

SEAN SMITH

"Dance is live art." You could call that the motto of Sean Smith, dynamo of Dallas Black Dance Theatre. Canadian, like Nicole Paiement, he's a creation of the west, having grown up in a small town near Vancouver, while she brings with her always a touch of eastern, Francophone Montreal. Both have crafted original lives. Both have electrified Dallas audiences with exceptional flair and style.

Sinuuous and insinuating, Sean Smith dances like a cat, but he's no precious creature of Persia or Siam. Smith in action has the look of a leopard, or a jaguar. Working from a base of classical ballet, he can muster the moves of a gymnast with the intensity of a lover obsessed, possessed, unable to pull apart from the passion of the moment, that stretches into many moments, for the whole of an evening. He is a dancer you don't forget.

Trained in Vancouver, Toronto and, finally, at the Alvin Ailey in New York, Smith had nothing inevitable about him except a lot of raw talent, unsupported at first by circumstances unless you count a childhood response to the dancing he saw on television and a sister who felt the same. But he did have the pluck to go after grants and scholarships that make his trajectory now look meant to be. Maybe, in the signs of astrology, but not necessarily in Abbotsford, British Columbia, where diverse groups were many, especially from Southern Asia, but Blacks were few, and it was easy for someone like Sean Smith to feel like an outlier. But who's to say that didn't fuel his propulsive ascent from student to striver to star?

Not only does Smith dance with the stamina of a long-distance runner, he also choreographs, and this year he became one of two rehearsal assistants at DBDT. Easily bored, he also has immersed himself in tap dancing, an early enthusiasm. He joined with the African-American Repertory Theater to act as a tap dancing interlocutor in *Fly*, a dramatic account of the Tuskegee airmen, from the university of the same name in Alabama, who integrated the Air Force during World War II.

La Traviata is his favorite opera. "I love that music," he said, and he has choreographed to it. His reigning genius, however, is Mozart. "His sonatas are so simple, so brilliant, so childlike, so pure. Mozart is it for me."

