Brief sojourn becomes permanent

District native grows with Alvin Ailey Dance Troupe

By Robyn-Denise Yourse
AFRO Staff Writer

When District native Renee Robinson, at the urging of friends, auditioned for a summer workshop with choreographer Alvin Ailey, the experience was originally slated as a temporary furlough from her studies at New York University.

But the sojourn proved more than just a fleeting notion.

Seven years later she has grown into a featured performer with the 30 member dance troupe appearing this week at the Kennedy Center.

"Actually I had been to New York and attended workshops at the Dance Theater of Harlem and the American Ballet Theater," the graduate of Notre Dame High said. "But at the time my goal was to major in dance with an economics minor at NYU."

The interest in a possible career in dance was piqued early for Robinson who began ballet studies at the Jones Haywood School of Dance while in grade school. Her fervent zeal led to an invitation to join the school's performing auxiliary, the Capitol Ballet Company. That decision dismissed at once, the normal high school flurry of ball games, proms or other related activities.

"I always had a class or a rehearsal right after school", said Robinson, "and there were actually times that I wanted to quit but my mother wouldn't allow me to."

"She'd tell me that if I wanted to quit, to do it when things were going well and not when they were bad. That always seemed to set things straight."

Robinson said she thinks of her mother and grandmother when dancing "Vespers," a dance for six women premiering here this week in Ailey's repertory. Set to a percussion score by Mikel Rouse, the piece was conceived by Ailey's former principal dancer turned choreographer Ulysses Dove, as a tribute to his grandmother.

"My whole family has been very supportive of my dance career. But it was my mother who gave me that extra boost. She was always there but she always insisted that I get an education first", she said.

Robinson, has been on an extended hiatus from the formal ranks of academia since 1981, touring both here and abroad with Ailey's acclaimed company. These days, however, she is an avid pupil of foreign languages and speaks some French, Japanese and Italian. She hopes to gain full mastery of the lexicon.

"There are so many things you have to know when you're in another country and I think that's something aspiring dancers should learn now," Robinson explained. "You never know when you'll be going there or even if a job opportunity comes along with a foreign company. Besides the languages, you also need to know mathematics for monetary transactions and taxes,"

Robinson knows about which she speaks. With days that often begin in the early afternoon and wind down just before midnight, she works hard for the money, shuns drugs and says she would never starve herself beyond recognition for the sake of art.

"Mr. Ailey feels that women should look like women and men like men", said Robinson who admits to having tried many types of diets and diet pills to maintain a desirable weight for her 5' 5" frame.

"The pills made me racy and then sometimes I was on a liquid diet or a milkshake diet. The best thing you can do is eat three square meals a day."

For her featured duet with partner Stephen Smith in the company's "Bad Blood" — an engaging and explicitly frank work examining the differences between men and women in relationships - Robinson needs all the strength she can muster. Also choreographed by Dove, the piece contains a series of abrupt movements that thrust the dancer from feet to floor, head first in one swift motion.

As with Glenn Tetley's "Voluntaries", presented earlier this year during Dance Theater of Harlem's Kennedy Center engagement, "Bad Blood" pits logic against will with its challenging choreography. During the performances or rehearsals in other cities, several dancers including Robinson have been injured.

"I've suffered a lot of bumps and bruises because the choreography is very aggressive, very demanding," Robinson said. "I have a wonderful partner so that makes things go a bit easier although he once hit me in the jaw by accident during rehearsals. It's hard work but the audience loves it."

What makes "Bad Blood" so appealing, Robinson said, is that "the message is so simple but speaks so loudly. "It's choreographed well and to the point," she said. "It makes a true statement about individuality."

In the much heralded Ailey revival of the work of choreographer /anthropologist Katherine Dunham, Robinson found a slice of history. Ailey's intentions with the reconstruction, she said, "was to provide a full documentation of her work".

