



# EG DAILY

With Simon Wilson ■ [simon.wilson@nottinghampost.com](mailto:simon.wilson@nottinghampost.com) ■ @eg\_editor ■ [nottinghampost.com/entertainment](http://nottinghampost.com/entertainment)



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater are back in the UK for the first time in six years, including two shows at the Royal Concert Hall. KELLY APTER speaks to dancer Linda Celeste Sims

**L**IKE every dancer in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Linda Celeste Sims remembers her first time.

Not the day she first walked into the company's New York headquarters, not even the first time she danced with them on stage – but the night she first performed Revelations.

Choreographed by Alvin Ailey himself in 1960, the piece has been performed countless times over the past 56 years, and closes every single performance when the company tours abroad.

"We're the only company who does this piece, and it's such a powerful work for so many reasons," says Sims.

"So if we go back to a theatre after a couple of years and we don't do Revelations, people get kind of upset."

Sims recalls the "nerve-wracking" night she first danced it – something she re-lives every time a new dancer joins the company.

"You're not really considered an Ailey dancer until you've performed your first Revelations," she says.

"It's like a baptism, and when it happens it's really very special. All the dancers on stage congratulate you at the end, it's a very nervous but beautiful moment that everybody goes through."

It's not just the dancers who view Revelations as special – as Sims says, audiences across the world enjoy the work over and over again. Set to a selection of traditional African-American gospel songs, the piece is at turns moving and thrilling. Large ensemble sections get the whole audience jumping, while more intimate, tender duets are filled with emotion.

Sims joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1996, so has danced the work more times than she can remember. Yet for her, like those watching it, Revelations remains as fresh and exciting as the first time she danced it – how is that possible?

"We can all feel the energy from the

audience," she says.

"When you hear that first note, before the curtain has even gone up, there is applause – so you know you're getting ready to do something special. Then, when the curtain rises, there's an intake of breath, as if people are saying 'yes, Revelations! I've been waiting all night for this piece'. The music is so touching, and the movement speaks for itself – so the audience can feel what we're feeling."

As wonderful as it is, Revelations is of course only one aspect of what the company has to offer. Yet regardless of what repertoire they bring to the UK (and each venue on the current Dance Consortium tour will see between four and six different works) the reaction is always the same. There is no audience like an Ailey audience in terms of vocal appreciation – something Sims puts down to dance that is both powerful and accessible.

"I often speak to people after a performance and they'll say 'my husband hates ballet, he really didn't want to come and thought he would leave halfway through, but he loved it!'. It really changes people's idea of what dance is, if they maybe think it can be kind of boring. But because we bring a little bit of everything, people who don't even like going to the theatre love it. Which is so cool."

■ September 30 and October 1, Royal Concert Hall, 7.30pm, 0115 989 5555, [trch.co.uk](http://trch.co.uk)

