants to see a dance performance at 10:00 a.m.? We also had to dance on a rug so we were less than enthusiastic. When the curtain went up, much to our surprise, the theater was full and the audience began applauding. This woke everyone up. It was an incredible performance and, at the end, the people came down to the stage and clapped and put candy and flowers on the stage. It was an extraordinary experience.[2]

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returned again to Paris for a brief appearance as the representatives of the United States at the Paris Festival of Nations where it enjoyed a warm reception at the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre on May 27, 1965.[3] Here the audiences still praised

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1965.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Jan Magure, "Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Scores Hit with Parisians," New York Herald Tribune, Paris, May 29 through 30, 1965.

Ailey for his personal performances as evidenced in the following review:

> Alvin Ailey is himself his best exponent. His powerful frame flexes agilely with self-contained ease of expression. When he dances the "Backwater Blues" and "Wading in the Water" with Hope Clarke and Loretta Abbott he illustrates the strength and grace of his own style of interpretative dancing at its most potent.[1]

The company performed in Paris from May 26 through 29, 1965.[2] Following the Festival in Paris, there were scheduled performances in many Italian towns en route to the major event of the tour, the Florentine Festival. The highlight of their isolated appearances in Italy was their series of performances in Rome on May 31 and June 1, 1965.[3] In Italy, however, the company, having been together for nine months, began to experience various artistic difficulties. Not overly enthusiastic about art which depicted violence, the Italians preferred works which displayed the fluid dancing of William Louther as opposed to the works by Talley Beatty. Louther, overly impressed by the attention given to him by the Italians, felt that he should receive "star billing" with the company. Finally, ten days before the Florentine Festival, Louther severed all relationships with the Alvin

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Programme, "The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Sarah Bernhardt Theatre, Paris, France, May 26 through 30, 1965.

[3] Programme, "Alvin Ailey Dance Theater," Teatro Olimpico, Rome, Italy, May 31 through June 1, 1965.

Ailey American Dance Theater and created a tremendous hardship for Ailey who would have to resume the performance of all of the Louther roles in the forthcoming programs.[1] At the Florentine Festival in mid-June, Ailey, who had all but stopped dancing completely, had to return to the stage and perform Hermit Songs, and Louther's roles in Rooms, Blues Suite, and Revelations.[2] Ailey describes the events which surrounded this Festival in the following manner:

> When we got to the Festival, there were no lights in the Theatre; Franco Zeferelli was directing Romeo and Juliet and had moved all of the lights to the garden. We had a miserable time. In addition, Dudley Williams would dance sometimes and sometimes he wouldn't. Kelvin Rotardier was having problems. It had been a long tour, and we were all getting on each other's nerves. At the Festival I had to dance four performances of Hermit Songs which I hadn't danced in six months--it was exasperating. I decided I would never direct this company again nor would I dance again. The latter decision was final. I discarded my dance tights in a wastebasket following the final Festival performance, and I have not owned another pair since that time.[3]

At the close of the Festival, James Truitte and Alvin Ailey visited Venice, Rhodes, Crete, and Rome for relaxation and sightseeing before returning to New York City in September of 1965.

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]Programme, "Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," XXVIII Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Florence, Italy, June, 1965.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

Ailey wished to give up his company in order to devote his time to choreography, but he had already committed its members to perform at several colleges and universities during the late fall of 1965.[1] Obligated, therefore, to pull his company together again, Ailey spent the fall of 1965 in rehearsals. As usual, following a major tour, there were several new faces--Miguel Godreau, Judith Jamison, Lea Levin, Clive Thompson, and Takako Asakawa--who again joined Ailey's dancers.[2] While Ailey was in rehearsal in New York City, the Harkness Ballet, making its first American Tour, was enjoying tremendous success with Ailey's Feast of Ashes and Ariadne. John Rosenfield of the Dallas Morning News thought Feast of Ashes demonstrated ". . . the most accurate esthetic verity of any ballet we have seen lately." He further commented:

> Not only was the idiom admirably right but Mr. Ailey did make it tell the Garcia Lorca "realistic" tale with an effectiveness we have not always found in the dramatic theater. The ballet if anything distills the intensity better and etches more sharply the folk elements, such as the church processions, the cruel street scene, the killings themselves and Bernardo's matriarchal grief.[3]

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[1]Press Release, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Touring Europe With Repertory of American Dance," October, 1964.

[2]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Harper Theatre, Chicago, Illinois, November 30 through December 5, 1965.

[3]John Rosenfield, "Proper Idiom for Lorca," Dallas Morning News, October 18, 1965.

Frank Gagnard of the Times-Picayune in New Orleans wrote:

> If there was a star to celebrate for his contributions Saturday and Sunday, it was Alvin Ailey, whose choreography produced the greatest impact and ensemble action from the Harkness dancers. Ailey's inventiveness and psychological and dramatic grasp were best represented in Sunday's "Feast of Ashes." It is one of the fieriest psychological ballets since "Fall River Legend" and it is just as free in its style of discourse. The influence of Martha Graham provides more inspiration for the movement than do the caves of Spain for the "Spanish" dance elements are stylized and inserted for dramatic purpose. Ailey has sought the most eloquent and expressive method of telling the story of Lorca's matriarchal household. He succeeds with tension and eloquence to spare.[1]

Gagnard states also that, although Ailey's ". . . Ariadne on Saturday's program was just as arresting [as Feast of Ashes], it is not as powerfully compressed."[2]

Even though Ailey no longer danced nor did his programs include any new choreography, he was, nevertheless, a total success. He opened his season that fall with a residency at the Harper Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, from November 30 through December 5, 1965.[3] Other major performances included participation in the Howard University Cultural Series in Washington, D. C., on December 13,

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[1]Frank Gagnard, "Harkness Ballets Two Showings Win Acclaim," Times-Picayune, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 25, 1965.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," November 30 through December 5, 1965.

1965,[1] and performances at the Hunter College Playhouse in New York City on December 17 and 18, 1965.[2] Reviewing the performances at Hunter College, Clive Barnes had the following to say:

> Since Mr. Ailey last brought his company here, it has won enormous recognition in Europe. It is easy to see why. The Ailey company is nothing less than superb--but we already underrate it. The program included nothing new, but there was something borrowed and plenty that was most magnificently blue. Indeed, with one patch of blue, Mr. Ailey's own "Blues Suite," the choreography had been considerably reworked and here and there replaced, but essentially Mr. Ailey concentrated on the works that have made him one of the theatrical sensations of the international dance world. He probably figured that would be enough. It was.[3]

Of the same performances, Walter Terry wrote:

> This was, indeed, one of the best programs that the Ailey Dance Theater has given, one which fully justified its director's statement of purpose, [which is as stated] . . . "I and my dance theater celebrate, in our program, this trembling beauty [the legacy of the American Negro]. We bring you the exuberance of his jazz, the ecstasy of his spirituals, and the dark rapture of his blues."[4]

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Cramton Auditorium, Howard University, Washington, D. C., December 13, 1965.

[2]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Hunter College Playhouse, New York City, December 17 and 18, 1965.

[3]Clive Barnes, "Dance: Nothing Less Than Superb," New York Times, December 19, 1965.

[4]Walter Terry, "Ailey Dance Troupe Stunning," New York Herald Tribune, December 18, 1965.

Ailey was home again, but only briefly, for the temptation of undertaking another European tour was too great. This, in addition to the fact that he had assembled a group of dancers with extraordinary talents, gave him the incentive to direct his company once more. The company embarked on February 14, 1966, upon its third European tour during which it performed in Germany, Holland, and Italy. Since the reception in Muenster had been so memorable on their previous visit, Ailey and his dancers chose to begin the tour in this small, but responsive town. The program presented in Muenster comprised Talley Beatty's Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot, Anna Sokolow's Rooms, and Ailey's Revelations. According to Ailey, ". . . if the audience applauded forty-five minutes on our first visit, they applauded one hour this time."[1] Other highlights of this tour were appearances in Berlin where Revelations was filmed on stage;[2] a return engagement at the Olympic Theatre in Rome where Rooms had to be cut from the program;[3] and

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]"Schwarze Tanzer lie Ben den Atem Stocken," Bild, Berlin, Germany, March 2, 1966.

[3]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Teatro Olimpico, Rome, Italy, March 28 through 31, 1966.

appearances at the Piccolo Theatre in Milan,[1] which satisfied Ailey's desire of many years to present his dance company in that particular theatre and city.[2] Following the performances in Milan, however, the tour was officially terminated because their impresario, Michael Dorfman, was scheduling a play entitled The Prodigal Son with an all-black cast in cities ahead of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Unfortunately, there had been some embarrassing difficulties resulting from the conduct of the cast of this play and the management of several theatres in which it had played canceled all future bookings negotiated by Dorfman. Ailey and his company, therefore, were stranded in Europe completely without work.[3] The First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal, from April 1 through 24, 1966,[4] saved Ailey's company. Following an appeal to Rebekah Harkness, Ailey and his company had been invited to join her troupe in Barcelona, Spain, during the month of May provided that he could sustain his company throughout April. When word came to him that there had been a

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Al Piccolo Teatro, Milan, Italy, April 4 through 6, 1966.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Programme, Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Negres, Dakar, Senegal, April 1 through 24, 1966.

considerable reduction in the budget for the representation of the United States at the Festival in Dakar and that the dance company preparing to represent the United States would not be sent by the government, he welcomed the opportunity to take his organization--already expert performers of the choreographies of eminent black Americans--to the Festival in order to represent Black Dance in the United States. James Truitte, who was then the Associate Director of Ailey's company, and Ailey managed to obtain sufficient funds to pay the members of the company two weeks' salary while they rested in Milan and awaited their departure for Senegal.[1] According to Ailey, the performances at the Festival were a "riot," although they were successful. He gives the following account:

> Miguel Gordeau, who was a teen-age dancer and new to the company had a trick shoulder which kept coming out of place. Morton Winston became ill during the performance; Clive Thompson's wife was having their first child, so he had to leave; we taught William Powell all of Clive's parts. So, Miguel, who was leading one section of Revelations, was lying backstage yelling "fix my shoulder" while Morton Winston was off stage on the other side regurgitating. We fixed Miguel's shoulder and he ran back on. Morton would run back on and do a few steps then run off sick again. Often there were supposed to be eight dancers on stage and there were only three. It was an unforgettable experience for us; but the audience never knew the difficulties we were experiencing.[2]

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

Following the Festival in Dakar, the company joined the Harkness Ballet in Barcelona but without the three Martha Graham dancers--Dudley Williams, William Powell, and Takako Asakawa--who went to London to accept teaching assignments rather than to join the Rebekah Harkness Ballet; and also lacking Consuela Atlas, who became ill enroute to Barcelona and returned to the United States. Ailey placed his five remaining dancers, therefore, in the ballet entitled Macumba, which he completed and presented for the first time in Barcelona. During this time, Ailey also choreographed a ballet for Marjorie Tallchief entitled El Amor Brujo, to music by Manuel de Falla.[1] The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater appeared with the Harkness Ballet at the Festival du Marais in Paris, France, from June 8 through June 18, 1966. Ailey's Ariadne was performed with mild success but El Amor Brujo received a "cool reception."[2]

Following the performances in Paris, Ailey again gave up the idea of directing a company and went to Rome to confer with Franco Zeffirelli concerning his production of Antony and Cleopatra by Samuel Barber, scheduled to open the

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[1]Wolfe Kaufman, "Harkness Eclipsed by Outdoors," New York Herald Tribune-Paris, June 11 through 12, 1966.

[2]Clive Barnes, "Dance: A Paris Festival," New York Times, June 16, 1966.

New Metropolitan Opera House in the Lincoln Center of the Performing Arts in New York City. Ailey was impressed with Zeffirelli's ideas and agreed to choreograph the opera. He returned to the United States in late July and worked with the Harkness Ballet at Watch Hill, Rhode Island, for a short period before departing for Cologne, Germany, where he taught as a guest instructor at the International Dance Academy during the early part of August in 1966.[1]

In late August of 1966, Ailey returned to New York City to conduct rehearsals for Antony and Cleopatra which opened at the Metropolitan Opera House on September 16, 1966.[2] Ailey does not speak of this experience too fondly as the composer, Samuel Barber, did not have the music ready in advance of the rehearsals and Ailey had to choreograph the dances without the music--inventing rhythms with Barber and conductor Thomas Schippers as the rehearsals progressed.[3] In his opinion, the opera was not successful and the dances were "so-so."[4]

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]Programme, "Antony and Cleopatra," Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center, New York City, September 16, 1966.

[3]Edele Holtz, personal interview, held in New York City, January 9, 1971.

[4]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

During the fall of 1966, Ailey met Gil Shiva who convinced him that he should become Ailey's Managing Agent. Since Ailey and his company had already received invitations to return to participate in the European Festivals in 1967, Shiva saw no reason why they should not do so. Shiva, therefore, obtained assistance from the National Endowment of the Arts and arranged for Ailey a tour of East and West Africa sponsored by the Office of Cultural Presentations of the Department of State. Ailey re-assembled his company and, along with several new faces, he added to his repertory Journey, choreographed by Joyce Trisler, and Prodigal Prince, choreographed by Geoffrey Holder.[1]

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater received its certificate of incorporation under the title of Dance Theatre Foundation, Incorporated, on April 29, 1967. This certificate of incorporation made it possible for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to appeal for grants for rehearsal costs as well as to initiate plans for the establishment of a permanent resident company and school in New York City ". . . in order to train the Young American Negro dancer as one of the major aims and goals of the Foundation."[2]

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[1]Virginia Innis-Brown, "Information Bulletin: The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," New York City, January 9, 1971.

[2]Certificate of Incorporation, Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, New York City, April 29, 1967.

Another aim of the Foundation is for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater " . . . to provide a continuing source and outlet for the talented professional Negro dancers to the world of Dance."[1]

Comprised of dancers Loretta Abbott, Consuelo Houston, Judith Jamison, James Truitte, Kelvin Rotardier, Dudley Williams, Miguel Godreau, George Fasion, Elbert Morris, Sharron Miller, Lynne Taylor, and Enid Atych, the newly assembled company embarked upon its tour of Europe and Israel on May 22, 1967. Under the managing direction of Gil Shiva, the tour was made possible by a grant from the Rebekah Harkness Foundation.[2] The itinerary for the tour, which extended from May 7 through September 12, 1967, included performances in Portugal, Germany, Sweden, Holland, Yugoslavia, Switzerland, Israel, the South of France, and Venice.[3] Repertory for this tour included Talley Beatty's Toccata, The Road of the Phoebe Snow, and Congo Tango Palace; Lester Horton's The Beloved; Louis Johnson's Lament; Geoffrey Holder's Prodigal Prince; Paul Sanasardos's Metallics; and Ailey's Reflections in D, Blues Suite, and Revelations.[4]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "Presstime News," Dance Magazine, July, 1967, p. 3.

[3] Innis-Brown, "Information Bulletin: The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," May 8, 1967.

[4] Ibid.

Festivals in which Ailey's company participated during this tour included the Festival Fulbenkion de Musica in Portugal, the Holland Festival, the Summer Festival in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, and the Israel Festival.[1] Clive Barnes, who visited the Holland Festival, commented:

> Audiences, it appears, took the Ailey dancers to their hearts. On the last night of the season here in Amsterdam, the packed audience at the state opera house insisted on an encore for the final section of Mr. Ailey's "Revelations." But the man who captured the Netherlands was Miguel Godreau, who technically and dramatically is rapidly becoming one of our most interesting dancers.
>
> He is still very young and appears to have unlimited potential, and it will be fascinating to see what happens to him.
>
> One last point: Why does a New York critic have to come to the Netherlands to see a New York company? When is Mr. Ailey going to have a Broadway season?[2]

Ailey was perhaps wondering the same thing because he realized that he and the members of his company were better known internationally than they were at home in New York City.

Each year, an artist-choreographer is commissioned to create a major ballet for presentation on Swedish television. In 1967, Alvin Ailey received that commission. The Swedish composer, Georg Riedel, wrote the music and the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Clive Barnes, "Dance: Ailey Troupe in Amsterdam," New York Times, July 12, 1967.

producer, Lars Egler, directed the ballet.[1] Rehearsals began on June 6, 1967, and the filming began on June 17 and lasted through June 21, 1967.[2] The work was entitled Riedaiglia, a combination of the names of the choreographer, composer, and producer.[3] Pal Nils Nilsson, a photographer, made a documentary film of the ballet showing Ailey working through all stages of the production. The work, created in a scant two weeks, won the Grand Prix Italia which is recognized in Europe as the most significant award given for television productions.[4] Anna Stahle describes the ballet in the following manner:

> It was inspired by the theme of the seven deadly sins, but it is not realistic. The magnificent Ailey dancers move in wonderful patterns; there is drama and intense feeling that bring the groups together or split them. Ailey has created a primitive ritual for Miguel Godreau and Loretta Abbott, and a display of power and sensuality for Kelvin Rotardier. Ailey uses fabrics as moving and dancing decor. Egler surrounds the dancing with light and shadow to create a wonderful feeling of space. It

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[1]Anna Greta Stahle, "Alvin Ailey's Television Ballet Wins Grand Prix Italia," Dance News, October, 1967, p. 6.

[2]Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, "Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Itinerary--European and Near East Tour--1967," from the files of the Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated.

[3]Stahle, "Alvin Ailey's Television Wins Grand Prix Italia."

[4]Ibid.

is a very exciting work. The music by Riedel is also very effective and close to the choreography.[1]

At the Israel Festival, the audience gave the company a "thunderous reception" but the critic, Meir Ronnen, was unimpressed as is evidenced in the following review:

> The two works choreographed by Ailey have regrettably little to offer where dance idioms are concerned. The "Blues Suite," danced to vocalized Duke Ellington, is of the level of Parisian cabaret and subscribes to all the cliches of Negro movement and costume that should have died with the Broadway of the twenties; I find it difficult to appreciate how a Negro can lend himself to perpetuating this form of unflattering cliche. "Revelations" is only a little better, and is danced to Negro spirituals.
>
> The show was saved artistically, however, by an exciting folk ballet: "Prodigal Prince," for which Geoffrey Holder wrote the gripping music, designed the exciting costumes and produced the fitting choreography, much of it based upon Central and West African dance movements. The ballet selects some incidents in the life of Haitian artist Hector Hippolite and draws on voodoo lore. The work as a whole is a burst of colour and vital, even erotic, dancing to gripping, savage rhythms. It made the whole evening worthwhile.[2]

While Ailey's company was performing in Israel, the Harkness Ballet, preparing for a Broadway season, had lost both George Skibine, its Artistic Director, and Marjorie

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Meir Ronnen, "Alvin Ailey and Some Negro Myths," Jeruselem Post, August 18, 1967.

Tallchief, the leading dancer. Ailey was summoned back to New York City by Mrs. Harkness to rehearse and re-set Ariadne for her company. Ailey returned but, during the second day of rehearsal, he walked out and boarded a plane back to Europe. His explanation follows:

> I simply could not take it any longer--being summoned by Mrs. Harkness whenever it was convenient regardless of what my own company was doing. I hated the final section of Ariadne anyway, and Tallchief was gone, so I just gave it up. Harkness had to drop the ballet; I flew back to Amsterdam and spent four days alone. I tried to meet my company--under the artistic direction of James Truitte--in Venice, but I missed them. Finally, I spent a week in Athens where I re-joined the company, at a stop-over there enroute to Africa.[1]

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater toured nine African countries under the auspices of the United States Department of State from September 12 through November 6, 1967. The tour took the company to Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ton Zunica, and the Matavasy Republic.[2] The most moving review of the performance of Ailey's company was written by Togbi Yao who says:

> Something breath-taking did come to town! It was the Alvin Ailey dance troupe. For a suspenseful two and a half-hour "age," a ladder as it were, was

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[1]Ailey, personal interview September 1, 1970.

[2]Alvin Ailey, "African Odyssey," Dance Magazine, May, 1968, p. 50.

> thrown over the Atlantic (echoes of Jacob's dream ladder of the Old Testament), linking the people of Ghana to the people of the United States.
>
> It was a sight to live for a lifetime in memory! These Afro-Americans, our brothers and sisters of many generations removed, are our relations still. The dynamism and vitality which they have contributed to American culture comes as no surprise to us in Africa.
>
> This element of American culture strikes a common chord in the hearts of Africans. As ambassadors of goodwill, they are most welcome to Ghana. May the cultural exchange grow and flourish.[1]

Ailey expressed his reactions concerning the African tour in an article for Dance Magazine entitled "African Odyssey."[2] After the African tour, Ailey spent a vacation period alone --visiting Morocco, Tangiers, and Amsterdam.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater began 1968 with a tour of the United States of America during which they traveled throughout the East Coast, the Mid-west, the Northwest and the West Coast. The tour began in Valatie, New York on January 14, 1968, and ended in Brooklyn, New York, on April 6, 1968.[3] On January 19 and 20, the company gave performances at the Hunter College Playhouse which marked

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[1]Togbi Yao, "It Was a Sight to Live For a Life Time," Sunday Mirror, Accra, Ghana, October 29, 1967.

[2]Ailey, "African Odyssey," pp. 50-53, 86-88.

[3]Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, "Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Up-to-Date Itinerary for 1968, United States Tour," from the files of the Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, January, 1968.

their first appearance in New York City since 1964. Here Ailey's company presented the New York City première of Holder's Prodigal Prince. Choreographed to traditional music, the program notes for the ballet read:

> This ballet deals with the real and imagined life of Hector Hippolite, the most formidable primitive painter in Haiti's history. Hippolite was for all his life a "houngan"--that is a high priest of that now gentle, now violent religion of the Haitian peasants--Voudoun. In the long years of poverty and obscurity before he painted, he [Hippolite] decorated walls, doors, chairs, postcards--even chamberpots--during a three year sojourn in Africa, a trip, which like many others he described, was perhaps a vision, one can never know. In 1943, the Voudoun Goddess Erzulie and Saint John the Baptist came to him in a vision. From the vision and his real or imagined sojourn to Africa, he painted the world of the Voudoun "loas"--those gods of Africa who ruled his life. Hippolite was apprised too by the gods in that vision that a man from over the seas would buy five of his paintings and his life would change for the better. Andre Breton was that man and Hector Hippolite, after nearly a half century of reverence, inherited his prize: genius.[1]

Reviewing the work, Clive Barnes gave Miguel Godreau credit for a brilliant performance stating that ". . . Godreau, burning his way through the ballet with a tense honesty, is unquestionably superb."[2] Perhaps more important about Barnes' review of the performance on January 19 is the fact

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Hunter College Playhouse, New York City, January 19 and 20, 1968.

[2]Clive Barnes, "Dance: Alvin Ailey's Troupe at Hunter," New York Times, January 20, 1968.

that he again posed some rather timely statements concerning the state of modern dance in America. He wrote the following:

> One of the most surprising, perhaps one of the most shocking, aspects of our senior modern-dance companies is that they can appear in extensive seasons in Europe, but at home it appears that they are not wanted upon the cultural voyage.
>
> An all too typical example is the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which has recently completed its latest highly successful European tour and now is back home. . . . Without question this company, which has made its way triumphantly through Europe, deserves a properly extensive New York season. Why are we so regardless of our own treasures? It is only a rather sad question.[1]

But Barnes' question remained unanswered, and the Ailey dancers continued their American tour--an important phase of which was the first appearance of Ailey's company in California. Under the auspices of the Intercampus Cultural Exchange Committee of the University of California, the company performed on university campuses at Los Angeles, Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz.[2]

At the end of the 1968 American tour, several things happened to Ailey. He went to Mexico City, where he set the choreography for and granted performance rights of Revelations

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "University of California Los Angeles, Concerts," Music Magazine of Los Angeles, March, 1968, p. 20.

to the Ballet Folklorico for performance at the 1968 Olympics; he obtained a Guggenheim Fellowship to re-structure Knoxville: Summer of 1915, and to choreograph a new ballet entitled Quintet; and he received grants of $5,000 and $10,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, respectively, for the purpose of creating new works.[1] Since he had not attempted any choreography for his company since his unsuccessful venture of Rivers, Streams, Doors, in 1963, Ailey believed that it was time to put his choreographic powers to work once more. He had never had so much money at one time before, and he had always wished to make available to Talley Beatty the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as an instrument at his disposal. Ailey used some of the grant funds, therefore, to commission Beatty to choreograph a ballet entitled Black Belt. He used still more of the money to re-structure and re-costume old dances, to acquire and costume Icarus choreographed by Lucas Hoving, and to costume the new Beatty work. All of these activities were in progress while the members of his company were preparing to go to Europe again for performances at the major festivals.[2]

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Ibid.

This chaotic situation took place during May and June of 1968 at which time Ailey himself did not adhere to a budget nor did he have a financial manager to do so. He maintains that the money was not spent unwisely but that there was just no income while everything was outgoing.[1] To add to the confusion, Ailey retired James Truitte from the stage in hopes that he would remain with the company in an administrative capacity, an offer which Truitte refused.[2] Other dance personalities, feeling that Truitte had been retired prematurely, were less than amicable toward Ailey.[3] It was at this point that Ivy Clarke, who had taken a leave of absence from her profession as a nurse specializing in radiological techniques, came to his assistance as his wardrobe mistress--a move which was to prove most profitable for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Ailey and his company departed for Europe and the Holland and Dubrovnik Festivals without having finished the works for which Ailey had received grants. While the company was in Amsterdam during the month of July, however, Ailey worked upon and completed the revised version of

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[1]*Ibid*.

[2]James Truitte, personal interview, July 3, 1970.

[3]Marilyn Bord, personal interview, July 4, 1970.

Knoxville: Summer of 1915. He also had the costumes made in Holland.[1] Beginning August 26, 1968, the company played the Edinburgh Festival, in Edinburgh, Scotland, for one week where Ailey quickly finished and presented Quintet along with the new version of Knoxville.[2] The premières of both ballets took place on August 28, 1968, and were reported by A. V. Coton of London's Daily Telegraph and Morning Post:

> Knoxville: Summer of 1915, deals with the turbulence in the heart of a Negro boy. Surrounded by a loving family, but agonised by his awareness of the world's complications. Miguel Godreau as the Boy and Judith Jamison as his mother gave an effective yet powerful simplicity to their characterisations.
>
> Quintet, the other novelty, displayed five very worldly wise ladies obviously of the Harlem entertainment milieu. In exotic tight gowns and blond wigs they celebrated in weird, luminous and occasionally tedious dancing, the banal sentiments of the accompanying music.[3]

In Edinburgh, the company's performance of Talley Beatty's Black Belt, retitled Black District, evoked the following response from London critic, Nicholas Dromgoole:

> I was less than impressed with "Black District," a propaganda piece about the treatment of Negroes in

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Ibid.

[3]A. V. Coton, "Attractive Dancing in Ailey Ballet," Daily Telegraph and Morning Post, London, September 15, 1968.

> America. Clearly, there are terrible issues involved about which an outsider must speak with care but in this work there is too much propaganda and far too little art. At the end of the ballet the dancers wave lights at us and scream in a crescendo of sounds that they are going to murder every one of us.
>
> The piece has ceased to be a dance work, even to be a dramatic one and become almost a public meeting, and a very didactic one at that.
>
> Effective dance imagery could have made a much greater impact without stepping outside the medium of the dance or the theatre. Dance that works does not require the dancer to stop moving and shout bloody murder at us, and the horror of what is actually happening in America was, if anything, minimised by such crude propaganda effects.[1]

The Edinburgh performances were, technically, the termination of Ailey's fifth European tour. There was a proposed London season which failed to materialize because it was impossible to make a theatre available for the company during that time.[2] The inability to secure a London season placed a tremendous financial burden upon Ailey and his company. He was forced to cancel the scheduled return to the Israel Festival in mid-October because it was impossible to support the members of his company in London for five weeks without remunerative engagements.[3]

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[1]Nicholas Dromgoole, "More Alvin Ailey Wanted," Sunday Telegraph, London, September 15, 1968.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

When Ailey informed the authorities for the Israel Festival of his unforeseen difficulties, they proceeded to file suit against him immediately for breach of contract.[1] The members of the company were able to earn some remuneration while in London, however; they filmed a program for presentation on television for which they were paid--only to have the entire program rejected because the television network would not allow taped music. Ailey, who always kept one week's salary and the price of a ticket back to the United States readily available for all of his dancers, paid them near the first of October and bade them farewell for an indefinite period. Before returning to the United States, Ailey vacationed in Tangiers, Morocco, for two weeks.[2] Returning home, he undertook the task of once more assembling the company prior to the rehearsals scheduled in November. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performed Revelations at the White House on November 21, 1968, before President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson and an invited audience of artists in honor of the National Council of the Arts. The performance was accompanied by the Howard University Choir directed by Howard Roberts.[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Alvin Ailey, personal correspondence to Lula E. Cooper, from Tangiers, Morocco, October 17, 1968.

[3] Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," The White House, November 21, 1968.

In January of 1969, Ailey's company had the distinguished honor of presenting its first Broadway season. Ailey's season at the Billy Rose Theatre, made possible through the assistance of a grant from the Ford Foundation, extended from January 27 through February 1, 1969, and was somewhat of an event.[1] The appearance of Ailey's company on Broadway was long overdue and Clive Barnes made the following comments after viewing the opening performance:

> The really surprising thing about the triumph of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the Billy Rose Theater last night was that Mr. Ailey has had to wait nearly a decade for the experience. After innumerable tours in Europe and Australia, Mr. Ailey has finally been able to bring his 11-year-old company into its hometown for a brief Broadway season.[2]

Frances Herridge of the New York Post further expanded Barnes' reaction by stating:

> The Ailey company, founded ten years ago, has been asked (and cheered) almost everywhere in the world except here on Broadway. And that's ironic in more ways than one.
>
> The material is so theatrical that some of it could be a part of a Broadway musical--a superior one, that is. But the work is at home, too, in the the concert hall, except that it is more exciting, more entertaining, than most dance concerts.[3]

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[1]Playbill, Billy Rose Theater, New York City, January 27 through February 1, 1969.

[2]Clive Barnes, "Dance: Ailey and Troupe in Triumph," New York Times, January 28, 1969.

[3]Frances Herridge, "Alvin Ailey Turn at Billy Rose," New York Post, January 28, 1969.

Happy to be on Broadway regardless of how long it had taken to reach this goal, Ailey chose to present the following works in two programmed combinations: Beatty's Congo Tango Palace, Toccata, Black Belt, and The Road of the Phoebe Snow; Hoving's Icarus; and his own Quintet, Reflections in D, Blues Suite, and Revelations.[1] With both Quintet and Black Belt offering their New York City Premières on the opening night of the engagement, lengthy descriptions were included in the reviews the following morning. It was obvious that both the critics and the Broadway audiences were pleased.[2]

The year of 1969 saw the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater undergo several major changes. Upon its return from Europe in Late 1968, the company was approximately $45,000 in debt.[3] Ivy Clarke, who had accompanied the company on the recent European tour to assist with the wardrobe, became Administrator for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and began, therefore, the mammoth task of "setting Ailey's house in order."[4] Beginning with the season of

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[1]Playbill, Billy Rose Theater, January 27 through February 1, 1969.

[2]Barnes, "Dance: Ailey and Troupe in Triumph."

[3]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[4]Moore, personal interview, July 20, 1970.

1968 through 1969, the Ailey company performed under the management of Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, working closely with Nancy Tuttle for the arrangement of the American tours.[1] Also having outgrown the facilities at the Clark Center for the Performing Arts, Ailey accepted an offer for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to become a permanent resident company of the Brooklyn Academy of Music[2]--the one change which he was destined in the future to regret. The Ailey company then embarked upon an American tour lasting six and one-half weeks, opening with a performance in Worchester, Massachusetts, on February 2, 1969. The tour, with scheduled performances confined primarily to the East Coast, took the Ailey company also to Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Missouri and was terminated on March 20, 1969, in Niagara, New York.[3]

Having accepted the offer to become a resident company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Ailey and the members of his company had moved their dance equipment from

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[1]Nancy Tuttle, personal correspondence with the investigator from New York City, July 6, 1971.

[2]Hubert Saal, "Ballet in Black," Newsweek, January, 1969, p. 76.

[3]Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Tour Schedule, Spring, 1969," from the files of Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, New York City, January, 1969.

the West Side YWCA before embarking upon their American tour. It is not hard to imagine the disappointment which they experienced when, upon their return to New York City, they learned that the only advantage of the move to Brooklyn was a guaranteed season in a sizable theatre and the benefit of a live orchestra. Ailey had been promised rehearsal space, costume storage space, office space, and a school--none of which materialized satisfactorily.[1] Luckily for the dancers, their schedule of performances at colleges in the State of New York was extended to last from March 21, 1969, through April 2, 1969.[2]

Ailey shared the Brooklyn Academy residency with two other leading modern dance figures--Merce Cunningham and José Limón. Ivy Clarke shared office space with the Cunningham personnel, and the three resident companies shared the inadequate space in the basement of the building for the storage of their respective costumes, props, and theatrical company equipment.[3]

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[2]Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, "Itinerary of Managements Scheduled for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, March 23 through April 3, 1969," Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, February, 1969.

[3]Personal observation by the investigator during numerous trips to the Brooklyn Academy of Music during the months of June and July, 1970.

From April 22 through 26, 1969, the Ailey company participated in the "Festival of Dance 68-69," at its new resident home, the Brooklyn Academy of Music.[1] Aside from presenting the revival of Knoxville: Summer of 1915, the performances appeared to have aroused very little excitement.[2] The remainder of 1969 saw the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater enjoying successful performances in the United States. During the month of May, the company was in Boston filming a program for the National Educational Television's station WGBH. Filmed for viewing on October 27, 1969, were Talley Beatty's Black Belt and Ailey's Revelations.[3] In addition, station WGBH presented the company in performances from May 20 through 25, 1969, at the Loeb Drama Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts.[4] In June, Ailey choreographed and rehearsed two new "commercial" ballets and a pas de deux for presentation at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles. Appearing on a program with the popular singing group, "The

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[1]Billboard Announcement, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Brooklyn Academy of Music, April 22 through 26, 1969.

[2]Nancy Goldner, "Modern Dance: Cunningham, Ailey, Limón," Christian Science Monitor, May 15, 1969.

[3]Press Release, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music," Brooklyn, New York, October, 1969.

[4]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Loeb Drama Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 20 through 25, 1969.

5th Dimension," the company performed Diversion No. 1,[1] which was comprised of "Can't You Hear Me Calling You," a pas de deux from Romeo and Juliet, and "Oh Happy Days."[2] The company presented, also, Toccata and excerpts from Revelations.[3]

The troupe performed in Rochester, New York, on July 29 and 30, 1969, in the Summer Arts Festival sponsored by the Summer Youth Opportunity Program.[4] George Murphy, a local reviewer, wrote:

> . . . I do not recall a time when Rochester has played host to a group of dancers superior to this one.
>
> Each member of the company displayed the charm, grace and physical attractiveness that are, or ought to be, the hallmarks of the art.[5]

Following the appearances in Rochester, Ailey and his company spent four days in residence at the Saratoga

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[1]Programme, "The 5th Dimension and The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Greek Theatre, Los Angeles, July 14 through 20, 1969.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, August 15, 1970.

[3]Programme, "The 5th Dimension and The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," July 14 through 20, 1969.

[4]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," East High School Auditorium, Rochester, New York, July 29 and 30, 1969.

[5]George Murphy, "Dance Troupe Sparkles," Democrat and Chronicle Metro, Rochester, New York, July 30, 1969.

Performing Arts Center in Saratoga Springs, New York,[1] before going to Connecticut College, New London, for two weeks. While in residence at Connecticut College from August 4 through 16, Ailey choreographed a new ballet entitled Masakela Langage, set to music by Hugh Masekela. He also had the opportunity to rehearse and prepare several ballets for presentation in repertory--Panambi, choreographed by Michael Smuin to music by Ginastera; Dance for Six, choreographed by Joyce Trisler to music by Vivaldi; and Poeme, choreographed by Pauline Koner to music by Samuel Barber.[2] The première of Masekela Langage was presented on the final program of the 1969 Dance Festival at Connecticut College in New London. After the performance, Anna Kisselgoff reported:

> Last night the company gave the six-week American Dance Festival at Connecticut College here a rousing finale that presented one premiere, two works new to the troupe, a jumping-up-and-down ovation from the audience and gladiolus-throwing from admirers.
>
> The company responded with a well-rehearsed encore it just happened to have handy. There was no time for false modesty in fact. The group was dancing better than ever and its performance could only be called electrifying.[3]

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[1]Press Release, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," October, 1969.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Anna Kisselgoff, "Ailey Dance Theater Presents a Rousing Finale," New York Times, August 18, 1969.

Of the première of Masekela Langage, Kisselgoff wrote:

> In its present form, the work relies entirely upon an unexpected dramatic climax for its impact--the actual choreography offering only a pale version of the striking use Mr. Ailey has made of jazz, and modern vocabulary in his best dances.[1]

Ailey had rehearsed his company well; in fact, he had been preparing his dancers for the début at Connecticut College since May. They had rehearsed in California and in Saratoga Springs as well as in Connecticut. Enjoying this luxury of working in a leisurely fashion with his company, Ailey says, ". . . it was elegant--I need to do that more often."[2]

During the remainder of 1969, Ailey's company completed its second American tour undertaken that year, extending from October 6 to November 13; was involved in its second season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, extending from November 20 through 29; and was engaged in a brief tour of Latin America with appearances in Puerto Rico and in the Virgin Islands from December 4 through 6.[3]

During the fall tour the company, in Los Angeles from November 7 through 9, appeared on the television program "Hollywood Palace," performing "Rocka My Soul" and "Sinner Man," from Ailey's major suite entitled Revelations.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, "Performance Schedule of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, July, 1969 through April, 1970," from the files of Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, New York City.

This tour was made without Ailey as he was involved in his first choreography designed for a Broadway musical--a musical entitled La Strada which was directed by Alan Schneider. The production opened on December 13, 1969, and closed on December 14, 1969.[1] The company, in the meantime, had returned to New York City and had fulfilled successfully its fall season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The major work presented during that fall, 1969, was Ailey's Masekela Langage, about which Walter Terry wrote the following:

> Masekela Langage is now-commentary, biting and restless and even violent at times, about people instead of folk.
>
> The setting is a saloon, in a tropical or semi-tropical climate.
>
> The ceiling fans turn sluggishly to stir the sultry air, and slatted blinds keep out the sun and the heat. There are chairs, a table, a juke box, and the action is separated into vignettes, seemingly distinct personal dramas or reactions, but all encompassed by the dance hall, all strangely intermingled.
>
> A girl, comfortably stoned, swings her hips as she crosses and recrosses the floor; two men pull chairs before the juke box and worship it; a girl, all in black, lets us see her lonely soul; there is itinerant courtship, and there is a man, bloodied, who comes in to die.
>
> Watching and hearing Masekela Langage, one might say that here is a club in a native section of South Africa. But then, there are whites present; so could it be America in a sordid but gaudy scene? Or is Ailey saying this is life with introspection, introversion, loneliness in the midst of conviviality,

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

> shaking hips, and the shudder of death? It is a stirring work, for it succeeds in being entertaining and disturbing at the same time, and that, in the classical sense, is what theater is all about.[1]

After vacationing in Puerto Rico during the Christmas holidays in 1969, Ailey returned to New York City in order to rehearse the members of his company for their forthcoming tour, scheduled from February 5 through March 20, 1970.[2] When they returned from this American tour, Ailey and his company had three weeks free before the beginning of their spring residency at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Disturbed by the fact that there were no new ballets for presentation during the season, Ailey quickly created two ballets entitled Streams and Gymnopedies, respectively. Streams, set to music by Miloslav Kabelac, had its première on the opening night of the Spring Festival of Dance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, on April 15, 1970.[3] Clive Barnes wrote that this ballet, which was inspired by the music, is:

> . . . instantly impressing as one of Ailey's finest works to date. Streams, and the title perfectly

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[1]Walter Terry, "World of Dance," Saturday Review, December 13, 1969, p. 49.

[2]Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, "Performance Schedule of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, July, 1969, through April, 1970."

[3]Clive Barnes, "Alvin Ailey Dancers Return With a World Première," New York Times, April 16, 1970.

> describes its structure, is a ballet bubbling on the hob, fires burn beneath, while cool streams of only slightly agonized movement flow above. A most rewarding work. And it was beautifully, exultantly, danced.[1]

Gymnopedies, set to music by Erik Satie and choreographed for Dudley Williams who, because of an injury was out of the company for the spring season, was first presented on April 23, 1970, with Keith Lee dancing the Williams' role.[2] The work is comprised of a series of three solos which are performed in a casual studio atmosphere. Anna Kisselgoff describes the première performance:

> A young man, Keith Lee, lons about smokes a cigarette. The pianist, John Childs, saunters over to the onstage piano. Mr. Lee nods. Mr. Childs plays. Mr. Lee dances, stops, reverts to ordinary movement and begins again, this time as if he were choreographing the dance on the spot.
>
> Although one suspects that the tautness of the first angular solo would have been better supplied by the injured Dudley Williams (for whom the piece was created), Mr. Lee, stepping in as guest artist, was perfectly at ease in the balletic second section and excellent in the extraordinary third solo--danced almost entirely half-prone.[3]

Early in 1970, representatives from the Department of State of the United States Government had approached Ailey regarding a possible tour of the Soviet Union and

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Anna Kisselgoff, "New Ailey Work Introduced by His Dancers in Brooklyn," New York Times, April 24, 1970.

[3] Ibid.

requested him to keep his company free of professional commitments after June of 1970. Ailey complied with this request, and found himself without engagements for his company at the close of the season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on April 26. Weary of searching constantly for rehearsal space, of borrowing money to pay salaries, of inadequate storage space for costumes and props, of lack of space to establish a school, of losing expert dancers following each major engagement and, most of all, weary of re-grouping his company several times a year, Ailey announced the dissolution of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater following the final performance of the company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the spring of 1970.[1] His announcement was a surprise, and the public ". . . responded with shock and disbelief."[2] According to Joseph Gale, dance critic for the Newark News,

> Ailey's motives were several--certainly frustration and despair among them--but they polarize in the single discouraging fact of artist life: money. Dance companies come and go, but the death of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater would be a stain on the country's artistic conscience.[3]

Gale quotes Ailey as saying:

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

[2]Joseph Gale, "Dance: Ailey's Decision," Newark News, May 10, 1970.

[3]Ibid.

> We have explored every possibility to keep our artists employed for a reasonable amount of time each year, in order to retain our high artistic standards. Now, when we cannot provide them employment, or when we must tour interminably under terrible conditions, when we must beat on doors all over the city to find a place to rehearse, then we feel especially after all these years of struggle that perhaps our good faith and hard work and good intentions have gone for naught.
>
> It is a sad moment for me, for this company and the cultivation of its ideas and artists have been my very heart for the past twelve years. But at the moment, and facing a constantly worsening situation, I see no alternative except to quit while we're ahead. I hope that the dance history books will remember that we passed here, for we have been a vital and creative force in American Dance.[1]

Ailey's company did not disband immediately, however, because an invitation to participate in the Shakespeare Summer Festival in Washington, D. C., during the week of June 23 through 27, made it possible for the company to remain together for a short time.[2] The proposed tour of the Soviet Union did materialize but, instead of in June, as anticipated, it was scheduled for October of 1970. The ubiquitous problem was to find a means by which to keep Ailey's company together until that time. Since the Ailey company was going to Russia as Cultural Ambassadors for the United States, the Department of State arranged for a five-week tour of North Africa. Funds were made available for

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

a rehearsal period of two weeks prior to the Festival in Washington, D. C., which opened on June 23, 1970.[1]

While his company was preparing repertory for the Festival in Washington and for the North African Tour, Ailey was choreographing a new ballet for the American Ballet Theatre. The ballet, entitled The River and set to a new score by Duke Ellington, had its première on June 25, 1970, at the New York State Theatre in Lincoln Center.[2] Despite the fact that, under the administrative expertise of Ivy Clarke, Ailey was freed of the usual menial chores connected with the preparation for a tour, he still had a major problem--the fact that Mr. Ellington's new music arrived slowly.[3] The première of The River was programmed, therefore, as "Seven Dances from a Work in Progress Entitled The River."[4] Excerpts from Clive Barnes' review of this performance follow.

> Mr. Ellington places at the head of his score a few somewhat menacing words: ". . . of birth

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[1]Joseph Gale, "No Break-Up: Ailey Tour Set in North Africa," Newark News, June 8, 1970.

[2]Programme, "American Ballet Theatre," New York State Theatre, New York City, June 25, 1970.

[3]Ivy Clarke, personal interview held in New York City, July 6, 1970.

[4]Clive Barnes, "Dance: Unfinished River," New York Times, June 26, 1970.

> . . . of the wellspring of life . . . of reaffirmation . . . of heavenly anticipation of rebirth . . ." In the small sense, that I suppose is what "The River" is about. Its importance is perhaps something quite else.
>
> It is a most interesting piece that uses Mr. Ellington's suave and yet passionate music to provide the basis for a plotless work that subtly suggests the life cycle of human hope and yet never converts it into a cliche ridden platform.
>
> Mr. Ailey has done his unfinished work with great distinction. He has created choreography for these classic dancers with ease and happiness, and the work is almost surprisingly beautiful.
>
> The idea--and the Buddhists had it first--is to take the symbol of the river as a metaphor of eternally renewing life. Mr. Ellington's music, smooth, subtle and happy, provides Mr. Ailey with the opportunity to create a work (or at least part of a work) of almost infinite planes and dimensions.[1]

Ailey and his company departed for North Africa on June 29, 1970. Their itinerary included Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia with performances in eight cities in these countries.[2] Representing the first cultural exchange program to those particular countries to be sponsored by the Office of Cultural Presentations, Department of State, of the United States, since 1967, Ailey and his company were received enthusiastically and performed to capacity audiences throughout the tour.[3] Ailey reacted to this

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, "North African Tour Schedule," from the files of Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, July, 1970.

[3] Press Release, "Ailey Dance Company to Tour Soviet Union," The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, New York City, September 4, 1970.

tour by saying:

> In North Africa, it's another way of thinking--the people are more languid than we are--the pace is very slow. The company was able to communicate very well though and the pieces which were best received were those of black American roots.[1]

While the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was touring North Africa, its residency at the Brooklyn Academy of Music was terminated. The acceptance of a residency at the Academy meant that the company was barred from accepting any engagements at theatres in Manhattan; the contract precluded any possibilities of Broadway seasons. In addition, as a resident company at the Academy, Ailey had been promised many advantages, including a school. The school had not materialized so all that he had received actually was a shared office, shared storage space, and a guaranteed spring and fall season--but in Brooklyn, away from the mainstream of theatre life in Manhattan. The residency was terminated, therefore, by mutual agreement between Ailey and Harvey Lichtenstein, Director of the Academy.[2]

Ailey and his company returned from North Africa and began a hectic schedule in New York City. Auditions held in order to enlarge the company to sixteen members;

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, January 17, 1971.

