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Alvin Ailey's Silky Creatures of the Night

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(Please click to watch video)

The sun sets, the moon rises and New York City is reborn. The night was a source of fascination for the choreographer Alvin Ailey. He understood its power, how bodies could soften in its shadows. It's a time when some people "become their real selves," he wrote in his notebooks in reference to his dance *Night Creature*. It's no accident that Ailey, the subject of *Edges of Ailey*, a major exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, choreographed a performance to open Studio 54 in 1977.

The Ailey glow, that undeniable sparkle, fully shows up in *Night Creature*, a slinky, frisky dance set to Duke Ellington. "I am on this rooftop, and I've become a part of the sky," said Constance Stamatiou, a member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, performing *Night Creature* with Yannick Lebrun at the Whitney at sunset. "The wind is that much sweeter. It's blowing kisses onto my skin." For Lebrun, "this ballet is magical — it's not only sensual, jazzy, technical, but it brings joy, which is what this company is about." Ailey's ease at melding dance forms, mixing ballet with modern dance and jazz, wasn't always appreciated during his time. But it's so silky. It wakes up your hips. They want to roll, just as your arms want to reach. Dance, Ailey knew, was for everybody. We all have a night creature inside of us.

Edges of Ailey continues through Feb. 9, with a series of related performances throughout.