Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
Judith Jamison, artistic director.

At the Wang Center.
Through March 29.
Presented by the Bank of Boston Celebrity Series.

By Josh Hartmann

Ordinary dance companies don't drive their audiences to stand up in their seats and dance along with an encore performance. But it is clear that the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is no ordinary company. At a March 26 performance at the Wang Center, the Ailey troupe displayed some of the late Alvin Ailey's best original works. The result was a crisp, clean, and often stunning performance.

Most dazzling was Revelations, a 1960 work that is considered Ailey's most monumental piece. In the half-hour composition, 18 members of the 29-member company explore the motivations and emotions of African-American religious music. Revelations was so remarkable because of the vibrant expressions of the dancers. Each clearly felt the emotions Ailey intended to present in the dance—a requirement for performances at the level the Ailey company has been noted for. There are no "stars" in Revelations, for each member of the company plays an important part. But the finale, "Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham," was the most impressive; hence the crowd's reaction to the encore.

Revelations was only the last part of the program. Although it was a treat, its predecessors—"Ailey Classics" with eight dances, some excerpted, ranging in length from 2 to 10 minutes—were excellent as well. In Memoriam, Elizabeth Roxas, an eight-year veteran of the company, stunned the audience with her extensions. She was equally impressive as a soloist in The Lark Ascending, dancing to the musical romance for violin and orchestra of the same name.

But the lighter pieces were certainly more exciting than the more serious ones. Among them was Night Creature, from "Ailey Celebrates Ellington," an expressionistic and jazzy dance based on Duke Ellington's song of the same name. This was Ailey at his best, and dancers Sarita Allen and Andre Tyson excelled among the company.

In Opus McSkann, Tyson, Renee Robinson, Gary DeLoatch, and Desmond Richardson proved they are convincing actors as well as dancers. Richardson and DeLoatch put on an entertaining performance as drunkards, while Robinson and Tyson, in an equally amusing play, portray a woman trying to

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