[2]McClandish Phillips, "Alvin Ailey Troupe Lose Base at the Brooklyn Academy of Music," New York Times, July 28, 1970.

rehearsals began in preparation for the Russian tour; and searches were undertaken for a new home for the organization. Office space was found at the West Side YWCA and temporary storage space at 229 East 59th Street where Ailey had rented rehearsal space for several months. While Ailey was busy with the artistic side of his company, Ivy Clarke, his Administrator, searched daily for a building large enough to house both the company and a school of dance. Applications were also made to the various Foundations as well as appeals to personal donors for funds to cover operational expenses for the company and its staff. Ivy Clarke often paid all of the salaries except Ailey's and her own in an effort to keep the financial obligations of the organization operating smoothly.[1]

On September 11 and 12, 1970, the company presented four performances of the repertory which had been prepared for the Russian tour. Representatives from the Department of State viewed these performances and approved the entire repertory which included Talley Beatty's The Road of the Phoebe Snow, Toccata, and Congo Tango Palace; Joyce Trisler's Journey and Dance for Six; Lucas Hoving's Icarus; Geoffrey Holder's Prodigal Prince and Adagio for a Dead Soldier, a

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[1]Ivy Clarke, personal interview held in New York City, August 14, 1970.

new solo for Judith Jamison dedicated to all of the war dead; and Ailey's Blues Suite, Streams, Masekela Langage, and Revelations.[1]

The company of twenty-four, comprised of sixteen dancers plus administrative personnel, left New York City for Moscow on September 21, 1970, for a six week's tour of the Soviet Union.[2] Russian cities scheduled on the tour included Zaporozlte, Donetsk, Kiev, Bordshilobgrad, Moscow, and Leningrad.[3] According to Mary Colquhoun, office administrator for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the reported reception of the company was phenomenal.[4] It appeared that in the smaller cities in Russia, reviews of performances were not published; instead, as a method of announcing its arrival, pictures were printed in the news media accompanied by accounts of the achievements of the company. Reviews were written, however, in the major cities; and special correspondents kept the interested personnel in

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[1]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," The Fashion Institute, New York City, September 11 and 12, 1970.

[2]Press Release, "Ailey Company to Tour Soviet Union," September 4, 1970.

[3]Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Soviet Tour Schedule," Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, September, 1970.

[4]Mary Colquhoun, personal letter to the investigator, New York City, November 10, 1970.

New York and in Washington, D. C., informed. James F. Clarity, correspondent for the New York Times, writes of the performance on October 22 in Moscow:

> A vibrant American modern dance company tonight won the unrestrained approval of a theatre full of Russians unaccustomed to the style of swinging innovation they saw on the stage of Moscow's Variety Theatre.
>
> About 1,300 Soviet spectators, most of them accustomed to, and often blasé toward, the predictable, technical, formal, classical excellence of the Bolshoi and other ballet companies here, gave the Alvin Ailey Theater's sixteen young dancers, most of them nonwhites, ten minutes of curtain calls after the final act of tonight's premiere performance here.
>
> Although there was little advance publicity for the performance, and the company was assigned the small Variety to work in, scores of Russians, mostly young people, stood in a cold rain pleading for tickets from persons who had them.[1]

A. Ilupina, a ballet critic in Moscow, quotes Vladimir Prebrazhusky, winner of the USSR State Prize in Dance, as saying:

> We first saw the Ailey group almost ten years ago when we made our US tour. Today, I am glad to note that many of Alvin Ailey's objectives have been achieved. Considering the limitations of the modern dance, most of his group command the medium perfectly. This is why the "Revelations," which crowned the opening night, is so good. Alvin's choreography and his dancers have been able to convey, in plastic form, the various moods of the music. This combines Negro spirituals, psalms and prayers, as well as the blues which express love, anxiety, and a longing for freedom. This plastic anthem of people seeking a

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[1]James F. Clarity, "Moscow Audiences Hail Ailey Dancers," New York Times, October 23, 1970.

> happier future and fervently believing in it has deeply moved me.[1]

According to an article in Dance News,

> Leningrad was an even greater repetition of the Moscow triumph, despite the absence on opening night of Judith Jamison and Mr. Williams who were indisposed. The curtain call at the Vyburg Palace of Culture lasted seventeen minutes, with enthusiastic cries of "Molodtsy"--"well done!" Closing night on November 1 surpassed the triumphant reception conferred then upon the company when the ovation lasted for twenty minutes. Young people had been let in who, as standees, packed the sides of the auditorium.[2]

Ailey's company, the first American modern dance company to visit the Soviet Union, was something of a revelation to the Russians who seemed surprised that the group was predominately black.[3] Anthony Astrachan, special correspondent to the Washington Post, quotes Ailey as saying:

> At first they thought we were black tap dancers, but in Kiev, the local ballet company came to see the daily classes and "flipped out" over the Martha Graham techniques. They couldn't believe it. They said, "Look, they're down on the floor! They're using their upper bodies!" It's really a groovy thing. They really want to see it. We're blowing their minds.[4]

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[1]A. Ilupina, "Impressions and Opinions," Moscow News, undated newspaper clipping from the files of Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated.

[2]"Soviets Say 'Molodtsy' to Ailey Troupe," Dance News, December, 1970.

[3]Anthony Astrachan, "Ailey Troupe in Russia," Washington Post, October 24, 1970.

[4]Ibid.

Other examples of mixed responses from the Russians are revealed in the following lines:

> . . . the newspaper in Zaporozhye criticized the violence in one Ailey dance. A Kiev dancer, seeing a girl in the Ailey group wrap her legs around the male soloist said, "We only do things like that in bed." . . . but in Voroshilovgrad the crowd besieged the dancers from their dressing rooms to their bus, demanding autographs, but were held back. Leading soloist Williams grabbed a Russian's program and autographed it, and the human-relations dam broke.[1]

Ailey, who enjoyed especially the opportunity to meet Russian dancers and teachers, offers the following additional impressions regarding the tour:

> It was a tremendous success, and I am very self-critical. I don't think that the company was that strong as many of the members were new. The Russians accepted us, however, as a statement of the whole American ethos and responded to the spirit and idea of the works, I think. They screamed, applauded, and gave us gifts and flowers--I felt very proud. As a company on the verge of dissolution, here we were being appreciated by the world's foremost critics of the dance--I thought, we must be doing something right as an artistic unit. I think we were even more successful than the State Department expected.[2]

After leaving Russia on November 2, 1970, the Alvin Ailey dance company went to Paris for a week of rest which was followed by performances at the International Dance Festival from November 10 through 14, at the Theatre des

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ailey, personal interview, January 17, 1971.

Champs Elyseés where Ailey was awarded the Golden Star for the "Best Modern Dance Company" and the "Best Choreography" during the Festival.[1] The company received critical compliments reminiscent of those on former Paris visits.[2] From Paris, the company went to London for another week of rest before fulfilling two weeks of performances at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, beginning on November 23, 1970.[3] During the London season, the Ailey dancers performed twenty ballets. According to Ailey, ". . . they loved us in London so we gave them everything which we could make ready including Knoxville: Summer of 1915."[4] In his effort to show as many works of American choreographers as possible, Ailey premièred Kelvin Rotardier's Child of the Earth, set to music by Hugh Masekela, and Geoffrey Holder's Adagio for a Dead Soldier, to the music of Albinoni--neither of which was successful. Of Child of the Earth, a reviewer wrote: "This was a little naive but had a fine simplicity and the two dancers Consuelo Atlas and Clive Thompson gave a moving exposition of a Zulu

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[1]Playbill, City Center 55th Street Theater, New York City, May, 1971.

[2]David Stevens, "Well Earned Applause for Ailey Troupe," International Herald Tribune, Paris, November 12, 1970.

[3]Colquhoun, personal letter, November 10, 1970.

[4]Ailey, personal interview, January 17, 1971.

couple moving desperately towards an unknown destiny."[1] The critics did not deal quite so kindly with Holder's ballet as is evidenced in the following review:

> The "beautifully-ugly" Judith Jamison enjoyed personal success and professional failure at the Wells last night. The statuesque Negress was the soloist in the world premiere of Geoffrey Holder's Adagio for a Dead Soldier--a tribute to the war dead of all nations. Albinoni music is suitably dramatic and Miss Jamison's elongated arabesque and expressive arms are extraordinary. But for the most talented dancer, grief is a difficult emotion to project. When it is unrelieved it is well nigh impossible. The audience applauded Miss Jamison with not a wet eye in the place.[2]

Ailey chose, wisely, to end each program with his classic work Revelations. Following the opening performance, Mary Clarke wrote:

> It is almost worth going to Sadler's Wells every night for the next two weeks to listen to the cheering after "Revelations." The house was thin but the roar that went up at the end would have disgraced Covent Garden on a Nureyev night.[3]

The critics hailed the Holder work entitled Prodigal Prince, primarily for the explosive dancing of Miguel Godreau in the leading role of the Haitian painter, Hector Hippolite,[4]

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[1]Fernau Hall, "Fine Dancing by Talented U.S. Company," Daily Telegraph, London, November 24, 1970.

[2]James Kelsey, "Not a Wet Eye in the Place," Evening News, London, November 26, 1970.

[3]Mary Clarke, "Review: Alvin Ailey," Guardian, London, November 25, 1970.

[4]Anabel Farjean, "Ballet," Evening Standard, London, November 25, 1970.

and praised Ailey for his presentation of works by other choreographers,[1] yet Noel Goodwin of the Daily Express, reviewing Ailey's "quietly beautiful" Knoxville: Summer of 1915, said ". . . it is still his own [choreography] that makes the most impact."[2] This opinion is supported in the words of another London critic, Nicholas Dromgoole, who, commenting upon the close of the season, said:

> We have seen seven outstanding works of Alvin Ailey himself, and if we add to these his brilliant The River choreographed for American Ballet Theatre and the undoubted hit of their recent season at Covent Garden, Ailey emerges as a choreographer of major status.[3]

The success of the London season of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1970 is best expressed in the following review:

> Sadler's Wells will never be the same again: a six-piece jazz group sharing the orchestra pit with a spiritual-singing choir and blues singer Brother John Sellers while ballet dancers pirouette onstage to recordings of Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie.
>
> The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, performing for two weeks at [the] Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, are renowned for their talented breaking down of artistic barriers and their dancing in London is breaking down barriers so successfully that the

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[1]Clarke, "Review: Alvin Ailey."

[2]Noel Goodwin, "Moving Childhood Memories," Daily Express, London, December 2, 1970.

[3]Nicholas Dromgoole, "Blended Dance," Sunday Telegraph, London, December 6, 1970.

> often staid ballet audiences have been moved to cheer and shout for more . . . . One need not be a balletomane to enjoy the beauty and spectacle of the Ailey company's dancing.[1]

Ailey and his company returned to New York City following the London engagement and began preparations for their forthcoming Broadway season at the American National Theatre and Academy on January 18 through 30, 1971.[2] Having the distinction of opening the City Center's eight-week American Dance Festival at the American National Theatre and Academy, Ailey chose to offer two premières choreographed by himself. On opening night, he presented Archipelago, set to music by Andre Boucourechliev. Ailey regards this ballet, the third of his water ballets, as ". . . an experiment in movement relationships."[3] Frances Herridge of the New York Post called it ". . . the least effective part of Ailey's program."[4] Other critics were kinder. Clive Barnes, writing a long excerpt concerning the music, stated that

> . . . choreographically [Archipelago] falls into Ailey's latest style, characterized perhaps by "The

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[1]Hugh Witt, "Sadler's Wells," Melody Maker, London, December 5, 1970.

[2]"Ailey Reinforced by Lynn Seymour," New York Times, January 14, 1971.

[3]Ailey, personal interview, January 17, 1971.

[4]Frances Herridge, "The Dance: Ailey Begins Season at ANTA," New York Post, January 19, 1971.

> River" for the American Ballet Theatre and "Streams" for his own company last season. His inspiration seems to have taken an aqueous bent. . . . the dancers, although confined within a fairly limited choreographic vocabulary, give this choreography with the right pulse, power and control.[1]

The première of Flowers on January 25, 1971, was received with the same low key of enthusiasm. Set to music by Big Brother and the Holding Company, Pink Floyd, Blind Faith, and Janis Jopkin, the work portrays the life and death of the late rock star, Janis Joplin. The dance was choreographed for Ailey's guest star from the Royal Ballet of England, Lynn Seymour. According to Anna Kisselgoff, Ailey in "telling the story straight" provides both a "virtue and a weakness;" he achieves some genuinely moving parts but ends up with a "star vehicle."[2]

Ailey's company embarked upon its spring tour of the United States shortly after closing at the American National Theatre and Academy. The tour began in Washington, D. C., on February 4 and ended in Princeton, New Jersey, on April 5, 1971.[3] The new work, Flowers, danced on tour by Linda Kent, Consuela Atlas, or Rosamund Lynn with each one

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Dance: Ailey Returns Triumphant," New York Times, January 19, 1971.

[2]Anna Kisselgoff, "Dance: No One's Sitting On His Hands," New York Times, January 27, 1971.

[3]Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, "Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Spring Tour of the United States, 1971," from the files of Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, New York City, February, 1971.

bringing her own personality into the leading role, was received more enthusiastically than was the case in New York City. In Washington, D. C., where Linda Kent made her début in the role, Jean Battey Lewis described the ballet as: ". . . striking, vivid theater with a visceral impact but it is a little more than that--it produces a deepening of insight that art can give."[1] In a comparison of Lynn Seymour and Linda Kent in the leading role, she adds, "Miss Seymour was forceful, possessed and gallant. Miss Kent was younger and more vulnerable. The ballet works both ways."[2]

The success of Ailey's company on Broadway brought an invitation from Norman Singer, Executive Director of the City Center of Music and Drama, Incorporated, for the company to perform from April 27 through May 9, 1971, at the City Center 55th Street Theatre.[3] With his acceptance of the two-week season at City Center, Ailey's company became the first American company to play consecutive

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[1]Jean Battey Lewis, "Ailvy Group: Exciting Theatre," Washington Post, February 8, 1971.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Walter Sorrell, "Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Tina Croll," Dance News, June, 1971, p. 15.

engagements in two Broadway theatres in New York City during the same year.[1]

Ailey, with the beginning of 1971, suddenly became more active choreographically. During the short season at the City Center, he presented two new works, entitled Choral Dances and Cry, respectively. The première of Choral Dances, set to the music of Benjamin Britten and the words of William Plomer, took place on April 28, 1971.[2] Comprised of dances based upon six separate themes, Anna Kisselgoff offers the following explanation of the works:

> Most of these themes are expressed in group passages but a key role is played by Kelvin Rotardier--a conjuring figure who acts as the Great Conciliator --in solos danced in silence. At other times, an unaccompanied chorus sings in the pit.[3]

She further adds that Choral Dances

> . . . is a mysterious piece, with much of its tantalizing appeal coming precisely from what it leaves unsaid, even incomplete. . . . one thing was clear, however, . . . one cannot type the company and one certainly cannot type Alvin Ailey as a choreographer. At first glance, "Choral Dances" sets the company and its choreographer out on a new direction. And yet, there are distinct echoes from earlier works. . . . There is peace,

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[1]"Ailey Dancers at Arts Center," Trenton Sunday Times Advertiser, June 20, 1971.

[2]Playbill, City Center 55th Street Theatre, May, 1971.

[3]Anna Kisselgoff, "Premiere of Choral Dances by Ailey," New York Times, April 29, 1971.

> joy, strife, and a sense of community. All these run through "Choral Dances." It is, in fact, a hymn to brotherhood.[1]

Ailey's other new work, entitled Cry, was choreographed to music by Alice Coltrane, Laura Nyro, and the Voices of East Harlem. Designed for his leading female dancer, Judith Jamison, the dance was dedicated to ". . . all black women everywhere--especially our mothers."[2] Ailey gave his mother her first trip to New York City for the première of Cry.[3] Of this new work, Walter Sorrell, writing for Dance News, gives a complete and moving review. He calls Cry

> . . . as perfect as anything can be. Its three parts create a dramatic and lyric mood which transcends its obvious pictorial connotations of showing a black woman in different stages of being. It is not militant at all, but so penetratingly human that its cry is unforgettable. It is unforgettable because it is artistically irrefutable.
>
> Choreography and performance can hardly be separated. The work was sculptured on Miss Jamison's very distinct looking figure, and she added to it the expression of her personality which appears on stage imperious and withdrawn, goddesslike and humble. In the first section, she seemed to be all woman, enduring pain and giving strength and joy. The specific color of her skin became clear in the second part when the challenge of the environmental space around her grew. Anguish finally turned into defiance and defiance into a fighting flame, proud of its power.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Playbill, City Center 55th Street Theater, May, 1971.

[3] Lula E. Cooper, personal interview held in Los Angeles, June 3, 1971.

> The strength of this simply staged solo, covering limited space, lies in the drama within the dancing figure created with a surprising economy of movement; it lies in the unpredictability of the movement sequences, in their explosive quality due to self-imposed limitations.[1]

While Ailey was being artistically productive, his Administrator was being equally productive. Through successful manipulation, the American Dance Center became a reality during the spring of 1971. The Ailey organization and the Pearl Lang organization, both of which had been sharing the facilities at 229 East 59th Street in New York City for rehearsal space, succeeded jointly in securing the building in order to house the official schools of the two companies. Using funds earmarked for the operation of a school and made available through the National Endowment for the Arts, the School began operating officially in May of 1971.[2] Classes were offered immediately in ballet, jazz, and modern dance with the faculty comprised of Alvin Ailey, Pearl Lang, Pepsi Bethel, Elizabeth Hodes, Nathaniel Horne, Michele Murray, Renee Rose, and guest instructors from both Ailey's and Lang's dance companies.[3] Ailey finally had one less worry; he now had a school--one factor which appeals

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[1]Sorrell, "Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Tina Croll."

[2]Ivy Clarke, personal interview held in Los Angeles, May 16, 1971.

[3]Advertisement, "The New American Dance Center," Dance News, June, 1971, p. 15.

to the generosity of Foundations. With this in mind, he told a reporter from the Trenton Times Advertiser, "I have a dream--I should like my company to become the nucleus of a year-round subsidized headquarters for modern dance."[1]

The summer tour of Ailey's company was almost ideal with respect to scheduled performances and response from audiences. Extending from June 23 through August 7, 1971, it was comprised of a four-day residency in Holmdel, New Jersey, at the Garden State Arts Center; five days in Detroit, Michigan, at the Fisher Theatre; seven days in Los Angeles, California, at the Greek Theatre; three days in Cupertino, California, at the Flint Center; three days in Berkeley, California, at the Zellerbach Auditorium; and six days in Hamilton, Bermuda, at the City Hall Theatre.[2] Reviews of this tour were superb; an example follows:

> All of the four works presented last night including "Cry," "Blue Suite," "Choral Dances," and "Revelations," were choreographed by Ailey. Mentioning any of them has to be random choice, not only because the performance uniformly was superb, but also because the pacing of the program was masterful, as though a composer had constructed it like a sonata. If I read my watch right, it's close to three hours long. It seemed like half an hour.[3]

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[1]"Ailey Dancers at Arts Center," June 20, 1971.

[2]Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Summer Tour 1971," from the files of the Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, New York City, June, 1971.

[3]David Spengler, "Dancers Enchant Holmdel," Record, Hackensack, New Jersey, June 24, 1971.

While the members of his company were touring, Ailey completed the choreography for The River, his former "work in progress," and the American Ballet Theatre offered the première of the finished product. The ballet is comprised of ten sections--"Spring," "Meander," "Giggling Rapids," "Lake," "Vortex," "Falls," "Riba," "Two Cities," "The Sea," and "Spring"--and has no story plot. It is

> . . . merely a theme of water, of a river, of an ever-welling, ever-reaffirmed life force. The ballet is light and funny, dark and romantic. It finds great variety, both from its Ellington score--which is one of the most successful and pertinent pieces of symphonic jazz in memory--and Ailey's choreography, which matches it with laconic ease.[1]

Clive Barnes adds that the new piece shows Ailey ". . . at his inventive best. Probably not since that great hit, 'Revelations,' . . . has Mr. Ailey worked with such ease and style."[2] Ailey designed "Giggling Rapids" as a special jazz duet for Erik Bruhn and Natalia Makarova and observed, after their performance, that

> To see Erik Bruhn and Natalia Makarova do the jazz duet in The River is just delicious. It's a kind of tongue-in-cheek vaudeville turn, and to see two people of their caliber--it's just remarkable.[3]

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[1]Clive Barnes, "Dance: Ballet Theatre Opens a Six-Week Season, New York Times, June 30, 1971.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Norma McLain Stoop, "Of Time and Alvin Ailey," Dance Magazine, December, 1971, p. 30.

Although Ailey had his moments of amusement working with the talented couple, he readily admits that he learned from them too. He realizes that, whenever he works in the ballet idiom, his respect for its discipline increases.[1]

Ailey, who had been, comparatively speaking, choreographically unproductive for several years, suddenly found himself besieged with opportunities. Leonard Bernstein asked him to choreograph Mass, the new "Theatre piece for singers, players, and dancers,"[2] which the famous composer was writing for the opening of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C.; Charles Mingus was writing music for him to choreograph Mingus Dances for the City Center Joffrey Ballet; and Robert Joffrey was preparing to restage Ailey's Feast of Ashes for his ballet company's fall season at the City Center.[3]

Faced with less than one month in which to choreograph Mass, Ailey recounts his first impressions for Norma McLain Stoop of Dance Magazine:

> When I first heard the Mass, I thought, "Wow! We need six months." I still think that because there are very complicated musical things going on all

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Souvenir Programme, "Leonard Bernstein's Mass," Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D. C., June 5 through July 17, 1972.

[3]Stoop, "Of Time and Alvin Ailey."

> the time that are to be danced. Even though I liked the music very much I almost quit once, early on, because Bernstein spent a lot of time thinking about the piece--he has brought to his complex, very textured piece the whole body of his musical knowledge, which is tremendous. Because of that I wanted to bring my entire reaction to it--to match him choreographically if possible.[1]

But Ailey did what he thought was impossible and Mass--which was written at the request of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and which Bernstein calls, ". . . the fulfillment of my life"--opened to an audience of 2,200 on September 8, 1971, and closed to ". . . a standing ovation and eleven minutes of steady applause."[2] Although his company enjoyed the distinction of participating in the opening of the new Kennedy Center, Ailey admits that his dancers were "bored to death" because they were ". . . second class performers in a production where the dancers sang and the singers danced." His dancers only enjoyed being "first class."[3] They soon realized their desire for, less than a month later, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater per se appeared in a series of performances at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts from October 5 through 10,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Marlene Simons, "Notables Flock to Opening of Kennedy Center for Arts," Los Angeles Times, September 9, 1971.

[3] Anna Kisselgoff, "Ailey Dancers to Give Mary Lou's Mass," New York Times, December 9, 1971.

1971.[1] Following these performances, the company continued its 1971 fall tour which opened in Ridgewood, New Jersey, on October 1, 1971, and ended in Urbana, Illinois, on November 20, 1971.[2]

The City Center Joffrey Ballet opened its fall season on October 6, 1971, with Alvin Ailey's Feast of Ashes, based upon Federico García Lorca's play entitled The House of Bernarda Alba and set to music by Carlos Surinach.[3] The ballet was received favorably by the New York critics, and Doris Hering of Dance Magazine commented:

> . . . all the tragedies in Feast of Ashes . . . were summed up when Diana Cartier as Bernarda, circled the stage, fell face down, stretched out her arms and clenched her fists. The hands said it all, as they often do in Ailey's choreography.[4]

Hering even accorded the work an encore of praise after viewing it for a second time. She then noted, ". . . how astutely the choreographer has used secondary characters like the Three Women of the Street who assume the stature

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[1]Claudia Crutcher, "Dance Theatre Opens at JFK Center," Washington Daily News, October 6, 1971.

[2]Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Fall-Winter Tour 1971," from the files of the Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, New York City, September, 1971.

[3]Clive Barnes, "Feast of Ashes Begins 6-Week Joffrey Season," New York Times, October 7, 1971.

[4]Doris Hering, "Joffrey Journey," Dance Magazine, January, 1972, p. 31.

of Three Fates."[1] She was not so impressed with Mingus Dances, a work comprised of five dances and four vaudeville episodes and suggested by the music of Charles Mingus. She called it "a bafflement" and, upon viewing it again, praised the second performance simply because it was a shorter version.[2]

Upon the return of his company to New York City on November 21, 1971, Ailey began rehearsals for two new works, entitled Mary Lou's Mass and Myth, respectively. Mary Lou's Mass represents a collaboration between Ailey and the "Queen of Jazz," Mary Lou Williams. The composition, entitled "Music for Peace," is a Mass in jazz idiom for which Miss Williams not only plays the piano but also conducts the orchestra.[3] The première of Mary Lou's Mass was held on December 9, 1971, when Ailey and his company began a two week's season at the City Center 55th Street Theater.[4] The work, comprised of thirteen sections, was received enthusiastically by the critics; for example, a writer for the Washington Post called it ". . . a triumphant, moving

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[1]Ibid., p. 36. [2]Ibid., pp. 34, 36.

[3]Kisselgoff, "Ailey Dancers to Give Mary Lou's Mass."

[4]Playbill, City Center 55th Street Theater, New York City, December 9, 1971.

celebration."[1] The same writer further added that

> In the Mass, the company prays, acts ashamed, offers praise, and dedication. This is an integrated company but the dance strongly suggests black Americans, expressing deep-felt emotions with strong physical motions. For one thing, these dancers, presumably attending Mass, really know how to "get the spirit" and dance loose. . . . there is one section with levity. The scripture reading is about Lazarus. John Parks as the rich man dies and does not get in Heaven and Dudley Williams as Lazarus dies and rests in the bosom of Abraham, Kelvin Rotardier. Lazarus is really digging Heaven and not a bit sorry he can't bring the rich man up with him.[2]

Frances Herridge said:

> You might call it a Mass for a musician's revival meeting, a celebration of peace. Some of the numbers are religious, particularly the words, but the score encompasses the whole range of Black music. "Mary Lou's Mass" doesn't have quite the explosive gutsiness of "Revelations," but it is in the best Ailey style and a fine addition to the repertory at City Center.[3]

Following the première, the audience applauded ". . . nearly ten minutes for the thirty-five minute work."[4] Myth, set to music by Stravinsky, met with much less success from the critics at its première on December 15, 1971. Inspired by the music, the ballet was, according to Marcia

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[1]"Alvin Ailey: Another Mass," Washington Post, December 11, 1971.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Frances Herridge, "Ailey With Mary Lou Williams," New York Post, December 10, 1971.

[4]"Alvin Ailey: Another Mass," December 11, 1971.

Siegel, a "blurred old reproduction" of Martha Graham, and an "uninspired" one at that.[1]

Two revivals were presented by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater during this season. Time Out of Mind, choreographed by Brian McDonald to the music of Paul Creston, was revived on December 9, 1971. According to Anna Kisselgoff, the work is a "banal" ballet--a third stream work which fuses the classic and modern idioms. She recalls that the performance by the Ailey dancers ". . . made it look different, but not better."[2] Suspensions, choreographed by May O'Donnell to the music of Ray Green, was revived on December 16, 1971. The accompanying program note reads:

> The dancers move in a state of suspended balance and order in which the harmony is maintained by the individual patterns which join, separate, energize and become tension points for each other to maintain the order and balance of the whole.[3]

The revival of Suspensions experienced mild success.[4]

Since its threatened dissolution in the wpring of 1970, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has been in

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[1]Marcia B. Siegel, "Ballet: 'Myth' by Ailey," Boston Herald Traveler, December 22, 1971.

[2]Anna Kisselgoff, "Ailey's Dancers Pursue an Idiom," New York Times, December 10, 1971.

[3]Playbill, City Center 55th Street Theater, New York City, December 16, 1971.

[4]Siegel, "Ballet: 'Myth' by Ailey."

constant demand throughout the United States. This increased popularity is evidenced by its expansion from a tour of six and one-half weeks during the 1968-1969 season to one of seventeen and one-half weeks during the 1971-1972 season.[1] What began as "one-night-stands" has grown to residencies of three to seven days duration at colleges and universities throughout the United States.[2] These residencies are made possible through the National Endowment for the Arts[3] and the respective State Arts Councils.[4]

Ailey's company launched its Winter/Spring tour in Jackson, Michigan, on January 13, 1972, and terminated it in Amherst, Massachusetts, on March 26, 1972.[5] During this period, Ailey, when not busy with choreographic endeavors, joined the company at its various performances;

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[1]Nancy P. Tuttle, personal correspondence, July 6, 1971.

[2]Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, "Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater 1971-1972 Winter/Spring Tour," from the files of Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, New York City, June, 1971.

[3]Programme, "Connecticut College American Dance Featival," New London, Connecticut, June 30 through August 6, 1972.

[4]Playbill, ANTA Theatre, New York City, January, 1971.

[5]Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, "Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 1971-1972 Winter/Spring Tour."

he was, however, productively involved in choreographing new works. In 1971, he not only choreographed six works for his own company, but he was also planning two new ballets for the forthcoming spring season at the City Center.[1]

The appearance of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the City Center April 18 through 30, 1972, marked the company's third consecutive engagement there within a year--a record for a modern dance company. This season saw the première of Ailey's The Lark Ascending, A Song for You, and a new production of Donald McKayle's Rainbow Round My Shoulder. For the latter work, presented during the first week of the season, Leon Bibb sang the music as a special favor to Ailey and to McKayle. Ailey offered his two new works during the second week of the season.[2] Neither created any critical enthusiasm but, as Byron Belt states:

> In addition to his established hits, which keep the box office purring nicely, Ailey is constantly digging into the past, and coming up with new works as well. Neither effort is unfailingly successful,

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[1] Ivy Clarke, Special Information Sheet for the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater, January 2, 1973.

[2] Playbill, City Center 55th Street Theater, New York City, April, 1972.

> but each reflects the choreographer's integrity and leadership.[1]

On April 20, 1972, the Juilliard American Opera Center offered the première of the Virgil Thomson-Jack Larson opera entitled Lord Byron, with choreography by Alvin Ailey. Scene two of the third act was comprised entirely of a ballet. Anna Kisselgoff described Ailey's assignment:

> Mr. Ailey was required to fill in the last chapter of Byron's biography with a compressed run-through of the poet's years in exile. Since the preceding action was explained in words and relatistically, it was sensible to construct a facsimile of a dream sequence for the 15-minute ballet. Mr. Ailey, however, created readily identifiable figures in the sequence: Byron, Shelley and two objects of Byron's affection--a contessa and a page boy, who become involved in a series of clever mirror dances. It might have been preferable to have a barefoot contessa rather than one on toe. But Mr. Ailey chose to base his choreography mainly in the classical idiom. At times, the student dancers seemed torn between ballet convention and modern dance expressivity. But they made a valiant and convincing effort.[2]

Lord Byron was, in essence, another choreographic success for Ailey.[3]

Ailey and the members of his company were occupied for the next three months with Leonard Bernstein's Mass;

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[1]Byron Belt, "Ailey Still Matchless!" Long Island Press, November 21, 1972.

[2]Anna Kisselgoff, "Ballet in Byron: A Tough Assignment," New York Times, April 22, 1972.

[3]Ibid.

rehearsals, restaging, and travel were involved. Mass was presented for the second consecutive year at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C., on June 5 through 17, 1972;[1] it was offered at the Philadelphia Academy of Music on June 19 through 24, 1972;[2] and it was presented also at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City on June 26 through July 22, 1972.[3] Ailey interrupted these activities in early June, however, in order to receive two honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees. He was honored at Cedar Crest College, in Allentown, Pennsylvania, on June 4, 1972.[4] Two days later, the same honor was bestowed upon him by the President of Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey.[5]

Concurrently with the aforementioned activities, Ailey was engaged in choreographing a new work, entitled Sea Change, for the American Ballet Theatre for an October

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[1]Souvenir Programme, "Leonard Bernstein's Mass," Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D. C., June 5 through 17, 1972.

[2]Programme, "Leonard Bernstein's Mass," Academy of Music, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 19 through 24, 1972.

[3]Programme, "Mass," Metropolitan Opera House, New York City, June 26 through July 22, 1972.

[4]Clarke, Special Information Sheet for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater."

[5]Programme, "The Two Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Commencement, Princeton University."

première in Kennedy Center; in staging the opera Carmen for its September opening at the Metropolitan Opera House; and in directing the movement for the play entitled Shaken Angels for a production at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park in July.[1] Following the final performance of Mass at the Metropolitan Opera House on July 22, 1972, Ailey's company performed at the 25th Connecticut College American Dance Festival on August 4 through 6, 1972.[2] In addition to the performance schedule of the company, the American Dance Center was operating full-time with an expanded dance faculty and staff and a Board of Directors comprised of twenty-three members. At this time, also, the Board of Directors of the City Center of Music and Drama, Incorporated, invited the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to become the resident modern dance company of City Center. With the acceptance of the invitation, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater became officially the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater on August 4, 1972. The new status of the company grants it a permanent place in which to perform in New York

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[1]Ivy Clarke, personal correspondence to the investigator, January 2, 1973.

[2]Programme, "Connecticut College American Dance Festival," June 30 through August 6, 1972.

City and guarantees it annually two seasons of three-weeks duration each.[1]

After appearing at several fall dance festivals on the East Coast of the United States, the company made its first Broadway appearance as the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater at the American National Theatre and Academy while participating in the City Center American Dance Marathon '72. Performances were on October 30 through November 4, 1972.[2] Foregoing a fall tour, the company opened its first season as the resident company of the City Center at the 55th Street Theater on November 14, 1972.[3]

In 1972, Ailey initiated a new series of revivals under the heading of "Roots of American Dance."[4] During his fall season, he revived The Kinetic Molpai by Ted Shawn, According to Eve by John Butler, and Choros by Katherine Dunham. The Kinetic Molpai, set to a two piano score by Jess Meeker which was played by the composer and

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[1]Ivy Clarke, Special Information Sheet for the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater, January 2, 1973.

[2]Playbill, ANTA Theatre, New York City, October, 1972.

[3]Playbill, City Center 55th Street Theater, New York City, November, 1972.

[4]Belt, "Ailey Still Matchless!"

Mary Campbell, was first presented on November 16, 1972.[1] Byron Belt gives the following account of the performance:

> One of Shawn's major works for male dancers was a 1935 opus entitled "The Kinetic Molpai." In the re-staging by Barton Mumaw, the nine Ailey males, led by statuesque John Parks, put on a superb display of strength and agility. Unhappily for audiences less historically interested than they should be, Shawn's posing verges on camp today, and the production is utterly done in by Jess Meeker's pretentious and corny silent-film music.
>
> Even, however, as contemporary audiences snicker . . . it is important for us to see this bit of our contemporary cultural genesis.[2]

Frances Herridge offers the following support for the ballet:

> Shawn's touring group was all male, but he composed for them as for dancers, not strictly men, and some of the airy leaps and lyric arm swings they did invaded the procince of what is thought female today. The audience last night found them amusing, as though they were a spoof of ballet. Shawn probably didn't intend them as such, but what matter: The Ailey group do them well and with wit, and the place becomes an excellent showcase for the men in the company . . . this is a fine tribute to the roots of American Dance that still glows today.[3]

Ailey presented John Butler's <u>According to Eve</u> with a score by George Crumb on November 24, 1972.[4] The ballet is about

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[1]Frances Herridge, "Ailey Adopts Shawn Work," <u>New York Post</u>, November 17, 1972.

[2]Belt, "Ailey Still Matchless!"

[3]Herridge, "Ailey Adopts Shawn Work."

[4]Clive Barnes, "Ballet: Ailey Presents Butler's 'According to Eve,'" <u>New York Times</u>, November 25, 1972.

Eve and her two sons, Cain and Abel. Judith Jamison is cast as Eve in the ballet which, according to Clive Barnes, was assisted tremendously by the lighting of Nicolas Cernovitch and the set designed by Ter Arutunian. He describes the action of the ballet thus:

> This is not Eve in her usual role of temptress and lover, but Eve as the mother of us all; Eve, solicitous, pained, forgiving--Eve facing up to primal violence with motherly compassion. She stands between her sons--Where was Adam when she needed him? Drinking with the serpent no doubt--and after this first and most tragic murder, she can still, with the conciliation of peace, embrace the transgressor, Cain.[1]

The third revival, Choros, set to music by Vadico Gogliano, was presented on November 25, 1972.[2] The program notes describe the dance as

> Variations on a Brazilian quadrille of the early 19th century inspired by the colonial architecture of Recife in northern Brazil and by the classical interpretation of folk themes and rhythms by the Brazilian composer Vadico Gogliano. Complementing the classical purity in the choreography are influences from Brazilian folk forms such as the Sambo Do Campo, the Xaxado, the Baiao, and the Capuera.[3]

Anna Kisselgoff describes it as

> . . . a gem of a little dance that sparkles and glitters on facets cut out by its grande dame of

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Anna Kisselgoff, "Dance: 'Choros' Dunham Gem Unveiled," New York Times, November 27, 1972.

[3] Playbill, City Center 55th Street Theater, November, 1972.

> a choreographer--the great Katherine Dunham, . . . who not only introduced an American black idiom to a wide public here and abroad but also introduced the black heritage of the Caribbean and Africa to Americans.[1]

Despite the numerous details involved in producing the revivals, Ailey did not neglect his own work. Having been only mildly successful with A Song for You at its spring première, he extended the work into a three-part solo for Dudley Williams and retitled it Love Songs.[2] Using the original solo dance set to the voice of Donny Hathaway singing "A Song for You" as the first section, Ailey choreographed the second section to the voice of Nina Simone singing "A Field of Poppies," and the third section returning to the voice of Donny Hathaway singing "He Ain't Heavy."[3] This work was, according to Anna Kisselgoff, now successful. She offers the following description:

> In theme, "Love Songs" now offers a message of hope and commitment. It deals with love (part one), despair ("Poppies") and ultimately the will to fight back. By the third and best section, with its sudden bursts of frenzy and clenched fists, Mr. Williams had offered a triumphant performance.[4]

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[1]Kisselgoff, "Dance: 'Choros,' Dunham Gem Unveiled."

[2]Anna Kisselgoff, "Dance: 'Love Songs,'" New York Times, November 20, 1972.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

And thus ended the Ailey company's first season as the resident modern dance company at the City Center. The season was a triumph. Now, in the early 1970's, after years of leadership in the dance world, Alvin Ailey is finally receiving some of the benefits which he richly deserves. Ailey now has guaranteed seasons in New York City; he now has a dance school; his company is in demand throughout the United States as well as internationally; and he is sought constantly by other dance artists as a choreographer. After years of recognition abroad as one of the foremost exponents of American dance, Ailey has achieved that distinction at home. The following words of Byron Belt, Critic-at-large, may best describe Alvin Ailey at this period of his life:

> If there is a modern dance company to match Alvin Ailey's, I hope I live to see it. It is almost impossible to imagine another ensemble so beautifully disciplined, so beautiful to look at, and in command of so varied and rich a repertory. Ailey, in the absence of Martha Graham, is clearly today's most daringly creative and successful choreographer and leader.[1]

Ailey as a Unique Artist

Alvin Ailey, who has been acclaimed by authorities in the field of dance as the foremost black male exponent of modern dance in the United States of America today,

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[1]Belt, "Ailey Still Matchless!"

prefers not to be designated exclusively as a modern dance leader. He wishes instead to be recognized as an exponent of American dance.[1] This preference on Ailey's part, coupled with his artistic direction and energetic promotion of his black American brother in the art of dance, is what makes Alvin Ailey a unique dance artist.[2] Throughout his long career, his intent has been manifested in the following introductory statement which appears in most of his printed programmes:

> The cultural heritage of the American Negro is one of America's richest treasures. From his roots as a slave, the American Negro--sometimes sorrowing, sometimes jubilant, but always hopeful--has created a legacy of music and dance which have touched, illuminated, and influenced the most remote preserves of world civilization. I and my dance theater celebrate, in our programme, this trembling beauty. We bring to you the exuberance of his jazz, the ecstasy of his spirituals, and the dark rapture of his blues.
>
> In our programmes I combine our own dance forms with instrumental music, song and acting techniques to express various dramatic themes or moods. This is what I mean by "Dance Theater." And since American culture has developed from many sources our programme is based upon a variety of materials representing many influences.[3]

These many influences of which Ailey speaks are reflected in the repertory of the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance

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[1]Ailey, personal correspondence, February, 1973.

[2]"Dance: Out of Pride," Time, May 28, 1965.

[3]Programme, "The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater," Shaftesbury Theatre, London, October 5, 1964.

Theater. During its life-span of fourteen years, his company has performed works of at least seventeen choreographers other than Ailey. In the early 1970's, works of thirteen of these choreographers are thus kept alive.

Ailey made his intentions known during his company's tour of Australia and Europe in 1965 when he said, "My big dream is to build a repertory modern dance company, completely mixed, although with a majority of Negro dancers, and then collect works from a great many choreographers."[1] He believes modern dance has suffered tremendously because many choreographers have established dance companies in order to perform their own works exclusively and to use their specific organizations as vehicles for personal display.[2] Laura Bell, of Show Magazine, echoes the same sentiments when she says, "Most renowned modern dance companies derive their own distinctive identities from the style and reputation of one choreographer, whose work dominates the company's repertoire."[3] Ailey believes that this practice is wrong

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[1]"Ailey Talks to Dance and Dancers," Dance and Dancers, April, 1965, p. 32.

[2]Ellen Cohn, "I Want to be a Father Figure," New York Times, April 13, 1969.

[3]Laura Bell, "Alvin Ailey Dance Theater: Struggling to Survive," Show Magazine, July 9, 1970, p. 34.

because, as he says, "Once you start making dances on your own body, it's hard to know when to stop. Soon you're competing with the kids in your own company and that can be a dangerous thing."[1] He feels that many talented young dancers have abandoned hopes of growth in such companies and, as a result, have formed companies of their own thereby "repeating the cycle."[2] Ailey believes that, in order to ". . . enlarge the experiences of dancers and audience alike . . ."[3] the practice of the ballet with respect to a varied repertory has definite merit.[4]

Alvin Ailey realizes that repertory requires stamina and versatility on the part of those comprising any dance company. Because of his belief in repertory he, therefore, has created a company of unique dancers with an abundance of both qualities. The stamina of the members of the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater evokes such comments as

> They are not stuck to the rhythm. They run under it, draw circles around it. They dance its impulses in the most manifold way and with a glorious freedom. It is a triumph of sweeping, violent beauty, a furious spectacle. The stage vibrates. One has never seen anything like it.[5]

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[1]Cohn, "I Want to be a Father Figure."

[2]*Ibid*.

[3]*Ibid*.

[4]*Ibid*.

[5]"Dance: Out of Pride."

Ailey maintains also that physical stamina is exemplified further in the fact that his dancers can endure tour after tour, the tours being a necessary part of their goal of spreading American dance.[1] Their versatility is evidenced in the fact that they are able to change their moods from ". . . the raw brutality and passion in Talley Beatty's classic jazz ballet, The Road of the Phoebe Snow, to the chillingly abstract study of loneliness in Anna Sokolow's Rooms,"[2] and from ". . . the angularity of Paul Sanasardo's Metallics, to the lyricism of Dance for Six by Joyce Trisler, [and] to [Ailey's] spiritually-based Revelations, in one program."[3]

Another admirable quality with respect to Alvin Ailey's dancers is the fact that throughout the years, the male dancers have been praised highly for their skill, strength, and techniques. In 1965, Beth Dean wrote the following words:

> [Alvin Ailey's] male dancers far outshadow the girls. This, surely, is what male dance ought to be: strong, violent when required; subtle, controlled in the legato sequences; and, finally, giving us a noble grace for contrasts . . . [these] male dancers in their frighteningly easy control of prodigious

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[1]Cohn, "I Want to be a Father Figure."

[2]"Dance: Out of Pride."

[3]Cohn, "I Want to be a Father Figure."

> techniques, their masculinity, their vitality, their undeviating concentration in acting roles shame our male dancers. If their visit can stimulate, can infuse these qualities into our, at present in general, bland, often narrow in outlook and sometimes enervated-looking male ballet dancers (influenced too deeply by the Covent Garden "tea-cup ballet" tradition), then indeed we may look to the promise that lies within the more appropriate athleticism of the traditional Australian.[1]

In 1968, Jean Battey of the Washington Post wrote:

> The men in particular [in Ailey's company] dance as if they were possessed, and in the concluding "Revelations" the male trio, Sinner Man, moved the audience to the kind of spontaneous applause that one associates with the pyrotechnics of ballet rather than the modern dance.[2]

In 1971, another writer for the Washington Post concurred wholeheartedly with Dean and Battey by stating that "This company has some of the best male dancers to be seen on the dance stage."[3]

Through his exploration of the roots of the American black, Ailey found a way to dance American history through an artistic medium. According to Byron Belt, ". . . a catholic taste and a sense of historical responsibility are merely two of Ailey's most important assets. . . ."[4] His

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[1]Beth Dean, "A Dynamo of Modern Dance," Bulletin, Sydney, Australia, January 9, 1965.

[2]Jean Battey, "Ailey Group Draws Capacity Turnout," Washington Post, April 1, 1968.

[3]"Alvin Ailey: Another Mass."

[4]Belt, "Ailey Still Matchless!"

achievements in this regard have resulted in part from his selection and direction of the members comprising his outstanding company of which Lester Abelman states:

> The name of the electrifyingly exciting group is so apt the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater because the conception and motivation of the company is all-American and it is a company that perhaps, more than any other dance group around, places almost as much emphasis on theater as it does on dance.[1]

Placing emphasis upon the historical factor, Joseph Gale writes:

> Any black program today inescapably contains the seeds of protest, but Ailey, who is almost always a historian first, and a proud one, concerns himself more with heritage. History speaks for itself, he seems to say, and if one draws uncomfortable conclusions, then so be it.[2]

In some of his choreography, however, Alvin Ailey does present his audience with certain abrasive realities because he feels that it is simply something which he has to do.[3]

Alvin Ailey is unique in that he is not just a black choreographer speaking to blacks.[4] He admits readily that the works in the repertory of his company which are by black choreographers are the ones which excite his

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[1]Lester Abelman, "Ailey Troupe Electrifying," Daily News, New York City, December 8, 1971.

