



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: New Works review – a heavenly night

Sadler's Wells, London

Skill, craft and beauty infuse pieces including Lar Lubovitch's *Many Angels* and Judith Jamison's *A Case of You*

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The [Alvin Ailey](#) company's New Works programme might be seen in some circles as dated, and it's true that it is neither cutting edge nor modishly contemporary. Yet it rests on more perennial qualities that underpin the company's enduring appeal: skill, craft, beauty and humanity, and beneath them an artistic aim that can reach up towards the sublime, out towards the world, or in towards the heart.

[Medhi Walerski](#)'s *Blink of an Eye*, new to the company but created in 2011 for Nederlands Dans Theater, tilts towards transcendence, being as spare, composed and unbound as the Bach music for solo violin it inhabits. The eight dancers repeatedly form a kind of visual chord – first a line, later a circle – which

dissolves to let solos, duets and trios unspool. The counterpointed lines of movement remind you of the music: limbs stretch like strings, torsos curve and coil like the body of a violin, and the inflections of phrasing are somehow exact yet unfettered. It is a rare, spacious and beautiful composition.

So, too, is *Many Angels* by veteran choreographer [Lar Lubovitch](#), made in 2024 when he was 81. Set to the yearning, unsettled sonorities of Mahler's Symphony No 5, it portrays a kind of heaven where five dancers, against a cloudscape backdrop, form and reform frieze-like tableaux, passing moments of statuesque beauty that melt back into movement. Unhurried, yet quickening towards its end – fleet leaps arcing airwards – this, too, has intimations of the sublime.

Two other works speak of more interior worlds. Jamar Roberts' *Song of the Anchorite* follows a monkish figure (Yannick Lebrun) on an inner quest. At first he seeks a path, his body reaching and reacting waywardly. A green cloth becomes a key that, once he wears it, lets him find his centre, and a direction. A chilled, jazzy arrangement of a Ravel adagio sets the sensitive mood.

Diana Krall's husky cover of a Joni Mitchell song almost overpowers *A Case of You*, a revival of a 2004 duet by Judith Jamison. The piece is carried by the performances of Caroline T Dartey and Christopher Taylor as the lovers whose intricate entanglements – mirrorings, lifts, slides and switches – seem to glow with feeling.

The company's traditional finale is an old work, Ailey's *Revelations* from 1960, which reaches upwards, outwards and inwards – and never seems to go out of fashion.



At [Sadler's Wells, London](#), until 19 September

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