

PERFORMING ARTS

Reaching back into history

If the pandemic has overshadowed the country's other pressing problems, Dallas Black Dance Theatre is here to remind us that the African-American push for equality is an ongoing project.

The long-running, Arts District-based troupe is presenting a pair of filmed works that amplify that struggle by looking at history. The stylized, gestural *Mourner's Bench*, a solo choreographed in 1947 by Talley Beatty to the traditional spiritual "There Is a Balm in Gilead," makes physical a man's spiritual battle on and around a churchlike pew.

Beatty was inspired by Howard Fast's novel *Southern Landscape*, which deals with the influence of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War.

The second piece, Matthew Rushing's *Odetta* from 2014, is a tribute to the music of Odetta Holmes, a 1950-60s folk and blues singer known as "the voice of the civil rights movement."

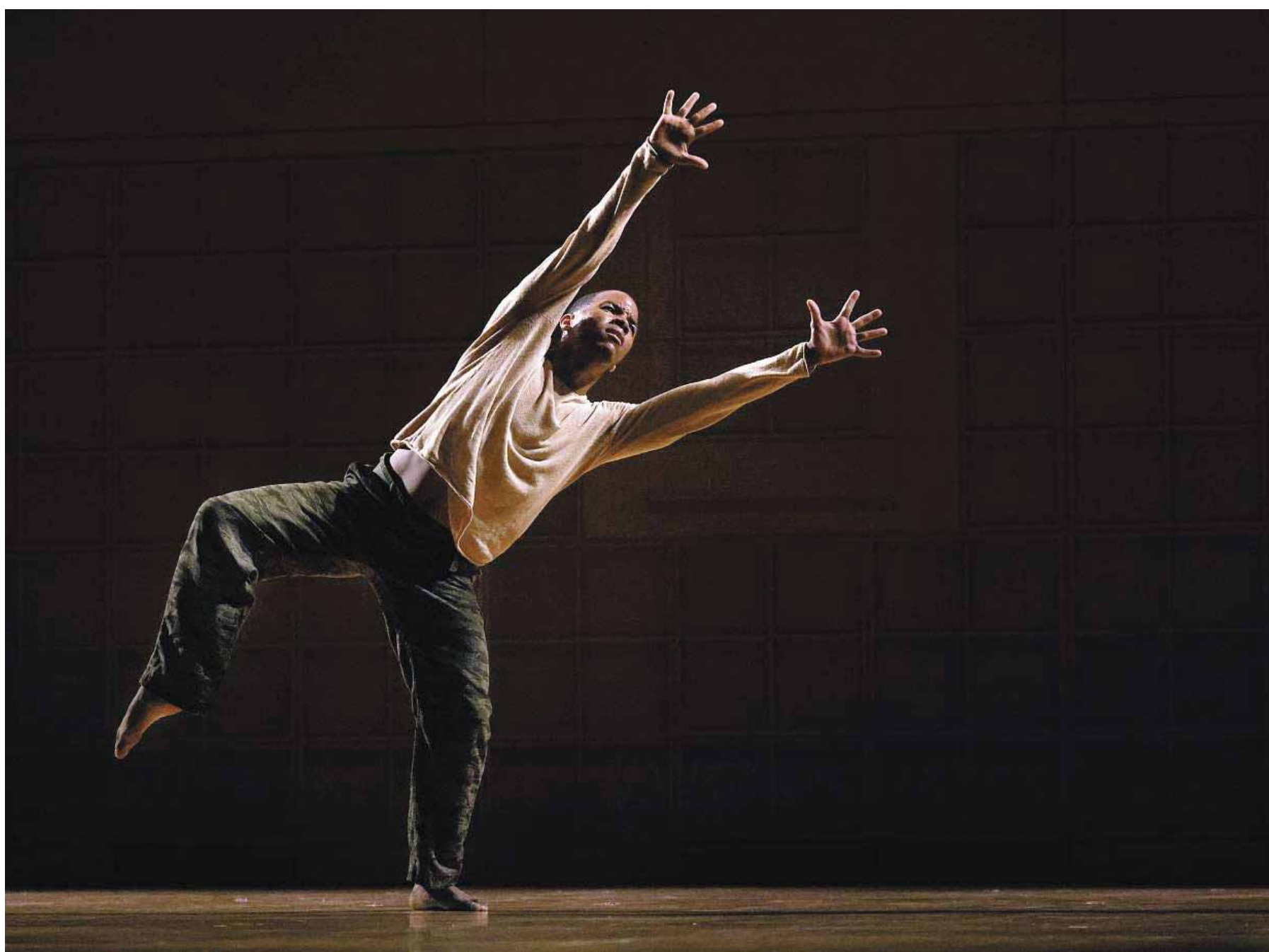
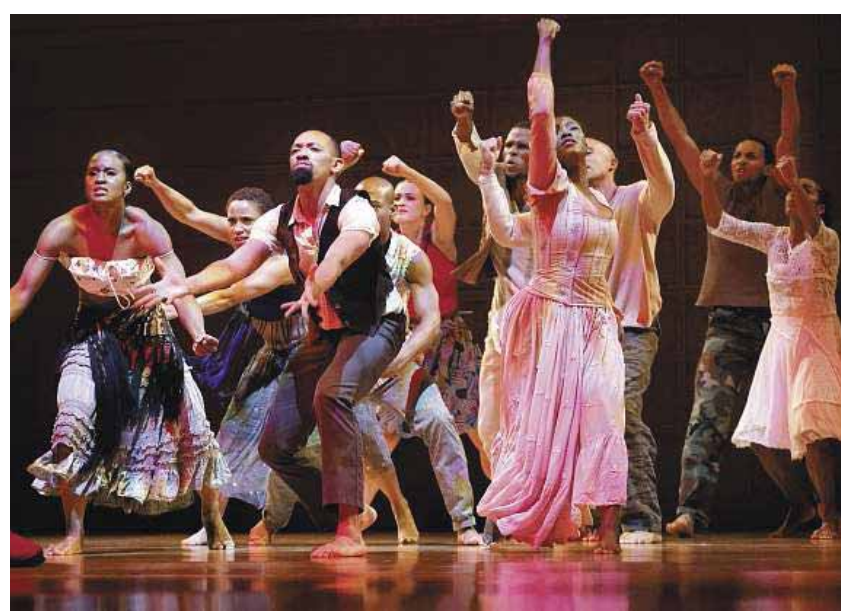
The pieces were shot at White Rock Lake, Trinity Groves, the Design District, Arts Mission Oak Cliff, Bonton Farms, Meyerson Symphony Center, a private home in the Bishop Arts District and the Flag Store in Old East Dallas.

