

## Alvin Ailey dancers preserve black culture

By KIM DONEHOWER  
Staff Writer

When choreographer Alvin Ailey started a dance troupe 30 years ago, his purpose was to create an indigenous American modern dance company with an emphasis on multi-racial expression. Today the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is one of America's premier modern dance companies.

The group will perform in Memorial Hall tonight as an event in the Carolina Union Performing Arts Series.

In addition to regular performances at New York City's historic City Center theater, the internationally-acclaimed group has toured extensively throughout the United States and abroad.

This emphasis on a heavy touring schedule reflects the philosophy and purpose of the company as it was originally conceived when Ailey started the group with seven dancers in 1958. "Mr. Ailey is totally dedicated to representing and developing American modern choreography," said Laura Beaumont, management associate for the troupe. "(In addition), he was a pioneer in giving black dancers

an outlet to perform. When the company first started, there was essentially nowhere for them to go."

Along these lines, Ailey has created a repertory company designed to preserve and continue both the American modern dance heritage and the uniqueness of black cultural expression. Works come from a variety of well-known American choreographers, including Katherine Dunham, Judith Jamison and Ailey himself. The company now numbers 29 dancers, many of whom are graduates from the Alvin Ailey Dance Center, an affiliated dance school currently registering more than 2,500 students annually from around the world.

The Chapel Hill show is part of the final stages of the troupe's current U.S. tour. The company plans to travel next to Europe, to continue abroad the unique representation of American modern choreography and its black cultural heritage.

*Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will perform tonight at 8 p.m. in Memorial Hall. Call 962-1449 for ticket information.*

## Haunting show

### 'Mourning Becomes Electra' is exciting, compelling drama

Kelly Rhodes  
Theatre

Paul Green Theatre was cold Saturday, so maybe the audience could shiver more easily. The theatre was also smoky and dark, so possibly the stage looked more haunted. Perhaps the action began a little late, so the audience's anticipation was heightened.

None of it was necessary, because the audience jumped anyway, the stage was already ghostly and the anticipation for the second complete run ever of Eugene O'Neill's 1931 play, "Mourning Becomes Electra," was already high.

PlayMakers Repertory Company, with the help of five guest artists, put on the long play with a delicacy and beauty that might have even impressed O'Neill.

Director David Hammond used the unabridged version of the Greek-based story, which is full of repetitions and difficult phrasing that create a play that is difficult for the audience to grasp and even harder for the cast to perform.

But Hammond surrounded himself with the best, including the husky-voiced Isa Thomas and the tireless Tandy Cronyn, who were capable of the broad ranges of emotion and unemotion that O'Neill called for in the Mannon women. Thomas portrayed the mother, Christine, and Cronyn was the daughter, Lavinia. Both were in love with men they shouldn't have been in love with and both were wonderful in the parts.

Cronyn performed well in her dualistic role—a daughter who loved her father and hated her mother, yet was becoming her mother, to the point of imitating her in dress. The Electra complex has become a common term in the English language, but this play takes the idea one step further. Lavinia is Electra, full of fury over her father's death and wanting justice done. O'Neill manages to put it all in perspective, and the lust and madness unfold before the audience's unbelieving eyes.

Maxwell Caener portrayed the father, Ezra, and assumed two other

roles after Ezra was killed off. James Lawson as Lavinia's fiance Peter seemed almost stiff and scared, but as one of the only normal characters in the play, he rightly should have been scared by all the events happening around him.

Patrick Egan portrayed Adam Brant, a vengeful character who was faithful to his lover, Christine. Changing emotions quickly, Egan was capable of flying into a rage as easily as flying into Christine's arms.

Wonderful performances were turned in by two of PRC's own, David Whalen and Susanna Rinehart. Whalen portrayed Orin, Christine and Ezra's son, who was caught in a battle concerning just that—whose child could he safely claim to be? When both parents were gone, he was mothered to death by big sister Lavinia. Wonderful on the stage, Whalen was comfortable in any situation and adaptable to anything that transpired.

Rinehart was Peter's sister and Orin's fiancee, Hazel Niles. The rage she portrayed toward her future sister-in-law and her helplessness at being caught in the situations she was in were frightening and real.

One obvious drawback of the play is its length; five hours is a long time to be in a dark, smoky theatre. Hammond divided the play at a very good point, after three hours, when there was a virtual capsule summary of the action in the first part.

Another drawback is the staging. Because the stage at Paul Green juts out into the audience, anyone speaking is in danger of turning his back to someone, and a few times a line or two was lost because of this problem.

The smoke that was being pumped into the theatre was a good effect,



Tandy Cronyn and David Whalen in "Mourning Becomes Electra"

but had a bad effect on the audience's eyes and throats. The coolness was also a bit of an inconvenience.

Most of the audience was brought to its feet in applauding the performances of Thomas and Cronyn. And deservedly so: Thomas gave a new meaning to the concept of a mother and Cronyn gave a new meaning to

the word endurance. The run of this play is a historical event in drama. The artists participating in it are well aware of the significance of every line and gesture, and anyone who sees it should share this awareness. Go see this play. Not only is it going to be remembered, but it is very well worth it.

### THE NINTH ANNUAL SHARING CONFERENCE

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### Campus Calendar

#### Monday

12 p.m. Women's Studies Program will have a brown-bag lunchtime colloquium in Toy Lounge of

Dey Hall. Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether will speak on feminism, theology and the church.

3:30 p.m. Walk for Humanity '88 of the Campus Y will have an organizational meeting in the Campus Y Lounge. All interested are welcome.

4 p.m. Graduate English Club

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is sponsoring a reading by Fred Chappell in Greenlaw 224.

7 p.m. Psi Chi will hold an inductee information meeting in 304 Davie Hall. By invitation only.

7:30 p.m. Women's Studies Program will sponsor a lecture by Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether on "Sex and the Single Male God: What is the Problem?" in 121 Hanes Art Center.

8 p.m. Students for Dole will meet in Union 213.

8:30 p.m. Fellowship of Christian Athletes will have a service in honor of Pete Maravitch in Kenan

Field House.

### Items of Interest

The UNC Environmental Resource Project is offering \$250 stipends for student research work with selected N.C. citizens environmental organizations. Contact ERP at 966-1301 or 966-3332 for info.

Student Government All Campus Candidates Forum will be Feb. 7. If you have a question you'd like to ask the candidates for student body president, please deposit your question in the marked folder at the Union desk.

Graduation Applications for all seniors graduating in May are due Feb. 10.

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