[2]Gale, "Ailey's Decision."

[3]Ailey, personal interview, January 17, 1971.

[4]Cohn, "I Want to be a Father Figure."

international audiences the most.[1] He maintains, nevertheless, that the works are not designed specifically for blacks. In discussing this point, Cohn quotes Ailey in the following manner:

> Revelations comes from Negro spirituals and gospels. Its roots are in American Negro culture, which is part of the whole country's heritage. The dance speaks to everyone--to Yugoslavs, to Poles, to the Chinese. Otherwise it wouldn't work. Knoxville [: Summer of 1915] isn't about Negroes. It's about people. It's about universal things. My dancers must be able to do anything, and I don't care if they're black or white or purple or green.[2]

Although Alvin Ailey has said to his black brethren, "Look! Look what you've made! Look how beautiful it is. It's yours. You did it out of adversity. Don't you feel a little dignity about yourself? Be proud of it . . . ."[3] He sees himself as a spokesman for art and says, "We talk too much of black art when we should be talking about art, just art."[4] Ailey best portrays his feelings through the maintenance of an integrated company--insisting that he will audition any dancer and accept him if he is good enough. He adds, however, "Well, maybe if a dancer is

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[1]Ailey, personal interview, January 17, 1971.

[2]Cohn, "I Want to be a Father Figure."

[3]"Dance: Out of Pride."

[4]Cohn, "I Want to be a Father Figure."

black and not quite good enough, I might take him on and work with him a bit more. It's just that black dancers still don't get enough work."[1]

When Alvin Ailey works with his dancers, he wishes each one to experience personal growth and development as a result of having come into contact with his art. He explains,

> I like for my works to represent a monument to the human spirit. I am involved with the dancer's experience within a work--how it relates to his personality and how his personality grows within the context of the choreography--how these works enlarge and enlighten the dancers as human beings. In a broad sense, I am involved with the theatrical effects of the work but within that framework I am involved with the people and how they develop within the company. Whenever I find a dancer who has no possibility for growth or expansion within these works and who technically and emotionally cannot understand and take these works unto himself and come out a better person, then there is no place in this company for him. If there is personality expansion within the context of the work, then the theatrical effects are there.[2]

Ailey's requirements of growth and expansion of personalities demand that his dancers possess considerable talent. This talent--no matter what the color of the dancer's skin--is exemplified with such authority and joy that Jean Battey of the Washington Post writes:

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[1]Bell, "Alvin Ailey Dance Theater: Struggling to Survive," p. 34.

[2]Ailey, personal interview, September 1, 1970.

> The most striking thing about the company is the energy it generates on stage . . . Dance vitality rather than dance precision is what the Ailey company is after. Its orientation is toward the exciting and theatrical and it makes a great impact. . . . Its expression of the music and dance and vigor of the American Negro gives it a strength and style that provide it a unique place in the American dance scene.[1]

Byron Belt, Critic-at-Large, writes that ". . . the infectious enthusiasm of the Ailey dancers explodes across the footlights and generates the sort of devoted attention and response that reflects theatre magic at its ultimate."[2] Following a performance in Middletown, Ohio, Marion Feman, a Music-Drama Editor, commented that

> The excitement that the company generated was apparent in the ten-minute ovation following the performance with many youths and blacks standing in acclaim, reiterating what has been felt every place this company dances from Middletown to Moscow.
>
> What is so special about this troupe which is integrated but predominately black? There is interest and movement and entertainment in every aspect of its performance. The choreography is direct, uncontrived. It effectively blends classical ballet techniques with modern dance and show-type skills. The dancers are disciplined and talented.
>
> It is gutsy, sensitive, expressive, sorrowing, joyful, powerful. Everything fits--choreography, dancing, music, lighting, stylish costumes, sparse and effective props.
>
> Ailey's unusual use of extended arms and legs and surprise movements hits right away. His dancers leap high, then roll in agony as earthbound vulnerable creatures.

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[1]Battey, "Ailey Group Draws Capacity Turnout."

[2]Belt, "Ailey Still Matchless!"

> And all of Ailey's works--while they show the struggles of the American black--end up in indomitable hope and celebration. What I'm trying to convey is that it all fits. Ailey feels it, the dancers feel it, and it booms across the footlights and the audience feels it.[1]

Perhaps Phillip Truckenbrod, in his review of a performance in Newark, New Jersey, best describes Ailey's unique accomplishments in the dance world. He writes:

> The orientation of the company and of Ailey's art is toward the American black and is often an attempt at illumination and expression of pains, pleasures, and attitudes peculiar to blacks of this country. Yet one of the most beautiful things about this magnificent company is that its dancing obliterates black and white as viable distinctions.
>
> The casting of each set in "Blues Suite" was obviously done by Ailey completely on the basis of dancer capacities and not the color of their skin. White and black dancers produced the work side-by-side and often hand-in-hand, giving the audience not the slightest hint which characters being portrayed were black and which white. Maybe no whites were meant to be portrayed at all, which would make the performance even more remarkable. It was the most truly and fully human artistic treatment of particular human beings I have ever seen. What emerged was a single race in which all emotions and problems are ultimately the same. One simply could not tell from the color of the dancer's skin whether he danced a part intended to be black or white.
>
> Ailey has managed to totally erase the differences we term "racial" today and has sacrificed those supposed differences to the greater god of humanity and worthy art. Ailey's company is richly deserving of the title "American" and represents us well in its

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[1]Marian Feman, "Ailey Dancers--Terrific," Sunday Record, Middletown, Ohio, March 21, 1971.

> tours around the world--both artistically and as representations of our most noble dreams.[1]

It appears that Ailey has made his message clear and widely known and, through his explorations of the roots of black folk, he has, perhaps, unearthed what is basically "American." Ailey's company, which has had the word "American" in its official title since 1962, has finally become ". . . a full partner of one of New York's few absolutely essential artistic organizations."[2] As the new resident modern dance company of the City Center of Music and Drama, Incorporated, the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater has dropped the "American" from its title. This has not changed Ailey's direction; it has, however, extended it to include further exploration into the "Roots of American Dance."[3]

As Alvin Ailey views the future, his horizons are limitless. His company is his vehicle for the revival of works of great American artists as well as for the performance of superb repertory for which he is noted; as guest choreographer for other dance companies--especially the ballet--his exuberant style extends more widely to audiences; with his new school in operation, he has a

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[1]Phillip Truckenbrod, "Alvin Ailey Troupe Scores an Artistic Triumph," Newark Star Ledger, June 24, 1971.

[2]Belt, "Ailey Still Matchless!"

[3]Ibid.

laboratory for repertory works as well as for developing new dancers to augment his company; and Ailey, himself, continues to exercise his own creativity--to structure dances, to direct and to inspire dancers, critics, and audiences alike to join the writer for Cue Magazine who offers the following salute: "In the amazing Alvin Ailey we find the magic element which can bring the discerning balletomane to his feet for ten minutes. And the sound is like music."[1] Alvin Ailey's struggle has been a long one but Ivy Clarke, now General Manager for Ailey's company, who has operated in the background during his most disheartening years, says, in 1973,

> Alvin is now at the point where he can be most productive. He is free of many of the tasks which, heretofore, he had to deal with personally. He is a creative genius, a dedicated minister of the arts--using black dance to stimulate a universal awareness that all men have an artistic message regardless of color, religion, or political affiliations. Alvin has given to America a reputation which no other representative of the modern dance has been able to achieve. The name "Alvin Ailey" is internationally identified with exciting American dance theater. He still has so much to give--he's ready now and the time is right.[2]

The task which began as an exploration of the roots of black folk has developed into an exploration of the roots of

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[1]"Salute of the Week: Alvin Ailey," Cue Magazine, April 24, 1971, p. 6.

[2]Ivy Clarke, telephone interview, March 13, 1973.

American dance; Alvin Ailey is the artist to lead the country in this endeavor and to animate and illuminate his findings.[1]

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[1]Belt, "Ailey Still Matchless."

CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY: ALVIN AILEY, EXPLORER OF THE ROOTS OF THE BLACK MAN

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Alvin Ailey were far from ideal. He was born in Rogers, Texas, to Alvin Ailey, Senior, and to Lula Cliff Ailey, on January 5, 1931, into the household of Grandfather Henry Ailey which was already comprised of thirteen persons. His birthplace itself was a single-walled house which provided inadequate protection against the cold Texas winter; his mother was so undernourished at the time of his birth that she was unable to produce milk for him. A "sugar tit," made of a clean cloth wrapped around a lump of sugar, was devised for young Alvin to suck upon in order to provide nourishment for him until he could eat the food from the table which his mother crushed with a spoon.

When Alvin, Junior, was three months old, his parents moved to a one-room cabin located about eight miles outside of Rogers on the property of a white landowner for whom they planned to work in return for free living quarters. Three months later, Ailey, Senior, abandoned his wife and infant son and left them to provide for themselves. Lula

Ailey, a woman of strong will and great love for her child, solicited washing and ironing from neighboring white residents; she also planted and cultivated a bean garden in order to provide for their bare subsistence.

One evening, when Alvin was two years of age, his mother had prepared a large quantity of dried beans and bread. He ate too rapidly, without chewing his food properly, and by nine o'clock that night he had become so ill that his mother placed him upon her back and walked the eight miles into town in order to seek the services of a physician, Dr. L. E. Etter. The doctor invited the Aileys to spend the remainder of the night in his home, and, upon learning of the distance which they had come in the darkness the night before, he took them back to their home in his car the following morning. Horrified at the unsanitary and inadequate conditions of their living quarters, Dr. Etter returned the following day and invited Mrs. Ailey to return to Rogers in order to work for his wife. He explained that he had servant quarters in which he thought that mother and son would be quite comfortable.

The Aileys were comfortable in their new living quarters until May of 1935 when Alvin's father returned to live with them. Because the arrangement proved to be as unsatisfactory as it had been three and a half years earlier,

Mrs. Ailey chose to take her son and leave the home and the position which Dr. Etter had provided for her. Her next move was to Wharton, Texas, where she was befriended first by Mrs. Maggie Earl and later by Mrs. Fannie Warfield. Through her association with these two ladies, Lula Ailey earned her livelihood by assisting with household chores and picking cotton on a day-to-day basis. The Aileys remained in Wharton, Texas, for one year only at which time they moved into an empty house in Athall, Texas. This was their home until Mrs. Ailey inadvertently discovered that her son had acquired a large chicken snake as a pet. Terrified by this discovery, she hurriedly packed their meager belongings and, with her small boy, departed the following day for Rogers, Texas.

During the summer of 1936, a new highway project in Navasota, Texas, provided Mrs. Ailey with another opportunity for remunerative employment away from Rogers. For about six months, she helped to prepare lunches for the laborers who were employed on the highway project. This employment was terminated, however, when the necessity for emergency surgery paved the way for Mrs. Ailey to become the first black patient ever assigned to a bed in the Navasota Hospital. Here she met the physicians who owned the Coleman, Stewart, and Ketchums Medical Clinic, and,

after her convalescence, she was employed at this Clinic. This employment led to her subsequent position as the first black employee at the Navasota Hospital.

In Navasota, the Aileys lived on the property of Amos Alexander, a black man who was regarded as an individual of considerable financial means. During the period of Mrs. Ailey's hospitalization, Alexander developed a fatherly attachment for young Alvin and became his official guardian for the next six years. The Alexander house, located just at the edge of town, gave Alvin Ailey an exposure to both town and country living. He experienced his first real responsibilities with respect to performing daily chores, to riding horses, and to becoming for the first time the owner of a dog. He attended the Navasota Colored School where, as a fourth grader, he was allowed to play the tuba with the high school band. He also exhibited early artistic interests by drawing sketches of small living things in a "Big Ben" writing tablet which he carried with him at all times. Upon this tablet he recorded verses also which he composed about interesting things which he either saw or imagined.

Sundays for the Aileys were filled with attending church and engaging in church-related activities as members of the True Vine Baptist Church. In Southern Baptist

churches such as True Vine, baptismal ceremonies were held in rivers or ponds in the vicinity of the Church. All of those to be baptized wore white clothing and were marched to the baptismal site with dignity and solemnity; the ceremony itself was followed by joyous singing, shouting, and expressions of praise. Such ceremonies, coupled with the racial friction which existed among southern blacks and whites and with the pattern of social life among the blacks in Southeast Texas, later influenced Ailey's choreography of his respective works entitled Revelations, Masekela Langage, and Blues Suite. During his boyhood, however, Alvin's only outward artistic expression was manifested through his drawings and his poems.

During the year 1942, when Alvin was eleven years old, Lula Ailey and her son moved to Los Angeles where he entered Valencia Junior High School, the first integrated school which he had ever attended. He was so unhappy in this setting that his mother moved to another neighborhood where he attended George Washington Carver Junior High School--a school for black children only. There he became a member of the Glee Club and developed an intense involvement with singing and with the sound of music. He enrolled also in a class in creative writing; in this class, he not only continued to write poems of his

own but he also became acquainted with the works of renowned poets.

Alvin Ailey saw his first ballet when he was in junior high school. Although this performance by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo was a personal disappointment to the youngster, the experience introduced him to the world of the theatre. By 1945, he had formed the habit of boarding a bus each Saturday and riding to the downtown section of Los Angeles in which the Biltmore and Orpheum Theatres were located. It was at the Biltmore Theatre that he saw the 1945 version of Katherine Dunham's Tropical Revue. Ailey was overwhelmed by the performance and fascinated with the colorful costumes and with the heavy make-up which was worn by the dancers--theatrical appurtenances which made a lasting impression upon the latent artist.

While attending the Thomas Jefferson Senior High School, Ailey extended his academic interests to include literature and foreign languages. He became so fluent in Spanish and in French that his services were enlisted as a substitute teacher whenever the regular high school teachers of Spanish or French were absent. His interest in Spanish literature led ultimately to his choreography of a dance drama entitled Feast of Ashes, based upon Federico García Lorca's play entitled The House of Bernarda Alba.

The milieu of black social activity during the period of World War II was centered on Central Avenue in Los Angeles. As often as he could afford the prices of admission, young Alvin frequented The Bill Robinson, The Florence Mills, The Rosebud, and The Lincoln Theatres. It was there that he viewed the early musicals of Gene Kelly and of Fred Astaire; Ailey credits Kelly with the establishment of his first genuine respect for the male dancer. The Lincoln Theatre featured live entertainment and provided Ailey with the opportunity to view such famous black performers as Pearl Bailey, Pigmeat Markham, Duke Ellington, and Billie Holiday. In addition to his experiences at the theatre, Alvin, by the time that he was sixteen years of age, had an extensive collection of 78 rpm phonograph records to which he listened for hours at home. A favorite among these records was Leonard Bernstein's music for the ballet entitled Fancy Free. At that time, Ailey's interest in the ballet was limited solely to his appreciation of the rhythm and melody of the score although, ironically, he was destined to choreograph, more than twenty years later, Bernstein's Mass.

At school, the first of his peers whom Ailey saw performing a dance was Ronald Gaffney, a fellow student who had had no formal training in dance but who was a self-styled

performer and choreographer. Ailey, fascinated by Gaffney, felt that he, himself, was too introverted and shy ever to do such things. At one of these performances, Ailey saw Carmen de Lavallade dance with Gaffney in Scheherazade and, a short time later, he saw her perform a ballet dance set to music by Mozart. Entranced by her beauty and dancing ability, Ailey sought an introduction to this girl with the result that today Carmen de Lavallade laughingly claims the credit for influencing Ailey's distinguished dance career.

The person who actually convinced Alvin Ailey to study dance seriously, however, was Ted Crumb, a boy who was enrolled in classes at various dance studios and practiced at home in his backyard the techniques which he had learned. Ailey became Crumb's regular, captive audience during these practice sessions and made constant inquiries concerning each new movement which he observed. Crumb, in turn, gave patient demonstrations and explanations and even persuaded Ailey to try some of the movements himself. One day, early in his senior year of high school, Ted Crumb demonstrated some modern dance techniques to Ailey which made the latter "tingle with excitement." After learning that these movements stemmed from Bella Lewitzky, who taught and danced in Hollywood at the Lester Horton Dance

Theatre, Ailey requested that Crumb take him to visit the Horton organization.

Ailey's introduction to the Lester Horton Dance Theatre was for him "an experience to remember." Carmen de Lavallade, Ted Crumb, and James Truitte were all in the class and "all dancing beautifully." Ailey made many more visits to the Lester Horton Dance Theatre where, sitting in the back of the combination theatre-studio, he watched the company of dancers rehearsing on stage. He decided that he wished to be a part of this beautiful activity and that, upon his graduation from senior high school, he would return to the Lester Horton Dance School and enroll in dance classes.

Having made no decision with respect to pursuing a career in dance only, Alvin Ailey made plans also to attend college at the University of California at Los Angeles. These plans necessitated full-time employment immediately following his graduation from the Thomas Jefferson Senior High School in Los Angeles on June 18, 1948. He worked with the Atomic Energy Commission from June until the end of December in 1948. Then, because the second semester at the University of California at Los Angeles did not begin until February, Ailey devoted his free time during January of 1949 to classes at the Lester Horton Dance School. He

chose a place at the back of the class because he was shy, and he approached the lessons in an athletic fashion. He found the experiences stimulating but left the school at the end of January to begin his studies at the University of California at Los Angeles.

In mid-February of 1949, Lester Horton himself telephoned Alvin Ailey and, upon learning of his financial situation and the seriousness of his interest in dance, offered him a working scholarship which involved his assisting with the lighting and working as a general "handy-man" for the weekly performances of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre. In exchange for these services, Ailey was enrolled in those dance classes which he could fit into his schedule. A full class load at the University and an eight-hour working "shift" at a nearby restaurant, however, made it impossible for him to enroll in dance classes on days other than Saturdays. Ailey was happy, nevertheless, because he was in the atmosphere of the Horton Theatre and School closely associated with Lester Horton whom he esteemed highly.

During the spring of 1949, Alvin Ailey's daily schedule proved too strenuous for him. He was physically exhausted most of the time and decided, therefore, not to return to the University of California at Los Angeles in the fall. During the summer months, he enrolled in two

classes in Horton dance techniques each week. He also became involved in a composition class in which he completed his first dance study--a workshop exercise which related sculpture and painting to movement.

In the fall, Ailey moved to San Francisco, California, where he continued his academic studies at the San Francisco State College. He obtained evening employment at the Greyhound Bus Terminal, thus leaving his days free for a full schedule of classes. The first semester progressed smoothly, but, at the beginning of the spring semester in 1950, Ailey underwent surgery for the removal of a non-functional kidney. During his period of recuperation, he met and became friendly with Mia Angelou, author of the book entitled I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, who later introduced him to Lon Fonteyne, a dancer-choreographer who had a night club act. Fonteyne was performing at the Champagne Supper Club in downtown San Francisco when he invited Ailey to audition for a place in his act and, after the audition, immediately employed him. When Fonteyne took his act to Los Angeles for an engagement, one of the first places which Ailey visited was the Lester Horton Dance Theatre. When he saw a new suite of Latin dances which Horton had choreographed, he was convinced that he must return to Los Angeles and study seriously at the Lester

Horton Dance Theatre School. Ailey returned to San Francisco, therefore, packed his belongings, and moved back to Los Angeles.

When Alvin Ailey was finally enrolled again at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School early in 1953, he participated in two or three classes each day. He became also a member of Horton's workshop group and began to learn some of the dances in the Horton repertory. He choreographed his first complete dance in the workshop during that summer, entitled Afternoon Blues, and he danced for the first time with Carmen de Lavallade, performing the male role in the Horton choreographic work entitled Dedication to José Clemente Orozco.

During the late spring of 1953, Jack Cole, the well-known choreographer for Broadway musicals and motion pictures, selected Claude Thompson, Carmen de Lavallade, and Alvin Ailey to dance in his choreography for the motion picture entitled Lydia Bailey. Ailey rehearsed with Cole for two weeks after which he became ill with mononucleosis and was unable to appear in the motion picture as scheduled. Ailey refers to the period of rehearsals as "two of the most exciting weeks" in his life. Jack Cole became one more person who influenced the early professional career of Alvin Ailey who was, in the future, to resort periodically to Cole's method of structuring a dance.

The Lester Horton Dance Theatre was performing at Ciro's in Hollywood when Horton suffered a heart attack which resulted in his death on November 2, 1953. Because he had been the sole choreographer for his company, his death left its members in a dilemma. Plans for their annual spring concert which were already in progress included the choreography of a new dance for the opening performance at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles. Frank Eng, former motion picture and drama critic of the Los Angeles Daily News, assumed immediate directorship of the company and invited each member to submit scenarios of dances which he or she wished to choreograph. Ailey was the only member of the company who accepted the opportunity. Two of his projected works, submitted under the titles of According to Saint Francis and Mourning, Mourning, respectively, were accepted by Eng and the members of the company. Ailey subsequently choreographed, directed, and supervised the production of these two works which were presented as planned at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles on June 4, 1954. Although the performance was not an overwhelming success, the presentation meant that the Lester Horton Dance Theatre was "alive and well."

Following this venture with Alvin Ailey as the new choreographer, several activities developed within the

Horton organization. A Children's Theatre was initiated at the School; Ailey and de Lavallade were cast as a dance team in the RKO motion picture production of Carmen Jones; and the members of the company began rehearsing for a return engagement at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated, near Lee, Massachusetts. Ailey was uncomfortable with the children, personally successful in Carmen Jones, and a disappointment at Jacob's Pillow. Ted Shawn had been so impressed by the Horton program presented in conjunction with the Festival during the previous summer when Ailey was not a member of the company that he had extended an invitation for a return engagement in 1954. During this engagement, however, Shawn felt insulted personally by this youthful choreographer's presumption in assuming the leadership of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre.

The engagement at Jacob's Pillow, however, opened up new avenues of exposure for Ailey and for Carmen de Lavallade. Monte Kaye, a producer-promoter, arranged for the company to travel to New York City following the final performance at Jacob's Pillow in order to audition at the Alvin Theatre for a possible future appearance on television. During the audition, Arnold Saint Subber, the producer of a forthcoming musical entitled House of Flowers, invited Ailey and de Lavallade to remain in New York City as members

of his cast. They refused his offer, however, by explaining their seriousness with respect to returning to the West Coast in order to keep the Lester Horton Dance Theatre in existence. They returned, therefore, to the West Coast and began preparations for the annual scholarship fund-raising event, the Bal Caribe, in October of 1954. This performance called again upon Ailey's creative resources with the result that he devised a series of variations on folk and Latin dances. The formal presentation of the program was acclaimed the ". . . finest in Horton dance group history."

On December 11, 1954, Saint Subber, the producer of House of Flowers, telephoned Ailey and de Lavallade and extended to them another invitation to become members of the cast of House of Flowers. Herbert Ross, who was enjoying success as the choreographer for the film version of Carmen Jones and who had replaced George Balanchine as the choreographer for House of Flowers had suggested that these two artists be added to the cast as featured dancers. De Lavallade and Ailey decided to accept the resulting offer because it afforded an opportunity for both artists to become featured dancers in a Broadway musical, to receive a regular salary, and to study in New York City with outstanding teachers of modern dance. Ailey and de Lavallade joined the cast billed simply as "Alvin" and "Carmen;"

they performed a "sexy" pas de deux which was well received by the audiences. Following the opening of the musical in New York City on December 30, 1954, Ross choreographed another dance for Ailey entitled Slide, Boy, Slide. The new dance was incorporated in the production of House of Flowers during the following April.

Shortly after his arrival in New York City, Alvin Ailey initiated his program of self-improvement by seeking out those master teachers of modern dance of whom he had heard high praise. He was disappointed with what he found as none of the teachers offered techniques which were similar to those which he had learned under the tutelage of Lester Horton. Eventually, Ailey heard about the work of Karel Shook and visited Shook's Studio of Dance Arts which was located in Greenwich Village. Shook convinced him that, if he were serious about choreography, he should study ballet. Acting upon Shook's advice, Ailey came often to the Studio of Dance Arts although he observed more often than he danced in the classes.

Ailey considers the period from 1955 through 1959 his "apprentice years." He spent these years dancing for different choreographers, enrolling periodically in various dance classes, visiting rehearsals at many dance studios, and generally absorbing materials for his own use in the

future. His favorite workshop area was the studio of the New Dance Group where he danced in choreography produced by Donald McKayle, Anna Sokolow, and Sophie Maslow. Ailey found that it was not too difficult for him to find remunerative employment following his role as a featured dancer in House of Flowers. During the fall of 1955, he played the role of a Chinese bandit in the off-Broadway production of The Carefree Tree; in the spring of 1956, he was featured with Mary Hinkson in the road company of the show entitled Sing, Man, Sing, starring Harry Belafonte; in the spring of 1957, he performed in a Calypso Revue which starred and was produced by Geoffrey Holder; during the summer of 1957, he performed in the Jones Beach production of Showboat; and, in the fall of 1957, he and Christyne Lawson headed the "dance brigade" in the Broadway musical entitled Jamaica, choreographed by Jack Cole.

Ailey's first concert, comprised predominately of his own works, was presented on March 30, 1958, at the Kaufmann Concert Hall of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA and featured Talley Beatty as a guest artist. The program was comprised of two major works by Ailey, Ode and Homage and Blues Suite, respectively, as well as four of the five dances based upon Latin themes. John Martin, then dance critic of the New York Times, gave Ailey's first choreographic venture in New

York City a satisfactory review, and the response of the audience was enthusiastic. Ailey's first concert was a success, and, as soon as this opening performance was over, he was already planning the next one. He felt that he was now ready for New York City and that he must lose no time before creating new dances for his next company of dancers to be designated as Alvin Ailey and Company.

Alvin Ailey and Company presented its second performance in New York City on December 21, 1958, at the Kaufmann Concert Hall, nine months after the Company's initial program. With Carmen de Lavallade as guest artist, Ailey presented Cinco Latinos, Blues Suite, and a new work entitled Ariette Oubliée. The critics were generally receptive to the concert, and P. W. Manchester, delighted with it, called it ". . . stimulating, exciting, beautiful, funny, and original entertainment." Not only was Ailey a gifted choreographer, but he had been able also to assemble some of the most talented black dancers in New York City for the presentation of his works. He was fortunate in the sense that all of these dancers knew and respected the abilities of each other; there was no rivalry between them, they were all interested in assisting Alvin Ailey to establish himself as a recognized choreographer.

Ailey's third major concert was presented at the Kaufmann Concert Hall of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA in New York City on January 31, 1960. On this occasion, his group of dancers was designated as the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater. With the lapse of over a year since his last appearance at the Kaufmann Concert Hall in New York City, Ailey had not only prepared new works for presentation but he had restructured earlier choreography also. Ailey's first choreography which was unfamiliar to the audience was his Creation of the World to music by Milhaud, a work which he had produced while he was associated with the Lester Horton Dance Theatre. He danced this work with Matt Turney, his guest artist from the Martha Graham Dance Company, and "caused a small sensation." Following the première of Revelations on this same program, in the midst of the applause and cheers of the audience, the Director of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA announced that the concert would be repeated as soon as arrangements could be made. This announcement meant genuine success for the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater as the most that black dancers and choreographers could expect to achieve in those days was one major concert each year. The repeat performance was presented on February 28, 1960, at which time James Truitte, whom Ailey had persuaded to come to New York City from the West Coast, joined the company.

The spring of 1960 was "special" for Alvin Ailey. Prior to this time, he had had costumes, stage properties, and all of the possessions of his company stored at his apartment, or at the apartments of friends, and any other area where space was available. Through his Stage Manager, Charles Blackwell, he met Edele Holtz, Director of the Westside Young Women's Christian Association, which was located in mid-town Manhattan. Ailey was searching primarily for rehearsal space but he received much more than that from his new acquaintance. Holtz converted the entire second floor of the YWCA building into an organization called the Clark Center for the Performing Arts and made the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater the resident dance company for the new organization. In addition to providing Ailey and the members of his company with a place in which to rehearse, to store costumes, and to teach classes, Holtz had the small auditorium renovated and converted into a concert hall in order that the dancers might present programs which would yield financial returns.

In October of 1960, the Clark Center for the Performing Arts was opened officially. The first concert of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater in its new home was on November 27 of that year. Again, Carmen de Lavallade danced as Ailey's guest artist. Her appearance in this

role and the fact that James Truitte was now a member of his company influenced Ailey to add to his repertory the choreography of other artists. Included on the program, therefore, were Lester Horton's The Beloved, danced by de Lavallade and Truitte, and John Butler's Portrait of Billie, performed by de Lavallade and Glen Tetley. The première of Ailey's Knoxville: Summer of 1915, based upon a prose poem by the late James Agee, was presented also. This poem had particular significance for Ailey as it reminded him of his childhood when he felt that he was loved deeply but seldom understood.

In January of 1961, Ailey made his dramatic début in the off-Broadway production of Michael Shurtleff's play entitled Call Me By My Rightful Name. The play centered around two graduate students who were roommates at Columbia University--one white and the other black--and a white girl. The theme dealt with the potential presence of racial tension even among men of good will. Ailey's début in drama received encouraging critical response which was especially pleasing since he had not studied acting before his appearance in this dramatic role.

During the summer of 1961, Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade danced the former's Jazz Piece, later re-titled Roots of the Blues, at the Tenth Annual Boston Arts Festival.

This event marked an artistic reunion of the two dancers following a period during which de Lavallade had been dancing with John Butler and the members of his company. Performing to music arranged by the soulful blues singer, Brother John Sellers, and accompanied by him and two of his musicians, Ailey and de Lavallade danced for fifteen minutes and literally ". . . stopped the show cold every single night." During the remainder of the summer of 1961, Ailey enacted the role of a college professor in a play entitled Ding Dong Bell, and made a successful return appearance at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated. That fall he enacted the role also of a soft-hearted prize fighter in the production of William Saroyan's one-act play entitled Two by Saroyan.

During the fall of 1961, Ailey and the members of his company were invited to tour Southeast Asia under the auspices of the President's Special International Program for Cultural Presentations. In preparation for this tour, Ailey enlarged his company from six to ten dancers, and completed the choreography for three new works entitled, respectively, Been Here and Gone, Two for Now, and Hermit Songs. With his special guest star, Carmen de Lavallade, receiving equal billing, the company was re-named the de Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company and embarked on

January 30, 1962, upon its tour of thirteen weeks in Southeast Asia. In addition to choreography by Ailey, the repertory for the tour included Lester Horton's The Beloved John Butler's Letter to a Lady, and Glen Tetley's Mountainway Chant.

The tour began in Sydney, Australia, where the members of the company found the Australian summer delightful as well as the response of the audiences and dance critics, and terminated in Seoul, Korea, where a riot occurred on the closing night because there were so many individuals who wished to see the sold-out performance but could not obtain tickets. The company received superlative reviews throughout the duration of the tour; Ailey and de Lavallade spoke constantly of their feeling of humility in experiencing such a warm response and of their desire to learn much from their tour of the Far East. Ailey returned to New York City late in May of 1962 with the satisfaction of knowing that the members of his company had been successful as Cultural Ambassadors for the United States of America. The reports which reached the representatives of the sponsoring agency in the Federal Government were more encouraging than those which had been received concerning any other group which had served in a similar capacity.

During the summer of 1962, Ailey taught a course in Jazz Forms at the Connecticut College School of Dance in New London, performed with his company at the Connecticut College Dance Festival, commuted daily to Watch Hill, Rhode Island, where he choreographed Feast of Ashes for the Joffrey Ballet, and suffered an emotional and professional parting of the ways with Carmen de Lavallade. Highlights of the remainder of the year of 1962 included a performance by the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater at the Rebekah Harkness Foundation Dance Festival in the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park in New York City which was attended by the members of the Bolshoi Ballet, and a dramatic performance which marked the end of Ailey's acting career. The last event occurred when Josh Logan, Director of the Broadway play entitled Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright, was determined to give Ailey his "big chance," and cast him in the leading role of the play, supported by such talented performers as Claudia McNeil, Diann Sands, Robert Lee Hooks, Roscoe Lee Brown, Al Freeman, Junior, and Cicely Tyson. As a result, Ailey was outstanding in his failure and concluded that both acting and dancing were serious arts and that neither should be engaged in haphazardly. With this experience, his potential career as an actor ended during the fall of 1962.

The year of 1963 found Alvin Ailey choreographing new works and restructuring old ones. He presented the

première performances of his Reflections in D, Suspensions, and Labyrinth at the Brooklyn Academy of Music during the spring and restructured and combined sections of his Blues Suite and Roots of the Blues to produce the suite, ultimately entitled The Blues Roll On, which was presented in summer performances. During the late summer of 1963, Alvin Ailey and his company joined Duke Ellington and Talley Beatty in Chicago, Illinois, in the preparation of the production of a musical entitled My People for the Black Centennial Exposition held in that city. From Chicago, the the company went to Brazil to participate in the International Music Festival held in Rio de Janeiro during the early part of September of 1963. Ailey attempted to choreograph Rivers, Streams, Doors for presentation at the Festival in Brazil but, unable to complete this work, he presented instead The Blues Roll On, Three for Now, and Revelations. At the close of the Festival, he traveled to Bahia, Brazil, to conduct research on the "Macumba" for Rebekah Harkness. Following a week of observation and study of folk dances in Bahia, Ailey left Brazil to return to New York City to prepare his company for its first American tour. The itinerary included many engagements on the East Coast of the United States and throughout the South. Ailey had several memorable experiences during this tour and

found that the stages in southern colleges were often inadequately equipped for dance performances. He concluded, however, that whatever the buildings lacked from a technical viewpoint, the audiences compensated for fully in their warmth and appreciation.

During the spring of 1964, Joyce Trisler, a white dancer from the Horton days, joined Alvin Ailey's company as a guest artist. Her presence in the company made it possible to expand further the range of choreographic presentations as she and James Truitte danced works by Lester Horton as well as their own choreographies. Ailey acquired also for his repertory three works by Talley Beatty entitled, respectively, Tocatto, Congo Tango Palace, and The Road of the Phoebe Snow. During the summer of 1964, Ailey's choreographic work, Revelations, reached its perfected form. Following the performance of this work in Central Park on September 1, 1964, the dance critic, Walter Terry, thought that the company succeeded triumphantly in projecting its stated theme--"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!"

On September 7, 1964, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, under the aegis of Michael Dorfman of England, began a three-month tour of Europe opening with engagements in Paris, France, at the Theatre des Champs Elysée. During

this tour, Ailey expressed his ambition to develop a repertory company in order to show great works which dance audiences rarely had an opportunity to see. He was well on his way to realizing this goal as his repertory for the European tour included, in addition to his own works, those of Talley Beatty, Lester Horton, James Truitte, and Joyce Trisler. The six-week engagement in London at the Shaftesbury Theatre evoked high critical acclaim from the leading dance critics in London, including Clive Barnes and Peter Williams.

Ailey's first European tour with performances in Paris and in London established the trend of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater for the next several years--that of becoming a touring company. Ailey returned to the United States for one month during which he acquired for his repertoire Louis Johnson's Lament and Anna Sokolow's Rooms, and revised his own choreography for Hermit Songs. Ailey's company, now called the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, in order to emphasize its repertoire of works by American choreographers, opened at the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney, Australia, on December 30, 1964, to an enthusiastic reception by audiences and by representatives of the press. The company performed for six weeks in Sydney and in Melbourne, Australia. The only controversial work in the repertory

was Anna Sokolow's Rooms which was accepted in Sydney but banned in Melbourne. Its deep psychological implications influenced the management at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne to ban the dance, fearing an adverse reception on the part of the general public.

Ailey was now dancing less than was his custom and, by the time that his company opened again in London in March of 1965, he had taught most of his dance roles to other members of his company. He revised Hermit Songs for William Louther, whom the London audiences loved. The two weeks of the London engagement were the beginning of a tour of Europe which lasted three months. The company fulfilled many "one night stands" throughout Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Germany, France, and Italy with these engagements filling the periods between appearances at the European Festivals of the Arts which were the major reason for the extended tour. Most memorable of the "one night stands" for Ailey and for the members of his company was their appearance in the small town of Muenster, Germany, where the audience applauded their performance for forty-five minutes.

As representatives of the United States at the Paris Festival of Nations, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater enjoyed a warm reception at the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre on

May 27, 1965. Although Ailey danced little, the critics in Paris still praised him for his performances by calling Ailey his "best exponent" of his own dance because he illustrated ". . . the strength and grace of his own style of interpretative dancing at its most potent." Following the Festival in Paris, the company performed in many Italian towns enroute to the major event of the tour--the Florentine Festival. In Italy, the company, having been together for nine months, began experiencing some artistic difficulties. William Louther, to whom the Italians gave much attention, felt that he should receive star billing with the company and, ten days before the Florentine Festival opened, he severed all relationships with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. At the Florentine Festival, Ailey, who had all but stopped dancing completely, had to return to the stage and perform Hermit Songs as well as Louther's roles in Rooms, Blues Suite, and Revelations. Following the final Festival performance, Ailey discarded his tights and decided that he would never combine the two roles of dancer and director again.

After spending a brief vacation in Venice, Greece, Crete, and Rome, Ailey returned to New York City in September of 1965. He reorganized his company for the fulfillment of commitments at several colleges and universities

during the late fall of 1965. Ailey's stay at home was brief because he could not resist the temptation of another European tour. The company, therefore, embarked upon its third European tour on February 14, 1966, performing in Germany, Holland, and Italy. Highlights of this tour included an hour-long ovation in Muenster, Germany, where the tour opened; the filming of Revelations on stage in Berlin; and appearances at the Piccolo Theatre in Milan which satisfied Ailey's desire of many years to present his dance company in that particular theatre and city. Unfortunately, however, their impresario, Michael Dorfman, had had some embarrassing difficulties with a black play which he had booked ahead of Ailey's dance company and the management of several theatres cancelled all future bookings by Dorfman. As a result of these cancellations, Ailey and the members of his company were stranded in Europe without remunerative engagements of any sort. Relief from their dilemma, however, came in the form of scheduled appearances at the First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal, during the month of April, and an invitation to join the Rebekah Harkness Ballet in Barcelona, Spain, during the month of May, 1966. Following its successful performances in Senegal, the Ailey company, minus four of its members, merged with the Rebekah Harkness Ballet in Spain.

Here Ailey finished the choreography for Macumba, which he had begun earlier for Mrs. Harkness, and choreographed El Amor Brujo for Maria Tallchief. The merged companies performed Ailey's Ariadne, choreographed earlier for the Harkness Ballet, and El Amor Brujo at the Festival du Marais in Paris, France, in June of 1966 where both works received a "cool reception."

When the appearances in Paris were over, Ailey abandoned the direction of his own dance company, and, in late August, he began rehearsals for Franco Zeffirelli's production of the opera entitled Antony and Cleopatra, which opened at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City on September 16, 1966. In Ailey's opinion, the opera was not successful and the dances were "so-so."

During the spring of 1966, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater received its certificate of incorporation under the official title of the Dance Theater Foundation, Incorporated, thus making it possible to appeal for grants for rehearsal costs and to initiate plans for the establishment of a permanent resident dance company and a school in New York City. During the fall of that same year, Ailey met Gil Shiva, a managing agent, who persuaded Ailey to reorganize his company once more. Shiva obtained assistance from the National Endowment of the Arts and arranged for

Ailey a tour of East and West Africa sponsored by the Department of State of the United States Government for the fall of 1967. Ailey re-assembled the members of his company, adding several new dancers, and expanded his repertoire to include Journey by Joyce Trisler, Prodigal Prince by Geoffrey Holder, and Metallics by Paul Sanasardo.

Having been invited back to appear in various European Festivals of the Arts, the newly-assembled Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater embarked upon a tour of Europe and Israel on May 22, 1967. Festivals at which the company performed included the Festival Fulbenkian de Music in Portugal, the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, the Summer Festival in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, and the Israel Festival in Jerusalem. In a review following the Holland Festival, Clive Barnes, who was now the dance critic for the New York Times, posed the questions, "Why does a New York critic have to come to the Netherlands to see a New York company? When is Mr. Ailey going to have a Broadway season?" Ailey was perhaps wondering the same thing because he realized that his company was better known internationally than it was at home in New York City. In fact, Alvin Ailey had just won the Grand Prix Italia--an award recognized in Europe as the most significant recognition for television productions--for his ballet, entitled Reidaiglia, which he

had choreographed specifically for Swedish television.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater toured nine African countries under the auspices of the Department of State from September 12 through November 6, 1967. The itinerary included Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Ethopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and the Motoyasy Republic. Ailey reported his feelings concerning this African tour in an article published in Dance Magazine and entitled "African Odyssey."

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater began 1968 with a tour of the United States of America which extended from Manhattan throughout the East Coast, the Midwest, the Northwest, and the West Coast. Important on the schedule were performances at the Hunter College Playhouse which marked the company's first performances in New York City since 1964. Important also was the first appearance of Ailey's company in California. Under the auspices of the Intercampus Cultural Exchange Committee of the University of California, the company performed on university campuses at Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz. At the end of the 1968 American tour, Ailey traveled to Mexico City where he adapted the choreography of his Revelations for the Ballet Folklorico to which he had granted performance rights for the

presentation of this work in conjunction with the 1968 Olympic Games held in Mexico; he obtained a Guggenheim Fellowship to re-construct Knoxville: Summer of 1915 and to choreograph a new ballet entitled Quintet; and he received $15,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts for the purpose of creating new works. Inasmuch as Ailey had never before had so much money at his disposal at one time, he decided to fulfill several desires of long standing. He commissioned Talley Beatty to choreograph a new ballet entitled Black Belt; he re-constructed and re-costumed old dances; he costumed Black Belt; and he acquired and costumed Icarus by Lucas Hoving. He and the members of his company departed for Europe and appearances again at the major European festivals without having finished the works for which Ailey had received grants. While in Amsterdam during the month of July of 1968, however, Ailey completed the restructuring of and had new costumes made for Knoxville: Summer of 1915. While the company danced at the Edinburgh Festival in August, Ailey quickly finished and presented Quintet along with the new version of Knoxville: Summer of 1915. The performances in Edinburgh were, technically, the termination of Ailey's fifth European tour. The proposed London season failed to materialize because no suitable theatre

was available for the company during the time scheduled for their appearances in that city. Because Ailey was unable to maintain his company for five weeks without remunerative engagements, the scheduled return to participate in the Israel Festival was canceled also.

In January of 1969, Ailey's company had the distinguished honor of appearing in its first Broadway season. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which had been heralded throughout Asia, Africa, Australia, and Europe, had had to wait a decade for the experience of performing on Broadway in its own "hometown." Regardless of how long it had taken to reach this goal, however, Ailey was happy for his season of one week at the Billy Rose Theatre. The dance critics and the Broadway audiences were pleased with the week of performances.

Having outgrown the facilities at the Clark Center for the Performing Arts, Ailey accepted an offer for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to become a resident company of the Brooklyn Academy of Music during the spring of 1969. He had been promised rehearsal space, office space, storage space for costumes, and a school, but he found subsequently that the only actual advantages that the new residency afforded were two guaranteed seasons of one week each per year, a sizeable theatre, and the benefit of

a live orchestra. Luckily for the members of the Company, the tours now arranged by Nancy Tuttle of Columbia Artists Management, Incorporated, kept the company away from New York City for a great deal of the time. Following its début performances as a new resident company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in April of 1969, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater enjoyed successful performances throughout the United States. Important was Ailey's première of Masakela Langage which terminated a residency of two weeks at Connecticut College in New London during the month of August.

Ailey's next choreographic achievements occurred during the spring of 1970. Following the Winter-Spring American tour, Ailey and the members of his company had three free weeks before beginning their spring residency at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Disturbed by the fact that there were no new ballets for presentation during the forthcoming season, Ailey choreographed quickly two ballets entitled Streams and Gymnopaedies, respectively. Both works received favorable reviews by the dance critics in New York City.

Early in 1970, representatives from the Department of State of the United States Government requested that Ailey not commit his company to any engagements after the

month of June pending a possible tour of the Soviet Union. Ailey complied with this request and found himself without engagements for his company at the close of the season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on April 26, 1970. Weary of all of the difficulties involved in maintaining a company, Alvin Ailey announced the dissolution of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater with the final performance of the company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on April 26, 1970. An invitation to participate in the Shakespeare Summer Festival in Washington, D. C., during the month of June, however, kept the company together for a short period of time. The tour of the Soviet Union materialized eventually, but it was scheduled for October instead of June as originally expected. In the interim, because the company was going to Russia as Cultural Ambassadors for the United States, representatives of the Department of State arranged for a five weeks' tour of performances in North Africa as a means of keeping the members of the company together.

Ailey and the members of his company departed for North Africa on June 29, 1970. The tour took them to Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia with performances in eight cities within these countries. Each performance was received enthusiastically and performed to capacity audiences. While the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was touring

North Africa, however, it lost its home base at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Residency at the Brooklyn Academy of Music barred acceptance of any engagements at theatres in Manhattan, thus precluding Broadway seasons. The residency was terminated, therefore, by the mutual agreement of Ailey and the management of the Academy. Ailey's Administrator, Ivy Clarke, found office space at the Westside YWCA and a temporary storage area at 229 East 59th Street where Ailey had rented rehearsal space for several months.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater left New York City for Moscow on September 21, 1970, for a six-week tour of the Soviet Union which included performances in the cities of Kiev, Moscow, and Leningrad. The reception of the first American modern dance company to visit the Soviet Union was phenomenal. In Leningrad, for example, curtain calls lasting seventeen minutes were accompanied by enthusiastic cries of "Molodtsy"--"well done". After leaving Russia, the company performed at the International Dance Festival in Paris, France, where Ailey was awarded the Golden Star for the "Best Modern Dance Company" and the "Best Choreography" presented during the Festival. From Paris, the company went to London for a two-week season at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, opening on November 23, 1970. During the London season the company performed twenty

different ballets as Ailey wished to present as many works of American choreographers as possible. The dance critics in London proclaimed the season successful.

