Bill T. Jones Addresses AIDS in “Analogy”

The second part of his latest dance cycle premieres in July.

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Just as he was in July 1994, when he graced the cover of the second issue of POZ, Bill T. Jones is still making beautiful art that tells moving, personal stories. Part 2 of the choreographer’s latest piece, the ambitious three-part Analogy, premieres at the American Dance Festival on July 1 in Durham, North Carolina.

While Jones often mines his own experience as a gay black man in his dances, the HIV-positive choreographer is also inspired by the lives of others. Part 2 of Analogy, “Lance: Pretty a.k.a. the Escape Artist,” tells the story of Jones’s nephew Lance Briggs, who spent his early life aspiring to be a mix between his uncle and Michael Jackson.

Eventually, though, Briggs, nicknamed “Pretty,” fell into drug addiction and prostitution, which ultimately led to AIDS, paraplegia and intense hospitalization. Set in the American club scene in the late ’80s and early ’90s, the show features songs and raps written by Briggs, now 46, as well as Jones’s interviews with him— which are voiced onstage by the dancers. Jones’s A Letter to My Nephew/Pretty, another piece inspired by Briggs, is currently on tour. It, along with many of Jones’s works, also speaks to the devastation of AIDS.

The first part of Analogy, “Dora: Tramontane,” which premiered in June 2015, recounts the early life of Dora, Jones’s Jewish mother-in-law, both in Belgium and in Nazi internment camps and also features Jones’s interviews with her. (The third and final part of Jones’s trilogy has not yet been announced.)

Jones explained why dance is able to tell these stories to The New York Times Style Magazine: “Dance is supposed to transcend language. Dance is supposed to be universal language. When I move my arm, we all have an arm: We can feel this. When I run, we can all feel it.”

Click here to watch Jones discuss his accomplishments and perform poses from his 1983 solo work, “21.”

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