

Arts & Entertainment

Ailey serves up what audiences crave

Review by Shelley Sperry

Those of us who had imbibed the Alvin Ailey experience before arrived at Monday night's Kimball performance expecting precisely what we were served — a carnival feast of cotton candy, tart lemonade and exotic treats. We were nourished, saved from bloated Midwestern malnutrition. All the fun was in the eating — the sudden rush of flavors and textures, the festive wrappings, the sassy postures one is free to relish publicly only during such sanctioned orgies.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is on tour celebrating its 25th anniversary. Forming the core of the touring repertoire are classics of 20th-century dance created by Ailey himself such as *Night Creatures* (1975) and *Revelations* (1960). Ailey's compositions and many others he chooses for the troupe show the influence of his teachers — Martha Graham's interpretive, highly emotional style, Charles Weidman's humor, and a strong sense of theatricality gained from many years acting, staging and choreographing on Broadway.

The Ailey company does not emphasize abstraction in dance, though more abstract pieces by other choreographers are included to complete each evening's program. On Monday two elaborate Ailey jazz and gospel pieces, *Phases* (1980) and his Texas-Baptist-childhood-inspired *Revelations*, sandwiched a more thought-provoking duet, *Treading*, by Elisa Monte, and a more-Ailey-than-Ailey story dance, *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder* (1959), by Donald McKayle.

Phases introduced us to the Ailey vocabulary of shape and movement which we then welcomed as a familiar companion to new melodies in *Revelations*: triangles and steeples; palms and fingers stretching toward heaven; quick, syncopated, angular arms and twirling bodies in every possible combination, both in harmony and in opposition to the music.

In both *Phases* and *Revelations* the costumes, lights and music had an Ailey signature. Harsh reds and violets and an insistent, often Caribbean rhythm section under jazz saxophones and deep blues voices filled our empty guts immediately. The clean white petticoats of *Revelation's* baptism procession seemed calculated to purify us of all the complex emotions — steamy, tragic, tender, sentimental — which preceded it. We were freed through simple, repetitious gospel songs begging (with confidence in an affirmative answer) for deliverance.

Ailey creates active audiences. We all crossed our legs, each leaving one foot bobbin free to supplement the dancers' interpretations of the finale, "Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham," which



Kimball Hall

Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* was performed Monday in Kimball Hall. The piece also will be featured in tonight's performance.

they repeated to our swaying and clapping accompaniment as an encore.

Ailey is harshly criticized for his showiness, his emphasis on entertainment and emotion rather than intellectualism and movement-for-movement's sake. Ailey dancers pose. Their exaggeration of muscularity and musicality is redundant in a form of art which consist mainly of those qualities. Ailey movements are clinches of modern dance worn out years ago by their creator, Martha Graham.

There is some validity in these standard criticisms but they overlook the major accomplishments of the Ailey philosophy. It entertains, it teaches audiences the basics of modern dance, and because of its

financial success, it can exhibit the works of young choreographers like Monte, who do not follow the formula, but complement it beautifully.

Treading was a duet, the majority of which was done close to the floor. The costumes and lighting were green, shadowy, even watery. No story, no message of oppression or spiritual freedom as in *Revelations* and the chain gang saga, *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulders*.

The male dancer was a pure physical expression of strength, of flight, of a universal need for free movement. The female was cautious, contemplative, tempering her own freedom. They literally balanced each other.

Continued on Page 11

'Smooth-talking' women promoting radio

Women may not be doing as well as they would like to in the programming end of the radio industry, but they seem to be closing in the sales department.

A spot check of Lincoln radio stations showed several women have made it to the top of the sales departments at their stations. And there are women at most stations doing well as "account executives," a glorified title used for sales people.

JoAnne Young

If that is the case, you can probably expect to see more female general managers in the industry because general managers traditionally come up the ranks through sales rather than programming.

Ray Farrington, general manager of KFMQ, said women make up two-thirds of his sales staff and his two top billers are female.

"You'll find the good people in sales are the most aggressive and persistent, have the desire and the

need to prove themselves and want to escalate into management," Farrington said. "And the majority of those people are women."

"There are a tremendous number of women going into sales," he said. "It's more financially rewarding and there's more growth potential."

The majority of UNL students Farrington sees are looking at sales as a career choice, he said. But, he admits, you don't need a college degree to sell radio time. What that would seem to say is you don't need a college degree to be a general manager, if those managers are taken from the sales departments.

Of the stations I talked to, KXSS seems to have the best attitude about women filling staff positions. I would say they probably would get the "Best All-Around" award for numbers of women in programming and sales positions. KXSS has two women, Kay Lake and Brandy Summer, on the air, and Rose Harrison is the station's sales manager.

KXSS music director Dean Lambert was enthusiastic, if not candid, in his assessment of his station's saleswomen.

"Guys are clumsy in sales — they talk too much," Lambert said. "Women are smooth. They know what to say. They seem to feel they need to prove some-

thing. Rose is a fantastic salesperson — a real go-getter."

KSRD, in the process of becoming KZKX, has recently hired Julie Gade, currently on the sales staff at KLMS, as their new sales manager. Station manager Don Cavaleri said he simply looked for the best person available in Lincoln with an excellent broadcasting background. Cavaleri said he is pleased to get someone of Gade's caliber.

So, why aren't women making the same progress in the programming side of the industry? The managers I talked to made a stab at speculation, but basically said they didn't know why.

The publisher of "Inside Radio" Jerry Dell Colliano says radio managers are anti-woman in general.

"They will scream and yell, claiming it's not true," Del Colliano said, "but if you look at how things are you'll see that women aren't much better off in radio than they were 10 years ago. They certainly aren't being promoted. They're still at the entry level."

Cavaleri said he couldn't disagree with that statement.

"Those managers have the mentality of the old-line broadcasters," Cavaleri said. "They don't feel they can scream at women and not hurt feelings. They have certain ideas about where a woman should and shouldn't be."

As it appears, women have proven themselves to be smooth-talkers in front of the advertisers, but haven't as yet proven themselves behind the microphone.

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The full-blown changes in KSRD (KZKX) have been delayed about a month, Cavaleri said. Legally the station is now KZKX and you'll hear those call letters on the hour. But essentially the station is still the old "Super Country" KSRD.

The changes are coming, Cavaleri said, by March 25. Mechanical problems are to blame for the delay, he said.