Ailey and his company returned to the United States for a two-week season on Broadway at the American National Theatre and Academy in January of 1971. The premières of two new works, choreographed by Ailey and entitled Archipelago and Flowers, respectively, were received without much enthusiasm. The success of the company's Broadway season was evidenced, however, by an invitation to return to Broadway for a subsequent two-week season at the City Center 55th Street Theater. Ailey accepted this invitation and his company became the first American modern dance company to play consecutive engagements in two Broadway theatres during the same year in New York City.

In 1971, Ailey suddenly became more active choreographically. He prepared new works for the short season at the City Center 55th Street Theater during which the premières of Choral Dances and Cry evoked enthusiastic response and laudatory reviews. Walter Sorrell, of the Dance News, wrote that Cry was ". . . as perfect as anything can be." While Ailey was being artistically productive, Ivy Clarke, now General Manager of Ailey's organization, had been equally productive. Through her successful negotiations,

the American Dance Center became a reality during the spring of 1971, Alvin Ailey at long last had a permanent dance school.

While his company was touring during the summer of 1971, Ailey completed the choreography for the ballet entitled The River for the American Ballet Theatre. Set to music by Duke Ellington, this ballet had been presented as a "Work in Progress" on programs given during the previous summer. Clive Barnes credited Ailey with being at his "creative best" in this work. Fortunately at this time, Alvin Ailey suddenly found himself besieged with opportunities for utilizing his creative talents. In August of 1971, he was choreographing Leonard Bernstein's Mass for the opening of the new Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C., and choreographing Mingus Dances as well as restaging Feast of Ashes for the Joffrey Ballet. As soon as his own company returned from its fall tour he began rehearsals for two new works entitled Mary Lou's Mass and Myth, respectively. The premières of these works were presented during the two-week season which his company enjoyed at the City Center 55th Street Theater. Mary Lou's Mass received the most enthusiastic response from the audience as well as the most favorable critical approval. Ailey further extended his repertory by revising Suspensions

by May O'Donnell and by adding Time Out of Mind by Brian McDonald.

Since its threatened dissolution in the spring of 1970, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has been in constant demand throughout the United States. From the first American tour in 1968-1969 which lasted six and one half weeks, the touring season in the United States increased to seventeen and one-half weeks during the 1971-1972 season. In addition, what began as a season of "one night stands" had grown to dance residencies lasting from three to seven days at colleges and universities throughout the United States. The appearance of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the City Center April 18 through April 30, 1972, marked its third consecutive engagement at the City Center within a year--a record for a modern dance company. Again Ailey presented premières of his two new works entitled, respectively, A Lark Ascending and A Song for You and added to his repertory Donald McKayle's classic entitled Rainbow Round My Shoulder. During this same time, the Juilliard American Opera Center offered the première of the opera entitled Lord Byron, by Virgil Thomson and Jack Larson, with choreography by Alvin Ailey.

Ailey and his company were involved for the next three months of 1972 with rehearsals for the restaging of and travel with Leonard Bernstein's Mass, for subsequent

performances in Washington, D. C., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New York City. Ailey himself interrupted these activities in early June, however, in order to receive two honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees. He was so honored at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey. Concurrent with all of these activities, Ailey choreographed a new work, entitled Sea Change, for the American Ballet Theatre, staged the opera Carmen for its opening at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, and directed the movement for Shaken Angels for a presentation at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park.

In the midst of these activities, an invitation was extended to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to become the resident modern dance company of the City Center for Music and Drama in New York City. With the acceptance of the invitation, the company became officially titled the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater on August 4, 1972. The new status of the company granted it a permanent place in which to perform in New York City and guaranteed it two seasons of three weeks' duration for each year.

Foregoing a fall tour, Alvin Ailey's dancers opened their first season as the resident company of the City Center for Music and Drama at the 55th Street Theater on

November 14, 1972. During the year, Ailey had initiated a new series of revivals under the heading of "Roots of American Dance." He revived for his fall season, therefore, The Kinetic Molpai by the late Ted Shawn, According to Eve by John Butler, and Choros by Katherine Dunham. Each revival was successful artistically. Despite the tedium of reviving the works of other choreographers, Ailey did not neglect his own choreographic work. Having been only mildly successful with A Song for You at its spring première, he extended the work into a three-part solo for Dudley Williams and retitled it Love Songs. With this version, he was triumphantly successful. Thus ended Ailey's first season as the director of his resident modern dance company at the City Center in New York City.

Alvin Ailey, who has been acclaimed by authorities in the field of dance as the foremost black male exponent of modern dance in the United States today, prefers not to be designated exclusively as a modern dance leader. He wishes instead to be recognized as an exponent of American dance. This preference on Ailey's part, coupled with his artistic direction and promotion of his black American brother in the art of dance, is the factor which makes Alvin Ailey a unique dance artist. Throughout his career, Ailey's intent has been ". . . to celebrate the trembling beauty of the

black American--to present to the numerous audiences the exuberance of the jazz of the black man, the ecstacy of his spirituals, and the dark rapture of his blues." Believing that American culture has developed from many sources, Alvin Ailey's programs are based upon a variety of materials representing many influences. These influences are evidenced in the fact that Ailey has developed a repertory company which, during the 1970's, performs works of more than thirteen choreographers other than himself.

Alvin Ailey realizes that repertory requires stamina and versatility on the part of those comprising any dance company. Because of his belief in repertory, therefore, he has developed a company of unique dancers with an abundance of both qualities. In addition to "running circles around the rhythm of any dance," Ailey's dancers are able to change their moods within the same program from ". . . raw brutality to chilling loneliness, to sharp angularity, to cool lyricism, and to joyful spirituality." Another admirable quality of the members of Ailey's company is the fact that, throughout the years, the male dancers have been praised highly for their skill, their strength, and their extraordinary technical proficiency.

Through his exploration of the roots of the American black, Ailey found a way to dance American history artistically. He presents his audiences with elements of their

heritage and lets the history speak for itself through communicative movement. He is not just a black choreographer speaking to blacks. Ailey's most successful work, Revelations, is inspired by Negro spirituals and gospels; its roots are in American Negro culture which is, as Ailey sees it, a part of the whole country's heritage. He makes his dances communicative to everyone and maintains that, through his concept of dance, he is a spokesman for art regardless of the color of the protagonist. He best portrays his feelings in this regard through the maintenance of an integrated company.

When Ailey works with his dancers, he wishes each one to experience personal growth and development as a result of having come into contact with his art. He insists upon an expansion of the personality of each dancer within the context of the work in which he is performing; he feels that the theatrical effects will then follow. This requirement of Ailey's demands that his dancers possess considerable talent--talent capable of portraying a dance based upon pains, pleasures, and attitudes peculiar to blacks in this country as well as those obliterating black and white as viable distinctions. Ailey's dancers are credited with such an accomplishment. Numerous articles and reviews indicate that Ailey has made his message clear

and that, through his explorations of the roots of black folk, he has unearthed a genre which is basically "American."

Ailey's company, which has used the word "American" in its title since 1962, became officially the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater on August 4, 1972. Although the "American" has been dropped from the title of the company, it has not altered Ailey's original concept but has expanded it. His company is his vehicle for the revival of works of great American artists of the past as well as for the performance of the superb repertory comprised of works of contemporary American choreographers.

From a personal standpoint, Ailey's future horizons seem limitless. As guest choreographer for other dance companies--especially the ballet--his exuberant style is being extended more widely to audiences than ever before. With his new school in operation, he has a laboratory for exploring repertory works as well as for developing new dancers to add to his company. Ailey, himself, continues to exercise his own personal creativity, to compose dances, to direct, and to inspire dancers, critics, and audiences alike to celebrate the "magic element" which stems from the American heritage.

Alvin Ailey has given to America a reputation which no other representative of modern dance has been able to

achieve. The name "Alvin Ailey" is internationally identified with exciting American dance theatre. The task which began as an exploration of the roots of black folk has developed into an exploration of the roots of American dance--and Alvin Ailey is the artist-explorer to lead the country in this endeavor and to animate and illuminate his findings!

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION AS A WHOLE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Summary of the Dissertation as a Whole

The present investigation entailed a biographical study of two outstanding artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--exponents of ballet and modern dance, respectively. In order to place these internationally recognized black dance artists in historical perspective, the biographical material was preceded by a summary of dance as a fine art and a brief overview of the evolution of ballet and modern dance as two forms of fine art. Chapter I of this dissertation was comprised, therefore, of an orientation to the study.

Dance as an art form falls into two major categories --a folk art or a fine art. Dance as a folk art is communal dance and encompasses such major categories as ethnic dance, folk dance, and some forms of avante-garde dance. Dance as a fine art may be distinguished by a definite separation between audience and performer and its status as such may be determined upon the criteria of creativity, definiteness and clarity of form, communicativeness, independence, a high

level of skill, and enrichment of personal experience. It is in the category of fine art that ballet and modern dance are considered.

Although ballet has its roots in the rituals of primitive man, it was not until the Renaissance Period that semblances of its present form became recognizable. Italy led the way in the elevation of the peasant dances to a noble quality worthy of the aristocracy; but France refined the dance into an art form. The present day concept of ballet owes its beginning to Louis XIV, who had Beauchamps, his personal dancing master, establish definite rules for the correct performance of codified ballet techniques. These rules have endured throughout the centuries as the basis for ballet technique.

The establishment of the Academie Royale de Danse by Louis XIV in 1661 marked the beginning of professional education for dancers of the ballet. Combined with the Academie Royale de Music in 1672, this institution was responsible for producing many outstanding dance artists. Professional dancers educated in Paris soon began to travel throughout Europe, and they, in turn, performed at various courts or founded their own ballet schools and companies.

Ballet reigned as a supreme art in France until the French Revolution at which time it began to decline

throughout the western world with the exception of Russia. Ballet in that country flourished under the patronage of the reigning monarchs and, under the tutelage of outstanding foreign Ballet Masters, two distinct schools of ballet evolved ultimately--the Marinsky Theatre at St. Petersburg, presently known as the Kirov State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, at Leningrad, and the Bolshoi Ballet Theatre in Moscow--after the Red Revolution.

The Russian impresario, Serge Diaghilev, organized in 1909 a unique company of superior dancers, choreographers, composers, and painters to form the original Ballet Russe which was responsible for the re-emergence of ballet as an art form during the early part of the twentieth century producing such artists as Nijinsky, Pavlova and others. Diaghilev died in 1929, but many of his dancers settled throughout Europe and the United States, keeping the Russian influence upon the ballet alive.

England was somewhat slower than other European countries in the development of native ballet dancers and choreographers, perhaps because of the British lack of interest in performing dance. The persons most influential in the development of native talent in England were Marie Rambert, a former student of Cecchetti, who established the Ballet Rambert, and Ninette de Valois, a former Diaghilev

dancer, who founded the Vic-Wells Ballet which ultimately became the Royal Ballet of England. England has produced such illustrious ballet personalities as Dame Margot Fonteyn, Sir Frederick Ashton, John Cranko, and Kenneth MacMillan.

The production of the Black Crook in 1886 was apparently the first to include a ballet conceived and presented in the United States. This country did not become a focal point for ballet, however, until after the first world war. Following this war, many Russian immigrants settled in the United States, and the ballet artists began laying the foundation for the development of classical ballet in America. Among the foreign artists who made outstanding contributions to the establishment of ballet in the United States are Mikhail Mordkin, Leonide Massine, and George Balanchine.

Lincoln Kirstein and George Balanchine formed a partnership in 1934 when they opened the School of American Ballet in New York City. From this beginning, the New York City Ballet emerged fourteen years later. Under the artistic direction of George Balanchine, the New York City Ballet has become one of the world's foremost ballet companies. This company was the first major ballet company in the United States to employ a black dancer as one of its

permanent members. That dancer was Arthur Mitchell, co-subject of this study.

Almost every country in the world now has its own ballet company, many of which have achieved Royal and National status and support and are official representatives of the heads of government. Although all ballet is based upon the same classical tradition, each country has a distinct national character of its own. Among those companies typically representative of the history, climate, customs, and temperament of the country are the Moiseyev Dance Company of Russia, the Hungarian National Ballet, and the Ballet Folklorico of Mexico.

Concurrent with the development of the New York City Ballet, other companies and American choreographers began to emerge throughout the United States. Among these companies were the American Ballet Theatre, the National Ballet of Washington, the Houston Ballet Foundation, the San Francisco Ballet, the Pennsylvania Ballet, and the Chicago Opera Ballet. The outstanding list of American choreographers includes such personalities as Agnes DeMille, Lew Christensen, Ruth Page, and Jerome Robbins.

The present status of ballet in the United States cannot be attributed wholly, however, to the success of major companies. There exists in the United States today an

increasing number of regional ballet companies. These non-professional ballet companies, comprised of directors and non-salaried dancers, have as their major goals the stimulation of interest in ballet and the support of both ballet companies and schools of ballet. These regional companies provide the larger professional companies with knowledgeable and enthusiastic audiences. Thus, in the twentieth century, the art of ballet has again embraced the people.

As was the case with ballet, modern dance may be traced also to the rituals of primitive man. After having evolved through many developmental stages to reach its present status as a unique American art, modern dance began in the United States with Isadora Duncan. Although she left no definite system of dance, she was the first to rebel against what she considered artificial balletic movements and thereby laid the foundation for the development of modern dance. Duncan advocated freedom in life as well as in art and left to the world a spiritual rather than a technical inheritance.

Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn are credited with the official founding of American dance. Having begun their careers independently, they met and married in 1914 and subsequently established their Denishawn School and the company known as the Denishawn Dancers, thus providing the

"rebels" who were against the classic tradition of dance a place to study as well as opportunities to perform throughout the United States and abroad. From 1915 through 1932, the school associated with Denishawn existed in some fashion, either in Los Angeles, California, or in New York City. Ruth St. Denis pursued a spiritualistic approach to dance while Ted Shawn pursued an eclectic approach. Together, these two innovators worked toward releasing the innermost potentialities of their dancers. In so doing, they produced three "rebels" who were to become the core of the second generation of American dancers--Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman. These three "rebels" left Denishawn because they believed that they could make personal contributions to the development of modern dance which would far exceed those conceived within the boundaries of Denishawn. The contributions of these three artists as dancers, teachers, and choreographers are monumental. Many of the third generation of American dancers owe their fertile background to this trio.

Concurrent with the dance activities of Graham, Humphrey, and Weidman on the East Coast, Lester Horton had been developing his modern dance school and theatre on the West Coast. Horton, who evolved his own special techniques, opened the doors of his school and company to dancers of

all races and colors. Among the contemporary black dancers who are alumni of the Lester Horton group are James Truitte and Alvin Ailey--the latter a co-subject of this study.

By the 1940's, modern dance leaders of various backgrounds began to appear on the concert stages in the United States--many of them trying to find the basic American pulse with respect to dance. It was during this time, also, that the black dance artist emerged as an important figure on the concert stage where he was finally permitted to perform dances other than those in keeping with the stereotyped image of the happy-go-lucky, grinning, tapping Negro stemming from the days of the traditional so-called Negro Minstrels. The two subjects of this study, Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey, are contemporary black male dance artists who have made outstanding contributions to the field of dance on the concert stage in the United States and in various parts of the world.

The purposes of this study were to describe the early life, educational background, and dance education of each subject; to describe his experiences as a professional dancer; to describe his teaching experiences; to describe his choreographic achievements; to describe the activities involving his particular professional dance companies and tours; to describe his appearances on radio and television

broadcasts; to describe his contributions to dance literature; to describe his honors and/or awards of merit; and to describe his unique contributions to the field of dance as a black male dance artist in contemporary society.

The investigator established the following limitations in the development of her study: the availability of biographical data pertaining to the lives of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey and their contributions to the field of dance in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively; the availability of relevant background material concerning the contemporary black male dancer in the United States; and the availability of data pertaining to the two selected subjects from both documentary and human sources.

Several studies have been completed which are closely related to the present investigation in that they are biographical or historical reports of outstanding figures in the field of dance. None of the studies which were reviewed duplicated the present dissertation.

The following unpublished studies were reviewed: "Ted Shawn: His Personal Life, His Professional Career, and His Contributions to the Development of Dance in the United States from 1891 to 1963" by Betty Poindexter; "Louis Horst, A Historical Study of His Contributions to Modern Dance

Choreography" by Mary Kulynitch; "The Life and Contributions of José Limón" by Kathleen Wynne; "An Historical Study of the Professional Life of Isadora Duncan and the Influence of Her Philosophy on Modern Dance Today" by Renée Yerg; "The Work of Mary Wigman" by Katherine M. Brown; "A Biography of Walter Terry with Emphasis Upon His Professional Career and His Contributions to the Field of Dance" by Lois Andreasen; and "Black Dance in the United States From 1619 to 1970" by Leonore Lynne Fauley Emery.

In addition to the biographical and historical studies reviewed, several published biographies and autobiographies were of interest and particular value and proved to be of great assistance in the development of this dissertation. Published biographical and autobiographical materials reviewed included Madame Sarah by Cornelia Otis Skinner, Dance: The Story of Katherine Dunham by Ruth Biemiller, and Theatre Street by Tamara Karsavina.

Chapter II of this dissertation was comprised of the procedures followed in the development of this study and included: (1) Preliminary Procedures, (2) Procedures Followed in the Collection of Data from Documentary Sources, (3) Procedures Followed in the Collection of Data from Human Sources, (4) Procedures Employed in the Organization,

Analysis and the Preparation of the Data in the Form of a Final Written Report, and (5) Preparation of a Classified Bibliography and Appendixes.

The final written report was organized and presented in the following twelve chapters: Chapter I, Orientation to the Study; Chapter II, Procedures Followed in the Development of the Study; Chapter III, Contemporary Black Male Dance Artists of the Concert Stage in the Idioms of Ballet and Modern Dance; Chapter IV, The Early Years of Arthur Mitchell; Chapter V, Arthur Mitchell: Professional Ballet Dancer; Chapter VI, Arthur Mitchell as a Teacher and as a Director of Professional Dance Companies; Chapter VII, Summary: Arthur Mitchell, Black Harlem's Artistic Messiah; Chapter VIII, Alvin Ailey: The Formative Years; Chapter IX, Early Professional Preparation and Career of Alvin Ailey; Chapter X, Alvin Ailey: Artist in New York City; Chapter XI, Summary: Alvin Ailey, Explorer of the Roots of the Black Man; and Chapter XII, Summary of the Dissertation as a Whole and Recommendations for Further Studies.

A classified bibliography of all sources of data utilized in the development of the study was prepared. Also included in the final written report are six appendixes which are comprised of the postal card questionnaire, selected sample letters, interview questions, and

biographical data sheets used by the investigator for obtaining data for this study; names and addresses of persons who contributed data pertinent to this study; professional performances and lecture-demonstrations presented by the Dance Theatre of Harlem; major tours of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; selected photographs representative of activities of both subjects and their respective dance companies; and selected programs and reviews of the performances of the companies of both artists.

Chapter III of this dissertation was comprised of biographical sketches of outstanding contemporary black male dance artists in the idioms of ballet and modern dance. The black entertainer was the first to provide what many authorities consider an entirely American theatrical element. The thematic source material for the American Minstrel Show--the ancestor of Vaudeville and the American Music Hall--was black music-making and dance which appeared in this country in the sixteenth century with the importation of the first slaves who, in their motherland, danced to express their every emotion. White performers in blackface capitalized upon the rich source materials provided by the blacks while early black performers appeared only in sporadic interludes. These black dancers on the American stage were featured as exotics, comics, and dandies--a stereotyped image which

haunted black entertainers well into the twentieth century. The twentieth century black dancer, however, was no longer satisfied with the familiar stereotyped image. Now a part of the American scene, he felt the need of returning to dance as an expression of his emotions--the emotions resulting from his cultural awareness that he was a full-fledged American citizen. During the pioneer days of black concert dance, several leaders emerged. Among these leaders were Charles Williams and Charlotte Moton Kennedy, Directors of the Hampton Institute Creative Dance Group; Hemsley Winfield, organizer of the Negro Art Dance Group; Eugene Von Grona, Director of the American Negro Ballet; and Wilson Williams, organizer of the Negro Dance Company.

Asadata Dafora Horton is considered the first black man to bring the dance of the Africans to the attention of the public in a theatrical manner. In 1934, he presented his opera entitled Kykunkor to the New York public. Kykunkor received favorable reviews and, during the three decades which followed, Dafora presented many other productions which he termed dance-dramas. Acceptance by critics and audiences of Dafora's theatrical use of ethnic material paved the way for the American-born Katherine Dunham to ascend to the concert stage.

Katherine Dunham is considered the "mother" of black concert dance in the United States. Dunham's career

in dance began when she became a member of her school dance club at the age of twelve. She continued to take dance lessons as often as she could throughout her high school years, and then financed her way through college with money earned from teaching classes in dance. Her major sequence, however, was Anthropology, which led to her receiving a Julius Rosenwald Traveling Fellowship for anthropological research in the West Indies. Dunham's thesis for a Master of Arts degree, entitled "The Dances of Haiti--Their Form, Function, and Sociological Organization," provided exciting source material upon which she could base her future choreography.

At the special request of the Federal Theatre of Chicago, Dunham choreographed the full-length ballet entitled L'Ag'Ya. The success of this ballet brought invitations from New York City for Dunham and the members of her company to appear in an evening of Negro dance at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA, and for Dunham to direct a musical show entitled Pins and Needles. Determined that her company should have a proper Broadway début, Dunham rented the Windsor Theatre in order to present her dancers in one performance only on Sunday, February 18, 1940. This performance met with such success that her company continued to perform for twelve additional Sundays.

In the years which followed, the dancer-anthropologist, in addition to choreographing for her own dance company, played roles in several motion pictures and in the Broadway musical Cabin in the Sky. Under the management of the noted impresario, Sol Hurok, Dunham and the members of her company toured the United States, Europe, South America, the Far East, and Australia. Some of her most famous choreographic achievements are L'Ag'Ya, Le Jazz Hot, Tropics, and Barrelhouse. During this period, Dunham established in New York City the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts, Incorporated, which served as a home base for her dance company as well as a place in which aspiring young dance artists could study. Many outstanding personalities in "show business" studied at Dunham's school including Eartha Kitt and Marlon Brando. Of the early Dunham dancers, Talley Beatty, Syvilla Fort, Lavinia Williams, and Claude Marchant have energed as noteworthy figures in the dance world.

Dunham staffed her school with such outstanding teachers as Syvilla Fort who is complimented highly by black artists as the one person in New York City who has done the most to continue the Dunham tradition. She had been a member of Katherine Dunham's company and had served as acting director of Dunham's school from 1950 through

1953 shortly before the organization was officially closed. In late 1953, Fort opened her own Studio of Theatre Dance in New York City. Inspired by her work with Katherine Dunham, Fort took the modern-primitive techniques of Dunham and developed them into modern-Afro techniques combined with American jazz. The Dunham techniques did not die with the closing of her school in New York City; they were extended and enlarged as Syvilla Fort continued a tradition. Fort's studio remains functional today, in 1973--a school in which artists may study modern-Afro dance techniques and American jazz.

Several well-known black male dance artists have enjoyed studying under the tutelage of Syvilla Fort. Among those who have made notable contributions in the area of dance are Walter Nicks, teacher and choreographer in the modern and ethnological idioms of dance; Jaime Rogers, dancer-teacher-choreographer active on the West Coast; Harold Pierson, dancer and teacher in the modern dance idiom; and Chuck Davis, specialist in the area of modern-Afro and indigenous African dance forms. Other black artists who have experienced valuable dance instruction from Syvilla Fort include such personalities as James Earl Jones, noted stage and film actor; and Danny Barrajanas, drummer extraordinaire and accompanist for primitive movement.

Another great lady of black dance in the United States is Pearl Primus who was born in Trinidad. She was already a college graduate when she began her professional career in New York City in 1941 quite accidentally--as a replacement in the dance group of the National Youth Administration. Following her first performing experience, Primus won a working scholarship as a member of the New Dance Group. A good student, Primus was soon choreographing her own dances. As an outgorwth of her student work and in order to soothe the wounds which she felt had been inflicted upon her because of racial discrimination, Primus became engaged in research on primitive dances. After her first six months of study, she had choreographed African Ceremonial, based upon a legend from the Belgian Congo. During the months which followed, she choreographed three solos in the modern dance idiom and presented them to the New York audience on February 14, 1943. At that time, John Martin, leading dance critic in the United States, described Primus as the greatest Negro dancer of them all.

All of Primus' choreography was based upon careful and extensive research. The artist choreographed African dances, however, before she visited Africa; she choreographed Caribbean dances using as resource materials memoirs of members of her family; and she choreographed dances about

southern blacks before she traveled in the south. Although Primus eventually visited Africa, the West Indies, and the Deep South in search of choreographic source materials, she discovered that those dances which she had structured upon the basis of research were just as valid and, in some instances, they were better compositions than those produced following her visits to the actual locales upon which they had been based.

As a dancer and choreographer, Primus is credited with a deep and sincere understanding of her people. As a director, she has influenced such outstanding black male dance personalities as Percival Borde, Primus' dancer-husband; Charles Queenan, an original member of the Negro Dance Theatre; Charles Blackwell, a stage manager employed by Merrick Productions; and Joe Nash, a multi-media specialist and authority on black resources in the United States.

Most of the early attempts of black men as ballet dancers were discouraged by the failure of the critics and the predominately white audiences to accept these black men strictly upon their individual merits as classical dancers. As late as the 1950's, two black ballet companies still attempted to provide separate outlets for talented blacks with specific training in classical dance. The Negro Dance

Theatre, directed by Aubrey Hitchins, made its début in the summer of 1954, at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated. The company lasted through a return performance the following year after which it was forced to disband because sufficient funds could not be obtained for its continued operation. The experiences of the New York Negro Ballet were similar to those of the Negro Dance Theatre. This company, directed by Ward Fleming, managed to present enough performances in and around New York City to raise the funds necessary for a European tour. Following a memorable eight-week residency at the Drury Lane Theatre in London during the spring of 1956, the company was forced also to disband because of a lack of operational funds.

Sylvester Cabmpell is one of the black ballet artists who left the United States early in his career to seek opportunities for performing in Europe. Having received his early instruction in dance at the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C. and at the School of American Ballet in New York City, he began his professional career with the New York Negro Ballet Company during the 1956-1957 performance season. When the Company toured Great Britain in the autumn of 1957, Campbell chose to remain in Europe at the close of the tour because there

were many more possibilities for him as a performer abroad than in the United States in the area of classical ballet. He occupies a unique position in that he is probably the only black classical dancer in the world who has performed all of the male leading roles in such ballets as Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, Romeo and Juliet, Giselle, and Les Sylphides. Campbell is making praiseworthy contributions to the field of dance as a black classical dancer.

Billy Wilson is another black dance artist who has experienced success in Europe. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Wilson's professional career began at the age of seven on the stages of the public schools in Philadelphia. He later studied as a scholarship student with Antony Tudor at the Philadelphia Ballet Guild School where he performed as a soloist with the company associated with the school. In 1955, Wilson went to New York City where he became a member of the cast of Carmen Jones and studied with such authoritative teachers as Karel Shook, Walter Hicks, and Pearl Lang. Wilson's performances in musicals afforded him the opportunity to work with such famous Broadway choreographers as Jack Cole and Jerome Robbins. In addition, his performance in the 1958 London production of West Side Story brought him the offer to join the National Ballet of Holland where he became the only black soloist in the company.

Wilson chose to live and to work in Europe because of his acceptance, first, as an artist and, second, as a black man. At no time in his professional career, however, has he been able to forget the color of his skin. He has always been aware of his heritage and of the responsibility which he has accepted--being a "first black" in so many professional situations. After spending his formative performance years in Europe, Wilson, involved also in teaching and in choreography, returned to the United States in 1965. Among his many reasons for returning to work in his own country is the fact that he wished to help provide black children with their own heroes and images.

Of the few black artists who remained in this country and tried to break through all barriers into the world of classical ballet during the early 1950's, two have experienced degrees of success--Arthur Mitchell, the co-subject of this study, and Louis Johnson. Mitchell achieved his success as a performer, and Johnson as a choreographer. Louis Johnson is a product originally of the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C. Following his graduation from high school in 1950, Johnson went to New York City where he studied at several leading schools of dance including the School of American Ballet. After two years at the latter, Johnson became the first

black dancer to perform a major role with the New York City Ballet. He danced a solo in Jerome Robbins' Ballade; this appearance, however, proved to be only a token performance as Johnson has had no further opportunity to perform with a major ballet company. Although Johnson was a strong dancer, he made his greatest impression upon the dance world as a choreographer. His first work, entitled Lament, dominated the evening at the American Ballet Club's Annual Choreographer's Night in 1953. Since then, he has choreographedmmany ballets--several of which are in the repertories of leading dance companies. For his choreography of the musical entitled Purlie Victorious, Johnson became the first black choreographer ever nominated for a Tony award. Johnson remains productive in the 1970's, creating works for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Capital Ballet, and for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Among those emerging black leaders in modern dance in the United States who immediately followed Dafora, Dunham, and Primus, three men have achieved outstanding success as dancers, choreographers, and directors of their own dance companies. These men are Talley Beatty, Donald McKayle, and Alvin Ailey, a co-subject of this study.

Talley Beatty was one of the dancers in the original company of Katherine Dunham which came to New York City to

perform in 1937. He remained with Katherine Dunham and Her Dancers through 1940, after which time he appeared in works by Helen Tamiris, Esther Junger, and Maya Deren. He also organized his own revue in the Dunham style and toured with it for five years. In 1959, Beatty gave the dance world his classic work entitled The Road of the Phoebe Snow. Another representative ballet, entitled Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot, soon followed and today, in the 1970's, Beatty's unique works are kept alive in the repertories of leading dance companies.

Donald McKayle, a product of the New Dance Group, made his début in the spring of 1948, in choreography by Sophie Maslow and Jean Erdman. During the following summer, he received a scholarship to study with Martha Graham; this study subsequently led to future performances as a member of Graham's company. Other outstanding choreographers whose works McKayle has performed include those of Charles Weidman, Daniel Nagrin, Merce Cunningham, and Anna Sokolow. Although he was an outstanding dancer, it is through his choreography that McKayle has made his greatest contribution to the dance world. The ideas and attitudes reflected in his works indicate that the artist is a humanist with a passionate concern for his fellow man. McKayle's three classic works are Games, Rainbow Round My Shoulder, and

District Storyville. Today, in 1973, McKayle is a member of the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts and at the Inner City Institute in Los Angeles. He continues to choreograph for motion picture and television audiences as well as for his own organization, the Inner City Repertory Dance Company.

The 1960's brought a bevy of young black choreographers and dancers to the attention of the dance world--each with his own idea concerning the black experience. Representing two contrasting factions within the black dance scene are Eleo Pomare and Rod Rodgers. Eleo Pomare formed a company in New York City in 1958 which proposed to utilize creative Negro talent and ability in American modern dance. His American company began to realize its purpose, however, only after Pomare returned from his professional experiences in Europe in 1964. The re-organized Eleo Pomare Dance Company presented its first performance in New York City in October of 1967. According to the critics, his Blues for the Jungle was his most powerful presentation. Critics sensed a deep sense of "Negritude" in Pomare's works along with the fact that he had consciously steeped himself in the peculiar experiences of black Americans. Pomare feels that the Black Revolution should be reflected in art as well as in politics; his choreography exemplifies his viewpoint in this regard.

Rod Rodgers is a black dancer-choreographer-director whose ideas support the "celebration of blackness" but in a less revolutionary manner than that of Pomare. Rodgers came to New York City in 1962 where he studied with Hanya Holm, Mary Anthony, and Erick Hawkins. The Hawkins influence was reflected in his program in 1966 when he presented several non-representational works. These early compositions expressed the artist's view that images which encourage intolerance of racial oppression are not the only means of communicating a black consciousness. Rodgers' later choreograpy has included such dances as Die Nigga and Say What, supporting, therefore, the feeling of the artist that Negro dance art, whatever form it may take, can be a celebration of the beauty and virtue of blackness.

There are other black dance artists who celebrate the beauty and virtue of black peoples throughout the world. The United States is the home of several outstanding ethnological dance artists. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to cover these artists, it is only fitting to mention that Jean Léon Destiné of Haiti, and Percival Borde and Geoffrey Holder of Trinidad have contributed immeasurably to the image of the black male dance artist as a powerful force in the history of dance in the United States.

Chapters IV, V, and VI were devoted to the life and contributions of Arthur Mitchell. These chapters were summarized in Chapter VII, pages 389 through 430. Arthur Adams Mitchell, Junior, is the outstanding contemporary black male dance artist in the idiom of ballet selected as co-subject of this biographical dissertation. He was born the second child of Willie Mae Hearns and Arthur Adams Mitchell, Senior, on March 27, 1934, in New York City. His parents, both from Savannah, Georgia, had moved to the community of Harlem in New York City sixteen years prior to his birth. Although Arthur, Junior, was fourteen years younger than his sister, Frances Marie, within the next four years the Mitchell family increased appreciably with the birth of Charles William, Laura Mae, Herbert Jerald, and Shirley Elizabeth, respectively.

At four years of age, Arthur Mitchell, Junior, entered the public elementary school on 139th Street between Seventh and Lenox Avenues. He chose to follow the kindergarten into class each day and was permitted to do so rather than remain on the playground of the schoolyard where his mother had placed him. In this school, he was allowed to play the maracas with the rhythm band and thus began his official participation in a musical environment.

As the eldest son, Arthur assumed economic responsibility and independence at an early age. When he was seven or eight years old, he sold newspapers and shined shoes, but his employment in the neighborhood butcher shop at age twelve set the stage for what became an obligatory pattern of young Arthur's life. From the beginning, the money which he earned was turned over to his mother to supplement the family budget. As he grew older, the burden of economic responsibility grew heavier and heavier until it was completely his own at the age of fifteen when Arthur Mitchell, Senior, became ill.

The Mitchell family was comprised of individuals who, despite distinctive personalities, got along with each other unusually well. This uniquely harmonious situation was particularly admirable with five children in a small apartment in Harlem. Because Arthur had supplemented the family income from the time that he was quite young, he had little time for socializing outside of his home. During his junior high school years, Arthur sang in the Convent Avenue Baptist Church Choir and occasionally shot a few baskets in the park during his rare moments of leisure. As he grew older, he chose to spend his free moments in solitude, enjoying his daily ice cream cone and reading a book in a small room situated in the center of the apartment.

His mother, who had hoped that her eldest son would become a physician, soon found out that these books were all concerned with history.

Arthur's musical interests were again brought to the foreground during his junior high school years. He joined the Police Athletic League Glee Club at the age of ten and thus began his training in the arts. The extent of his early exposure to dance, however, was a series of tap dance lessons in 1944 when he was also ten years of age. While still enrolled in junior high school, Arthur's life assumed a new direction as the result of his participation in a general party held at the end of the school term. His guidance teacher noticed his "hamming it up" with one of the girls and recognized the fact that he possessed a definite talent in dance. She began immediately the procedures necessary to obtain for Arthur a scholarship at the High School of Performing Arts. After securing the application forms for admission, Arthur sought the help of Tom Nip, an old black vaudevillian, in the preparation of a tap dance routine which he could use at his audition for the scholarship for which he had applied. His scholarship audition was quite different from those of the others who were performing classical ballet studies or intense modern dance compositions. In spite of his unorthodox performance,

he was accepted, although he feels that it was probably because the School "needed male dancers."

Arthur Mitchell entered the High School of Performing Arts in the fall of 1949 with a major sequence in modern dance. His first year there as a student was not an easy one. In fact, near the end of the year, one of his teachers suggested that he give up dance altogether because he lacked the flexibility and the physical characteristics of a dancer. Her very words motivated him to decide not only to become a dancer, but to become one of the best dancers in the world.

Concurrent with his professional preparation, Arthur Mitchell launched his professional career. He joined the Repertory Dance Company of the High School of Performing Arts where he worked with Natanya Neumann and Shirley Broughton. In addition to performing, he began experimenting with choreography. Although he choreographed a solo for himself entitled Primitive Study in 1957, his primary interest was directed toward becoming a performing artist. He danced, therefore, with several modern dancers who are noted for their outstanding works. Among these artists are Donald McKayle, John Butler, Louis Johnson, Sophie Maslow, and Anna Sokolow.

During Arthur's senior year in the High School of Performing Arts, he had the good fortune of making his

Broadway début as an angel in the revival of Four Saints in Three Acts, an opera with text by Gertrude Stein and music by Virgil Thomson. Originally presented in 1934, the opera was revived for a Broadway season at the American National Theatre and Academy during the spring of 1952. Following the Broadway season, the cast left for Paris, France, in order to represent the United States at the International Festival of the Arts. Proud and happy, Arthur Mitchell returned from Paris to receive his certificate in modern dance from the High School of Performing Arts. Upon graduation, he became the first male to receive the Dance Award given each year by the School and, following his graduation, he was offered not only a scholarship to Bennington College in Vermont but also one to the School of American Ballet in New York City. After much deliberation, Arthur decided that, if he could retain his unique qualities as a black dancer--a sense of rhythm, style, and a characteristic way of moving--and combine these qualities with the discipline and training of classical ballet, he could become a unique dancer with a style totally unlike that of any other performer. Having made this decision, he accepted the scholarship at the School of American Ballet and began his work toward becoming a performing artist in classical ballet. Shortly after his enrollment in the School of American Ballet,

Mitchell met and began studying with Karel Shook, a superb Ballet-Master then teaching at the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts in New York City. This meeting was an exciting stroke of good luck for Arthur Mitchell because Shook developed a special interest in the young student and became his friend and advisor as well as his teacher.

At the time that Mitchell began his association with Shook, he was eighteen years of age and had assumed full responsibility for the support of his mother and four sisters and brothers. Because his schedule included classes at both the School of American Ballet and the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts, he needed employment which would not interfere with his total dedication to dance. This problem was quickly resolved for him because Dunham's School closed soon after Mitchell enrolled in it, and Shook opened his own Studio of Dance Arts. There, in the Studio of Dance Arts, Mitchell was able to study and to teach dance classes in a stimulating environment which attracted such extraordinary students as Mary Hinkson, Matt Turney, Geoffrey Holder, and Alvin Ailey. With tap dance, modern dance, and ethnological forms of dance in his background, Mitchell was, at the age of eighteen, deeply immersed in his study of classical ballet. In addition to his intensive schedule of study, Mitchell still danced with anyone who

asked him to perform regardless of the dance idiom entailed. During this period, he received special critical acclaim for his performances in Shirley Broughton's Quartet, Louis Johnson's Lament, Donald McKayle's Games, The Street, and Nocturne, William Dollar's Concerto, and Hubert Farrington's Out of Eden.

After three years of study at the School of American Ballet, Mitchell made his second appearance on Broadway. He danced in the Truman Capote-Harold Arlen musical entitled House of Flowers where he worked with such exceptional black artists as Pearl Bailey, Dianne Carroll, Geoffrey Holder, Alvin Ailey, Carmen de Lavallade, Frederick O'Neal, and Josephine Premice. During the three-month run of House of Flowers on Broadway, Mitchell was invited by John Butler to join his newly formed John Butler American Dance Theatre which was then making preparations for a European tour. After three years of study at the School of American Ballet which was associated with the New York City Ballet, Mitchell's optimism concerning becoming a member of that famous company had begun to fade. He accepted Butler's invitation, therefore, to become a member of the John Butler American Dance Theatre.

While Arthur Mitchell was touring Europe during the summer of 1955 with the John Butler American Dance Company,

he was offered a position as a permanent member of the New York City Ballet. Although Butler's company was in financial trouble when Mitchell was invited to join the New York City Ballet, Mitchell was again faced with a delicate decision concerning his future--whether to finish the tour with John Butler and his company or to return to New York City and fulfill his own dream of becoming a classical dancer. This was a difficult decision for Mitchell to make because he had always accepted completely the obligation of fulfilling his commitments. After giving the matter much thought, he finally decided that he should choose advantageously with respect to his own future as a professional dancer. He returned, therefore, to New York City to become the first black dancer to serve as a permanent member of a major ballet company in the United States.

Although Arthur Mitchell joined the New York City Ballet as a member of the Corps de Ballet, during the first week of his opening season with the Ballet, he experienced an unexpected début as a featured dancer. George Balanchine, Director of the company, cast him in the Fourth Movement of Western Symphony as the partner of Tanaquil LeClerq, a prima ballerina with the company at that time. Because Mitchell wished to be recognized only on the basis of his merits as a dancer, no advance notices pointing out the fact that he

was black were released. The reaction of the audience at Mitchell's first performance with the New York City Ballet was somewhat dramatic with such audible comments as "My God, they have got a nigger in the company," and ". . . he's not bad at all" being heard onstage during the performance. Once the initial shock of his being black had been overcome by the audience, Mitchell was judged solely from the standpoint of his ability as a dancer. In addition to Western Symphony, Mitchell danced in Jerome Robbins' Fanfare and Pied Piper during the first week of his opening season with the New York City Ballet. For all of his performances, he received complimentary reviews--a response which was highly pleasing to his famous director, George Balanchine.

During the late summer of 1956, Arthur Mitchell made his first European tour with the New York City Ballet. Although he had been to Europe with John Butler, this was his first tour with a large dance company. In his daydreams, he had envisioned a fictionalized, fairy-tale existence only to awaken to the unpleasant task of packing, moving, and always searching for inexpensive places in which to live. Many of these touring experiences were lonely ones for Mitchell as the only black person in the company, and he had long solitary hours in which to reflect about his future. It was in Europe, on this particular

tour, that Mitchell decided that his "off-stage" role with the New York City Ballet would have to be as important as any role which he might perform onstage. He resolved that, regardless of the personal sacrifices entailed, a black person must remain in ballet in the United States so that aspiring young black dancers might have someone about whom to say, "Well, if he made it, so can I."

Arthur Mitchell considers the year of 1957 as one of the high points in his career with the New York City Ballet. He was selected for the leading role in Balanchine's new ballet, entitled Agon, in which he danced a pas de deux created especially for him. His partner was Diana Adams in the official première of the Stravinsky-Balanchine ballet on December 1, 1957. For the pas de deux danced by Mitchell and Adams, the majority of the critics had nothing but praise in their respective reviews.

From mid-April through mid-August of 1958, Arthur Mitchell toured again with the New York City Ballet with performances in Japan, the Philippine Islands, and Australia. During this tour, Mitchell's assignments included leading roles in Stars and Stripes, Bourrée Fantasque, and The Four Temperaments. Of these ballets, his most exciting role was that of Phlegmatic in The Four Temperaments. This role was particularly enjoyable to him

because it requires the dancer's portrayal of dramatic interpretation through classical movement. For his performances of this role Mitchell received enthusiastic critical acclaim. He was also the subject of many complimentary newspaper articles in Sydney, Australia, where the company spent the longest period of time during the tour.

In December of 1959, Mitchell danced his first wholly dramatic role, that of Jason in Birgit Cullberg's ballet entitled Medea. The leading male role in this dramatic and tragic ballet is a challenge because it requires the dancer to project a strong, heavy quality. Initially the critics thought that Mitchell's dancing lacked dramatic style, a criticism which he took seriously, working assiduously to develop increasing intensity in his style of dancing and making a dedicated effort to discover all of the dramatic aspects of his role in Medea.

Mitchell began performing pure classical ballets such as Symphony in C and Allegro Brillante during the fall of 1960. He cherished this new challenge because, on the basis of his roles in these ballets, he could be referred to officially as a classical dancer. He was soon completely at ease performing the "white ballet." At approximately the same time, he was involved in other special assignments including the principal pas de deux in John Taras' Ebony

Concerto and the role of the snake in Todd Bolender's Creation of the World. The latter role gave him an extraordinary opportunity to explore and to utilize all of the other forms of dance which were a part of his educational background.

The next major step in Mitchell's career came in 1962 when Balanchine asked him to perform the role of Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream. He was given choreographic freedom and was permitted to interpret the role from a dramatic standpoint as well as from that of dance alone. Because Mitchell realized that many qualities which were inherent in Puck were characteristic of himself, this role was extremely significant for him. His performance in A Midsummer Night's Dream, which had its première in January of 1962, was a source of "rave" reviews for Mitchell for years to come. He considers this one of his most rewarding assignments to date because he not only had "great fun" dancing it but he also had the opportunity to use his own creativity, to employ acting and timing techniques, and to draw upon his previous experiences outside of the realm of classical ballet in order to perfect this particular characterization.

The role of Puck is the most recent one created by Balanchine specifically for Arthur Mitchell, Since its creation in 1962, however, Mitchell has danced in practically

every ballet in the repertory of the New York City Ballet; he particularly enjoys dancing the Ragtime pas de deux in Ivesiana and the role of the Bridegroom in Bugaku. Although Mitchell's involvement in many additional activities during the late 1960's left little time with the New York City Ballet, he danced with this company whenever his schedule permitted.

Since he first appeared on Broadway in House of Flowers during the spring of 1955, Mitchell has performed in four other Broadway musicals entitled, respectively, Carmen Jones, Kiss Me Kate, Shinbone Alley, and Nöel Coward's Sweet Potato. During his appearances in Nöel Coward's Sweet Potato in 1968, Mitchell was involved in several professional projects; on weekdays, he worked with the children at the Harlem School of the Arts; on Sundays, he danced with the New York City Ballet; and at night, he sang, acted, and danced at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

Gian Carlo Menotti had observed Mitchell in his portrayal of the Unicorn in the opera entitled The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore, and invited him to form a company to participate in the Third Festival of Two Worlds to be held in Spoleto, Italy, during June and July of 1960. Mitchell made such an impression upon audiences at this Festival that he was invited to return the following year

to perform at the Fourth Festival. Instead of presenting an entire company of dancers, he returned to Spoleto with a partner only, Akiko Kanda. During the Festival in 1961, Mitchell choreographed the three dances which he and Akiko Kanda presented as well as the "Dance of the Seven Veils" for the Luchino Visconti production of Salome, the opera by Richard Strauss.

Arthur Mitchell takes an impish kind of delight in remembering the spring of 1962 as the season during which he replaced Dame Alicia Markova at the Metropolitan Opera. Markova became ill, and Arthur Mitchell and Violette Verdy, both of the New York City Ballet, were asked to appear as guest artists in the opera Orfeo ed Euridice. Although their dancing failed to receive any sensational reviews, the performances were exciting for Arthur Mitchell because they comprised his first experience as a premier danseur with the Metropolitan Opera.

