



Calvin Royal
Photo by Jade Young

DANCER'S JOURNEY

Calvin Royal III

Up close with ABT Soloist Calvin Royal III

How did you start dancing? I started dancing probably around 11 years old. I did this community project in Florida called *The Chocolate Nutcracker*, and that was my first introduction to dance. We did African dancing, hip-hop and jazz.

I went to a middle school for the performing arts and studied music. I thought that I wanted to become a pianist, but when I auditioned for the performing arts high school, I applied to all of the arts programs and was accepted into the dance program. The beginning of my journey began when I was a freshman in high school with two hands on the barre.

Where did you receive your ballet training? While studying at my high school, I participated in the **Youth America Grand Prix**, and I was invited to New York City to compete in the finals. This is where I was spotted by Franco DeVita and Raymond Lukens and received a scholarship to ABT's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School.

How did you know you wanted to become a ballet dancer? It really didn't occur to me to have the dream of becoming a professional ballet dancer, even after I moved to New York and began studying. I was still a student adjusting to a new city and getting the best training in the world. Then, after being in this environment and seeing dancers like Ethan Stiefel and Jose Manuel Carreño (whom I grew



Interplay
Photo
by Gene Schiavone

up watching on DVDs), I started to realize that this is something that I could potentially do as my career.

What is a typical day for you like?

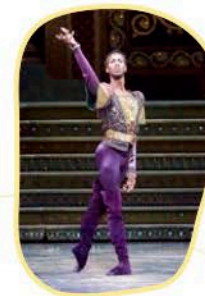
I get up at 8am every morning, and I try to get to the city by 10am because class starts at 10:15. I have 15 minutes to warm up and stretch before a 90-minute technique class. Then we have a short break followed by rehearsals from noon to 7pm, with a few breaks throughout the day.

If you had to be in another profession, what would that be?

At ABT, I have been getting a lot of character-acting roles and developing those characters has been really fun for me. I especially like characters that are not my own personality, like an Evil Sorcerer. So, I think if I wasn't a dancer, I would probably want to explore acting.

Who are your artistic influences and why?

I just started reading a biography of Mel Tomlinson who recently passed away. He was one of the first dancers of color to dance with the New York City Ballet after Arthur Mitchell. He danced so many prominent roles and came from the South like me. I danced a ballet called *Agon* that was created for Arthur Mitchell by George Balanchine. So definitely Mel Tomlinson and Arthur Mitchell... they are the pioneers who changed people's perceptions and the landscape of classical ballet.



Swan Lake
Photo
by Gene Schiavone



Dream within a Dream (deferred)
Photo by Marty Sohl

What is your favorite ballet?

My favorite ballet to watch would probably be *Giselle*. It's super dramatic, and there are so many things that strike your heart when you watch it. As a performer, it's *Swan Lake*—mainly because I get to play the sorcerer von Rothbart. This was the first role where I felt like I lost Calvin and transformed into this other person. You basically invite yourself to the ball, break in and make everybody fall under your spell. There's just something so powerful about that.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job is connecting with other dancers in the Company. It makes it so much easier to come to work, because it doesn't feel like work. It feels like I'm a part of something special, and it's exciting!

Any other advice you want to impart to aspiring young dancers?

Trust yourself! Sometimes we have the wildest ideas, dreams or visions for ourselves and they may not necessarily align with how other people see us. It's okay to trust yourself!

Beginnings in St. Petersburg, FL., at the Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School

ABT's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School

ABT's Studio Company

ABT Main Company as an Apprentice

ABT Corps de ballet

ABT Soloist