

BWW Review: AILEY II NEW YORK SEASON SHOWS SIGNS OF GREATNESS at Ailey Citigroup Theater

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by Tracy Hopkins



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With dynamic movement and dazzling technique, Ailey II debuted a vibrant new season at the Ailey Citigroup Theater, March 30 - April 10.

Founded in 1974, the junior company continues the legacy of founder and choreographer [Alvin Ailey](#). For nearly four decades, Ailey II blossomed under the direction of [Sylvia Waters](#). And in 2012, former Ailey II and [Alvin Ailey](#) American Dance Theater dancer Troy Powell took over as artistic director.

During the matinee performance we attended, we were treated to a completely new program with four world premieres. And in Powell's capable hands, the 12 talented young dancers reach new heights, with a few missteps along the way.

The program opened with *In & Out*, a jazzy, genre-bending piece choreographed by Ailey School alum Jean Emile, where female dancers donned suits and catcalled the male dancers, who wore skirts. The provocative and poignant work featured eight dancers and gave an "honest view of the ups and downs of contemporary life."

Set to rhythmic Afrobeat music by [Fela Kuti](#), the second piece was *Gemeos* (Portuguese for twins), loosely based on the relationship between choreographer [Jamar Roberts](#) (an Ailey company dancer) and his brother. Although the steps were playful, they were repetitive and too reliant on the music. During the matinee, it was performed by a male dancer (Jacob Lewis) and female dancer ([Courtney Ross](#)), but I could only imagine how much stronger the dance is when two male dancers act it out, as it's done in other performances. So for us, the story of the brothers was never fully realized.

In contrast, however, the kinetic third piece, *Something Tangible*, was flawless. Choreographer [Ray Mercer](#) led the ensemble cast into "a series of vignettes that reflect sensations of love, passion, fear and self-doubt." Lithe and limber, Courtney Celeste, Jacoby Pruitt and Nathaniel Hunt were standouts.

Something Tangible was an incredibly hard act to follow. And unfortunately the closing ensemble number, *I Am The Road*, choreographed by hip-hop and house dancer Kyle "JustSole" Clark, just didn't measure up. Ailey II is known for spotlighting new choreographers, but despite lead dancer Lloyd A. Boyd and the rest of the ensemble's energetic efforts, the work felt amateurish and anti-climactic.

Instead, we wish we'd had one more chance to witness Ailey II's riveting contemporary dance moves in motion.