During the years which followed Arthur Mitchell's success at Spoleto and his performances at the Metropolitan Opera, he has made innumerable appearances as guest artist--both as a soloist and in conjunction with special presentations of the New York City Ballet. One of his most memorable experiences was that of dancing the role of Mercutio in John Cranko's version of Romeo and Juliet in the annual gala

ballet celebration given by the Stuttgart State Opera Ballet in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1963. Following that performance, he was invited to Munich, Germany, where he danced in Heinz Rosen's Othello and Dance Panels in Seven Sections as well as in George Balanchine's Donizetti Variations and in John Taras' Orpheus. Other memorable guest performances included Mitchell's appearances in choreography by George Balanchine. He danced in Agon and in the role of the Dark Angel in Orpheus at the Hamburg Stravinsky Festival in Germany; he appeared with the New York City Ballet in Stars and Stripes at the inaugural program for President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in 1961; and in Western Symphony at the inaugural program for President Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1965. He danced in Agon at the Geneva Opera during the week of October 10 through 15, 1970, in conjunction with a complete program of Balanchine's works presented as a tribute to the famous choreographer.

Arthur Mitchell has made individual appearances before television viewing audiences in the United States on the Jinx Falkenburg Show, the Jackie Gleason Show, and the Harry Belafonte Specials. His television appearances, for the most part, however, have been in conjunction with the various dance companies of which he has been a member. While dancing with Donald McKayle in 1953, the company

filmed Games, Nocturne, and Rainbow Round My Shoulder for presentation on "Camera Three." Later, when he became a member of John Butler's American Dance Theatre, he danced in Butler's Three Promenades With the Lord for audiences in this country and again in Italy while the company was touring Europe. In 1960, while appearing at Spoleto, Mitchell's own company was filmed for Italian audiences. Some of Mitchell's major television appearances with the New York City Ballet included Stars and Stripes for presentation on the "Bell Telephone Hour" and The Nutcracker Suite for presentation on the Columbia Broadcasting System television network.

When Arthur Mitchell reflects upon his pioneering experiences as the first black permanent member of a major ballet company in the United States, he is even more determined to give to the world black classical dancers who have instilled within themselves the attitude that the major distinction between performing artists lies not in the color of their skin, but in their ability to perform. This is the reason that today he devotes the majority of his time to the preparation of such black artists. The multifaceted role which Arthur Mitchell was to play eventually began to manifest itself in 1953 at approximately the same period in his life as the beginning of his education in

ballet. His teacher, Karel Shook, recognized Mitchell's ability to teach and often delegated certain of his own classes to the aspiring young dancer. Mitchell's first teaching experiences occurred in the Katherine Dunham School in New York City where Shook was employed also; later experiences were afforded at the Studio of Dance Arts, also in New York City, which Shook owned and operated. Further opportunities for teaching resulted either directly or indirectly from Mitchell's association with the New York City Ballet. He taught for a short time at the Melissa Hayden School of Dance at Cedarhurst, Long Island, before becoming associated with the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D. C., in 1957--an association which lasted until 1963.

The First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal, in April of 1966 led to the recognition of Mitchell's organizational capabilities. Serving as Dance Chairman for the committee representing the United States, Mitchell organized a company of thirty-one black dancers which included such personalities as Paula Kelly, Claude Thompson, Carmen de Lavallade, Llanchie Stevenson, Sarah Yarborough, and William Louther. The members of the new company worked daily without any compensation and soon reached a high level of skill and artistry in performance.

This company of able dancers failed, however, to realize the rewards of their labors because, at the last moment, the members were informed that the budget of the Festival Committee had been reduced and that the money for Arthur Mitchell's dance company, therefore, was not forthcoming. The disappointed director had to disband his company of fine dancers. Mitchell's organizational capabilities, however, did not go unnoticed. Following the collapse of the company which he had assembled for the Festival of Negro Arts, the United States government invited him to serve as one of a trio of representatives from the United States to participate in a cultural exchange program with the Brazilian government. Mitchell accepted the assignment and, in March of 1966, left for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to assist in organizing the first National Ballet Company of Brazil. Although this newly-formed company was quite successful, internal politics forced its disbanding within a few months. Good fortune was with the dancers, however, since one of the young women in the company was married to a wealthy Brazilian who asked Mitchell to return the following year and to form a private ballet company.

In early January of 1967, Mitchell began traveling to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, whenever he was not appearing with the New York City Ballet. It was here that he began

to develop serious choreography. The Brazilians provided him with an environment for dance which was rich in folklore and religious rituals readily adaptable to the choreography of several ballets designed especially for the Brazilian company. These ballets were based upon Brazilian themes, ideas, and music, but they were choreographed within the traditional style of the classical ballet idiom.

Mitchell received such personal gratification through his work with the Brazilian company that he might have remained in that country had it not been for the assassination of Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior. On the day of King's assassination, Mitchell was en route to Brazil. He then decided to pay homage to the great leader by teaching ballet to his own people in his own country--the United States of America. Mitchell's decision following the assassination of Doctor King prompted him to call Dorothy Maynor, the Founder-Director of the Harlem School of the Arts, to offer his services to her well established School. The Department of Dance at this School was in an embryonic stage when Mitchell agreed to join the faculty and he promptly raised $25,000 for operating expenses. He opened the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts on July 8, 1968, three months after the assassination.

Prior to the opening of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts, Karel Shook, former teacher and friend of Arthur Mitchell, had been the Associate Artistic Director for the National Ballet of Holland for nine years. A few days following the assassination of Doctor King, Mitchell telephoned Shook in Amsterdam, Holland, and invited him to return to New York City as Ballet-Master and Associate Artistic Director of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts. Feeling a compulsion to accept the invitation, Shook left his position in Holland and joined Mitchell in New York City on July 31, 1968.

The Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts, which began with about thirty students in July, had grown to an enrollment of 250 by September of the same year. The news of the School had spread throughout New York City. Students from downtown came to Harlem to study with Mitchell and Shook, and several additional dancers became members of the embryonic dance company which was established in conjunction with the School. Shook decided not to return to Holland but to remain with Mitchell's project with full responsibilities as Ballet Master and Associate Artistic Director. His decision freed Mitchell for his necessary concentration upon the development of choreography for the

repertoire of the evolving dance company. Mitchell soon choreographed and produced Ode to Otis, the First Movement of Tones, and Rhythmetron for performances by his young company of black dancers. These dancers were eager to learn and, within a few weeks, they were ready for public presentation as a performing group. As a method of involving the community with the newly-formed Department of Dance, Mitchell and Shook initiated a series of lecture-demonstrations presented at Open House Sessions held in conjunction with each program presented at the Harlem School of the Arts.

The success of the new Department of Dance appeared to constitute a threat to the other established programs at the Harlem School of the Arts inasmuch as it attracted the majority of the students and the special attention and commendation of the patrons. During the summer of 1969, therefore, Miss Maynor ordered Mitchell and Shook to leave her premises by the middle of August. The two artists left, but with the conviction that they must return to Harlem soon to continue their work. In keeping with Mitchell's philosophy that "out of death comes birth," the closing of the Department of Dance at the Harlem School of the Arts initiated the official birth of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. This birth took place in mid-August, away from its ultimate

permanent home in Harlem, at the Glen Tetley Studio in Greenwich Village in New York City. This Studio was not insured properly to cover the needs of a school, and the Dance Theatre of Harlem was forced, therefore, to move again. On September 23, 1969, Mitchell and his organization moved into the Church of the Master at 86 Morningside Avenue which became the Harlem home of the Dance Theatre of Harlem until September 20, 1971.

In early December of 1969, the minister of the Church of the Master informed Mitchell of an increase in rent from $170 per month to $600 per month. As a result, Mitchell began searching for a new location for the Dance Theatre of Harlem. He found his building at 466 West 152nd Street and was able to purchase it through a generous benefactor. Following the purchase of the building, Mitchell busied himself with the plans necessary to convert it into a combined dance theatre and dance school such as he had begun at the Church of the Master. Thus re-established, the Dance Theatre of Harlem continues to provide a magnetic atmosphere for students of varied backgrounds and abilities. Although the core of study at the school is classical ballet, each member of the diversified staff is a specialist in his own right and contributes a personal genius to the provision of experiences in ethnological and modern dance as well as

in ballet. Mitchell makes a special point of having his students believe that a dancer is ". . . a thoroughbred--the best of the human race."

The dance company comprising the Dance Theatre of Harlem has existed in various stages of development since Arthur Mitchell initiated his project in 1968 in association with the Harlem School of the Arts. Determined to develop a dance school and a dance company simultaneously, he began with a nucleus of only four dancers who subjected themselves to an unbelievably rigorous schedule of physical and artistic improvement. Since the official formation of the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the organization has been a source of pride and of abundant rewards for all individuals associated with it. Mitchell considers the series of lecture-demonstrations--both those presented at the Wednesday afternoon Open House Sessions at the studio and those presented for various school and community groups, as one of the most important contributions to the dance which his organization can offer. During these demonstrations, Mitchell often involves the young audiences by asking volunteers to demonstrate current popular dance steps which he transforms into balletic movements. He encourages children to study ballet by showing them what the thirteen and fourteen-year-old members of his company have

accomplished. Most of these valuable lecture-demonstrations are made possible by the sponsorship of the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

An invitation to perform as the leading attraction of the First Bermuda Arts Council Summer Festival, held in June of 1970, opened the door to the first major tour for Mitchell's young company of dancers. Other engagements in the Caribbean included appearances in Nassau, The Bahamas, and Curacao, Netherlands Antilles. The repertory which the Dance Theatre of Harlem presented during the Caribbean Tour was comprised of Mitchell's Holberg Suite, Biosfera, Tones, Ode to Otis, and Rhythmetron, and of George Balanchine's Concerto Barocco. Significant during the Bermudian portion of the tour was the company's première performance of Concerto Barocco. Here, Mitchell sat in the audience and wept as he saw his ". . . beautiful black children" in soft white costumes, dancing one of the best ballets of one of the greatest choreographers living today, with the verve and expertise of a seasoned company.

Arthur Mitchell considers the week of August 18 through 22, 1970, a special landmark in the brief history of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. It marks the first "real engagement" of the company in the United States. The company had the honor of being the only dance group presented at the

Ted Shawn Theatre during the ninth week of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated. The response of the audience at "the Pillow" was especially significant for it was indicative of the reactions of dance audiences throughout the United States. Because it was important that the new all-black classical dance company perform the ballets of its black choreographer, Arthur Mitchell selected carefully the dances to be presented. On opening night, the appreciative audience gave the young dancers a standing ovation and demanded nine curtain calls. The remainder of the week was equally successful and capacity crowds kept coming for both matinee and evening performances. Critics and photographers alike were in attendance from New York City and the surrounding towns, and the Dance Theatre of Harlem was warmly received at every performance.

In October of 1970, the Dance Theatre of Harlem performed in Trinidad and in Jamaica. The company was again a source of personal and professional pride for Mitchell and for the members of his staff. A continuing sense of satisfaction for Mitchell also lies in the fact that students and potential members of the dance company seem drawn magnetically to the unique atmosphere of the Dance Theatre of Harlem wherever the company has appeared throughout the United States and abroad. In October of 1970

also, after two years of existence, the first television appearance of the Dance Theatre of Harlem was scheduled in the form of a master class filmed for viewing on the Educational Television Network of Cincinnati, Ohio. Later, on December 24 of the same year, four members of the company appeared on the Polaroid Television Special entitled "A Holiday Celebration With Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee."

The Dance Theatre of Harlem began its performing season of 1971 with its official New York City début at the Guggenheim Museum, January 8 through 10, 1971. The program was comprised of three ballets by Mitchell--Tones, Rhythmetron, and the première of Fête Noire. The new ballet, Fête Noire, was dedicated to Mrs. Alva B. Gimbel who, through a generous gift, made the performances at the Guggenheim Museum possible. Each performance ended with standing ovations and cheering crowds.

Arthur Mitchell's company made its Broadway début at the American National Theatre and Academy on March 8, 10, and 12, 1971. New additions to the repertory included Jerome Robbins' Afternoon of a Faun, John Taras' Designs for Strings, and the première of Mitchell's new ballet entitled Fun and Games. The critics in New York City responded favorably to all of the ballets performed by the Dance Theatre of Harlem with the exception of Fun and Games.

They seemed disappointed with the story line of the ballet rather than with the dancing of it. The outstanding critical approval awarded to the remaining ballets on the program appeared to be an excellent indication of the future success of Mitchell's young dance company. Each performance was sold out, and each performance ended with cheering and enthusiastic applause.

On May 6, 1971, the New York City Ballet presented its annual benefit performance in conjunction with Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem. This was the first time in its history that the New York City Ballet had performed in conjunction with another dance group. Co-choreographers George Balanchine and Arthur Mitchell offered their audiences a "one-time only" performance of Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra. The critics called the merging onstage of the all-white New York City Ballet and the all-black Dance Theatre of Harlem a "fascinating comparison of style." Although the performance was not considered an outstanding contribution to dance, it accomplished its purpose--that of entertaining those who attended the ballet benefit.

Unforgettable among the experiences for the company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem is a recent triumphant European Tour. This tour began on June 25, 1971, with

performances at the Fourteenth Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. The company performed also in the Netherlands and in Belgium. The audiences at Spoleto responded to the dancers with twenty-minute standing ovations and insistent, rhythmic chanting of "Bis!" "Bis!" In Amsterdam, the entire scheduled engagement was sold out and the original number of performances was extended These experiences, new and unique for the young dancers, served to impress upon each individual involved the fact that the Dance Theatre of Harlem was well on its way and would assume ultimately its place among the world's foremost ballet companies.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem returned to New York City from its European Tour to prepare for the occupancy of its ultimate and present permanent home during the week of September 20, 1971. A building which was formerly a garage had been completely renovated and transformed into three dance studios, a workshop, a music room, a costume room, dressing rooms, offices, and lounges. The Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, could now offer, on a permanent basis, a functional program of uninterrupted service to the community. The company of the Dance Theatre of Harlem was recognized as an overt manifestation of the aims and objectives of the Harlem School. In a phenomenally short period

of time, the company had received worldwide recognition, had progressed smoothly from one type of engagement to another, had enjoyed remarkable success, and had become increasingly determined to bring pride in and artistic appreciation of the ballet to the community of Harlem.

Arthur Mitchell, the dance artist, has envisioned and developed a unique project in Harlem. Founded upon the premise that all children should be given an equal opportunity to realize their own aspirations of artistic performance and to make their own contributions to society, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Incorporated, is unique in that Mitchell chose one of the world's best-known ghetto areas as his locale for taking dance to the people. Mitchell is a man of extraordinary dedication and stamina, an eloquent performer, and an energetic teacher. He considers his careers as a performer and as a teacher complementary to each other and prefers not to separate the two. Lincoln Kirstein has described Mitchell as "elegance itself"; Mitchell seeks for his students the same degree of excellence which he has achieved. With respect to his choreography, Arthur Mitchell's dancers find it unique and exciting because, although it introduces all forms of dance, it is executed with the elegant style of the classical ballet. In addition, Mitchell is sensitive to the special qualities

and abilities of each of his dancers and either choreographs to emphasize the strengths of each dancer or pushes him to the point of overcoming any inadequacies.

The business affairs of the Dance Theatre of Harlem are directed with the same degree of verve as are the artistic aspects of this unusual organization. Although Mitchell has assembled an excellent administrative staff, he personally oversees every decision concerning the Dance Theatre of Harlem, monetary and otherwise. He has learned to make schedules and to write reports, to keep books and to balance budgets, and--perhaps most important of all--he has learned how to make a non-profit organization finish the fiscal year within the limits of its budget.

As a friend and father-image to the individuals comprising his organization, Mitchell watches dutifully over everyone associated with the Dance Theatre of Harlem as if he or she were indeed his own child. His concern for the younger members of the company is well-founded as he has teenage girls from as far away as Atlanta, Georgia, and Kansas City, Kansas. Mitchell finds suitable housing for his youngsters, sends them to the Professional Children's School, and arranges tutorial services for those with academic deficiencies. The dancers maintain a family atmosphere, and their relationships are built upon a genuine

love for each other. As members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, their lives have taken on a new purpose; they feel that they are needed and that they belong.

Arthur Mitchell's project is unique in that it provides for every interested child the opportunity to study dance. For those who cannot afford to pay for their classes, arrangements are made for lessons through Foundation funds. Mitchell's dream precludes denial of anyone who wishes to study dance. The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique also in that it is the only permanent black classical ballet company ever to exist. Mitchell furthermore has prepared students to perform within a period of two years although normally it takes a minimum of ten years to "train" the professional ballet dancer. He has recognized the necessity to produce dancers in a short time in order that young blacks could have a dance company to which they might aspire and through which they might earn their livelihood.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique in the quality of the achievements of its youth. The dancers are a group of young persons who love to perform, and they do so with their hearts and souls because they have made their choices and have dedicated their lives to their art. Whether or not these young boys and girls are the greatest dancers in the world is irrelevant; Mitchell believes that, historically,

the Dance Theatre of Harlem will prove to be of worldwide significance.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem is unique in that it has Arthur Mitchell as its leader. He generates a contagious energy which appears to attract individuals to him. Once these individuals are influenced by him, their lives assume a sense of direction which they have formerly lacked. Mitchell's success has been attributed to his deep and all-pervading conviction of spirituality. He has an almost superhuman strength and will-power coupled with a devout belief in God. For his extraordinary dedication to his unique project, he was honored on May 26, 1971, as the recipient of the Capezio Dance Award.

As Arthur Mitchell views the future, he envisions the fulfillment of his dream. The Dance Theatre of Harlem, in the 1970's, has moved into its new facility at 466 West 152nd Street in Harlem where the curriculum will be broadened still further to include additional forms of dance, acting, and music. Perhaps the most ambitious projection for the Dance Theatre of Harlem is the establishment of a fully accredited academic school by the fall of 1973. Other plans for the future of the Dance Theatre of Harlem company encompass an expansion of its repertoire to include the works of many other choreographers. Among the projected

additions are George Balanchine's Agon, Lester Horton's The Beloved, and Doris Humphrey's The Shakers. In addition, the performance rights for the production of the ballet Carmen have been acquired by the Dance Theatre of Harlem with the entire production costs underwritten by the Ruth Page Foundation. The company will expand also its schedule of performances to include a number of benefits.

With respect to his own plans for the future, Arthur Mitchell proposes to continue to dance with the New York City Ballet whenever his schedule permits him to do so, and to continue his direction of the Dance Theatre of Harlem which is his lifetime commitment. Although the Dance Theatre of Harlem is basically black and located in a black community, it will continue to exist for all people--to provide through the arts enrichment, hope, and a belief in the natural dignity of man regardless of his economic or social status. To many, this enterprising and dedicated artist, Arthur Mitchell, represents more than an artistic leader; he is, as Charles DeRose calls him, a "Messiah of Hope."

Chapters VIII, IX, and X were devoted to the life and contributions of Alvin Ailey. These chapters were summarized in Chapter XI, pages 685 through 731.

Alvin Ailey, Junior, is the outstanding contemporary black male dance artist in the idiom of modern dance selected as a co-subject of this biographical dissertation. He was born in Rogers, Texas, to Alvin Ailey, Senior, and Lula Cliff Ailey on January 5, 1931. Ailey, Senior, abandoned his wife soon after the birth of her infant son and left them to provide for themselves. As a result, Lula Ailey solicited washing and ironing from neighboring white residents and cultivated a bean garden in order to provide for their bare subsistence.

Alvin's childhood was characterized by frequent moves from one Texas community to another as his mother took advantage of various opportunities for remunerative employment. Alvin attended the Navasota Colored School in Navasota, Texas, where, as a fourth grader, he was allowed to play the tuba with the high school band. He also exhibited early artistic interests by drawing sketches of small living things in a "Big Ben" writing tablet which he carried with him at all times. Upon his tablet he recorded verses also which he composed about interesting things which he either saw or imagined. Sundays for the Aileys were filled with attending church and engaging in church-related activities as members of the True Vine Baptist Church. Baptismal ceremonies witnessed by young Alvin, coupled with

the racial friction which existed among Southern blacks and whites and with the pattern of social life among the blacks in Southeast Texas, later influenced Ailey's choreography of several of his most outstanding works entitled Revelations, Masekela Language, and Blues Suite. During his boyhood, however, Alvin's only outward artistic expression was manifested through his drawings and his poems.

During the summer of 1942, Lula Ailey and her son moved to Los Angeles where Alvin entered Valencia Junior High School, the first integrated school which he had ever attended. He was so unhappy in this predominately white setting that his mother moved to another neigoborhood where he attended George Washington Carver Junior High School, a black school. There he became a member of the Glee Club and developed an intense involvement with singing and with the sound of music. He enrolled also in a class in creative writing where he continued to write poems as well as to become acquainted for the first time with the works of renowned poets. Alvin Ailey saw his first ballet when he was in junior high school. This performance by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo introduced him to the world of the theatre. By 1945, he had formed the habit of riding a bus each Saturday to the downtown section of Los Angeles in which the Biltmore and Orpheum Theatres were located. It

was at the Biltmore Theatre that he saw the 1945 version of Katherine Dunham's Tropical Revue which overwhelmed and fascinated him with the colorful costumes and the heavy make-up which were worn by the dancers.

While attending the Thomas Jefferson Senior High School, Ailey extended his academic interests to include literature and foreign languages. He became so fluent in Spanish and in French that his services were enlisted as a substitute teacher whenever the regular high school teachers of those languages were absent. His interest in Spanish literature led ultimately to his choreography of a dance drama entitled Feast of Ashes, based upon Federico García Lorca's play entitled The House of Bernarda Alba.

The milieu of black social activity during the period of World War II was centered on Central Avenue in Los Angeles. As often as he could afford the prices of admission, young Alvin frequented The Bill Robinson, The Florence Mills, The Rosebud, and The Lincoln Theatres. It was there that he viewed the early musicals of Gene Kelly and of Fred Astaire. Ailey credits Kelly with the establishment of his first genuine respect for the male dancer. The Lincoln Theatre featured live entertainment and provided Alvin Ailey with the opportunity to view such famous black performers as Pearl Bailey, Pigmeat Markham, Duke Ellington, and Billie

Holiday. At school, the first of his peers whom Ailey saw performing a dance was Ronald Gaffney, a fellow student who had had no formal training but who was a self-styled performer and choreographer. At one of these performances, Ailey saw Carmen de Lavallade dance with Gaffney in Scheherazade and, a short time later, he saw her perform a ballet dance set to music by Mozart. Ailey, deeply impressed by her beauty and her ability, sought an introduction to this girl, and today Carmen de Lavallade laughingly claims the credit for influencing Ailey's distinguished dance career.

The person who actually convinced Alvin Ailey to study dance seriously, however, was Ted Crumb, a boy who practiced at home the techniques which he had learned at various dance studios. Ailey became Crumb's regular audience during these practice sessions and Crumb, in turn, gave patient demonstrations and explanations and even persuaded Ailey to try some of the movements himself. One day, early in his senior year of high school, Ted Crumb demonstrated some modern dance techniques to Ailey which made the latter "tingle with excitement." After learning that these movements stemmed from Bella Lewitzky, who taught and danced in Hollywood at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, Ailey visited the Horton organization. Ailey's introduction to the Lester

Horton Dance Theatre was for him "an experience to remember." Carmen de Lavallade, Ted Crumb, and James Truitte were all in the class--"all dancing beautifully." Ailey made many more visits to the Lester Horton Dance Theatre where, sitting in the back of the combination theatre-studio, he watched the company of dancers rehearsing on stage. He decided that he wished to be a part of this beautiful activity and that, upon his graduation from senior high school, he would return to the Lester Horton Dance School and enroll in classes.

In 1949, Alvin Ailey enrolled in the beginners' class at the Lester Horton Dance School for one month after which he began his academic studies at the University of California at Los Angeles. One month later, Lester Horton himself telephoned Alvin Ailey and, upon learning of his financial situation, offered him a working scholarship at his dance school which involved Ailey's assisting with the lighting and working as a general "handy-man" for the weekly performances of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre. In exchange for these services, Ailey was permitted to enroll in those dance classes which he could fit into his schedule. A full class load at the University of California at Los Angeles and an eight-hour working "shift" at a nearby restaurant, however, made it impossible for him to enroll in dance classes on days other than Saturdays.

During the spring of 1949, Alvin Ailey's daily schedule proved too strenuous for him and he decided, therefore, not to return to the University in the fall. During the summer months, he enrolled in two classes in Horton dance techniques each week and became involved also in a composition class in which he completed his first dance study--a workshop exercise which related sculpture and painting to movement. Despite this increasing interest in dance, however, during the fall Ailey moved to San Francisco, California, where he continued his academic studies at the San Francisco State College. He obtained evening employment at the Greyhound Bus Terminal in order to leave his days free for a full schedule of academic classes. At the beginning of the spring semester in 1950, Ailey underwent surgery for the removal of a non-functional kidney. During his period of recuperation, he met Lon Fonteyne, a dance-choreographer who had a night club act which was performing at the Champagne Supper Club in downtown San Francisco. Fonteyne invited Ailey to audition for a place in his act and, after the audition, immediately employed him. When Fonteyne took his act to Los Angeles for an engagement, Ailey immediately visited the Horton Theatre where he saw a new suite of Latin dances which Horton had choreographed. This experience convinced Ailey that he must return to Los

Angeles and study seriously at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School; he returned to San Francisco, packed his belongings, and moved back to Los Angeles.

When Alvin Ailey enrolled again at the Lester Horton Dance Theatre School early in 1953, he participated in two or three classes each day. He became also a member of Horton's workshop group and began to learn some of the dances in the Horton repertory. During that summer, he choreographed his first complete dance, entitled Afternoon Blues, and he danced for the first time with Carmen de Lavallade as he performed the male role in the Horton choreographic work entitled Dedication to José Clemente Orozco. During the late spring of 1953, Jack Cole, the well-known choreographer for Broadway musicals and motion pictures, selected Alvin Ailey, Claude Thompson, and Carmen de Lavallade to dance in his choreography for the motion picture entitled Lydia Bailey. Ailey was unable to appear in the motion picture as scheduled because he became ill with mononucleosis. Despite this misfortune, Ailey refers to the period of intensive rehearsals for his proposed appearance in Lydia Bailey as "two of the most exciting weeks" in his life. Jack Cole became one more person who influenced the early professional career of Alvin Ailey who was, in later years, to resort periodically to Cole's

method of structuring a dance. In 1953, also, while the Lester Horton Dance Theatre was performing at Ciro's in Hollywood, Horton suffered a fatal heart attack. Because he had been the sole choreographer for his company, his death left its members in a dilemma. Plans for their annual spring concert included the choreography of a new dance for the opening performance at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles. Frank Eng, former motion picture and drama critic of the Los Angeles Daily News, assumed immediate directorship of the company and invited each member to submit scenarios of dances which he or she wished to choreograph. Ailey was the only member of the company who accepted the opportunity. Two of his works, submitted under the titles of According to Saint Francis and Mourning, Mourning, respectively, were accepted by Eng and the members of the company. Ailey subsequently choreographed, directed, and supervised the production of these two works which were presented as planned at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles on June 4, 1954.

Following this venture with Alvin Ailey as the new choreographer, several activities developed within the Horton organization. A Children's Theatre was initiated in conjunction with the School; Ailey and de Lavallade were cast as a dance team in the RKO motion picture production of

Carmen Jones; and the members of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre began rehearsing for an engagement at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated. Ailey was uncomfortable with the children, personally successful in Carmen Jones, and a disappointment at Jacob's Pillow. The trip to Jacob's Pillow, however, opened up new avenues of exposure for Ailey and for Carmen de Lavallade. Monte Kaye, a theatrical producer-promoter, arranged for the company to travel to New York City following the final performance at Jacob's Pillow in order to audition at the Alvin Theatre for a possible future appearance on television. During this audition, Arnold Saint Subber, the producer of a forthcoming musical, entitled House of Flowers, invited Ailey and de Lavallade to remain in New York City as members of his cast. They refused his offer, however, by explaining their seriousness with respect to returning to the West Coast in order to keep the Lester Horton Dance Theatre in existence. The two artists returned, therefore, to the West Coast and began preparations for the annual scholarship fund-raising event, the Bal Caribe, in October of 1954. This called again upon Ailey's creative resources; as a result, he devised variations on folk and Latin dances for the formal presentation of the program which was acclaimed the "finest in Horton dance group history."

On December 11, 1954, Saint Subber telephoned Ailey and de Lavallade and again extended to them an invitation to become members of the cast of the House of Flowers. Herbert Ross, who was enjoying success as the choreographer for the film version of Carmen Jones and who had replaced George Balanchine as the choreographer for the House of Flowers, had suggested that these two artists be added to the cast as featured dancers. Ailey and de Lavallade joined the cast, billed simply as the dancers, "Alvin" and "Carmen" performing a "sexy" pas de deux which was well received by the audiences. Following the opening of the musical in New York City on December 30, 1954, Ross choreographed another dance for Ailey entitled Slide, Boy, Slide, which was incorporated within the production during the following April.

Shortly after his arrival in New York City, Alvin Ailey initiated his program of self-improvement by seeking those master teachers of modern dance of whom he had heard high praise. He was disappointed with what he found as none of the teachers offered techniques which were similar to those of Lester Horton. Eventually, Ailey visited Karel Shook's Studio of Dance Arts which was located in Greenwich Village. Shook convinced him that, if he were serious about choreography, he should study ballet, and, as a result, Ailey came often to the Studio of Dance Arts although he

observed more often than he danced in the ballet classes. Ailey considers the period from 1955 through 1959 his "apprentice years." During these years, he danced for different choreographers, enrolled periodically in various dance classes, visted rehearsals at different dance studios and generally absorbed materials for his own use in the future. During the fall of 1955, he played the role of a Chinese bandit in the off-Broadway production of The Carefree Tree; in the spring of 1956, he was featured with Mary Hinkson in the road company of the show entitled Sing, Man, Sing, starring Harry Belafonte; in the spring of 1957, he performed in a Calypso Revue which starred and was produced by Geoffrey Holder; during the summer of 1957, he performed in the Jones Beach production of Showboat; and, in the fall of 1957, he and Christyne Lawson headed the "dance brigade" in the Broadway musical entitled Jamaica, choreographed by Jack Cole.

Ailey's first concert in New York City was presented on March 30, 1958, at the Kaufmann Concert Hall of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA. Featuring Talley Beatty as guest artist, the program was comprised of two major works by Ailey, entitled Ode and Homage and Blues Suite, respectively, as well as four of his five dances based upon Latin themes. Ailey's first choreographic venture in New York City

presented jointly with Ernest Parham, received satisfactory reviews and the response of the audience was enthusiastic. The success of that first concert encouraged Ailey to organize his own company and to present a second concert in New York City on December 21, 1958, at the Kaufmann Concert Hall, nine months after his initial program. With Carmen de Lavallade as guest artist, Alvin Ailey and Company presented Cinco Latinos, Blues Suite, and a new work entitled Ariette Oubliée. The critics were generally receptive to the concert, and P. W. Manchester, delighted with it, called it ". . . stimulating, exciting, beautiful, funny, and original entertainment." Not only was Ailey a gifted choreographer, but he had been able also to assemble some of the most talented black dancers in New York City for the presentation of his works. He was fortunate in the sense that all of these dancers knew and respected the abilities of each other; there was no rivalry between them, and they were all interested in assisting Alvin Ailey to establish himself as a recognized choreographer.

Ailey's third major concert was presented at the Kaufmann Concert Hall of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA in New York City on January 31, 1960. This time the group was designated as the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater. With the lapse of over a year since his last appearance there, Ailey

had not only prepared new works for presentation but he had also restructured some of his earlier choreography to add to the program. One of the latter was his Creation of the World to music by Milhaud. He danced this work with Matt Turney, his guest artist from the Martha Graham Dance Company, and "caused a small sensation." The première of Revelations followed and evoked appreciative applause and cheers from the audience. A repeat performance was presented on February 28, 1960, at which time James Truitte, a member of the Horton company whom Ailey had persuaded to come to New York City from the West Coast, joined his company.

During the spring of 1960, Alvin Ailey met Edele Holtz, Director of the Westside Young Women's Christian Association, which was located in mid-town Manhattan. At that time, Ailey was searching primarily for rehearsal space but he received much more than that from his new acquaintance. Holtz converted the entire second floor of the YWCA building into an organization called the Clark Center for the Performing Arts and made the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater the resident dance company for the new organization. In addition to providing Ailey and the members of his company with a place in which to rehearse, to store costumes, and to teach classes, Holtz had the small auditorium renovated

and converted into a concert hall in order that the dancers might present programs which would yield financial returns.

In October of 1960, the Clark Center for the Performing Arts was opened officially. The first concert of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater in its new home was on November 27 of that year. Again, Carmen de Lavallade danced as Ailey's guest artist. Her appearance and the fact that James Truitte was now a member of his company influenced Ailey to include in the program the choreography of other artists. On the program, therefore, were Lester Horton's The Beloved, danced by de Lavallade and Truitte, and John Butler's Portrait of Billie, performed by de Lavallade and Glen Tetley. The première of Ailey's Knoxville: Summer of 1915, based upon a prose poem by the late James Agee was presented also.

In January of 1961, Ailey made his dramatic début in the off-Broadway production of Michael Shurtleff's play entitled Call Me By My Rightful Name. His début in drama received encouraging critical response which was especially pleasing since he had not studied acting before his appearance in this dramatic role.

Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade, during the summer of 1961, danced the former's Jazz Piece, later retitled Roots of the Blues, at the Tenth Annual Boston Arts

Festival. Performing to music arranged by the soulful blues singer, Brother John Sellers, and accompanied by him and two of his musicians, Ailey and de Lavallade danced for fifteen minutes and literally ". . . stopped the show cold every single night." During the remainder of the summer of 1961, Ailey enacted the role of a college professor in a play entitled Ding Dong Bell, and made a successful return appearance at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated. That fall he enacted the role also of a soft-hearted prize fighter in the production of William Saroyan's play entitled Two by Saroyan.

During the fall of 1961, Ailey and the members of his company were invited to tour Southeast Asia under the auspices of the President's Special International Program for Cultural Presentations. In preparation for this tour, Ailey enlarged his company from six to ten dancers and completed the choreography for three new works entitled, respectively, Been Here and Gone, Two for Now, and Hermit Songs. With his special guest star, Carmen de Lavallade, receiving equal billing, the de Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company embarked on January 30, 1962, upon its tour of thirteen weeks in Southeast Asia. In addition to choreography by Ailey, the repertory for the tour included Lester Horton's The Beloved, John Butler's Letter to a Lady,

and Glen Tetley's Mountainway Chant. The tour began in Sydney, Australia, where the members of the company found the Australian summer delightful as well as the response of the audiences and dance critics, and ended in Seoul, Korea, where a riot occurred on the closing night because there were so many individuals who wished to see the sold-out performance but could not obtain tickets. The company received superlative reviews throughout the duration of the tour; Ailey and de Lavallade spoke constantly of their feeling of humility in experiencing such a warm response and of their desire to learn much from their tour of the Far East. Ailey returned to New York City late in May of 1962 with the satisfaction of knowing that the members of his company had been successful as Cultural Ambassadors for the United States of America.

During the summer of 1962, Ailey taught a course in Jazz Forms at the Connecticut College School of Dance in New London, performed with his company at the Connecticut College Dance Festival, commuted daily to Watch Hill, Rhode Island, where he choreographed Feast of Ashes for the Joffrey Ballet, and suffered an emotional and professional parting of the ways with Carmen de Lavallade. Highlights of the remainder of the year of 1962 included a performance by the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater at the Rebekah Harkness

Foundation Dance Festival in the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park in New York City which was attended by the members of the Bolshoi Ballet, and a dramatic performance which marked the end of Ailey's acting career. The latter event occurred when Josh Logan--Director of the Broadway play entitled Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright--was determined to give Ailey his "big chance," and cast him in the leading role of the play, supported by such talented performers as Claudia McNeil, Dianna Sands, Robert Lee Hooks, Roscoe Lee Brown, Al Freeman, Junior, and Cicely Tyson. As a result, Ailey was outstanding in his failure and concluded that both acting and dancing were serious arts and that neither should be engaged in haphazardly. With this experience, his potential career as an actor ended during the fall of 1962.

The year of 1963 found Alvin Ailey choreographing new works and restructuring old ones. He presented the première performances of his Reflections in D, Suspensions, and Labyrinth at the Brooklyn Academy of Music during the spring and restructured and combined sections of his Blues Suite and Roots of the Blues to produce the suite, ultimately entitled The Blues Roll On, which was presented in a series of summer performances. During the late summer of 1963, Alvin Ailey and his company joined Duke Ellington and Talley Beatty in Chicago, Illinois, in the preparation of the

production of a musical entitled My People for the Black Centennial Exposition held in that city. From Chicago, the company went to Brazil to participate in the International Music Festival held in Rio de Janeiro during the early part of September of 1963. At the close of the Festival, Ailey traveled to Bahia, Brazil, to conduct research on the "Macumba" for Rebekah Harkness. Following a week of observation and study of folk dances in Bahia, Ailey left Brazil to return to New York City to prepare his company for its first American tour. The itinerary included many engagements on the East Coast and throughout the South.

During the spring of 1964, Joyce Trisler, a white dancer from the Horton days, joined Alvin Ailey's company as a guest artist. Her presence in the company expanded further the range of choreographic presentations as she and James Truitte danced works by Lester Horton as well as their own choreographies. Ailey acquired also for his repertory three works by Talley Beatty entitled, respectively, Tocatto, Congo Tango Palace, and The Road of the Phoebe Snow. During the summer of 1964, Ailey's choreographic work entitled Revelations reached its perfected form. Following the September 1 performance of this work in Central Park, the dance critic, Walter Terry, wrote that the company succeeded triumphantly in projecting its

[Revelations] stated theme--"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!"

On September 7, 1964, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, under the aegis of Michael Dorfman of England, began a three-month tour of Europe, opening with engagements in Paris, France, at the Theatre des Champs Elysée. During this tour, Ailey expressed his ambition to develop a reportory company in order to present great works which dance audiences rarely had had an opportunity to see. He was well on his way to realizing this goal as his repertory for the European tour included, in addition to his own works, those of Talley Beatty, Lester Horton, James Truitte, and Joyce Trisler.

Ailey's first European tour with performances in Paris and in London established the trend of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater for the next several years--that of becoming a touring company. Ailey returned to the United States for one month during which he acquired for his repertoire Louis Johnson's Lament and Anna Sokolow's Rooms, and revised his own choreography for Hermit Songs. His company, now called the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, in order to emphasize its repertoire of works by American choreographers, opened at the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney, Australia, on December 30, 1964, to a most favorable reception

by audiences and by representatives of the press. The company successfully performed for six weeks in Sydney and in Melbourne, Australia. The only controversial work in the repertoire was Anna Sokolow's Rooms which was accepted in Sydney but, because of its deep psychological implications, was banned by the management at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne to preclude the possibility of an adverse reception on the part of the general public.

Ailey was now dancing less than was his custom, and, by the time that his company opened again in London during March of 1965, he had taught most of his dance roles to other members of his company, revising Hermit Songs for William Louther. The two weeks of the London engagement were the beginning of a tour of Europe which lasted three months. The company fulfilled many "one night stands" en route to the European Festivals of the Arts which were the major reason for the extended tour. As representatives of the United States at the Paris Festival of Nations, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater enjoyed a warm reception at the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre on May 27, 1965. Although Ailey danced little, the critics in Paris still praised him for his performances by calling Ailey his "best exponent" of his own dance because he epitomized ". . . the strength and grace of his own style of interpretative dancing at its

most potent." Following the Festival in Paris, the company performed in many Italian towns en route to the major event of the tour, the Florentine Festival. In Italy, the company, having been together for nine months, began experiencing some artistic difficulties. William Louther, to whom the Italians gave much attention, insisted that he should receive star billing with the company. Ten days before the Florentine Festival, he severed all relationships with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater which meant that, in order to fulfill his commitments in conjunction with the Florentine Festival, Ailey, who had all but stopped dancing completely, had to return to the stage and perform Hermit Songs as well as Louther's other roles in Rooms, Blues Suite, and Revelations. Following the final Festival performance, Ailey discarded his tights and decided that he would never combine the two roles of dancer and director again.

Following a brief vacation in the Mediterranean area, Ailey returned to New York City in September of 1965 where he reorganized his company for the fulfillment of commitments at several colleges and universities during the fall of 1965. Ailey's stay at home was brief because he could not resist the temptation of another European tour. The company, therefore, embarked upon its third European

tour on February 14, 1966, performing in Germany, Holland, and Italy. Highlights of this tour included an hour-long ovation in Muenster, Germany, where the tour opened; the filming of Revelations on stage in Berlin; and appearances at the Piccolo Theatre in Milan which satisfied Ailey's desire of many years to present his dance company in that particular theatre and city. Unfortunately, however, their impresario, Michael Dorfman, had had some embarrassing difficulties with a black play which he had booked ahead of Ailey's dance company, and the management of several theatres cancelled all future bookings by Dorfman. As a result, Ailey and the members of his company were stranded in Europe without remunerative engagements of any sort. Relief from their dilemma, however, came in the form of scheduled appearances at the First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal, during the month of April. An invitation to join the Rebekah Harkness Ballet in Barcelona, Spain, during the month of May, 1966, led ultimately to the merging of the two companies for performances at the Festival du Marais in Paris, France, during June of 1966.

Following the appearances in Paris, Ailey abandoned temporarily the direction of his own company; in late August, he began rehearsals for Franco Zeffirelli's production of the opera entitled Antony and Cleopatra, which

opened at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City on September 16, 1966. In Ailey's opinion, the opera was not successful. During the fall of the same year, Ailey met Gil Shiva, a managing agent who convinced him to re-organize his own company once again. Shiva obtained assistance from the National Endowment of the Arts and arranged for Ailey a tour of East and West Africa sponsored by the Department of State of the United States Government projected for the fall of 1967. Ailey re-assembled the members of his company, added several new dancers, and expanded his repertoire to include Journey by Joyce Trisler, Prodigal Prince by Geoffrey Holder, and Metallics by Paul Sanasardo. That spring, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater received its certificate of incorporation under the official title of the Dance Theatre Foundation, Incorporated, thus making it possible to appeal to Foundations for grants for rehearsal costs and to initiate plans for the establishment of a permanent resident dance company and a school in New York City.

Having been invited to appear again at the European Festivals of the Arts, the newly assembled Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater embarked upon a tour of Europe and Israel on May 22, 1967. Festivals at which the company performed included the Festival Fulbenkian de Music in Portugal, the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, the Summer

Festival in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, and the Israel Festival in Jeruselem. Ailey and the members of his company, now better known internationally than at home in New York City, followed the appearances at the various European Festivals with a tour of nine African countries under the auspices of the Department of State of the United States Government from September 12 through November 6, 1967. The tour took the company to Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Ethopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and the Motoyasy Republic.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater began 1968 with a tour of the United States of America which entailed travel from Manhattan throughout the East Coast, the Midwest, the Northwest, and the West Coast. Important on the schedule were performances at the Hunter College Playhouse which marked the company's first performances in New York City since 1964. Important also was the first appearance of Ailey's company in California where, under the auspices of the Intercampus Cultural Exchange Committee of the University of California, the company performed on the university campuses at Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz. At the end of the 1968 American tour, Ailey traveled to Mexico City where he adapted the choreography for his Revelations for the

Ballet Folklorico to which he had granted performance rights for the presentation of this work in conjunction with the 1968 Olympic Games held in Mexico; he obtained a Guggenheim Fellowship to re-construct Knoxville: Summer of 1915 and to choreograph a new ballet entitled Quintet; and he received $15,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts for the purpose of creating new works.

Inasmuch as Alvin Ailey had never before had so much money at his disposal at one time, he decided to accomplish several professional projects. He commissioned Talley Beatty to choreograph a new ballet, entitled Black Belt; he re-constructed and re-costumed former dances; he costumed Black Belt; and he acquired and costumed Icarus by Lucas Hoving. He and the members of his company, however, departed for Europe to appear again at the major European Festivals of the Arts without having finished the works for which Ailey had received grants. While in Amsterdam during the month of July of 1968, Ailey completed the re-structuring and costuming of Knoxville: Summer of 1915 and, while the members of his company danced at the Edinburgh Festival in August, he quickly finished and presented Quintet along with the new version of Knoxville: Summer of 1915. The performances in Edinburgh were, technically, the termination of Ailey's fifth European tour. The proposed London season

which was scheduled to follow the engagement in Edinburgh failed to materialize because no suitable theatre was available for the company during the time designated. Unable to maintain his company for five weeks without remunerative engagements, Ailey cancelled the remainder of the tour.

In January of 1969, Ailey's company had the distinguished honor of appearing in its first Broadway season. This company, which had been heralded throughout Europe and Australia, had had to wait a decade for the experience of performing on Broadway in its own "hometown." Regardless of how long it had taken to reach this goal, however, Ailey was happy for his season of one week at the Billy Rose Theatre. The dance critics and the Broadway audiences were pleased with the week of performances.

Having outgrown the facilities at the Clark Center for the Performing Arts, Ailey accepted an offer for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to become a resident company of the Brooklyn Academy of Music during the spring of 1969. He had been promised rehearsal space, office space, storage space for costumes, and an area for a school but he found subsequently that the only actual advantages that the new residency afforded were two guaranteed seasons of one week each per year, a sizeable theatre, and the benefit of a live orchestra. Following its début

performance as a new resident company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in April of 1969, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater enjoyed successful performances throughout the United States. Important was Ailey's première of Masakela Langage which terminated a residency of two weeks at Connecticut College in New London during the month of August.

Ailey's next choreographic achievements occurred during the spring of 1970. Following the Winter-Spring American Tour, Ailey and the members of his company had three free weeks before beginning their second spring residency at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Disturbed by the fact that there were no new ballets for presentation during the forthcoming season, Ailey choreographed two ballets entitled Streams and Gymnopaedies, respectively. Both works received favorable reviews by the dance critics in New York City.