Details: Streaming Saturday at dbdt.com. \$30 per household.



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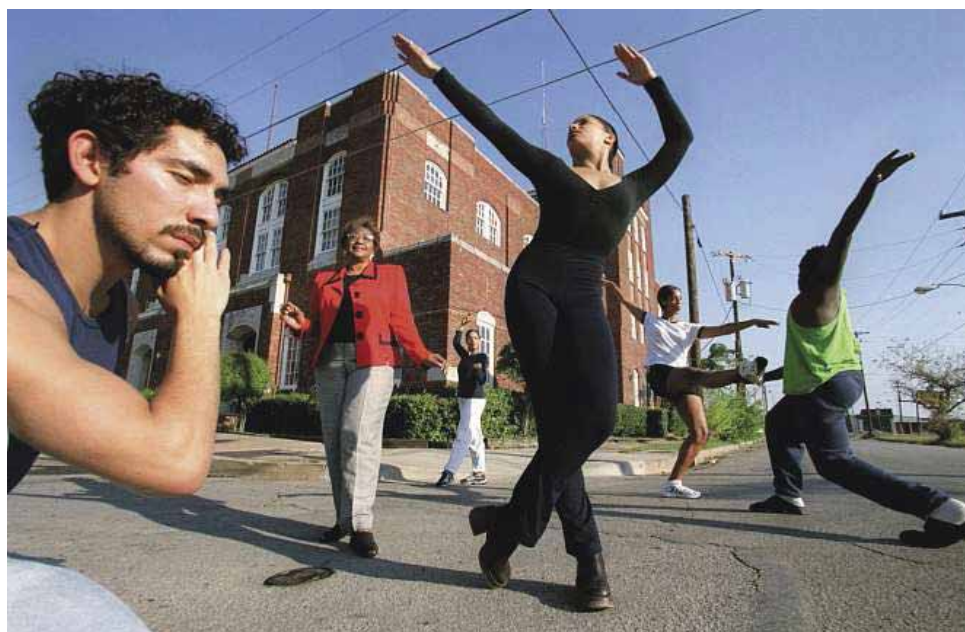


Photos by Tom Fox/Staff Photographer

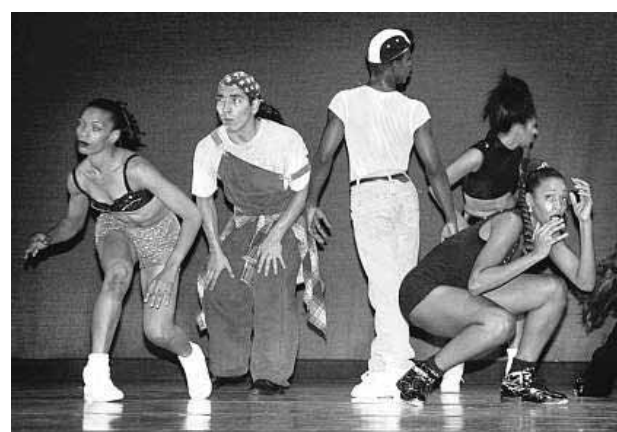
Claude Alexander III (above) and other Dallas Black Dance Theatre members (at top) perform scenes from *Odetta* as part of a filmed piece that will stream online for one night only. Saturday's streaming presentation also includes a solo performance of *Mourner's Bench* by Talley Beatty.



1991 File Photo/Staff



2004 File Photo/Staff



1995 File Photo/Staff

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Photographing a pillar of North Texas' arts community

The *Dallas Morning News* has been covering Dallas Black Dance Theatre — the oldest continuously operating professional dance company in North Texas — since the ensemble's founding in 1976. Some of the memorable moments our cameras have documented include, of course, the day in 1991 when dancers from the company met with Queen Elizabeth II (top left) at the Meyerson Symphony Center before a performance. We were also there in 1995

for rehearsals for a modern, swaggering take on George Faison's *Mad Pain* (below left). And, poignantly, we were there in 2004 to photograph the company's beloved founder, Ann Williams, and dancers from her company as they struck a pose in front of the old YMCA building on Flora Street, that became the group's new home (above). The dancer in the back with the white T-shirt? That's Melissa Young, who "has held almost every job on the artistic side of company," we reported in 2018. At that time, Young had just been named artistic director, and she still leads the company today.

Christopher Wynn