"Thanks to Katherine Dunham the way was paved for many. She is a tremendous force and Mr. Ailey wanted to capture what had not been done before so that there would be a record of her work and a tribute to it".

Another Ailey favorite for Robinson is "For Bird With Love," a number dedicated to the memory of jazz great Charlie Parker. As with many Ailey works, it is a comment on an era and depicts the women who were close to the musician during his life.



RENEE ROBINSON

Robinson said she has seen Ailey's company evolve over the years to include dancers with training in varying disciplines - ballet, African, folk , tap - and with more emphasis on technical points such as body placement and alignment. "This is your only tool", she said of the body. "You have to learn to take care of it because if something goes wrong you can't get another part."

Robinson's desire is to continue a career in the arts to Ailey's company. She envisions singing, acting and even fashion designing when she "retires " from the ensemble. She would also like to teach.

"I enjoy teaching or going into the community to speak and to be able to give back what I've learned", Robinson said. "It's important to me that young people have a center based on solid foundations, especially those who want to dance."

"With those type of roots coupled with a strong faith, they can conquer the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall the same as they can their school auditoriums. It's simply a matter of knowing what you want and going after it".

Council bill aimed at 7-Eleven 'redlining'

Southland denies allegations from black franchisers

By Hamil Harris
AFRO Staff Writer

The Southland Corporation — which has been assailed by black 7-Eleven store owners for using a double standard in the operation of its 28 area stores, is now opposing the legislation that according to one D.C.Councilmember is designed for all people who own and operate franchises..

Councilmember Charlene Drew Jarvis introduced the Franchising Act of 1987, which particularly would help the black franchisers from losing their life savings while operating stores they feel they were forced to take with little chance of making a profit.

Less than 24 hours before Jarvis brought the bill before a public roundtable, the top area brass of Southland was busy wining and dining reporters while denying the allegations of discrimination and running a system that has been called no better than "sharecropping."

"If you have the qualifications you can franchise any store in any area that you would like," said Kathleen Callahan-Guion, division manager for Southland.

"I have not found any substantial information to verity that information,"Guion added as she explained that Southland does not,"redline stores." This is the practice of selling blacks only stores in the black community and whites the stores in the white community.

"If in fact something like that happened it would be dealt with severely," she said.

However, according to Carolyn James that is exactly what happened as Southland refused to sell her a store in a white community but instead "sold the store to a white male for $30,000."

James eventually got that store on 24th and New Hampshire but not until she paid over $150,000 which included $110,000,"good faith money."

According to Jarvis, franchisees in the District have complained that because of their contractual arrangement with Southland— the parent company — "they are unable to make a living wage."

"For many months franchisees have been calling me as chair of the committee on Housing and Economic Development to indicate their very troubling concerns about their relationship with the Southland Corp,"Jarvis said.

According to Jarvis, among their concerns are a 72- hour termination notice; and the fact that inner city store owners are for the most part members of minority groups which have to sustain higher cost for doing business because of theft and the need for additional staff, security and maintenance."

"The franchisees are also concerned about the split of profits between Southland and their franchisees," Jarvis said but quickly added the hearings were not only about the 7-Eleven situation.

According to Dawn Alexander, spokesperson for Jarvis,"The hearing this week was an action taken by Jarvis to examine the full range of contractual agreements for all in franchising in the District."

Part of the proposed bill that Southland opposes is a 60-day notice a store owner would have before they had to vacate the store. But, Guion said this clause would put an undo hardship on Southland because if franchisees would stop making deposits to Southland, "they would have 59 days to do so," before they would have to vacate.

"We don't think that this bill is good for our franchisees," because of,"economic concerns," Guion said.



Photo by Joffre Clarke

WAITING PATIENTLY—These parents, relatives and friends wait patiently for the parade to pass them by in hopes of catching someone they know who took part in the annual safety patrol parade held last weekend. The parade brought elementary schools from around the country in order to honor the patrols who keep the young children safe. (More photos on Page 5B.)

LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

The Pocomoke City Housing Authority will received sealed bids for rehabilitation of Seven (7) houses until 4:30 p.m. May 18, 1988 at which time they will be opened and real aloud.

Bids are to be delivered or mailed to the Housing Authority, City Hall, P.O. Box 29, Pocomoke City, Maryland 21851. Attention: Mr. M. R. Marshall.

Location and specifications for the houses to be rehabilitated can be picked up at the Housing Office at City Hall, Clarke Avenue, Pocomoke City, Maryland.

The Housing Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive formalities therein, as may be in the best interests of the City.

Marion R. Marshall
Housing Coordinator

The City of Baltimore has applied or intends to apply to the St. of MD. Dept. of Economic and Employment Development, for a project under the MD. Industrial and Commercial Redevelopment Fund (MICRF) Program.

The project involves a grant to the Catholic Release Services organization, in the amount of $500,000 to be used for the renovation of a headquarters office building.

A public hearing to present the project will be held on Monday, June 6, 1988 at 6 p.m.

The hearing will be held in the offices of the Balto. Economic Development Corp. (BEDCO), 36 S. Charles St. Suite 2400. Balto., MD 21201. For information, contact Stuart Entwistle at 301-837-9305.

LEGAL NOTICE
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Maryland State Department of Education announces the availability of funds for FY89 Adult Basic Education programs. These funds are utilized for Maryland Adult Basic Education instructional programs and Special Experimental Demonstration and Teacher Training Projects in adult education as provided for under the Adult Education Act and its regulations. Requests for funds to operate Adult Basic Education programs or special projects require the submission of a proposal to be postmarked no later than June 30, 1988.

For additional information, contact Ms. Jacqueline Brown-Baxter, Division of Instruction, Maryland State Department of Education, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-2595. Phone: 301-333-2378.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
R.F.P. 88-112
CONSULTING SERVICES
FOR
WEST STREET STUDY

The Central Purchasing Office of the City of Annapolis will accept sealed proposals for consulting services for the development of a West Street Design Plan, Outer West Street Sector Plan, and a Traffic Analysis of West Street until 4:00 p.m., June 1, 1988.

Proposal packages may be obtained from the Central Purchasing Office, 160 Duke of Gloucester Street, Room 108, Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

The City of Annapolis reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities and select that proposal deemed to be in the best interest of the City.

BRIAN D. SNYDER
PURCHASING AGENT

LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE OF LETTING
HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

Sealed proposals for construction will be received from qualified bidders at the Howard County Division of Purchasing, John Lee Carroll Building, 3450 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043 until the below date at 2:00 p.m. at which time they will be opened and read in the Waverly Room on the second floor of the John Lee Carroll Building.

SEWER MAIN CONSTRUCTION
CAPITAL PROJECT W-8153

Plans and specifications for Contract 1490 O'Connor Road Water Main consisting of 2,050 feet of 8 inch diameter water main and two railroad crossings and appurtenances are available for a nonrefundable cost of $25.00. Proposals will be opened June 9, 1988.

Howard County hereby notifies all bidders that Minority Business Enterprises will be afforded full opportunity to submit bids in response to this notice and will not be subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex or national origin in consideration of this award. It is the goal of Howard County that Minority Business Enterprises participate in 10 % of the total value of prime construction contracts in excess of $25,000.00. All bidders shall submit with their bids, the County's Minority Affirmative Action Certificate.

Specifications and plans may be obtained in the Department of Public Works, Public Assistance Center, First Floor, George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive.

Each bid shall be accompanied by a CERTIFIED CHECK or bid Bond in the amount of 5 % of the total bid made payable to the Director of Finance — Howard County, Maryland.

Howard County reserves the right to reject any or all bids, and to award the contract in its entirety, or in part, whichever, in their opinion best serves the interest of the County.

Harry H. Bain
Chief of Purchasing

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