Early in 1970, representatives from the Department of State of the United States Government requested that Ailey not commit his company to any engagements after the month of June pending a possible tour of the Soviet Union. Ailey complied with this request and found himself without engagements for his company at the close of the season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on April 26, 1970. Weary of

all of the difficulties involved in maintaining a company, Alvin Ailey announced the dissolution of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater with the final performance of the company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on April 26, 1970. An invitation to participate in the Shakespeare Summer Festival in Washington, D. C. during the month of June, however, kept the company together for a short period of time. The tour of the Soviet Union materialized eventually, but it was scheduled for October instead of June. In the interim, because the company was going to Russia as Cultural Ambassadors for the United States, representatives of the Department of State arranged for a five weeks' tour of performances in North Africa as a means of keeping the members of the company together. Ailey and his company departed for North Africa on June 29, 1970. The tour took them to Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia with performances in eight cities in these countries. Each appearance was received enthusiastically and attracted capacity audiences. While the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater toured North Africa, however, it lost its home base at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Ailey's Administrator, Ivy Clarke, found sufficient office space at the Westside YWCA and temporary storage area at 229 East 59th Street where Ailey had rented rehearsal space for several months.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater left New York City for Moscow on September 21, 1970, for a six-week tour of the Soviet Union which included performances in the cities of Kiev, Moscow, and Leningrad. The reception of the first American modern dance company to visit the Soviet Union was phenomenal. In Leningrad, for example, curtain calls lasting seventeen minutes were accompanied by enthusiastic cries of "Molodtsy"--"well done." After leaving Russia, the company performed at the International Dance Festival in Paris, France, where Ailey was awarded the Golden Star for the "Best Modern Dance Company" and the "Best Choreography" presented during the Festival. From Paris, the company went to London for a two-week season at the Sadler's Wells Theatre beginning November 23, 1970. During the London season, the company performed twenty different ballets as Ailey wished to present as many works of American choreographers as possible. The dance critics in London proclaimed the season successful.

Ailey and the members of his company returned to the United States for a two-week season on Broadway at the American National Theatre and Academy in January of 1971. The premières of two new works choreographed by Ailey and entitled <u>Archipelago</u> and <u>Flowers</u>, respectively, were received with little enthusiasm. The success of the

company's New York season was evidenced, however, in an invitation to present two weeks of performances at the New York City Center 55th Street Theater. Ailey accepted this invitation and his company became the first American modern dance company to play consecutive engagements in two Broadway theatres during the same year in New York City.

In 1971, Ailey suddenly increased his choreographic activities. He prepared new works for the short season at the City Center 55th Street Theater during which the premieres of Choral Dances and Cry evoked enthusiastic response and laudatory reviews. While Ailey was utilizing his artistic talents, Ivy Clarke, now General Manager of Ailey's organization, had been equally productive. Through her successful negotiations, the American Dance Center became a reality during the spring of 1971 and Ailey now had a New York school. At this time also, Ailey was besieged with opportunities for producing new choreographic works. In August of 1971, he was choreographing Leonard Bernstein's Mass for the opening of the new Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C., and choreographing Mingus Dances as well as restaging Feast of Ashes for the Joffrey Ballet. As soon as his own company returned from its fall tour, he began rehearsals for two new works entitled, respectively, Mary Lou's Mass and Myth. The

premières of these works were presented during the two-week season which his company enjoyed at the City Center 55th Street Theater. Mary Lou's Mass received the most enthusiastic response from the audience as well as the most favorable critical reviews. Ailey further extended his repertory by revising Suspensions by May O'Donnell and by adding Time Out of Mind by Brian McDonald.

Since the spring of 1970, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has been in constant demand throughout the United States. From its first American tour in 1968-1969 which lasted six and one-half weeks, the touring season in the United States increased to seventeen and one-half weeks during the year of 1971-1972. In addition, what began as a season of "one night stands" had grown to dance residencies lasting from three to seven days at colleges and universities throughout the United States. The appearance of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the City Center in New York April 18 through 30, 1972, marked the third consecutive engagement at the City Center within a year--a record for a modern dance company. Again Ailey presented premières of two new works, entitled A Lark Ascending and A Song for You, respectively, and added to his repertory Donald McKayle's classic entitled Rainbow Round My Shoulder. During this same time, the Juilliard

American Opera Center offered the première of the opera entitled Lord Byron by Virgil Thomson and Jack Larson, with choreography by Alvin Ailey.

Ailey and his company were involved for the next three months of 1972 with rehearsals for the restaging of, and travel with Leonard Bernstein's Mass, in preparation for subsequent performances in Washington, D. C., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New York City. Ailey interrupted these activities in early June, however, in order to receive two honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees. He was so honored at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey. In the midst of these activities, an invitation was extended to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to become the resident modern dance company of the City Center for Music and Drama in New York City. With the acceptance of the invitation, the company became officially The Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater on August 4, 1972. The new status of the company afforded it a permanent place in which to perform in New York City and guaranteed it two seasons of three weeks' duration each year.

Foregoing a fall tour, Alvin Ailey's dancers opened their first season as the resident company of the City Center for Music and Drama at the 55th Street Theater on

November 14, 1972, during which time Ailey revived The Kinetic Molpai by the late Ted Shawn, According to Eve by John Butler, and Choros by Katherine Dunham. Each revival was successful artistically. He extended his own work, entitled A Song for You, presented the previous spring, into a three-part solo dance for Dudley Williams and re-titled it Love Songs. With this new version, he was triumphantly successful. Thus ended Ailey's first season as the director of his resident modern dance company at the City Center for Music and Drama.

Alvin Ailey, who has been acclaimed by authorities in the field of dance as the foremost black male exponent of modern dance in the United States today, prefers not to be designated exclusively as a modern dance leader; he wishes to be recognized instead as an exponent of American dance. This preference on Ailey's part, coupled with his artistic direction and promotion of his black American brother in the art of dance, is the factor which makes Alvin Ailey a unique dance artist. Throughout his career, his intent has been ". . . to celebrate the trembling beauty of the black American--to present to the numerous audiences the exuberance of the jazz of the black man, the ecstacy of his spirituals, and the dark rapture of his blues." Believing that American culture has developed from

many sources, Alvin Ailey's programs are based upon a variety of materials representing many influences. These influences are evidenced in the fact that Ailey has developed a repertory company which, during the 1970's, performs works of at least thirteen choreographers other than himself.

Alvin Ailey realizes that repertory requires stamina and versatility on the part of those comprising any dance company. He has developed, therefore, a company of unique dancers with an abundance of both qualities. In addition to ". . . running circles around the rhythm of any dance," Ailey's dancers are able to change their moods within the same program from ". . . raw brutality to chilling loneli--ness, to sharp angularity, to cool lyricism, and to joyful spirituality." Another admirable quality of the members of Ailey's company is the fact that, throughout the years, the male dancers have been praised highly for their skill, their strength, and their extraordinary technical proficiency.

Through his exploration of the roots of the American black, Ailey has found a way to dance American history artistically. He presents his audiences with elements of their heritage and lets the history speak for itself through communicative movement. He is not just a black choreographer

speaking to blacks. Despite the fact that Ailey's most successful work, Revelations, is inspired by Negro spirituals and gospels, its roots are in American Negro culture which is, as Ailey sees it, a part of the whole country's heritage. He maintains that, through his concept of dance, he is a spokesman for art regardless of the color of the protagonist. Numerous articles and reviews indicate that Ailey has made his message clear and that, through his explorations of the roots of black folk, he has unearthed a genre which is basically "American." Ailey's company, which has used the word "American" in its title since 1962, became officially the Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater on August 4, 1972. Although the "American" has been dropped from the title of the company, it has not altered Ailey's original concept but rather has expanded it. His company is his vehicle for the revival of works of great American artists of the past as well as for the performance of the superb repetory comprised of works of contemporary American choreographers.

From a personal standpoint, Alvin Ailey's future horizons seem limitless. As guest choreographer for other dance companies--especially the ballet--his exuberant style is extended widely to audiences throughout the world. With his new school in operation, he has a laboratory for

exploring repertory works as well as for developing new dancers to add to his company. Ailey himself continues to exercise his own personal creativity, to compose dances, to direct, and to inspire dancers, critics, and audiences alike to celebrate the "magic element" which stems from the American heritage. Alvin Ailey has given to America a reputation which no other representative of modern dance has been able to achieve. The name "Alvin Ailey" is internationally identified with exciting American dance theatre. The task which began as an exploration of the roots of the black folk has developed into an exploration of the roots of American dance--and Alvin Ailey is the artist-explorer to lead the country in this endeavor and to animate and illuminate his findings!

Recommendations for Further Studies-

In conjunction with the development of this biographical study of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey, the investigator became aware of the need for expanding the number of historical, biographical, and philosophical research studies in dance. She became aware also of several other related problems which may afford research workers in the area of dance feasible topics for theses and dissertations. Specifically, the investigator

recommends the following studies related directly to the present one:

1. An Historical Study of the Evolution of Tap Dance With Emphasis Upon the Contributions of Black Tap Dance Artists in the United States.

2. An Historical Study of Minstrel Shows With Emphasis Upon the Contributions of Authentic Black Performers.

3. An Historical Study of Dance in Vaudeville With Emphasis Upon the Contributions of Outstanding Black Performers.

4. A Detailed, Descriptive, and Analytical Study of Black Dance to be Used as a Syllabus for Curriculums in Colleges and Universities.

5. A Biographical Study of William Henry Lane With Emphasis Upon His Contributions to Black Dance in the United States.

6. A Biographical Study of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson With Emphasis Upon His Personal Life, Professional Career, and Contributions to Black Dance in the United States.

7. A Comparative Study of the Techniques, Styles, and Philosophies of Selected Black Dance Artists in the United States From 1920 through 1950.

8. A Comparative Study of the Dance Techniques and Philosophies of Outstanding Black Ethnological Dance Artists With Emphasis Upon Their Influences Upon Dance in the United States.

9. A Comparative Study of the Dance Techniques and Philosophies of Outstanding Black Women in Dance in the United States Including a Critical Analysis of Major Choreographic Works.

10. A Biographical Study of Asadata Dafora Horton With Emphasis Upon His Personal Life, Professional Career, and Contributions to Black Dance in the United States.

11. A Biographical Study of Katherine Dunham With Emphasis Upon Her Personal Life, Professional Career, and Contributions to Black Dance in the United States.

12. A Biographical Study of Pearl Primus With Emphasis Upon Her Personal Life, Professional Career, and Contributions to Black Dance in the United States.

13. A Biographical Study of Geoffrey Holder With Emphasis Upon His Personal Life, Professional Career, and Contributions in the Idiom of Ethnological Dance in the United States.

14. A Biographical Study of Donald McKayle With Emphasis Upon His Personal Life, Professional Career, and Contributions to the Idiom of Modern Dance in the United States.

15. A Detailed, Descriptive, and Analytical Study of the Dance Techniques of Katherine Dunham Accompanied by Video Tapes Designed for Instructional Purposes.

16. A Detailed, Descriptive, and Analytical Study of Dance in Selected Religious Rituals and Its Resultant Effect Upon Choreographic Styles of Selected Black Dance Artists in the United States.

17. A Comparative Study of the Techniques, Philosophies, and Choreographic Works of Contemporary Black Revolutionary Choreographers in the United States.

In addition to the foregoing studies related directly to the present one, the investigator recommends the following as feasible topics for further studies.

1. A Comparative Study of the Dance Techniques and Philosophies of Selected Avante-garde Dance Artists in the United States.

2. An Historical Study of Dance in Motion Pictures in the United States.

3. A Biographical Study of Lester Horton With Emphasis Upon His Personal Life, Professional Career, and Contributions to Dance in the United States.

4. A Biographical Study of Karel Shook With Emphasis Upon His Personal Life, Professional Career, and Contributions to Dance in the United States.

5. A Detailed, Descriptive, and Analytical Study of the Humphrey-Weidman Dance Techniques Accompanied by Video Tapes Designed for Instructional Purposes.

6. A Detailed, Descriptive, and Analytical Study of the Dance Techniques of Martha Graham Accompanied by Video Tapes Designed for Instructional Purposes.

7. A Detailed, Descriptive, and Analytical Study of the Dance Techniques of Lester Horton Accompanied by Video Tapes Designed for Instructional Purposes.

8. An Historical Study of Dance in Broadway Musicals and the Resultant Influence of Broadway on Concert Dance in the United States.

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Personal Correspondence from Arthur Mitchell, 321 West 78th Street, New York City, to the investigator, dated March 30, 1971.

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APPENDIX A

THE POSTAL CARD QUESTIONNAIRE, SELECTED LETTERS, BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEETS, AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USED BY THE INVESTIGATOR PERTINENT TO THE OBTAINING OF DATA FOR THE BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF ARTHUR MITCHELL AND ALVIN AILEY

A Copy of the Postal Card Questionnaire Used by the Investigator for the Purpose of Establishing the Outstanding Contemporary Black Male Dance Artist in the Idioms of Ballet and Modern Dance, Respectively

POSTAL CARD QUESTIONNAIRE

In my opinion, the three most influential contemporary black male dance artists in the idioms of ballet and modern dance, respectively, are:

Ballet	Modern Dance
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

Signed_____

This postal card questionnaire was sent to the late Ted Shawn, Walter Terry, Doris Hering, and Ann Barzel, all recognized authorities in the field of dance, who served as a jury of experts and assisted in the identification of the oustanding representatives in the idioms of ballet and modern dance.

Copies of Letters Representative of Those Sent to Each of the Selected Subjects, Black Male Dance Artists, Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists, and to Friends and Fellow Dancers of Each of the Selected Subjects

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DENTON, TEXAS 76204

COLLEGE OF HEALTH,
ICAL EDUCATION, AND RECREATION

April 9, 1970

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

May I take this means of introducing myself as Dean of the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation at the Texas Woman's University and as the Director of Jacqueline Moore's Doctoral Dissertation entitled: A Biographical Study of the Lives and Contributions of Two Selected Contemporary Black Male Dance Artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--in the Idioms of Ballet and Modern Dance, Respectively. I wish to endorse formally Mrs. Moore's research study and to thank you for agreeing, in your telephone conversation with Mrs. Moore on Friday, April 3, 1970, to serve as the outstanding representative of the contemporary black male dance artist in the idiom of ballet.

Mrs. Moore is a beautiful, lovely, refined, cultured young Negro with the highest of personal and professional standards. I admire tremendously her interest in the American Negro and her identification with this so-called minority group with pride and with the humility essential to an artist and to an educator.

Mrs. Moore is a young woman of unusual integrity and is thoroughly conversant with the research techniques which she will employ in the development of her dissertation. I am confident that she will complete the Doctor of Philosophy degree for which she is a candidate in a highly creditable manner, and that she will continue to serve her profession as an outstanding leader in the area of dance education.

May I add my request for your cooperation to that of Mrs. Moore's in providing her with the necessary information to make this dissertation a very scholarly work? The accompanying letter from Mrs. Moore is self-explanatory.

With deep appreciation for your cooperation in this regard, and with best wishes to you for continued success and happiness in your outstanding work, I am

Sincerely yours,

Anne Schley Duggan
Dean

Mr. Arthur Mitchell
321 West 78th Street, Apt. 1C
New York, New York 10024

P. O. Box 846
Denton, Texas 76201
April 9, 1970

Mr. Arthur Mitchell
321 West 78th Street, Apt. 1C
New York, New York 10024

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

May I introduce myself again as a graduate student preparing to write my dissertation and thus complete all the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major sequence in Dance and Related Arts under the direction of Doctor Anne Schley Duggan, Dean of the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, at the Texas Woman's University and also the Chairman of my Dissertation Committee. I am most interested in historical, biographical, and philosophical research and, therefore, have selected as the topic for my dissertation a biographical study entitled: A Biographical Study of the Lives and Contributions of Two Selected Contemporary Black Male Dance Artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--in the Idioms of Ballet and Modern Dance, Respectively.

This study is limited to the selection of male dance artists because it has been my experience as a dance educator to have as my most diligent, dedicated, and talented students male dancers who gave up their dancing after graduation from college because of the misconception pertaining to the relatively low esteem afforded the black male dancer. Moreover, historically, I have been most impressed with the brilliance of Mr. Ted Shawn's unparalleled leadership of his company of famous Men Dancers. I am hoping that, through careful study and skillful writing, I can present a picture of the black male dancer which will be encouraging and inspiring to those who are also capable of making worthwhile contributions to our cherished field of dance.

May I also take this opportunity to confirm our telephone conversation of April 3, 1970, in which you so graciously agreed to permit me to do an in-depth study of your life and your outstanding contributions in the idiom of ballet? For

this, I am most grateful, and I can assure you that I am dedicated to preparing a scholarly work which will be a worthwhile contribution to the area of dance.

During the second week in May, I shall provide you with further information concerning the dissertation and perhaps, by that time, we may also establish a schedule of appointments for interviews with you and with others whom you may recommend as human sources of data. Should you have any questions or suggestions concerning the study, please contact me at the above address or call me collect at the following number: 817-387-8862.

Again, I am deeply grateful for your cooperation in this study and I extend to you my best wishes for continued success in your brilliant career.

Most sincerely yours,

Jacqueline Q. Moore

P. O. Box 846
Denton, Texas 76201
May 14, 1970

Mr. Alvin Ailey
P. O. Box 850
Ansonia Station
New York, New York 10023

Dear Mr. Ailey:

Now that the enormous task of my qualifying examination is behind me, I am returning to what I hope will be a most exciting undertaking--the development of my dissertation. Tentative plans for the dissertation include a documentary analysis of the American Negro dancer, changes in the historical "image" of the male dancer, an introductory overview of the idioms of ballet and modern dance, and an in-depth study of the lives and contributions of two selected artists.

I plan to collect most of my data concerning your life and contributions from you, your friends, relatives, colleagues, and other recommended persons. I shall personally interview as many individuals as possible while others will be interviewed via telephone and/or an interview form somewhat similar to a questionnaire.

At present it appears that I shall be arriving in New York City the third week in June and shall remain there throughout July and August. I need to make contacts and set up interview schedules before I arrive. Will you, therefore, send to me a list of persons whom you recommend as human sources of data? I shall be organizing your biographical data under the following headings: (1) as a child, (2) as a young or beginning dancer, (3) as a seasoned performer, (4) as a teacher and/or choreographer and/or educator, and (5) as a contributor of any other nature. I am especially interested in names, addresses, and telephone numbers (if available) of parents, relatives, former teachers, and friends (in Texas, California, New York) who can supply me with information relative to any of the above five categories. Sample questions that will appear on the interview forms follow:

1. Describe Alvin Ailey as a child (or a teenager).
2. What persons do you believe were most important in the development of his interest and personality during childhood and youth?
3. Can you describe Alvin Ailey's basic philosophy with reference to teaching? As a choreographer?

All questions will be general in nature and will be adjusted with respect to the category in which the individuals supplying the information would fall (e.g., former teacher, relative, colleague, etc.). All answers will be analyzed by me and submitted to you for approval before synthesization into the dissertation.

For your convenience, I am enclosing forms for names and addresses of persons who you feel may be helpful in this study. Please fill out the forms and return them to me by the end of May. If you should have any questions or should you prefer communicating via telephone, please call me collect at Denton, Texas, 817-387-8862. I am usually home in the evenings Monday through Friday (with the exception of Wednesday, May 20) anytime after 6:00 P.M. If daytime hours are best for you I am in all day Sundays and Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings until noon.

In the midst of all the rumors about the disbandment of your company I suppose the State Department Tour did not materialize? Although the present status of the company will not affect my study, I am very interested in knowing what is really going on. Won't you please drop me a note to that effect?

Most sincerely,

Jacqueline Q. Moore

P. S. You need not include names and addresses of the present members of your company unless they will not be in New York City during the summer.

1301 Austin
Apartment 558
Waco, Texas 76701
December 2, 1970

Mr. Donald McKayle
174 N. Wetherly Drive
Beverley Hills, California 90211

Dear Mr. McKayle:

May I introduce myself as a graduate student at the Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas, with a major sequence in Dance and Related Arts. I am in the process of writing my dissertation which involves a biographical study of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey.

Plans for the background chapters of the dissertation include biographical sketches of other famous contemporary black male dance artists in the idioms of ballet and modern dance. To this effect, I would like to enter a biographical sketch of you and your work under the section entitled, "Contemporary Black Male Artists in the Idiom of Modern Dance." I would be more than honored if this meets your approval. Would you send to me a copy of your personal data sheet and any other materials that you may have available for publicity purposes? I am also enclosing a biographical data sheet if you would prefer answering in this fashion. Please feel free to fill out the sheet in writing (using both sides of the pages and/ or additional pages) or use either a cassette cartridge or a 5" reel if you would rather tape the answers. I shall be happy to re-imburse you for the cost of the tapes and receive any of the materials via C.O.D. It will also be most helpful if I can hear from you by December 17, 1970.

Because of your acquaintance with Mr. Ailey, and Mr. Mitchell, I should also be very pleased if you would agree to contribute to my efforts to complete this biographical study of these two artists. Please indicate your response to my request for your assistance in this matter on the enclosed post card.

Please know that any assistance that you can give to me in this endeavor will be greatly appreciated. Perhaps I shall

have the opportunity to meet you sometime in the near future. I would consider such a meeting a great privilege, as I have seen and appreciated much of your choreography.

Most sincerely yours,

Jacqueline Q. Moore
Enclosures

1301 Austin
Apartment 558
Waco, Texas 76701
December 2, 1970

Mr. Sylvester Campbell
HET Nationale Ballet
Stadsschouwburg, Amsterdam C

Dear Mr. Campbell:

May I introduce myself as a graduate student at the Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas, with a major sequence in Dance and Related Arts. I am in the process of writing my dissertation which involves a biographical study of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey.

Plans for the background chapters of the dissertation include biographical sketches of other famous contemporary black male dance artists in the idioms of ballet and modern dance. To this effect, I should like to enter a biographical sketch of you and a brief summation of your work under the section entitled, "Contemporary Black Male Artists in the Idiom of Ballet." I shall be more than honored if this meets your approval. Would you, therefore, send to me a copy of your personal data sheet and any other materials that you may have available for publicity purposes? I am also enclosing a biographical data sheet if you would prefer answering in this fashion. Please feel free to fill out the sheet in writing and use both sides of the pages and additional pages if necessary.

Please know that any assistance that you can give me in this endeavor will be greatly appreciated. Mr. Karel Shook suggested that I might contact you. I am sure, therefore, that your contribution is one that I dearly desire for inclusion in my study. May I hear from you before the holidays?

Happy holidays, good luck, and good dancing!

Most sincerely,

Jacqueline Q. Moore

Enclosures

1301 Austin Avenue
Apartment 558
Waco, Texas 78701
November 14, 1970

Miss Syvilla Fort, Director
Studio of Theatre Dance
153 West 44th Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Miss Fort:

Referring to our conversation this past summer, you will probably remember that I am writing my dissertation which is entitled: A Biographical Study of the Lives and Contributions of Two Selected Contemporary Black Male Dance Artists--Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey--in the Idioms of Ballet and Modern Dance, Respectively. I am also developing a background chapter on the black men in the United States who have made notable contributions in the above-named idioms of dance since the turn of the century. Practically everyone with whom I spoke told me of the very important role that you have played in the professional preparation of most of these men. I would like, therefore, to develop a section of one of my chapters which spotlights you and your role in the shaping of the careers of these artists.

Please realize that I am not ignoring the fact that many outstanding black female dance artists have also come under your tutelage. A study of this nature has its limitations, however, and for my immediate purposes I am only concerned with male dance artists.

Miss Fort, I am most grateful to you for your time and cooperation in contributing material for this study. I am enclosing tape cartridges as I remember that you were planning to acquire a small tape recorder. If, however, you do have to do the taping on a reel, please do so without reservations as I have access to both types of tape recorders. I will be happy to refund your money for any expenses encountered in so doing.

Enclosed also is a list of questions and statements to guide you in making the tapes. In addition, you will find a stamped,

self-addressed envelope for your convenience in returning them to me. It will be most helpful to me if you can return this material by December 5, 1970.

Again, thank you most sincerely.

Respectfully yours,

Jacqueline Q. Moore
Graduate Student
Texas Woman's University
Denton, Texas

1301 Austin Avenue
Apartment 558
Waco, Texas 76701
March 12, 1971

Mrs. Hanna Marie Conforti
11783 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90049

Dear Mrs. Conforti:

May I introduce myself as a graduate student at the Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas, with a major sequence in Dance and Related Arts? Presently, I am writing my dissertation which includes a biographical study of Arthur Mitchell.

Arthur has spoken of you several times in our interviews and he had just received a letter from you when I was last in New York City. He, therefore, gave to me your name and address along with permission to contact you as a fellow dancer and special friend of his. I am hoping that you will be able to answer a few questions for me about Arthur Mitchell. I am especially interested in anecdotes and favorite stories that you may be able to recall. I am enclosing a list of questions that may be helpful to you. Please feel free to omit any that you feel do not apply to you or to add anything that will be helpful. If you prefer to use a tape recorder, please do so and I shall reimburse you for the cost of the tape and the shipping charges.

I shall be more than grateful for any assistance that you can give to me. May I hear from you before the end of March?

Very sincerely yours,

Jacqueline Q. Moore

Encl.

Copies of Biographical Data Sheets Used by the Investigator for the Purpose of Obtaining Data from Black Male Dance Artists, Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists, and Friends and Fellow Dancers of Each of the Selected Subjects

Biographical Data Sheet for Black Male Dance Artists

(To be used with or without recording tape)

Name_____ Date_____

Current Address_____ Marital Status_____

Phone Number_____ Wife_____

Dance Idiom (check one) Children_____

( ) Modern _____
( ) Ballet
( ) Ethnological _____

1. What is the general nature of your background with respect to the following:

   a. Place and date of birth

   b. Names of parents

   c. Number of brothers and sisters

   d. Extent of elementary and secondary education

2. How did you become interested in dance?

3. What is the extent of your professional preparation in dance with respect to

   a. Teachers?

   b. Places of study?

   d. Types of dance?

4. Why did you choose _____ as your area of specialization?

5. When and how did your professional career begin?

6. Which dance companies in the United States have you danced with?

   During what years?

7. Have you danced in on- or off-Broadway shows? During what years?

   Names of shows and roles played?

8. Were you able to dance in the companies or shows on the merits of your ability alone?

9. In your opinion, did you experience anything "unique" because of your color?

10. Have you danced or taught abroad? If so, when, where, and during what years?

11. Why did you go abroad to live and/or work?

12. Will you explain briefly the status of the black dance artist abroad?

13. If you have returned to the United States, when and why did you return?

14. Will you explain briefly the nature of your dance activities at the present?

15. Would you comment on "The Uniqueness of Being a Black Dance Artist in the United States?" (use back of page if necessary)

16. Please feel free to add any further comments that would be relevant in a study of this nature.

17. (If you are answering via recording tape) Do I have permission to incorporate this information into my study at my discretion or would you prefer to edit the transcript before it is used?

18. If you know of other black male dance artists in your idiom of dance ( ), please list them and include current addresses and dance involvement (if possible).

Data Sheet for Teachers of Black Male Dance Artists

Questions and statements to guide taped interviews and/or personal correspondence regarding black male dance artists who have worked and/or danced with your dance company or in your studio of dance**

1. Please state your name, address, and present occupation.

2. Briefly explain the extent of your dance background with respect to:

   a. Preparation in dance
   b. Performance experiences
   c. Choreographic experiences
   d. Teaching experiences (when and where)

3. When did your dance company and/or studio of dance become a reality?

4. Has it always had the same name and location? If not, list the name changes and previous locations and give reasons for such changes.

5. If you do not currently have a dance company or studio of dance, when was the last one(s) in existence?

6. As well as you can remember, please give the following information about each of the black male dance artists who have danced in your company and/or studied at your studio (please specify) and have since gone on to make notable contributions in the idioms of ballet, or modern dance:

   a. Name, address, (if known by you) and present activity.

   b. During what years were you associated with him?

   c. In what capacity were you associated with him? (Teacher, dancer, etc.)

d. In which of the above idioms has he made a notable contribution?

e. What is the extent of the contribution?

f. Do you feel that his work with you has been particularly influential in the direction that his career has taken? Please explain.

g. Do you know any anecdotes, stories, or any further information about this artist that would be helpful and/or interesting in a study of this nature?

7. Do I have your permission to use this information at my own discretion or would you prefer that I submit it to you in written form for you to edit before it is used?

**Questions one through three and possibly one through five may be substituted for by a personal data sheet and/or other materials that you may have prepared in advance for publicity purposes.

Biographical Data Sheet

Name of artist_____

Questions for Friends and/or Fellow Dancers

(Please write on the back or add extra pages if you feel that you need more space.)

1. Please state your name, address, and present occupation.

2. What is (was) the nature of your association with _____?

3. Under what circumstances did you first become acquainted with _____?

4. Are you still in communication with _____? If so, how and in what capacity?

5. What is your opinion of _____ as a dancer?

   As a choreographer?

   As a teacher?

6. Do you know of any outstanding events which may have influenced his personality? If so, what and how?

7. Were there any disappointments which influenced him? If so, what and how?

8. Were there indications that his career would take its present course? Explain.

9. What are the most memorable moments in dance that you experienced with _____?

10. Please give highlights of special places which you have visited together. (Tours, performances, vacations, etc.)

11. What are your favorite stories about _____? May be anecdotal in nature.

12. Please add anything which you think will be interesting or helpful in understanding _____, the man.

Interview Questions Used by the Investigator Pertinent to the Obtaining of Data for the Biographical Study of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey

Questions to be Asked During Personal Interviews Conducted with Members of the Family and/or Personal Friends of Each of the Subjects

1. In what way were you associated with _____?

2. How long did you know him? (Friends)

3. Where did you know him? (Friends)

4. Describe any unique interests that you can recall.

   a. Personal
   b. Religious
   c. Community and political
   d. Travel
   e. Additional

5. When and how did he become interested in dance?

6. When did he decide upon dance as a profession?

7. Describe him as a child; as a teenager.

8. Describe his home environment as a child; as a teenager.

9. What persons do you believe were most important in influencing the development of his interests and personality during his childhood and youth?

10. What words would you select as most descriptive of him?

11. Are these words descriptive of him during all of the periods of his life with which you are familiar?

12. What is your favorite story about him?

13. Are there other stories or anecdotes which describe his personality traits?

14. Can you think of any other descriptive information which may be important in a study of this nature?

Questions to be Asked During Personal Interviews Conducted with Individuals Familiar with Each of the Subjects During his Childhood

1. Under what circumstances did you meet _____?

2. During what years did you know him?

3. Was he like any other boy in appearance, grooming, and behavior patterns?

4. Did he seek other children as companions or was he a "loner."

5. Was he comfortable in the company of adults?

6. Did he undertake projects which were meaningful? Did he complete such projects?

7. Do you know of any specific interests and/or hobbies which he pursued?

8. To what extent did he pursue these interests?

9. Was he very studious in nature?

10. Did he like to discuss his ideas and/or plans with others? Grown-ups or children? Both? Members of his family? Which ones?

11. Did he know what he "wanted to be in life" at an early age?

12. What do you know about his home environment?

13. Do you know of specific individuals who might have influenced the development of his special interests and characteristics?

14. Is it possible for you to provide names and addresses of such persons?

15. Can you recall any stories or anecdotes which may describe his personality traits or interests as a child?

16. What words do you select as most descriptive of him during his childhood?

17. Did the family move often? If so, how did this affect his schooling, friendships, et cetera?

Questions to be Asked During Personal Interviews Conducted with Individuals Familiar with Each of the Subjects During His Professional Preparation

1. Under what circumstances did you become acquainted with _____?

2. During which years did you know him?

3. What kind of dance student was he?

4. Did his dance activity reflect any particular philosophy during this period?

5. Did he undertake purposeful projects? What were they? Did he complete them?

6. What type of dance did he study during the period of your acquaintance?

7. What other activities was he involved in during this period of study with you? (optional)

8. Did he "mix" well with other dancers?

9. Had he madeddefinite decisions concerning the type of career which he wished to pursue after he studied with you?

10. Did he have a chance to experiment with choreography during this time? If so, did he adhere to specific thematic sources? What were they?

11. Were there any major disappointments in his life during the period(s) he studied with you?

12. Were there any outstanding events?

13. Do you know of specific individuals who may have influenced the development of his special interests and characteristics?

14. Did he have any special interests and/or hobbies? What were they?

15. To what extent did he pursue these interests and/or hobbies.

16. Do you know any stories or anecdotes which may describe his personality traits during this time?

17. What words do you select as most descriptive of him?

18. What is your favorite story or anecdote about him?

Questions to be Asked During Personal Interviews Conducted with Members of the Professional Dance Company of Each of the Subjects

1. Under what circumstances did you become acquainted with _____?

2. How long and during what dates were you associated with him?

3. What words do you select as descriptive of him as

   a. a teacher?
   b. a choreographer?
   c. a performer?
   d. a director?

4. How do you describe the performances presented by him?

5. How do you describe him as the manager and/or director of his professional dance company?

6. Did he maintain amicable personal relationships with members of his professional dance company?

7. Did he always undertake projects which were purposeful and beneficial to the members of his professional dance company?

8. Did he seek advice from or discuss his ideas with others? If so, who were these persons?

9. Were there major disappointments in his life during the period(s) in which you were a member of his professional dance company? If so, what were they and how did he react to them?

10. Were there outstanding events? What were they and how did he react to them?

11. Are you aware of any specific individual who has influenced the development of his special interests and

characteristics as a professional dancer? As an individual? As a director of his professional dance company?

12. Were you aware of his special interests and/or hobbies? If so, what were they?

13. How did he pursue these interests and/or hobbies?

14. Do you know any stories, anecdotes, or illustrative events which may describe his personality traits during this time?

15. What is your favorite story or anecdote about him?

16. Can you think of other descriptive information which may be important in a study of this nature?

APPENDIX B

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF INDIVIDUALS WHO CONTRIBUTED DATA TO THE BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF ARTHUR MITCHELL AND ALVIN AILEY THROUGH PERSONAL INTERVIEWS, GROUP INTERVIEWS, TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS, BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEETS, BIOGRAPHICAL RESUMES, AND/OR PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE INVESTIGATOR

Names and Addresses of Individuals Who Contributed Data to the Biographical Study of Arthur Mitchell and Alvin Ailey through Personal Interviews, Group Interviews, Telephone Interviews, Biographical Data Sheets, Biographical Resumes, and/or Personal Correspondence with the Investigator

Abarca, Lydia
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Balanchine, George
c/o New York City Ballet
New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center
New York, New York

Banks, Gerald
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Beatty, Talley
c/o Elmer Lewis School of Fine Arts
122 Elm Hill Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts

Bord, Marilyn
1338 47th Street
Brooklyn, New York

Campbell, Sylvester
Lomanstraat 14 huis
Amsterdam, Zuid.

Clarke, Ivy
524 West 46th Street
New York, New York

Cole, Jack
146 East 49th Street
New York, New York

Colquhoun, Mary
c/o American Dance Center
229 East 59th Street
New York, New York

Conforti, Hanna-Marie
11783 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, California

Cooper, Lula E.
144 East 68th Street
Loi Angeles, California

De Lavallade, Carmen
c/o Department of Drama
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

De Rose, Charles
c/o John Newman Associates
135 William Street
New York, New York

Destiné, Jean Léon
Destiné Dance Company, Ltd
676 Riverside Drive
New York, New York

Dunham, Katherine
532 North 10th Street
East St. Louis, Illinois

Eng, Frank
7469 Mulholland Drive
Los Angeles, California

Fort, Syvilla
Studio of Theatre Dance
153 West 44th Street
New York, New York

Hill, Thelma
c/o The American Dance Center
229 Eaat 59th Street
New York, New York

Hinkson, Mary
165 Park Row, Apartment 14F
New York, New York

Holder, Boscoe
31 Industry Lane
Port-au-Spain, Trinidad

Holder, Geoffrey
215 West 92nd Street, Apartment 15A
New York, New York

Holtz, Edele
c/o Alwin Holtz
The American Dance Center
229 East 59th Street
New York, New York

Hurd, Ella
c/o L. E. Cooper
144 East 68th Street
Los Angeles, California

James, Lorenzo
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Johnson, Bernard
252 West 46th Street
New York, New York

Johnson, Louis
39 West 19th Street
New York, New York

Johnson, Virginia
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Jones, Pamela
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Kirstein, Lincoln
c/o The New York City Ballet
New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center
New York, New York

Le Clerq, Tanaquil
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Mathis, Clover
c/o The American Dance Center
229 East 59th Street
New York, New York

McKayle, Donald
3839 Davana Road
Sherman Oaks, California

McKayle, Lea
3839 Davana Road
Sherman Oaks, California

Melchoir, Jewel
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Mills, Shirley
840 Columbus Avenue, Apartment 20G
New York, New York

Mitchell, Willie Mae
536 West 143rd Street, Apartment 22
New York, New York

Moore, Charles
1043 President Street
Brooklyn, New York

Moore, Edward
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Nash, Joe
1430 Amsterdam Avenue, Apartment 4L
New York, New York

Ouroussow, Madame Eugenie
c/o The American School of Ballet
Lincoln Center
New York, New York

Phifer, Cassandra
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Pierson, Harold
c/o Studio of Theatre Dance
153 West 44th Street
New York, New York

Primus, Pearl
17 West 25th Street
New York, New York

Raines, Walter
516 East 78th Street, Apartment 6K
New York, New York

Richardson, Dorene
c/o New Dance Group
254 West 47th Street
New York, New York

Rohan, Sheila
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Sampson, Rhonda
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Sampson, Rosalyn
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Sellers, Brother John
258 West 65th Street, Apartment 2C
New York, New York

Shawn, Ted
Box 877
Eustis, Florida

Shook, Karel
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Smalls, Samuel
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Stevenson, Llanchie
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Swann, Rodney
c/o The Dance Theatre of Harlem
466-68 West 152nd Street
New York, New York

Thompson, Ella
1043 President Street
Brooklyn, New York

Truitte, James
348 West 56th Street
New York, New York

Tuttle, Nancy
165 West 57th Street
New York, New York

Williams, Louis
24 St. Nicolas Place
New York, New York

Wilson, Billy
295 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts

APPENDIX C

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCES AND LECTURE-DEMONSTRATIONS PRESENTED BY THE DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCES AND LECTURE-DEMONSTRATIONS PRESENTED BY THE DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM

October, 1969 Through September, 1970

Date	Location	Presentation
1969		
November 2	Academy of Music Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Performances (two)
November 5	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture-Demonstration
November 7	Greenburgh Central School District Hartsdale, New York	Lecture-Demonstration
November 9	YWCA West Orange, New Jersey	Lecture-Demonstration
November 10	Mineola Junior High School Mineola, New York	Lecture-Demonstration
November 17	Clara Carlson School Elmont, New York	Lecture-Demonstration (two)
November 18	North Junior High School Great Neck, Long Island, New York	Lecture-Demonstration (two)
November 19	Mineola Junior High School Mineola, New York	Lecture-Demonstration (two)
November 20	Elmont Memorial High School Elmont, New York	Lecture-Demonstration

1969

November 20	Dutch Broadway School Elmont, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
November 21	Merle Avenue Junior High School Oceanside, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
	Boardman Junior High School Oceanside, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
November 24	Packard Collegiate Institute Brooklyn, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
December 4	Lee Nordness Benefit New York, New York	Performance
December 10	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
December 17	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
December 19	Public School 128 Parent-Teacher Association New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration

1970

January 7	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
January 10	McMillian Theatre Columbia University New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
January 14	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
January 21	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
January 24	Harlem Cultural Council New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
January 28	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration

1970

February 5	William Penn High School Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Lecture- Demonstration
	Irvine Auditorium Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Performance
February 11	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
February 18	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
February 23	Madison Square Garden National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Benefit--"Soul on Soul" New York, New York	Performance
March 5	High School of Performing Arts New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
March 7	Nazareth College Rochester, New York	Lecture- Demonstration and Performance
March 9	Middlesex County Regional Arts Council Middlesex, New Jersey	Lecture- Demonstration (two)
March 10	Jonas Salk Middle School Old Bridge, New Jersey	Lecture- Demonstration
	East Brunswick High School EastBBrunswick, New Jersey	Lecture- Demonstration
March 12	Weequahic High School Newark, New Jersey	Lecture- Demonstration
	Dayton Street School Newark, New Jersey	Lecture- Demonstration
March 15	Academy of Music Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Performance
March 19	Spelman College Atlanta, Georgia	Lecture- Demonstration

1970		
March 21	Spelman College Davage Auditorium Atlanta, Georgia	Performance
April 8	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
April 11	Illinois State University Stroud Auditorium Normal, Illinois	Performance
April 16	West Kinney Junior High School Newark, New Jersey	Lecture- Demonstration
April 22	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
April 29	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
May 2	Freeport High School Freeport, Long Island, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
May 6	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
May 11	Columbia University New York, New York Cultural Heritage Implementation Program	Lecture- Demonstration
May 21	William Penn High School Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Wings Motivation Program	Lecture- Demonstration
May 23	Junior High School 117 New York, New York Community Planning Workshop	Lecture- Demonstration
May 27	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
June 3	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
June 10	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration

1970

June 17-20	Hamilton Proper, Bermuda Bermuda Arts Council's Summer Festival	Performances
June 24-27	Dundas Civic Center Nassau, Bahamas	Performances
June 29- July 1	Cultural Centrum Curacao, Netherlands, Antilles	Performances
June 30	Cultural Centrum Curacao, Netherlands, Antilles	Lecture- Demonstration
July 15	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
July 22	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
July 24	Usdan Center for the Creative and Performing Arts Wyandanch, Long Island, New York	Lecture- Demonstration (two)
July 27	Saratoga Performing Arts Center Saratoga Springs, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
July 29	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
August 1-2	Saratoga Performing Arts Center Saratoga Springs, New York	Performances
August 5	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
August 12	Dance Theatre of Harlem New York, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
August 18-22	Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Incorporated Lee, Massachusetts	Performances
August 29	John F. Kennedy Educational, Civic, and Cultural Center Garden City, New York	Performance

1970

September 16	Bureau of Recreation Public Safety Building Rochester, New York	Lecture-Demonstration
September 19	State University of Buffalo Buffalo, New York	Performance

November, 1971 Through June, 1972

1971

November 18-19	University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico	Performances
November 22-24	Charlotte Amalie High School St. Thomas, Virgin Islands	Lecture-Demonstration
November 24	Charlotte Amalie High School St. Thomas, Virgin Islands	Performance
November 26	St. Dunstan's Auditorium Christiansted, St. Croix	Performance
November 26-27	St. Dunstan's Auditorium Christiansted, St. Croix	Lecture-Demonstration
December 1-3	Worcester Memorial Auditorium Worcester, Massachusetts	Lecture-Demonstration; Performances
December 7	South Senior High School Great Neck, Long Island, New York	Lecture-Demonstration
	North Junior High School Great Neck, Long Island, New York	Lecture-Demonstration
December 11	Hunter College New York, New York Reality House Benefit	Performance
December 14	Newark State College Theatre for the Performing Arts Union, New Jersey	Performance

1971

December 17	Middletown High School Middletown, New York	Performance

1972

January 3-5	Orange Coast College Costa Mesa, California	Lecture-Demonstration; Performance
January 7-9	Inner City Cultural Center Los Angeles, California	Performances
January 13-14	Stanford University Stanford, California	Performances
January 16-17	University of California Berkeley, California	Lecture-Demonstration; Performances
January 20-22	University of New Mexico Albuquerque, New Mexico	Lecture-Demonstration; Performances
January 23	The Greer Garson Theatre Santa Fe, New Mexico	Performance
January 27-29	Texas Christian University Fort Worth, Texas	Lecture-Demonstration; Performances
February 1-3	College of St. Catherine O'Shaughnessy Auditorium St. Paul, Minnesota	Lecture-Demonstration; Performance
February 4	University of Cincinnati Music Hall Cincinnati, Ohio	Performance
February 4-8	University of Cincinnati Music Hall Cincinnati, Ohio	Lecture-Demonstration
February 10-12	Brown Theatre Louisville, Kentucky	Lecture-Demonstration; Performances

1972

February 14-18	Public Schools Washington, D. C.	Lecture-
February 21-23	Opera House Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Washington, D. C.	Performances
February 24-29	Public Schools Washington, D. C.	Lecture-Demonstration
March 3-5	Auditorium Theatre Chicago, Illinois	Lecture-Demonstration; Performances
March 6-8	Northern Illinois University University Center Ballroom DeKalb, Illinois	Lecture-Demonstration; Performances
March 12-14	North High School Des Moines, Iowa	Lecture-Demonstration; Performance
March 23	Cooperstown, New York	Performance
March 29-April 5	Harlem Residency New York, New York Model Cities Program	Performances
April 8	YM-YWCA of Essex County West Orange, New Jersey	Lecture-Demonstration; Performance
April 13	Wilmington High School Wilmington, Delaware	Performance
April 19	Harlem Residency New York, New York Model Cities Program	Performance
April 21	Town Hall New York, New York	Lecture-Demonstration
April 22	Howard Herber Junior High School, Malverne, Long Island, New York	Lecture-Demonstration; Performance

1972

April 26	Harlem Residency New York, New York Model Cities Program	Performance
April 29	Brooklyn College Whitman Hall Brooklyn, New York	Performance
May 5	Kleinhaus Music Hall Buffalo, New York	Performance
May 6	Allegheny College Meadville, Pennsylvania	Performance
May 10	Harlem Residency New York, New York Model Cities Program	Performance
May 12	Poughkeepsie High School Poughkeepsie, New York	Lecture- Demonstration
May 17, 31- June 7	Harlem Residency New York, New York Model Cities Program	Performances
June 11-18	Kansas Dance Council Residency Wichita, Kansas	Lecture- Demonstration; Performances
June 23-24	Harlem Residency New York, New York Model Cities Program	Performances

APPENDIX D

SELECTED ITINERARIES OF TOURS MADE BY THE ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

SELECTED ITINERARIES OF TOURS MADE BY THE ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
European and Near East Tour--1967

Date	City	Theatre*
Monday, May 22	Leave New York City	
Tuesday, May 23	Arrive Lisbon, Portugal	
Wednesday, May 24	Lisbon, Portugal	Tivoli Theatre
Thursday, May 25	Leiria, Portugal	Teatro Jose Lucio Da Silva
Friday, May 26	Lisbon, Portugal	Tivoli Theatre
Saturday, May 27	Evora, Portugal	Teatro Garcia De Resende
Sunday, May 28	Beja, Portugal	Teatro Pax Julia
Monday, May 29	Faro, Portugal	Teatro Santo Antonio
Tuesday, May 30	Leave Lisbon, Portugal	
	Arrive Frankfurt, Germany	

*The names of the theatres were not always available. This was particularly true of the foreign tours.

