Your Name

Instructor Name

Course Number

Date

Alvin Ailey

Alvin Ailey is one of the famous choreographers of the 20th century and his work in the form of ‘revelation’ is his remarkable work. Revelation is the performance that was introduced in 1960 and is a representation of Alvin’s memories of his childhood of worship while living in Texas in his Baptist church. The music is basically a compilation or combination of African-American spirituals. Alvin Ailey once said that the cultural heritage of the Afro-Americans is one of the richest treasures which is sometimes jubilant, sometimes sorrowful but is always hopeful. The display of movement and coherence of body parts with the music explores many places of holiest joy and deepest grief inside the soul (PERFORMANCES). My interest in American-African music and dance moved me to attend Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater for the very first time in person. I came to observe the performance of revelation in opening night at the city center. Each performance that I witnessed had comparatively a different choreographic lineup but all of them included aspects from Revelations.

I attended the show with one of my friends who is more knowledgeable than me in this regard and informed me that Firebird is originally a classical ballet choreographic move. Firebird is actually a movement of a dance jump performed by the performers and is actually the ability of a performer to keep his/her front leg straight while bending the back leg at the angle of 90. Ailey's choreography, Firebird is generally performed by two men and the dances are barefooted throughout the end of the show. The song played was ‘I Been Buked’ and it was an inexplicable rush of spiritual immersive emotions once the performance started to accelerate its rhythm from peaceful movements to organized rapid moves. In the opening segment, 11 men danced while turning their backs to the audience and the scene was very absorbing when a women’s head remained glued to the chest of her partner even as her leg searched his body nooks. All of the performers had amazing body movements with highly-muscled and exceptionally well-toned men and flexible women. The men participants are generally bare-chested while women are dressed with feathered skirts in halter tops.

‘I Been Buked’ is one of the three pilgrims of sorrow that is often played at the beginning of the performance and is primarily rocked-up and choral music of negro spiritual background. At the beginning of a few minutes, the movement was peaceful with slow and peaceful music which then progressively became faster rendering movements of performers fast and articulate in a sense to add a soulful touch to the environment (Kourlas). The performers stand close to each other with their heads leaning backward and they stretch their arms towards the audience while gazing at the sky. Their upper body rotates around their torsos appears as they have been pulled downwards suddenly by an invisible force and the pattern is repeated with many variations (Mendoza). These variations demonstrate the struggle of human beings for survival as my friend informed me. One does not have to be an expert in the knowledge and understanding of dance in order to feel what’s happening. Revelations move from the expression of heartache and oppression to salvation and cultural expression aided by specific costumes and symbolic props like strips of a particular fabric that represents baptism waters and white umbrella for the representation of heaven. A vocabulary of the repetitive vocabulary of the movement, rapid upper body, detailed exquisitely and head isolations and ripples, unison in bouncing jumps, a continuous thigh-slapping and arms spreading like wings created a wordless conversation in a language hitherto unknown to me.

Works Cited

PERFORMANCES, CAL. "2012: Alvin Ailey’s American Dance Theater study guide." (2011).

Kourlas, Gia. Review: Evoking Ailey, a Beautiful Conversation Between Choreographers. 5 12 The NEw York Times. 2018.

Mendoza, Manuel. "Essential viewing: Alvin Ailey's 'Revelations' remains powerfully human." 29 3 2017. Dallas Morning News.