Tuesday, May 30	Frankfurt, Germany	Stadtische Buhnen Oper
Wednesday, May 31	Hannover, Germany	Theater am AEGI Aegidientorplatz
Thursday, June 1	Hannover, Germany	Theater am AEGI Aegidientorplatz
Friday, June 2	Stuttgart, Germany	Liederhalle Berliner Platz 1
Saturday, June 3	Mannheim, Germany	Nationaltheater Goetheplatz
Sunday, June 4	Munster, Germany	Stadtische Buhnen
Monday, June 5	Leave Frankfurt, Germany Arrive Stockholm, Sweden	
Tuesday, June 6-Monday, June 12	Stockholm, Sweden	Rehearse
Tuesday, June 13-Friday, June 16	Stockholm, Sweden	Stadsteater
Saturday, June 17-Wednesday, June 21	Stockholm, Sweden	Rehearse and make television film
Thursday, June 22	Free	
Friday, June 23	Leave Stockholm Arrive The Hague, Netherlands	
Saturday, June 24 and Sunday, June 25	Free	
Monday, June 26	The Hague, Netherlands	Royal Theatre Koniniklijke Schouwburg

Tuesday, June 27	Amsterdam, Netherlands	
Wednesday, June 28	Nijmegen, Netherlands	
Thursday, June 29	Leiden, Netherlands	
Friday, June 30	Eindhoven, Netherlands	
Saturday, July 1	Utrecht, Netherlands	
Sunday, July 2	Free	
Monday, July 3	The Hague, Netherlands	
Tuesday, July 4	Groningen, Netherlands	Municipal Theatre Stadsschouwburg
Wednesday, July 5	Arnhem, Netherlands	Municipal Theatre Stadsschouwburg
Thursday, July 6	Rotterdam, Netherlands	
Friday, July 7	Middelburg, Netherlands	
Saturday, July 8	Amsterdam, Netherlands	
Sunday, July 9	Leave Amsterdam, Netherlands	
	Arrive Belgrade, Yugoslavia	
Monday, July 10	Belgrade, Yugoslavia	
Tuesday, July 11	Novi Sad, Yugoslavia	
Wednesday, July 12	Free	
Thursday, July 13	Opatija, Yugoslavia	

Friday, July 14	Ljubljana, Yugoslavia
Saturday, July 15	Pula, Yugoslavia
Sunday, July 16	Free
Monday, July 17	Zagreb, Yugoslavia
Tuesday, July 18-Saturday, July 22	To be announced

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater American Tour--Fall, 1969

Date	Auspices	Theatre
October 6	University of Connecticut	Jorgensen Theater Storrs, Connecticut
October 7	Iona Institute	RKO Theater New Rochelle, New York
October 8	Gettysburg College	Gettysburg College Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
October 9	Madison College	Wilson Auditorium Harrisonburg, Virginia
October 10	Pittsburgh Dance Council	Syria Mosque Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
October 11	Community	High School Auditorium Lancaster, Ohio

October 12	Free	
October 13	Central Michigan University	Warner Auditorium Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
October 14	Ball State University	Emens Auditorium Muncie, Indiana
October 15	Northern Illinois University	University Center Ballroom DeKalb, Illinois
October 16	Wisconsin State University	Old Main Auditorium Stevens Point, Wisconsin
October 17	Wisconsin State University	University Arena Eau Claire, Wisconsin
October 18	Schubert Club	St. Paul Municipal Auditorium St. Paul, Minnesota
October 19	Free	
October 20	Mankato State College	Mankato High School Auditorium Mankato, Minnesota
October 21	Free	
October 22	Summy-Birchard (New York)	The Vert Pendleton, Oregon
October 23	Community	Capitol Theater Yakima, Washington
October 24	Northwest Releasing	Opera House Seattle, Washington
October 25	Summy-Birchard	Everett Civic Auditorium Everett, Washington
October 26	Northwest Releasing	Portland Public Auditorium Portland, Oregon

October 27		Beaverton, Oregon
October 28	Free	
October 29	Community	Shasta Union High School Auditorium Redding, California
October 30	San Jose State College	Morris Daily Auditorium San Jose, California
October 31-November 1	Regents University of California	Zellerbach Auditorium Berkeley, California
November 2	Hayward Area Concert Association	College Community Auditorium Hayward, California
November 3		Reno, Nevada
November 4	Community	Santa Rosa High School Auditorium Santa Rosa, California
November 5	Free	
November 6	China Lake Civic Concerts	Center Theater China Lake, California
November 7	Occidental College	Thorne Hall Los Angeles, California
November 8	Los Angeles Concert Association	Shrine Auditorium Los Angeles, California
November 9	University of California at Los Angeles	University Auditorium Los Angeles, California
November 10	Community	Riverside Municipal Auditorium Riverside, California

November 11	Community	Millikan High School Auditorium Long Beach, California
November 12	Community	Palm Springs High School Auditorium Palm Springs, California
November 13	Arizona State University	Grady Grammage Auditorium Tempe, Arizona

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater American Tour--Winter, 1970

Date	City	Theatre
Thursday, February 5	South Hadley, Massachusetts	Chapin Auditorium
Friday, February 6	Free	
Saturday, February 7	Washington, D. C.	Lisner Auditorium
Sunday, February 8	Farmville, Virginia	Jarman Hall
Monday, February 9	Charlottesville, Virginia	University Hall
Tuesday, February 10	Richmond, Virginia	Virginia Museum Theatre
Wednesday, February 11	Sweet Briar, Virginia	Babcock Fine Arts Center
Thursday, February 12	Greensboro, North Carolina	Harrison Auditorium
Friday, February 13	Greensboro, North Carolina	Aycock Auditorium

Saturday, February 14	Free	
Sunday, February 15	Chapel Hill, North Carolina	Memorial Hall
Monday, February 16	Durham, North Carolina	B. N. Duke Auditorium
Tuesday, February 17	Salisbury, North Carolina	Varick Auditorium
Wednesday, February 18	Statesboro, Georgia	McCroan Auditorium
Thursday, February 19	Free	
Friday, February 20	St. Petersburg, Florida	Bayfront Center
Saturday, February 21	Tampa, Florida	Theatre Auditorium
Sunday, February 22	Free	
Monday, February 23	Tallahassee, Florida	Lee Hall
Tuesday, February 24	Tallahassee, Florida	Westcott Auditorium
Wednesday, February 25	Nashville, Tennessee	Kean Hall
Thursday, February 26	Free	
Friday, February 27	Chicago, Illinois	Auditorium Theatre
Saturday, February 28	Free	
Sunday, March 1	Lafayette, Indiana	Elliot Hall of Music

Monday, March 2	Fort Wayne, Indiana	Scottish Rite Auditorium
Tuesday, March 3-Thursday, March 5	East Lansing, Michigan	Kellogg Center
Friday, March 6	Cleveland, Ohio	Music Hall
Saturday, March 7	Free	
Sunday, March 8	Delaware, Ohio	Gray Chapel
Monday, March 9	Trenton, Michigan	Trenton High School Auditorium
Tuesday, March 10	Ypsilanti, Michigan	Pease Auditorium
Wednesday, March 11	Ypsilanti, Michigan	Pease Auditorium
Thursday, March 12	Ypsilanti, Michigan	Pease Auditorium
Friday, March 13	Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania	
Saturday, March 14	Williamsport, Pennsylvania	Scottish Rite Auditorium
Sunday, March 15	Princeton, New Jersey	McCarter Theatre
Monday, March 16	Union, New Jersey	Theatre for the Performing Arts
Tuesday, March 17	Great Neck, Long Island, New York	South High School
Wednesday, March 18	Mt. Kisco, New York	Fox Lane High School Auditorium

Thursday, March 19	Red Bank, New Jersey	Carlton Theatre
	West Orange, New Jersey	Levin Auditorium
Friday, March 20	Deer Park, Long Island, New York	

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
North African Tour--Summer, 1970

Date	City	Theatre
July 3-4	Casablanca, Morocco	Municipal Theatre
July 5	Leave Casablanca, Morocco	
	Arrive Rabat, Morocco	
July 6	Rabat, Morocco	Mohamed-V
July 7	Leave Rabat, Morocco	
	Arrive Meknes, Morocco	
July 8	Meknes, Morocco	Cinéma Rif
July 9	Leave Meknes, Morocco	
	Arrive Safi, Morocco	
July 10	Safi, Morocco	Cinéma Royal
July 11-13	Travel to Casablanca, Morocco	
July 14-15	Travel to Algiers, Algeria	
July 16-18	Algiers, Algeria	Theatre d'Alger
July 19	Travel to Oran, Algeria	
July 20	Oran, Algeria	National Theater
July 21-22	Travel to Tunis, Tunisia	

July 23	Free	
July 24	Tunis, Tunisia	Interviews--Press, radio, television
July 25	Carthage, Tunisia	Roman Theatre
July 26	Free	
July 27	Hammamet, Tunisia	Outdoor Theatre
July 28-30	Sfax, Tunisia	Tunisian Arts Festival
July 31-August 2	Travel to New York City	

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
Soviet Russia Tour--Fall, 1970

Date	City	Theatre*
September 21	Leave for Moscow, Russia	
September 22	Arrive Moscow, Russia	
September 23	Travel to Zaporozhe, Russia	
September 24-September 28	Zaporozhe, Russia	
September 29	Travel to Donetsk, Russia	
September 30	Free	
October 1-5	Donetsk, Russia	
October 6-7	Free	
October 8-12	Kiev	
October 13-14	Free	

October 15-19	Boroshilobgrad
October 20	Travel to Moscow, Russia
October 21	Free
October 22-26	Moscow, Russia
October 27	Travel to Leningrad, Russia
October 28	Free
October 29-November 1	Leningrad, Russia
November 2	Leave Russia

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Summer Tour--1971

Date	City	Theatre
Wednesday, June 23-Saturday, June 26	Holmdel, New Jersey	Garden State Arts Center
Sunday, June 27	Travel	
Monday, June 28	Free	
Tuesday, June 29-Saturday, July 3	Detroit, Michigan	Fisher Theatre
Sunday, July 4	Travel	
Monday, July 5-Sunday, July 11	Los Angeles, California	Greek Theatre

Monday, July 12	Travel	
Tuesday, July 13-Thursday, July 15	Cupertino, California	Flint Center DeAnza College
Friday, July 15-Sunday, July 18	Berkeley, California	Zellerbach Auditorium
Monday, August 2-Saturday, August 7	Hamilton, Bermuda	City Hall Theatre

The Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theater
Winter-Spring Tour--1973

Date	City	Theatre
January 15-21	Washington, D. C.	The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
January 22	Travel	
January 23	Frankfort, Kentucky	Bradford Hall Auditorium
January 24	Travel	
January 25-27	Lafayette, Indiana	Purdue University Elliot Hall of Music
January 28	Free	
January 29-31	Macomb, Illinois	Western Illinois University Western Hall
February 1-3	Ann Arbor, Michigan	University Musical Society Power Auditorium

February 4	Free	
February 5-6	Allendale, Michigan	Grand Valley State College Louis Armstrong Theatre
February 7-8	Free	
February 9-11	Bloomington, Indiana	Indiana University Auditorium
February 12-14	Iowa City, Iowa	University of Iowa Hancher Auditorium
February 15 17	Minneapolis, Minnesota	University of Minnesota Northrop Memorial Auditorium
February 18	Free	
February 19	Liberty, Missouri	To be arranged
February 20-21	Kansas City, Missouri	William Jewell College Capri Theatre
February 22	Free	
February 23-25	Chicago, Illinois	Auditorium Theatre
February 26-28	Travel and Free	
April 1	Mt. Vernon, New York	To be arranged
April 2	Princeton, New Jersey	McCarter Theatre
April 3	Hackensack, New Jersey	Orrie de Nooyer Auditorium
April 4	Newark, New Jersey	Symphony
April 5-11	Williamsville, New York	Kleinhans Music Hall
April 12-14	Rochester, New York	Nazareth College Arts Center Auditorium

APPENDIX E

SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS REPRESENTATIVE OF ACTIVITIES OF BOTH SUBJECTS--ARTHUR MITCHELL AND ALVIN AILEY-- AND THEIR RESPECTIVE DANCE COMPANIES

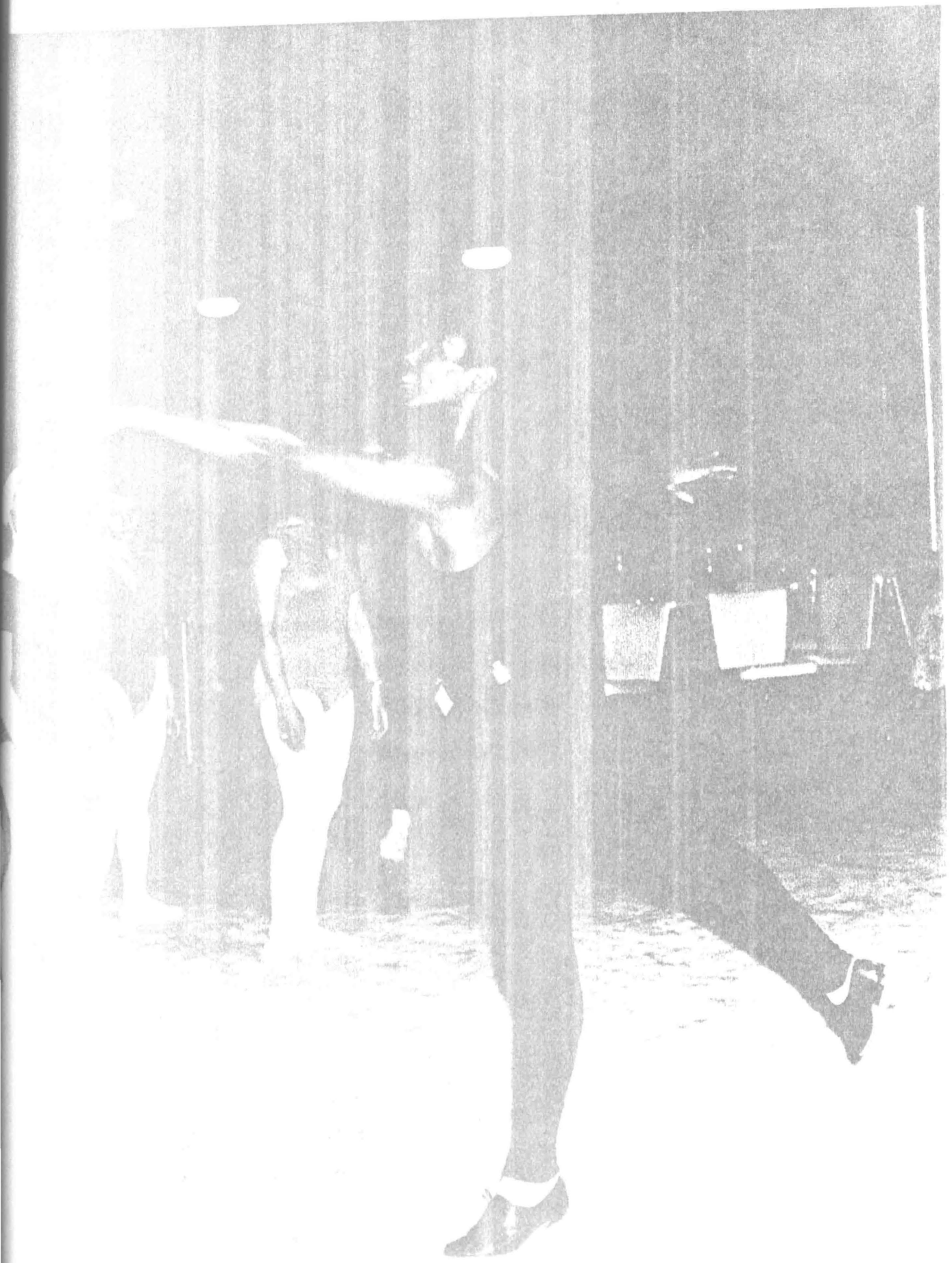
SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS REPRESENTATIVE OF ACTIVITIES OF ARTHUR MITCHELL AND THE DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM

Arthur Mitchell--Instructor at The Second Annual

American Dance Symposium in

Wichita, Kansas

Summer of 1969



Arthur Mitchell--Instructor at The Second Annual

American Dance Symposium in

Wichita, Kansas

Summer of 1969

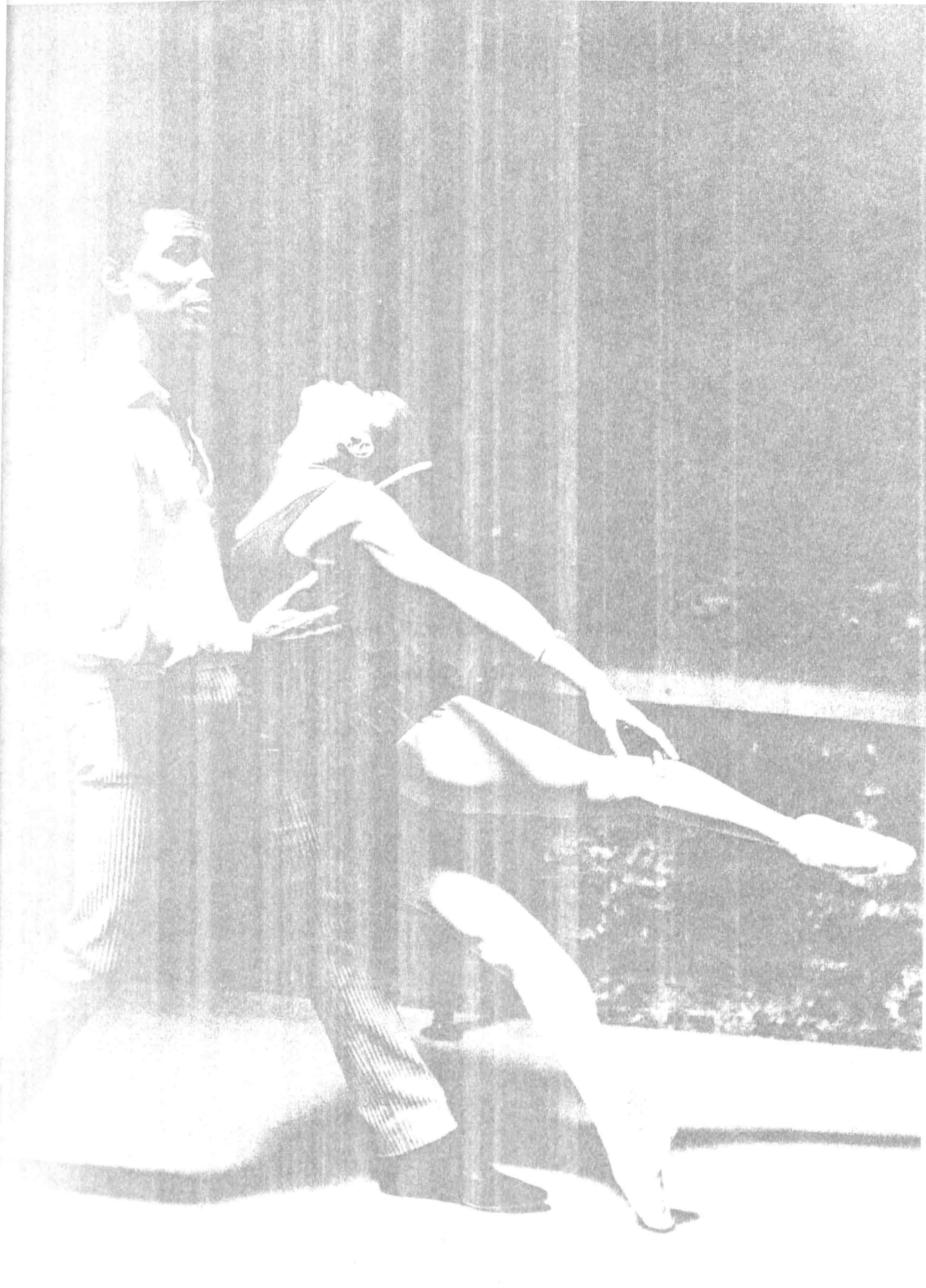
Arthur Mitchell--Instructor of a Class of Children at the Dance Theatre of Harlem

(Photo by Marbeth)

Arthur Mitchell--Demonstrator with Llanchie Stevenson

at the Dance Theatre of Harlem

(Photo by Marbeth)



The Dance Theatre of Harlem

Summer, 1970

The Dance Theatre of Harlem

Walter Raines, Clover Mathis, and Lydia Abarca

in Holberg Suite

The Dance Theatre of Harlem

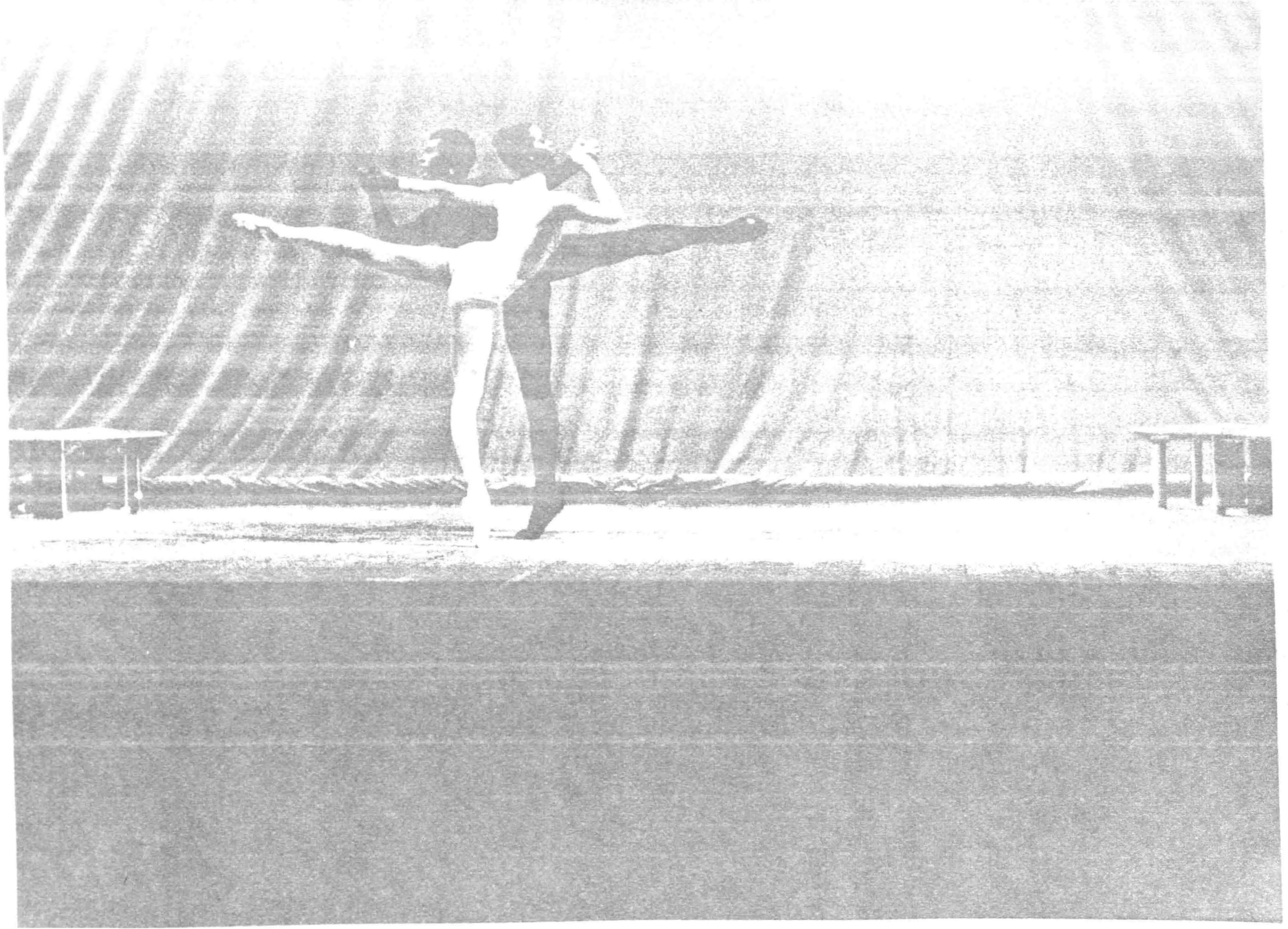
Ronda Sampson and Gerald Banks

in Holberg Suite

The Dance Theatre of Harlem

Lydia Abarca and Walter Raines

in Biosfera



The Dance Theatre of Harlem

Derek Williams and Gail McKinney

in Tones

Open House at the Dance Theatre of Harlem

Dancers Susan Lovelle and

Ronald Perry, in

Foreground

The Dance Theatre of Harlem

Students at the Barre

in Ballet Class

(Photo by Marbeth)

The Dance Theatre of Harlem

Zelda Wynn, Director of the Fashion Workshop,

Instructs Young Students in

Basic Sewing

The Dance Theatre of Harlem

Students in a Music Class

The Dance Theatre of Harlem

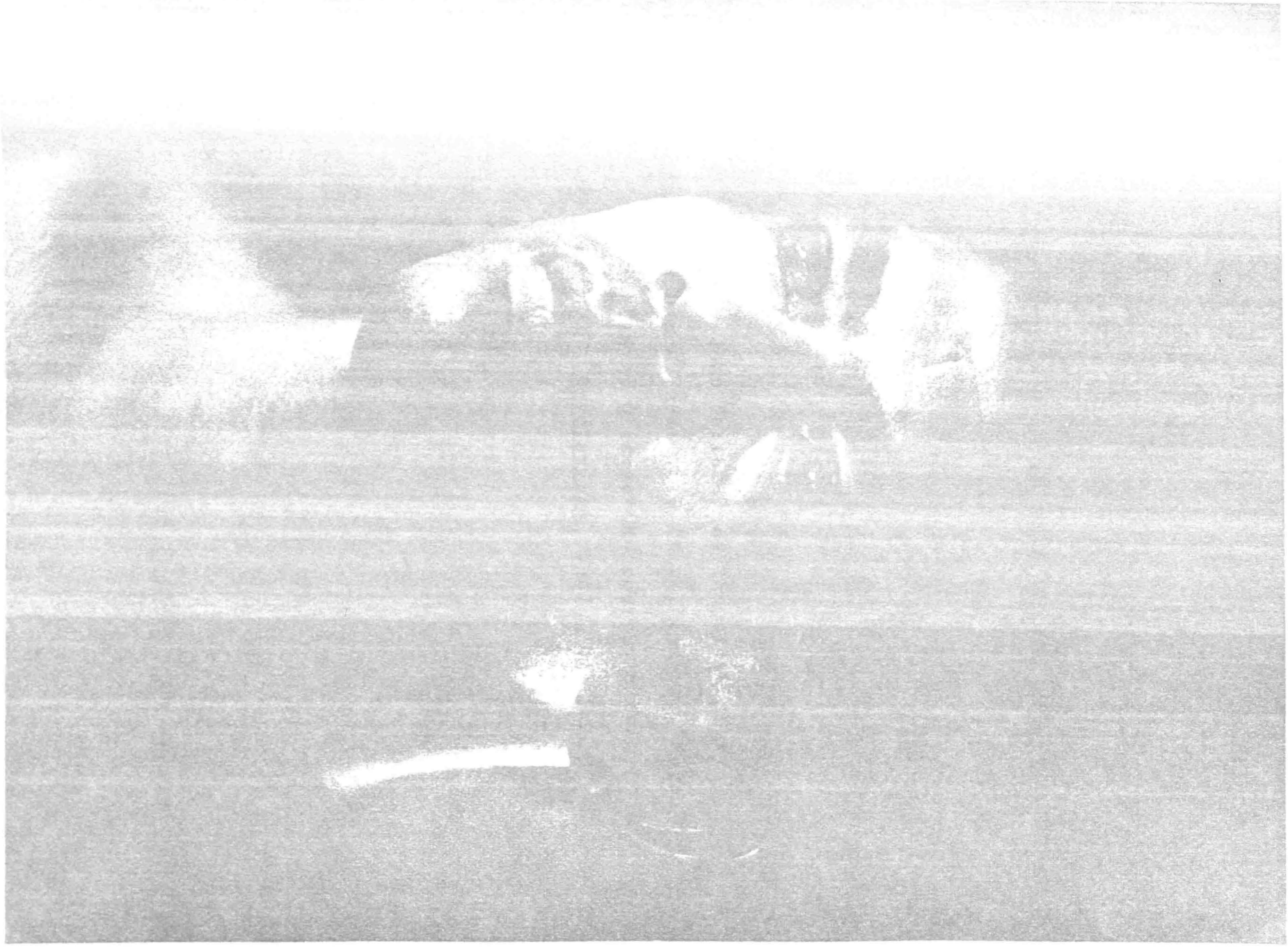
Kathleen Grant Instructs

Young Students in

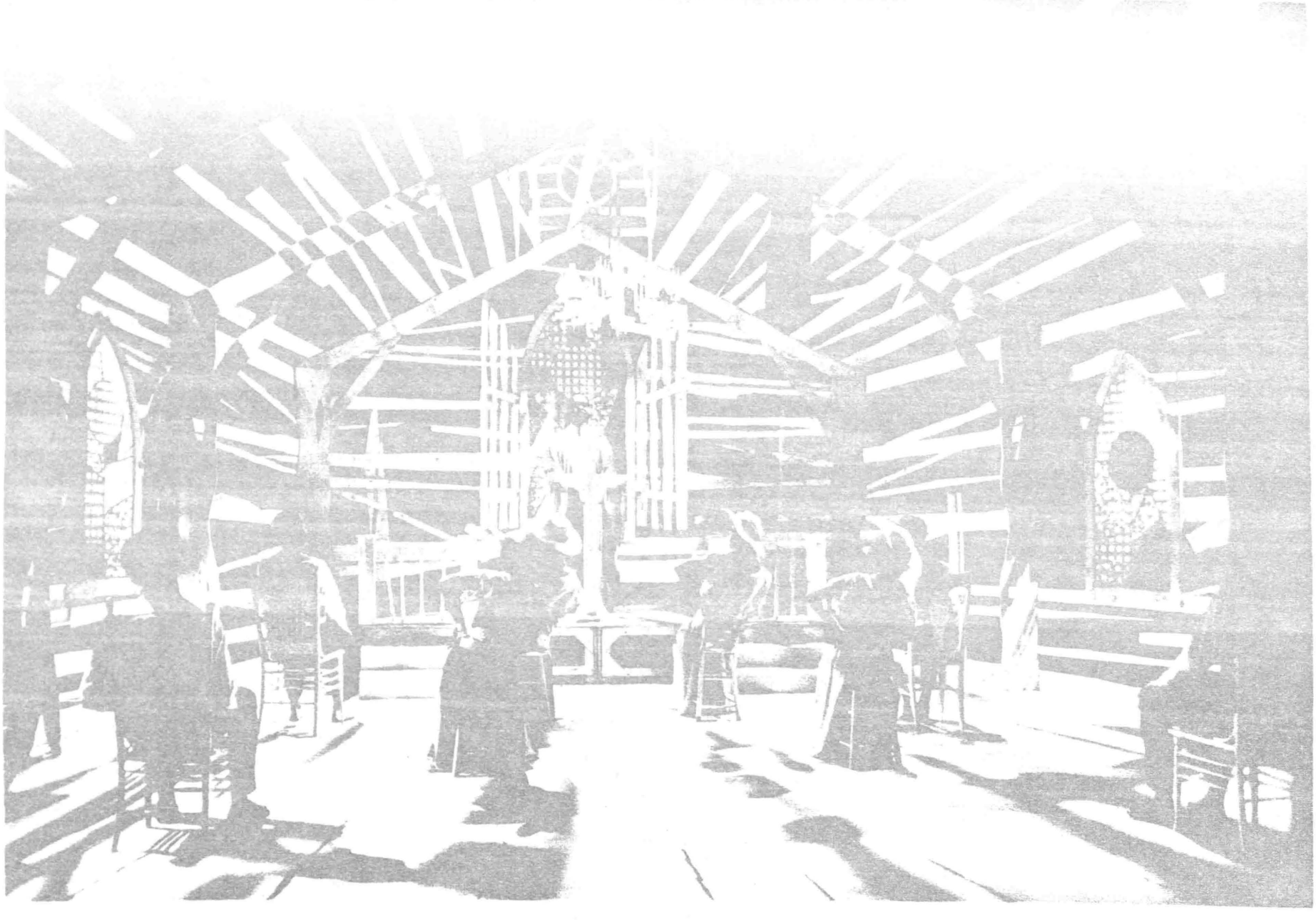
Special Exercises

SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS REPRESENTATIVE OF ACTIVITIES OF ALVIN AILEY AND HIS RESPECTIVE DANCE COMPANIES

Alvin Ailey--Dancer, in 1965



Brother John Sellers and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in "Move, Members, Move," from Ailey's Classic Choreographic Work, Revelations, 1962

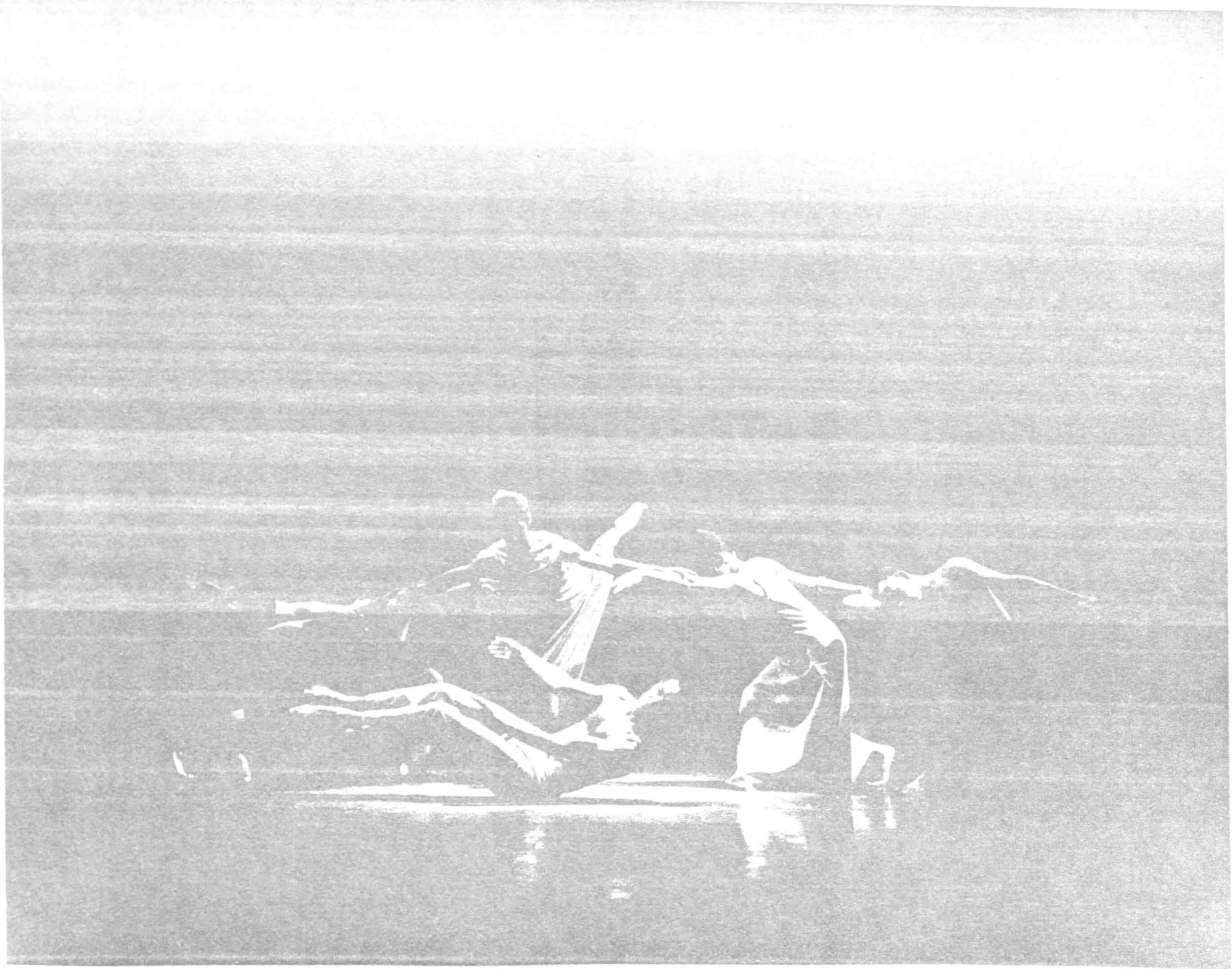


The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater

Dancers Alvin Ailey, Myrna White, Minnie Marshall,

James Truitte, Ella Thompson, and Don Martin

in Revelations, 1962



The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater

Dancers Alvin Ailey, Ella Thompson, and Minnie Marshall

in "Wade in the Water" from

Revelations, Early 1960's

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Dancers in a Scene from Talley Beatty's

The Road of the Phoebe Snow

THE ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Judith Jamison and Miguel Godreau

in Geoffrey Holder's

Prodigal Prince,

1970


JACK
MITCHELL
NYC

Alvin Ailey and Two Other Recipients of

Honorary Doctorate Degrees from

Cedar Crest College, Allentown,

Pennsylvania, on June 4, 1972

APPENDIX F

SELECTED PROGRAMS AND REVIEWS OF PERFORMANCES OF THE PROFESSIONAL DANCE COMPANIES OF ARTHUR MITCHELL AND ALVIN AILEY

THE DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM

at The Guggenheim Museum

January 8, 9 and 10, 1971 at 8:30 p.m.

TONES

Music by Tania Leon Viera
Choreography by Arthur Mitchell
Scenery and Lighting by George Veughn Lowther

First Movement:

Gayle McKinney	Roslyn Sampson	Ronda Sampson
William Scott	Edward Moore	Clover Mathis
Sheila Rohan	Lydia Abarca	Virginia Johnson
Derek Williams	Homer Bryant	Gerald Banks

Second Movement:

LLANCHIE STEVENSON **WALTER RAINES**

Third Movement:

ENTIRE COMPANY

Lydia Abarca	Walter Raines
Virginia Johnson	Gerald Banks
Olinda Davis	Samuel Smalls
Sheila Rohan	Clover Mathis
Gayle McKinney	Homer Bryant
Pamela Jones	William Scott
Ronda Sampson	Ronald Perry
Roslyn Sampson	Edward Moore
Cassandra Phifer	Derek Williams
Susan Lovelle	Rodney Swan
Llanchie Stevenson	Lazar Dano
Yvonne Hall	

Intermission

FÊTE NOIRE

Music by Shostakovich
Choreography by Arthur Mitchell
Costumes designed and executed by Patricia Mattison and Bernard Johnson
Lighting by George Vaughn Lowther

Dedicated to Mrs. Alva B. Gimbel

First Movement:

VIRGINIA JOHNSON **WALTER RAINES**

Roslyn Sampson
Derek Williams

Ronda Sampson
Homer Bryant

Lydia Abarca
Rodney Swan

Sheila Rohan
Lazar Dano

Second Movement:

LLANCHIE STEVENSON **GAYLE MC KINNEY**
LAZAR DANO **CLOVER MATHIS**

Third Movement:

Lydia Abarca	Virginia Johnson	Gayle McKinney	Llanchie Stevenson
Susan Lovell	Pamela Jones	Roslyn Sampson	Sheila Rohan
Ronda Sampson	Olinda Davis	Yvonne Hall	Cassandra Phifer
	Walter Raines	Derek Williams	Clover Mathis
Homer Bryant	Gerald Banks	Edward Moore	William Scott
Lazar Dano	Samuel Smalls	Ronald Perry	Rodney Swan

Intermission

RHYTHMETRON

Music by Marlos Nobre
Choreography by Arthur Mitchell
Costumes by Patricia Mattison
Lighting by George Vaughn Lowther

The Preparation

PATRICIA RICKETTS, Priestess

Lydia Abarca	Virginia Johnson	Gayle McKinney
Sheila Rohan	Ronda Sampson	Llanchie Stevenson
Clover Mathis	Homer Bryant	Ronald Perry
Walter Raines	Derek Williams	Samuel Smalls

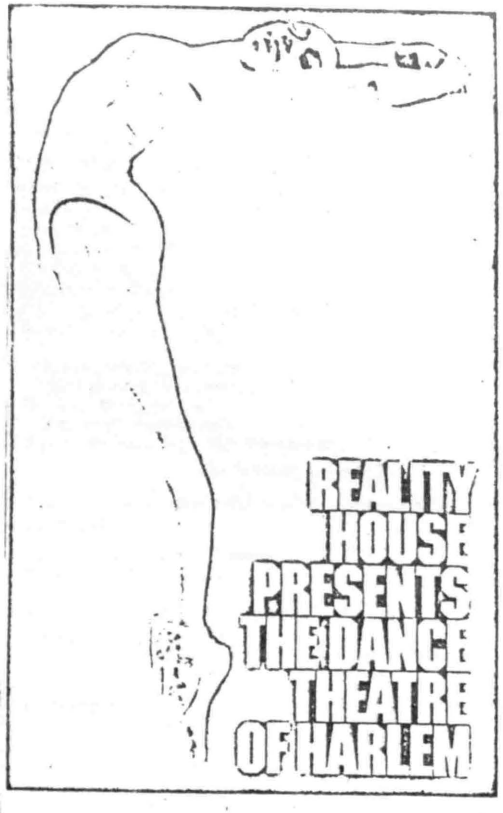
The Chosen: Pas de Six

LLANCHIE STEVENSON **LYDIA ABARCA** **VIRGINIA JOHNSON**
CLOVER MATHIS **WALTER RAINES** **SAMUEL SMALLS**

The Ritual:

PATRICIA RICKETTS

Lydia Abarca	Walter Raines
Virginia Johnson	Gerald Banks
Sheila Rohan	Samuel Smalls
Gayle McKinney	Clover Mathis
Pamela Jones	Homer Bryant
Ronda Sampson	William Scott
Olinda Davis	Ronald Perry
Cassandra Phifer	Edward Moore
Susan Lovelle	Derek Williams
Llanchie Stevenson	Rodney Swan
Yvonne Hall	
Roslyn Sampson	



Arthur Mitchell, Executive and Artistic Director
Karel Shook, Associate Artistic Director

Lydia Abarca	Olinda Davis	Yvonne Hall
Virginia Johnson	Pamela Jones	Susan Lovelle
Gayle McKinney	Melva Murray	Cassandra Phifer
Patricia Ricketts	Ronda Sampson	Roslyn Sampson
	Llanchie Stevenson	
Gerald Banks	Homer Bryant	Lazar Dano
Edward Moore	Ronald Perry	Walter Raines
Paul Russell	William Scott	Samuel Smalls
	Derek Williams	

Forces of Rhythm

Music: Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson
Choreographer: Louis Johnson
Costumes: Zelda Wynn
Lighting: Fred Barry

Prologue

Roots and Rhythm

Homer Bryant, Edward Moore
Ronald Perry, William Scott

Rhythm and Strings

Olinda Davis, Yvonne Hall, Pamela Jones
Virginia Johnson, Susan Lovelle, Melva Murray
Cassandra Phifer, Roslyn Sampson, Gerald Banks
Lazar Dano, Samuel Smalls, Derek Williams

Distress

Olinda Davis, Virginia Johnson
Pamela Jones, Cassandra Phifer

Shout

Patricia Ricketts

Forces of Rhythm

Gayle McKinney, Edward Moore, Derek Williams

Harlem Rhythms

Paul Russell

Coda

The Entire Company

Understudies: Virginia Johnson for Miss Ricketts
Llanchie Stevenson, Lazar Dano, Homer Bryant
in the movement, Forces of Rhythm

"Forces of Rhythm" is a pure dance work created especially for the Dance Theatre of Harlem by Mr. Johnson, one of today's leading black choreographers. This work captures the essence of ballet and ethnic dance styles, demonstrating the rapport, beauty and relationship between the two.

Intermission

Holberg Suite

Music: Edvard Grieg
Choreography: Arthur Mitchell
Lighting: Fred Barry

Opening:

Virginia Johnson, Gayle McKinney, Cassandra Phifer, Ronda Sampson, Roslyn Sampson, Llanchie Stevenson, Homer Bryant, Lazar Dano, Paul Russell

Pas de neuf:

Gayle McKinney, Susan Lovelle, Cassandra Phifer
Gerald Banks, Homer Bryant, William Scott
Lazar Dano, Paul Russell, Derek Williams

Pas de trois:

Homer Bryant, Virginia Johnson, Lazar Dano

Pas de deux

Llanchie Stevenson, Paul Russell
Ronda Sampson, Pamela Jones

Finale:

Roslyn Sampson, Ronald Perry
and the entire company

Intermission

The Beloved

Music: Judith Hamilton
Choreography: Lester Horton
Staged by: James Truitte
(by permission of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre)
Costumes: Zelda Wynn
(after the originals of Lester Horton)
Lighting: Fred Barry
(after the original of Lester Horton)
Pianist: Tania Leon Viera

"Thou art all fair, my love
There is no spot on thee, . . .
Thy lips, O my spouse
Drip as the honeycomb
Honey and milk are under thy tongue . . ."
. . . . The Song of Solomon

Out of an era of dogma and servility comes a theme of violence and bigotry.

The Woman: Gayle McKinney
The Man: Walter Raines

Alternates to Miss McKinney and Mr. Raines:
Virginia Johnson and Paul Russell
Understudies: Llanchie Stevenson and Derek Williams

Intermission

Rhythmetron

Music: Marlos Nobre (played from tape)
Choreography: Arthur Mitchell
Costumes and Accessories: Bernard Johnson
Sets and Lighting; Fred Barry

The Preparation:

Patricia Ricketts, Priestess

Women: Virginia Johnson, Pamela Jones, Gayle McKinney, Melva Murray, Cassandra Phifer, Ronda Sampson

Men: Gerald Banks, Homer Bryant, Lazar Dano, Paul Russell, Edward Moore, Ronald Perry, Walter Raines, William Scott, Samuel Smalls, Derek Williams

The Chosen:
Pas de six

Llanchie Stevenson, Lydia Abarca, Virginia Johnson, Derek Williams, Walter Raines, Samuel Smalls

The Ritual:

Patricia Ricketts
and the entire company

Lydia Abarca	Gerald Banks
Olinda Davis	Homer Bryant
Yvonne Hall	Lazar Dano
Virginia Johnson	Edward Moore
Pamela Jones	Ronald Perry
Susan Lovelle	Walter Raines
Gayle McKinney	Paul Russell
Melva Murray	William Scott
Cassandra Phifer	Samuel Smalls
Roslyn Sampson	Derek Williams
Roslyn Sampson	
Llanchie Stevenson	

In the three short years since its inception, The Dance Theatre of Harlem, under the direction of Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook, has already established itself as one of the leading dance companies in the world. Drawing upon a previously untapped source of talent, firmly rooted in the tradition of classical ballet, this all-Black company provides the inner-city community of Harlem in New York (from which it sprang) with a resident dance company and a School of Dance in which students from all parts of the country are enrolled. Despite its youth, both in length of its existence and the age of its dancers, Anna Kisselgoff, dance critic for *The New York Times*, wrote: "No such company has made such progress in so short a time."

In recognition of the artistic excellence of Dance Theatre, George Balanchine has given the Company performance rights to his ballets, "Concerto Barocco" and "Agon." Among the many other ballets in the repertoire are those of John Taras, Lester Horton, Louis Johnson, as well as Arthur Mitchell and other leading choreographers.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem's unique Lecture/Demonstration program has been presented to over 150,000 school-age children across the country, and it was this program which broke all previous attendance records at the prestigious Town Hall in New York City.

This past summer, Dance Theatre of Harlem was the resident ballet company at the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds, where they received standing ovations lasting 20 minutes. After this spectacular success, the Company toured throughout Italy, Belgium, and Holland, where the Amsterdam engagement was extended because of public clamor for tickets. This critically acclaimed first European tour followed performances at Saratoga, Jacob's Pillow, throughout the Caribbean, and in major cities, colleges and universities across the country.

The Company is now in its second year of touring under the sponsorship of The National Endowment Residency Touring Program and will return to Europe this summer for an extended engagement.

NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 1971

Harlem Dancers Excel at Guggenheim

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

One of the most exciting aspects of the Dance Theater of Harlem, itself one of Ballet's most exciting undertakings, has ben the opportunity to watch this young black classic company — founded and directed by Arthur Mitchell — grow.

Friday night in the Guggenheim Museum, at the foot of its spiraling ramp, the 21-member troupe made what was billed as its formal New York City debut. Generally, this statement is correct but seems to rely mainly upon the definition of "formal."

Mr. Mitchell, best known as one of the New York City Ballet's principal dancers, has not exactly kept his promising youthful protegés under a bushel since he founded the company and its associated school in Harlem two years ago.

Since the spring of 1969, there have been several tantalizing glimpses of some of the dancrs, trained by Mr. Mitchell, Karel Shook, the troupe's associate director, and others. They have appeared in various places in Manhattan in what probably was their "informal" debut.

The Program

DANCE THEATER OF HARLEM: Executive and artistic director, Arthur Mitchell; associate artistic director, Karel Shook; stage manager and lighting designer, George Vaughn Lowther; first assistant, Richard Tsukada; sound/pianist conductor, Tania Leon Viera. Presented at the Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue.

TONES: Music, Tania Leon Viera; choreography, Arthur Mitchell; scenery and With: Gayle McKinney, William Scott, Roslyn Sampson, Edward Moore, Ronde Sampson, Clover Mathis, Sheila Rohan, Derek Williams, Lydia Abarca, Homer Bryant, Virginia Johnson, Gerald Banks, Llanchie Stevenson, Walter Raines and Olinda Davis, Pamela Jones, Cassandra Phifer, Susan Lovelle, Yvonne Hall, Samuel Smalls, Ronald Perry, Rodney Swan and Lazar Dano.

FETE NOIRE: Music, Shostakovich; choreography, Arthur Mitchell; costumes, Patricia Mattison and Bernard Johnson; lighting, George Vaughn Lowther.
With: Virginia Johnson, Walter Raines, Llanchie Stevenson, Lazar Dano, Gayle McKinney, Clover Mathis and company.

RHYTHMETRON; Music, Marlos Nobre; choreography, Arthur Mitchell; costumes, Patricia Mattison; lighting, George Vaughn Lowther.
With: Patricia Ricketts, Llanchie Stevenson, Lydia Abarca, Virginia Johnson, Clover Mathis, Walter Raines, Samuel Smalls and company.

It was last summer, at Jacob's Pillow in Massachusetts, however, that the stunning promise of the company became crystal-clear.

That potential was emphatically confirmed again Friday, when the Dance Theaater of Harlem appeared in three works chorographed by Mr. Mitchell, "Tones," "Fête Noire" and "Rhythmetron." There has ben a marked improvement in the boys' technique while the girls, still somewhat ahead, demonstrated their special brand of streamlined purity and performing presence.

In a sense, the group's really formal debut here will take place when it performs onstage March 8 at the ANTA Theater as part of the City Center's American Dance series. While the special half-moon platform in the Guggenheim's gallery served its purpose admirably (the public hung over the ramps or was seated downstairs in front), its space limitations appeared to cut down the flow of Mr. Mitchell's choreography.

This was particularly true of "Tones," a rather acrobatic exercise in design, but was less obvious in "Fête Noire," to Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 2, which included a lovely double pas de deux.

"Rhythmetron," to a percussion score by Marlos Nobre, has gained on second viewing—its mixture of classic and ethnic styles acquiring a new subtlety.

The company's three performances at the museum Friday, yesterday and tonight were made possible by a gift from Mrs. Alva B. Gimbel.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 1971

By William Weaver

SPOLETO, June 28.—Spoleto's Festival of Two Worlds has from its beginning 14 years ago, won the gratitude of balletomanes in Italy, a notoriously dance-poor country. Jerome Robbins created a special company—and some memorable choreography—for Spoleto; Balanchine, Fonteyn, Nureyev and other big names have all visited here, and so have several smaller, more experimental groups.

This year it is the turn of the Dance Theater of Harlem, founded in 1968 by Arthur Mitchell, the famous black dancer, who has now proved an inspiring teacher, an able organizer and a talented choreographer.

The company of 25 dancers, the product of Mitchell's Harlem school, has been working together now for two years. This is, as dance companies go, a short period, and it would be foolish to pretend that they have achieved the smoothness of some older companies. But already the Dance Theater of Harlem has a recognizable personality, a spirit of its own, a welcome and unusual mixture of youthful freshness and dedicated intensity.

Balanchine's "Concerto Barocco," which opened the first program, is still slightly beyond the dancers' grasp; they lacked the cool ease the work demands (and the orchestra was also poor). But it revealed Lydia Abarca's elegant line: In her, the Dance Theater of Harlem has a prima ballerina of star quality. Mitchell's "Fête Noire," set to Shostakovitch's Second Piano Concerto (wondrously played by Craig Sheppard) is a kind of black version of "Graduation Ball," danced with precision and brio. But the best work of the evening was Mitchell's "Rhythmetron," to taped percussion music by the Brazilian composer Marlos Nobre. Here the choreographer created a compelling ritual, using his own blend of classical and African or jazz-inspired movements. The piece gives the whole company a chance to show off; they were impressive.

* * *

The New York Times

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1971

Harlem Dance Theater Comes of Age

Mitchell Troupe Attains High Performing Level

By CLIVE BARNES

Arthur Mitchell is an overachiever of the nicest kind. Three years ago he founded the Dance Theater of Harlem and now, together with his associate director, that exceptional teacher Karel Shook, the company has progressed so far that it demands to be judged at a very high level.

Few, if any, companies have moved so far so fast, and this speed of progress is all the more remarkable when it is realized that many of the company's very young dancers have not been training for very long. Even so, in three years a valuable American dance company has been molded, and it was a pleasure to see it again on Saturday night at the Hunter College Playhouse, a pleasant auditorium too rarely used for dance events these days.

•

The company was dancing in a gala to assist Reality House, the drug rehabilitation center based in Washington Heights. It's program included the first performance of "Forces of Rhythm," a work-in-progress by Louis Johnson, and the first New York performance of the company's new production of the late Lester Horton's "The Beloved," which has been mounted for the Dance Theater by James Truitte.

There are members of the black community who question whether anything so obviously European in its derivation as classic ballet has any real place in Afro-American culture. The point is understandable but not very credible—it could be suggested, just as logically, that rock music, a white adaptation of Afro-American music, should have no place in white culture. National pride cannot, perhaps, afford to be so narrow.

However, it was precisely with this classic dance and ethnic dance contrast that Mr. Johnson's new ballet is concerned. The ballet, which was very well received, cannot as yet be reviewed because it was seen danced to a rehearsal tape—a mélange ranging from jazz to Tchaikovsky—whereas the proper ballet will have a specially commissioned score by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, and further comment must obviously await that.

Mr. Horton's "The Beloved," a duet telling a stark tale of religious bigotry, domination and murder in the Bible Belt, has been expertly revived by Mr. Truitte, who danced it first for Mr. Horton and later with the Ailey Company. Mr. Horton's strong, almost static choreography remains as powerful as ever, and the work was most passionately danced by a terrified but calm Gayle McKinney and an impassively brutal Walter Raines.

Lester Horton's 'The Beloved' Is Presented

•

The remainder of the program consisted of the familiar "Holberg Suite," a light and Balanchinian exercise to Grieg, and, also choreographed by Mr. Mitchell himself, to music by Marlos Nobre, the more interesting "Rhythmetron," which attempts to offer a ritual dance in the classic style. With its formal ensembles, it succeeds extremely well, not least in a pas de six of svelte elegance and unforced excitement.

The company continues to improve, and I noticed, in this program particularly, in addition to Miss McKinney and Mr. Raines, the vibrant Patricia Ricketts and two tough and vigorous male dancers, Edward Moore and Paul Russell. I think the Harlem dancers have a real stake in American dance. One last question however. Why is this not an integrated company? Does it have something against white folks?

A 10 THE COURIER-JOURNAL, SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 1973

Dance review

The Dance Theatre of Harlem even more pleasing a year later

By WILLIAM MOOTZ
Courier-Journal Critic

It was just over a year ago that the Dance Theatre of Harlem first came to Louisville to give a dazzling performance before a wildly enthusiastic crowd in the old Brown Theatre.

Last night, the company was back, and it isn't just the old Brown, now the Macauley, that has gone through a metamorphosis in the meantime.

For the Dance Theatre of Harlem has grown and matured astonishingly over the past twelve months. It is still a young group of dancers, who sometimes fall back on raw energy when more experienced performers might exhibit finesse.

But for a company that is just barely five years old, the Dance Theatre of Harlem is remarkable. You can only stand in awe, I think at what its directors, Arthur Mitchell and Karen Shook, have achieved with their young artists, some of whom had never seen a ballet when they were first recruited for the company.

To accomplish so much in so short a time must give Mitchell and Miss Shook some kind of track record in the history of the arts in this country.

What's more, I have the distinct feeling that Mitchell is determined that what we saw last night is only the beginning. In Louisville this week, and after the performance last night at the Macauley, he had the look of a man with the confidence to lead his team to the head of the pack.

Because of injuries in the Dance Theatre of Harlem (a common affliction among ballet troupes, but one particularly wounding to a small company like this), there were changes in the printed program. Mitchell was forced to substitute George Balanchine's "Concerto Barocco" and Louis Johnson's "Forces of Rhythm" for Ruth Page's "Carmen and Jose." The rest of the evening was devoted to Jerome Robbins's "Afternoon of a Faun" and Arthur Mitchell's "Rhythmetron," which, like "Forces of Rhythm," had been performed here by the Dance Theatre last season.

Of the works being danced here for the first time by the Dance Theatre, Balanchine's "Concerto Barocco" possibly hurled the greatest challenge at the company. It was a challenge its dancers met with aplomb. Like so many of Balanchine's works, the "Concerto Barocco" is about nothing except pure dance and the choreographer's intoxication at discovering a great piece of music, in this case Bach's Concerto for Two Violins in D minor.

Robbins sets "Faun" in a dance studio, in that rather hot-house atmosphere where performers are surrounded by mirrors. (It would have helped many in last night's audience, I suspect, had the program explained that there is an imaginary mirrored wall between dancers and audience.)

A young man awakes to a sensual awareness of himself. He is visited by a ballerina as preoccupied with her own image as he is with his. For a moment, it seems they may reach out to each other, but neither can really see beyond himself. It is a subtle work, made especially touching last night by Miss Abarca's tremulous performance as the girl. Young Mr. Perry is technically secure as the boy, but he has a lot of growing to do before he'll convey the emotional richness of the part.

Of the repeat works, Mitchell's "Rhythmetron" seemed even more gripping than it did last year. It is a stunning piece, beautifully tailored to his company, and electrifyingly danced. "Forces of Rhythm," on the other hand, seemed even more an unsuccessful pastiche this year, although there are brilliant solos by Cassandra Phifer and Russell and the entire work is a facile crowd-pleaser.

The program will be repeated tonight at 8:30. It's an exhilarating evening of dance. In Miss Abarca, moreover, it gives us the chance to discover a young ballerina who must surely be destined for greatness.

The YM-YWHA presents

ALVIN AILEY AND COMPANY

ERNEST PARHAM AND COMPANY

TALLEY BEATTY, *guest artist*

Lighting, NICOLAI CERNEVITCH

Sunday Afternoon, March 30, 1958, at 2:40

PROGRAM

Trajectories - - - - - - - - - - Kenton, Rugolo, Marks

Choreography by ERNEST PARHAM

Costumes designed and executed by LEW SMITH

Trio	Georgia Collins Jon Jones Ronnie Frazier
Theme for Sunday	Jacqueline Walcott Charles Moore
Icarus	Talley Beatty
Mirage	Nancy Perkins, Jim McMillan and Don Emmans, Jain Fairfax, Nathaniel Horne, Scott Hunter, Harold Pierson, Mona Pivar, Ella Thompson

Ode and Homage - - - - - - - - - - Glanville-Hicks

A dance of faith, respectfully dedicated to the memory of Lester Horton, modern dance pioneer and innovator.

Choreographed and danced by ALVIN AILEY

Costumes designed and executed by NORMAN MAXON

Redonda (Five Dances on Latin Themes)

Lirica - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - *Baxter*

Choreographed by ALVIN AILEY

Audrey Mason, Dorene Richardson, Mabel Robinson,
Julius Fields, Tommy Johnson, Harold Pierson

Rumba - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - *Fields*

Choreographed by ALVIN AILEY

Jacqueline Walcott, Charles Moore

Beguine - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - *Prado*

Choreographed by ALVIN AILEY

Julius Field, Tommy Johnson, Audrey Mason, Mabel Robinson

Rumbalero - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - *Camarata*

Choreographed by ERNEST PARHAM

Ella Thompson, Claude Thompson
and Georgia Collins, Jain Fairfax, Scott Hunter, Jim McMillan

Rite - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Black

Choreographed by **ALVIN AILEY**

Charles Moore, Audrey Mason, Dorene Richardson,
Tommy Johnson, Harold Pierson,
and Cristyne Lawson, Alvin Ailey

Costumes for *Lirica, Rumba, Beguine, and Rite*
designed and executed by **NORMAN MAXON** and **GEORGE MILLS**

Costumes for *Rumbalero* designed and executed by **LEW SMITH**

INTERMISSION

Uirapurú - - - - - - - - - - - - - Villa-Lobos

Choreography by **ERNEST PARHAM**
Costumes designed and executed by **LEW SMITH**

the boy	Ernest Parham
the girl	Cristyne Lawson
the leader	Ronnie Frazier
the people	Jain Fairfax, Nathaniel Horne, Scott Hunter, Nancy Perkins, Harold Pierson, Mona Pivar, Ronald Platts, Ella Thompson

INTERMISSION

Blues Suite

Choreography by **ALVIN AILEY**
Decor and costumes by **GEOFFREY HOLDER**
Music arranged and composed by **PAQUITA ANDERSON** and **JOSE RICCI**

The musical heritage of the southern Negro remains a profound influence on the music of the world . . . during the dark days the blues sprang full-born from the docks and the fields, saloons and bawdy houses . . . indeed from the very souls of their creators. . . .

Good Morning Blues	Clarence Cooper, Nancy Reddy and Julius Fields, Lavinia Hamilton, Tommy Johnson, Audrey Mason, Charles Moore, Charles Neal, Dorene Richardson, Liz Williams,
Smokedream	Claude Thompson
Fare Thee Well	Nancy Reddy, Lavinia Hamilton, Audrey Mason, Dorene Richardson
New Broom	Nancy Reddy, Claude Thompson
Sham	Julius Fields, Lavinia Hamilton, Tommy Johnson, Audrey Mason, Charles Moore, Charles Neal, Dorene Richardson, Liz Williams
Careless Love	Nancy Reddy, Lavinia Hamilton, Audrey Mason, Liz Williams
Jack of Diamonds	Clarence Cooper and the Company

Pasquita Anderson, *piano* Jose Ricci, *flute, drums*

Staff for the Parham and Ailey Companies:
CHARLES BLACKWELL, *stage manager* CLAUDE THOMPSON, *assistant stage manager*

Staff for the YM-YWHA:
DAN BUTT, *Stage Manager* ALAN BRENT, *Assistant Stage Manager*

The DANCE CENTER OF THE YM-YWHA *presents*

THE ALVIN AILEY DANCE THEATRE *

with

MATT TURNEY, guest artist

The Music Masters Guild Chorus of the Harlem Branch YMCA

FRANK THOMAS, Director

PROGRAM

CINCO LATINOS

Samba - - - - - - - - - - - - - - BAXTER

An irreverent version of Brazil's frivolous carnival dance.

LEU CAMACHO, JOAN DERBY
NATHANIEL HORNE, HERMAN HOWELL

Llorona - - - - - - - - - - - - - - BAXTER

. . . after the forest dances of Panama and Colombia.

ALVIN AILEY, MINNIE MARSHALL, MERLE DERBY
DORENE RICHARDSON, NATHANIEL HORNE, HERMAN HOWELL

El Cimarron - - - - - - - - - - - FIELDS

The age-old fight between man and woman stated in new terms.

JAMES TRUITTE, LEU CAMACHO

Canto al Diablo - - - - - GONZALEZ, arranged by Paquita Anderson

After the Afro-Brazilian fetishist rituals.

ALVIN AILEY NANCY REDI MERLE DERBY
MINNIE MARSHALL DORENE RICHARDSON NATHANIEL HORNE
HERMAN HOWELL

CREATION OF THE WORLD - - - - MILHAUD

Milhaud's early use of jazz-in-symphony inspires another look at Adam and Eve's oldest love story.

ALVIN AILEY MATT TURNEY

INTERMISSION

*February 28, 1960

BLUES SUITE - TRADITIONAL-ANDERSON-RICCI

From the fields, levees and barrelhouses of the Southern Negro

The Blind Man - - - - - - - - - *Gene Hobgood*
The Woman Upstairs - - - - - - - - *Nancy Redi*
Her Lover - - - - - - - - - - *Alvin Ailey*
The Other Man - - - - - - - - - *Nathaniel Horne*
Lady Friends - - - - - - *Joan Derby, Merle Derby, Minnie Marshall*
Their Men - - - - - - *Jay Fletcher, Herman Howell*

INTERMISSION

REVELATIONS - - - - - - - TRADITIONAL

The Music Masters Guild Chorus of the Harlem Branch Y.M.C.A.
FRANK THOMAS, Director

This suite explores motivations and emotions of Negro religious music which, like its heir the Blues, takes many forms—"true spirituals" with their sustained melodies, ring-shouts, song-sermons, gospel songs, and holy blues—songs of trouble, of Love of deliverance.

PILGRIM OF SORROW

I been buked - - - - - - - - - - *The Company*
Weeping Mary - - - - - - - - - - *Nancy Redi*
Round About the Mountain - - - - - - *Joan Derby,* Minnie Marshall, Dorene Richardson

THAT LOVE MY JESUS GIVES ME

Fix Me - - - - - *Minnie Marshall, Herman Howell*
Honor, Honor - - - - - - - - - *The Company*
Wade In the Water - - - - - - - - *Joan Derby, Jay Fletcher, Merle Derby, Nathaniel Horne*
Morning Star - - - - *Nancy Redi, Joan Derby Merle Derby, Minnie Marshall, Dorene Richardson*
Sinner Man - - - - *Gene Hobgood, Nathaniel Horne, Herman Howell, Jay Fletcher*

MOVE, MEMBERS, MOVE!

Precious Lord - *Gene Hobgood, Nancy Redi and the company*
God A Mighty
Waters of Babylon
Elijah Rock!

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presents

THE
ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE

with

LORETTA ABBOTT
ALVIN AILEY
HOPE CLARKE
GEORGIA COLLINS
WILLIAM LOUTHER
JOAN PETERS
KELVIN ROTARDIER
JAMES TRUITTE
DUDLEY WILLIAMS
MORTON WINSTON

Decor and Costumes VES HARPER
Lighting NICOLA CERNOVICH

1. GILLESPIANA

MUSIC : LALO SCHIFFRIN

CHOREOGRAPHY : ALVIN AILEY COSTUMES : VES HARPER

The sinuous and sensuous trumpet of Dizzy Gillespie inspires a lyrical and formalized dance paralleling the dynamics, texture, and moods of the music.

LORETTA ABBOTT GEORGIA COLLINS JOAN PETERS
JAMES TRUITTE KELVIN ROTARDIER

2. REFLECTIONS IN D

MUSIC : DUKE ELLINGTON CHOREOGRAPHY : ALVIN AILEY

DUDLEY WILLIAMS

3. LAMENT

(European Premiere)

MUSIC : HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS (Modinha and Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5)

CHOREOGRAPHY : LOUIS JOHNSON

The Girl ..... HOPE CLARKE
The Boy ..... WILLIAM LOUTHER
and MORTON WINSTON, LORETTA ABBOTT, KELVIN ROTARDIER

This lyrical ballet, composed in 1953, was the first work of American Negro choreographer, Louis Johnson. Mr. Johnson has since continued his career as a choreographer and director of many ballets and musicals.

The soprano on the recording of Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 is Bidu Sayao.

INTERVAL

4. ROOMS

(European Premiere)

MUSIC : KENYON HOPKINS CHOREOGRAPHY : ANNA SOKOLOW

In small rooms in large rooming houses throughout the world people live out their dreams and fantasies, their fears and anxieties. In the hallways of life they pass without seeing, without hearing, without speaking, without touching.

ALONE ..... The Company
DREAM ..... Dudley Williams
ESCAPE ..... Hope Clarke
DESIRE ..... Loretta Abbott, Joan Peters, Georgia Collins, William Louther, Dudley Williams, Kelvin Rotardier
PANIC ..... James Truitte
DAYDREAM ..... Loretta Abbott, Joan Peters, Georgia Collins
THE END ? ..... Loretta Abbott
ALONE ..... The Company

Anna Sokolow, the choreographer of this work, is a major influence on the dance in America. Always concerned with the human being in his darker aspects — or as society has affected him, the theme of man's inability to communicate haunts her works. She has long been associated with Elia Kazan, Harold Chapman, the Actors' Studio and the Stanislavsky "Method" approach to theatre. Her work reveals perhaps more than any other American choreographers, an extension of real human habit patterns into abstract dance. This ballet is also in the repertoires of the Netherlands Dance Theatre and the Modern Dance Theatre of Israel. Photographic projection by David Moore.

INTERVAL

5. REVELATIONS

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!"

TRADITIONAL

This suite explores motivations and emotions of American Negro religious music, which, like its heir the blues, takes many forms — true spirituals with their sustained melodies, song-sermons, gospel songs, and holy blues — songs of trouble, of love, of deliverance.

"Spirituals sing of woe triumphantly, knowing well that all rivers will be crossed and the Promised Land is just beyond the stream. The Spirituals ask no pity — for their words ride on the strongest of melodies, the melody of faith. That is why there is joy in their singing, peace in their music, and strength in their soul."

LANGSTON HUGHES, August, 1964.

CHOREOGRAPHY : ALVIN AILEY

PILGRIM OF SORROW

I BEEN 'BUKED ..... The Company

DIDN'T MY LORD DELIVER DANIEL ..... Alvin Ailey (or Kelvin Rotardier), Joan Peters, Hope Clarke

FIX ME, JESUS ..... Georgia Collins, James Truitte

TAKE ME TO THE WATER

PROCESSIONAL ..... Dudley Williams, Joan Peters, Hope Clarke, Loretta Abbott, Kelvin Rotardier, Morton Winston

HONOR, HONOR ..... The Company

WADING IN THE WATER ..... Alvin Ailey (or William Louther), Loretta Abbott, Hope Clarke

I WANT TO BE READY ..... James Truitte

SINNER MAN ..... Kelvin Rotardier, Morton Winston, William Louther

MOVE, MEMBERS MOVE

THE DAY IS PAST AND GONE ..... Loretta Abbott, Hope Clarke, Joan Peters, Georgia Collins

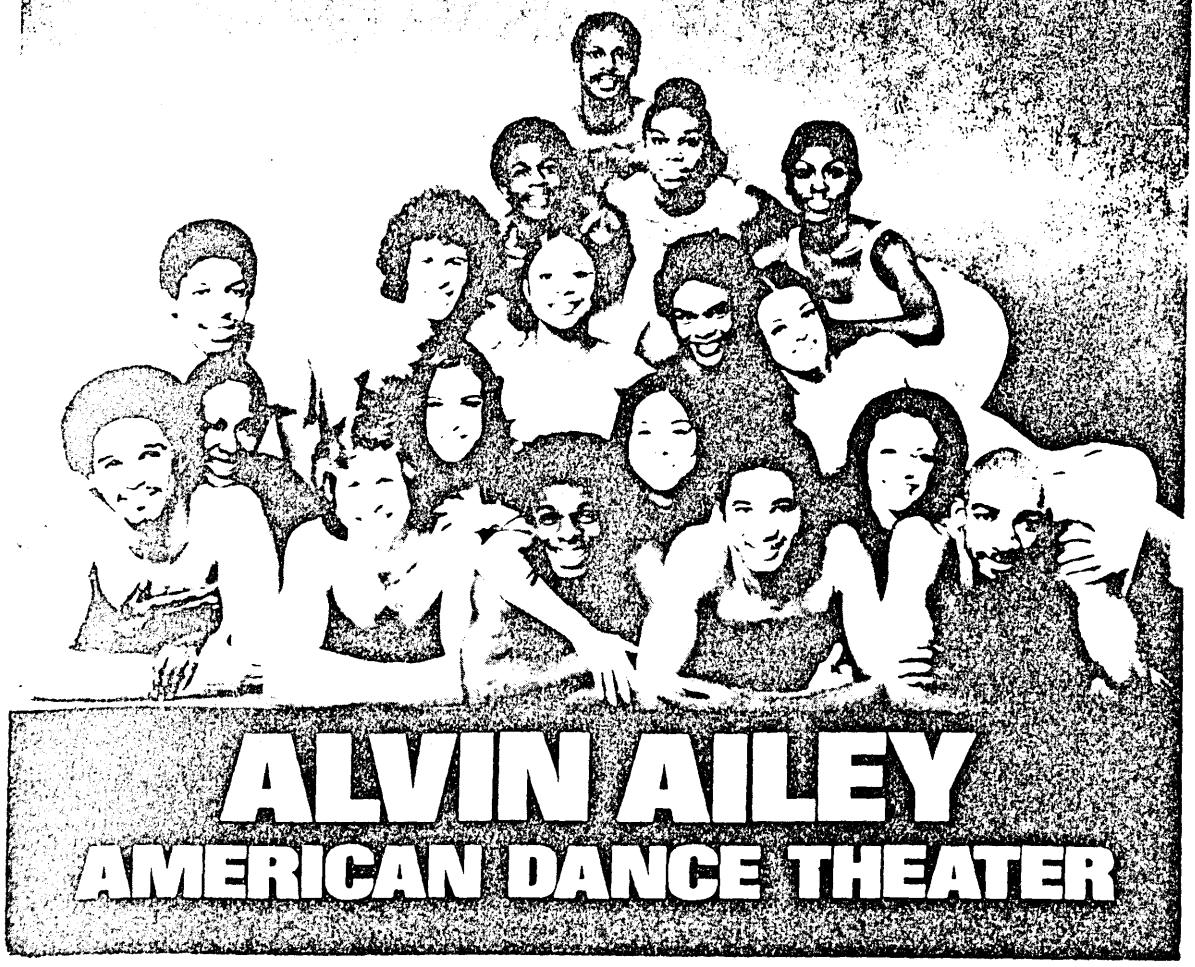
YOU MAY RUN HOME ..... The Company

ROCKA MY SOUL IN THE BOSOM OF ABRAHAM ..... The Company

City Center
55 St. Theater

PLAYBILL*

the national magazine for theatregoers



*April 18 through 23, 1972

TUESDAY EVENING, APRIL 18, 1972
THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 20, 1972

TOCCATA

(Treadmills, Encounters, Treadmills)
(first performance October 1960, New York City)

Music by Lalo Schiffrin (Gillespiana)
Choreography by Talley Beatty
Lighting by Nicola Cernovitch

Sara Yarborough	**John Parks**	**Kenneth Pearl**	**Linda Kent**
Hector Mercado	**Gail Reese**	**Lee Harper**	**Ronald Dunham**
Estelle Spurlock	**Leland Schwantes**	**Rosamund Lynn**	**Freddy Romero**

An episode from a longer work originally created by Talley Beatty with the title, **Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot. Toccata** is described as "set in the streets of New York" and incorporates nuances of classic and primitive dance in its basically jazz idiom. It is expressed in a sequence of ensembles, duets and trios that are danced in an almost declamatory manner as the dancers project their movements toward the audience and seldom toward themselves.

JOURNEY

(first performance December 1958, New York City)
Choreography by Joyce Trisler
Music by Charles Ives ("The Unanswered Question")
Costume by Malcolm McCormick
Lighting by Nicola Cernovitch

The Dancer: MARI KAJIWARA

A solo dance originally choreographed in 1958, later incorporated into a revised version of a larger work by Joyce Trisler called **Theater Piece** (1960). **Journey** is set to **"The Unanswered Question"** by Charles Ives (1874-1954), composed some time before 1909—a short, intensely evocative orchestral mood-poem comprising a steady, soft background of muted strings, a persistently repeated "question" by a solo trumpet and an unsuccessful hunt for the "answer" undertaken with increasing urgency by the flutes.

ICARUS

(first performance April 1964, New York City)

Music by Shin-ichi Matsushita
Choreography by Lucas Hoving
Costumes by Beni Montresor
Lighting by Nicola Cernovitch

According to the myth, Daedalus, imprisoned with his son, Icarus, devised wings to enable them to escape. Icarus, overcome by the ecstasy of flying, flew toward the sun, whereupon his wings burned and he fell to his death.

Icarus ..... **Dudley Williams**
Freddy Romero (4/20)
Daedalus ..... **Clive Thompson**
The Sun ..... **Sara Yarborough**

INTERMISSION

CRY

(First performance May 1971, New York City)

For all Black women everywhere—especially our mothers.

Music: Alice Coltrane ("Something About John Coltrane")
Laura Nyro ("Been on a Train")
The Voices of East Harlem ("Right On, Be Free"*)
Choreography by Alvin Ailey
Lighting by Chenault Spence

JUDITH JAMISON

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INTERMISSION

REVELATIONS

(First performance January 1960, New York City)

Music: Traditional
Choreography by Alvin Ailey
Decor and Costumes by Ves Harper
Lighting by Nicola Cernovitch
(All arrangements by Howard Roberts unless otherwise noted)

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."
This suite explores motivations and emotions of American Negro religious music, which, like its heir, the blues, takes many forms—true spirituals with their sustained melodies, song-sermons, gospel songs and holy blues—songs of trouble, of love, of deliverance.

> "Spirituals sing of woe triumphantly, knowing well that all rivers will be crossed and the Promised Land is just beyond the stream. The Spirituals ask no pity for their words ride on the strongest of melodies, the melody of faith. That is why there is joy in their singing, peace in their music and strength in their soul." —Langston Hughes

PILGRIM OF SORROW

I Been Buked ..... **The Company**
Arranged by Hall Johnson
Daniel ..... **Kenneth Pearl, Linda Kent, Gail Reese**
Arranged by James Miller

Fix Me, Jesus ..... **Mari Kajiwara, Clive Thompson**
Arranged by Hall Johnson

TAKE ME TO THE WATER

Processional ..... **Sara Yarborough, Kelvin Rotardier, Judith Jamison, Rosamond Lynn, Freddy Romero, Leland Schwantes, Ronald Dunham**
Wading in the Water ..... **Sara Yarborough, Kelvin Rotardier, Judith Jamison**
"Wading in the Water" sequence by Ella Jenkins. "A Man Went Down to the River" is an original composition of Ella Jenkins.
I Want to be Ready ..... **Dudley Williams**
Arranged by James Miller

MOVE, MEMBERS, MOVE

Sinner Man ..... **Freddy Romero, John Parks, Hector Mercado**
The Day is Past and Gone ..... **The Company**
You May Run Home ..... **The Company**
Arranged by Brother John Sellers and Howard Roberts
Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham ..... **The Company**
Soloists: Leon Bibb, Brother John Sellers, Mary Ann Rydzeski

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 22, 1972

DANCE FOR SIX

(First performance May 1964, New York City)

Music by Vivaldi ("La Cetra")

Choreography by Joyce Trisler

Freddy Romero	**John Parks**	**Hector Mercado**
Mari Kajiwara	**Linda Kent**	**Estelle Spurlock**

"Dance for Six" is set to Vivaldi's Concerto #9 in B Flat major and Concerto #12 in B minor.

INTERMISSION

RAINBOW 'ROUND MY SHOULDER

(New production, first performance May 1959, New York City)

Choreography by Donald McKayle

Music arranged by Robert de Cormier and Milton Okun

from the collection of John and Allen Lomax

Lighting by Chenault Spence

Costumes by Ursula Reed

Men on the Chain Gang ..... **Dudley Williams, John Parks and Ronald Dunham, Hector Mercado, Kenneth Pearl, Clover Mathis, Leland Schwantes**

The Dream (Sweetheart/Mother/Wife) ..... **Sara Yarborough**

Soloist: Leon Bibb

Guitar: Leon Atkinson

(Rehearsal director Rodney Griffin)

CRY

(First performance May 1971, New York City)

For all Black women everywhere—especially our mothers.

Music: Alice Coltrane ("Something About John Coltrane")

Laura Nyro ("Been on a Train")

The Voices of East Harlem ("Right On, Be Free"*)

Choreography by Alvin Ailey

Lighting by Chenault Spence

JUDITH JAMISON

* Used with permission of the publisher, Really Together Music.

INTERMISSION

MARY LOU'S MASS

(Dances of Praise)

(First Performance, December 1971, New York City)

Music by Mary Lou Williams

Choreography by Alvin Ailey

Costumes by A. Christina Giannini

Lighting by Chenault Spence

"Praise the Lord from Heaven, praise Him in the heights, praise Him all you angels, praise Him sun and moon . . ."

INTRODUCTORY **Mary Lou Williams and trio . . .**
"Willis" "Old Time Spiritual"

ENTRANCE HYMN
"The Lord says I speak thoughts of peace and not of affliction . . ."
The Company

ACT OF CONTRITION
"Oh my God, I detest all the sins of my life . . ."
The Company

KYRIE
"For our lack of Faith . . .
For our lack of Hope . . . Lord have mercy"
Sara Yarborough
Hector Mercado Kenneth Pearl Freddy Romero Ronald Dunham

GLORIA
"We praise you, we bless you, we thank you . . ."
Linda Kent, Mari Kajiwara, Rosamond Lynn, Lee Harper, Gail Reese, Estelle Spurlock

SCRIPTURE READING
Lazarus "There once was a selfish rich man . . .
there was also a beggar man named Lazarus . . ."
Dudley Williams
Kelvin Rotardier, John Parks

RESPONSORIES
1. "In His day justice shall flourish . . ."
Sara Yarborough
2. "Peace I leave with you . . ."
Kelvin Rotardier

CREDO
"And I believe in the Father Almighty and in one God . . ."
John Parks Kelvin Rotardier

OFFERTORY PSALM
"Turn aside from evil and do good . . ."
Kelvin Rotardier

SANCTUS
"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts . . .
Hosanna in the highest . . ."
Mari Kajiwara, Hector Mercado
Rosamond Lynn Gail Reese Lee Harper Estelle Spurlock
Kenneth Pearl, Ronald Dunham

THE LORD'S PRAYER
"Our Father who art in Heaven . . ."
Sara Yarborough

AGNUS DEI
"Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world . . . grant us peace . . ."
Dudley Williams

PAX: COMMUNION
"People in trouble . . . children in pain . . .
too mean to care . . . too weak to share . . . work
so hard trying to find a brother . . . became
impatient . . . now we hate each other"
Kelvin Rotardier and The Company

RECESSIONAL
"Praise the Lord . . ."
The Company

Soloists: Janice Campbell, Honi Gordon, Eileen Gilbert, Tony Middelton, Randy Peyton, Carlene Ray

THE JAPAN TIMES, TUESDAY, APRIL 24, 1962

Fine Dance Company From U.S.

By ELISE GRILLI

THE DE LAVALLADE-AILEY AMERICAN DANCE COMPANY. At Sankei Hall, April 19 and 20.

Without any fanfares—in fact, with only the sketchiest advance notices—one of the finest dance performances in my memory appeared on a Tokyo stage. Within five minutes the De Lavallade-Ailey American Dance Company won over an audience that obviously had arrived "cold." Half-way through the program some of my Japanese friends still asked what was specifically "American" in the themes and styles of this dance. At the end they were too busy applauding to continue their intellectual cogitations. The vitality, the expressive strength, the artistic finesse, and the emotional surge swept one along in a mounting wave of enthusiasm. The evening was too short. No encores. Hunger was not appeased.

First it must be stated that this was great dancing, with wonderful use of all the resources of the human body in motion. The thematic material is almost equal in importance, but it would have remained ethnographical had not the artists here transmuted folklore of Negroes and Indians and of the "Bible Belt" in America into an art form of theater. There was nothing naive or "folksy" about this performance, and no reportage of things-as-they-are. A large accumulation of ideas and of history was translated into pure motion.

The language of this movement drew its vocabulary from many pioneers of the modern dance and from several continents. The leaders of this group sum up all that can be learned about the art of dance; from the courtly ballet of Europe and from its recent incarnations; from the rebels like Duncan and Denishawn and Graham and Limon, who pulled away from the aristocratic restrictions; from the Russians and the Danes and the British; from the German Expressionists; from the Latin-American rhythms; from Diaghiliev and Balanchine; from Dunham and other researchers in ethnography; from the dance that still exists on the bare earth of Africa and of America . . . All this learning and amassing of ideas and disciplines is fundamental for the creation of their art form, but once acquired and digested, it becomes a personal amalgam. There is no trace of eclecticism in evidence.

The above mentioned contacts with preceding and contemporary forms enable this dance group to function as a culmination of dance in the theater, with all the appurtenances of lights, costume, and music. In the theater, but not theatrical. All the devices needed for artistic performance do not interfere with a powerful and convincing sense of actuality, with an acceptance on faith of the belief that these dances really convey a truthful essence of the earthy emotions from which they spring.

After a first number which set the key with an exuberance of movement and a deep glow of traditional music, the core of a special approach was revealed in "The Beloved." With only two dancers and two stiff chairs on the stage, a whole complex of religion-cum-sex, of puritanic inhibitions and physical releases was translated into motion, gesture, and psychological gleams.

Here also emerged the special pattern of large movements interspersed with occasional minute twitches, almost nervous trembles. Thus the sweeping externalizations, the "adagio" movements of older dance forms, are enriched with the shorter gestures of jazz, and with the still more telling compressions of psychological tensions.

I have refrained up to now from mentioning any single dancer's name, so unified is the ensemble spirit of the whole group. Two leading dancers, Carmen De Lavallade and Alvin Ailey, are central in the choreography and in the high mark of bodily controls, but there is no "star" system. The stars, if any, are some of the humble props, an umbrella, a fan, or a stool, which magnetically direct a whole action. The music also becomes a leading actor, especially when it is sung in the form of Negro spirituals, and reverently interpreted through highly imaginative parallels of dance.

Imagination and discipline, exuberance and control, intellectual themes and physical motion are blended into a language wonderfully suited to an art that transmutes into dance the life rhythms of a rich vein of humanity. The confluence of sources from several continents is here organically assembled, for it did thus emerge on a geographical band across the southern United States. This is truly American dance by highly trained and deeply imaginative artists.

The Times, Thursday, October 22, 1964

DANCERS' STEELY CONTROL

Shaftesbury Theatre: *Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre*

The Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre presented their second thoughts at the Shaftesbury Theatre last night, and their second thoughts were triumphantly, if proverbially, the best.

The two outstanding works of the first programme, *Roots of the Blues* and *Revelations*, both by Mr. Ailey himself, have sensibly been retained. But to these have been added an intriguing new solo to Ives' music, choreographed and coolly danced by Miss Joyce Trisler, together with two modern dance "classics", Lester Horton's *The Beloved* and Talley Beatty's *The Road of the Phoebe Snow*.

Mr. Beatty's engimatically named mood ballet must be regarded as among the finest jazz ballets ever made. It takes its music from Duke Ellington and its title from the nickname of the railroad, the Phoebe Snow, which ran through Mr. Beatty's home-town

Mr. Beatty's choreography is often curiously classical, but the vigour of its rhythmic nuance and the choreographer's very remarkable powers of invention give it a quality of imagination perfectly individual to itself. Like all the works presented by the Ailey dancers, *Phoebe Snow* was superbly staged and wonderfully danced, particularly perhaps by the panther-like Mr. William Louther.

The late Lester Horton is a choreographer who only now, some 12 years after his death, is beginning to be revalued outside of his workplace, Los Angeles. *The Beloved*, the first Horton work to be seen here, is a fascinating, even horrific dramatic *pas de deux*. A man and woman, locked in some love-hate relationship over a New England breakfast table, are caught before the final resolution of their fate—the woman's murder.

Horton's choreography, danced with steely control by Miss Trisler and Mr. James Truitte, provides a startling glimpse of a very considerable creative talent. Together with the rest of the programme it adds up to an evening of pure theatrical excitement and superlative dancing.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1970

Ailey Dancers Fill Soviet Theater

A standing-room-only house that cheered a modern-dance work in the jazz idiom and a meeting with a Soviet rock band highlighted the second week of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's current Soviet tour.

The State Department's Office of Cultural Presentations reported yesterday that the company had played to "consistently full houses" at the State Theater of Opera and Ballet in Donetsk, the coal-mining capital of the Ukraine, from last Thursday through Monday. Talley Beatty's "The Road of the Phoebe Snow" received the biggest hand of any work performed by the company in the Soviet Union, the department said.

The dance, choreographed in a jazz style with music by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, deals with love and violence in life along the Lackawanna Railroad, one of whose trains was named Phoebe Snow.

A State Department spokesman added that in a meeting with the faculty and students at Donetsk's Young University, Mr. Ailey answered questions about the place of the arts in American higher education.

Many modern-dance companies, such as the Ailey troupe, depend on campus engagements for a sizable number of their bookings. The American dancers, who are on a six-week tour, met later with a rock group that was practicing at the university.

The Daily Telegraph,
Wednesday, Nov. 25, 1970

Dance-drama of magical stylishness

By FERNAU HALL

"THE Prodigal Prince," a dance-drama based on the real and imagined life of the Haitian primitive painter, Hector Hippolyte, was danced with magical stylishness by the Alvin Ailey company last night at Sadler's Wells.

This dance-drama was choreographed by Geoffrey Holder, himself a Trinidadian, and showed deep understanding of the Vodoun rites of Haiti. It had its longueurs, but these were of small importance compared with the intense, mysterious atmosphere of the best scenes.

What stood out above all was the powerful, expressive dancing of Miguel Godreau and Judith Jamison in the leading roles.

As the painter, the short intense Mr Godreau was brimful of charm and vitality while the very African Miss Jamison, looking taller than ever with a head-dress of long feathers, moved with langorous, erotic and very individual magic as the fertility goddess Erzulie.

Their big pas de deux was a high point of the dance-drama with Miss Jamison throwing her long legs up in smooth mysterious curves, while later Mr Godreau triumphed in a solo in which he rivalled the Kirov star Mikhail Barishnikov, in his spins and leaps.

the village VOICE, *May* 4, 1972

dance

by Deborah Jowitt

I IMAGINE THAT quite a few choreographers wouldn't mind having Alvin Ailey's problems instead of their own. Because his work delights so many people, because the company performs so much, he must keep adding dances to the repertory and dancers to the company and money to the budget.

It's great that the Ailey company has become so popular and reached so many people; almost everyone loves to watch the way his dancers rip into a piece of choreography, shape it with their muscles, bones, and sinews, drench it with their sweat. The dances have become—gradually—things to show off the dancers. "Cry" is Judith Jamison dancing. And that's almost enough for anyone. The new solo, "A Song for You," is Dudley Williams dancing. And that's fine too. But the solo isn't as well made as Ailey's best dances, isn't shaped nearly as interestingly as the Donny Hathaway love song that accompanies it. "A Song for You" is, understandably, crammed with things that Williams does well, and the little balletic exhibits distract from the rawer gestures that create the lost-love mood.

The Ailey choreography that I like best is simple, stylish, as well as virtuosic. The Ailey choreography that I like least is too busy—something new cropping up on every beat, but no real growth. The solo for Williams is like that.

So is the new group dance "The Lark Ascending." Except that "The Lark Ascending" begins beautifully and for a while seems quite different from other Ailey works. It's performed to a Vaughn Williams Romance for Piano and Orchestra—an urgent, searchingly romantic work. The dance at first is all swirling, turning, reaching patterns. The movements blur together until all you feel is a kind of drift of intense yearning. But when the dancing becomes busier and more complicated, the lovely lyricism loses some of its strength.

Sometimes I wonder if Ailey has to make so many new dances. Some of them zip in and out of the repertory so fast that if you blink you miss them. I was looking forward to seeing the May O'Donnell work he acquired last season; it's not around anymore. Oh, well . . . the dancers, yes, are splendid. There are always new things to notice about them. Jamison, of course, almost the only one these days who can switch from classical style to real character stuff. Mari Kajiwara, violent and stunning in Paul Sansardo's "Metallics." Gail Reese and Leland Schwantes suddenly looking fine to me, dancing with a new openness and clarity. Estelle Spurlock and Freddy Romero, spunky but unaffected, doing a great "Wading in the Water." Hector Mercado looking more confident and lively. John Parks getting his beautiful skinny length around with more gusto.

SO AILEY HAS MADE IT. His problem is how to maintain it, and he can't, perhaps, afford to experiment too much.