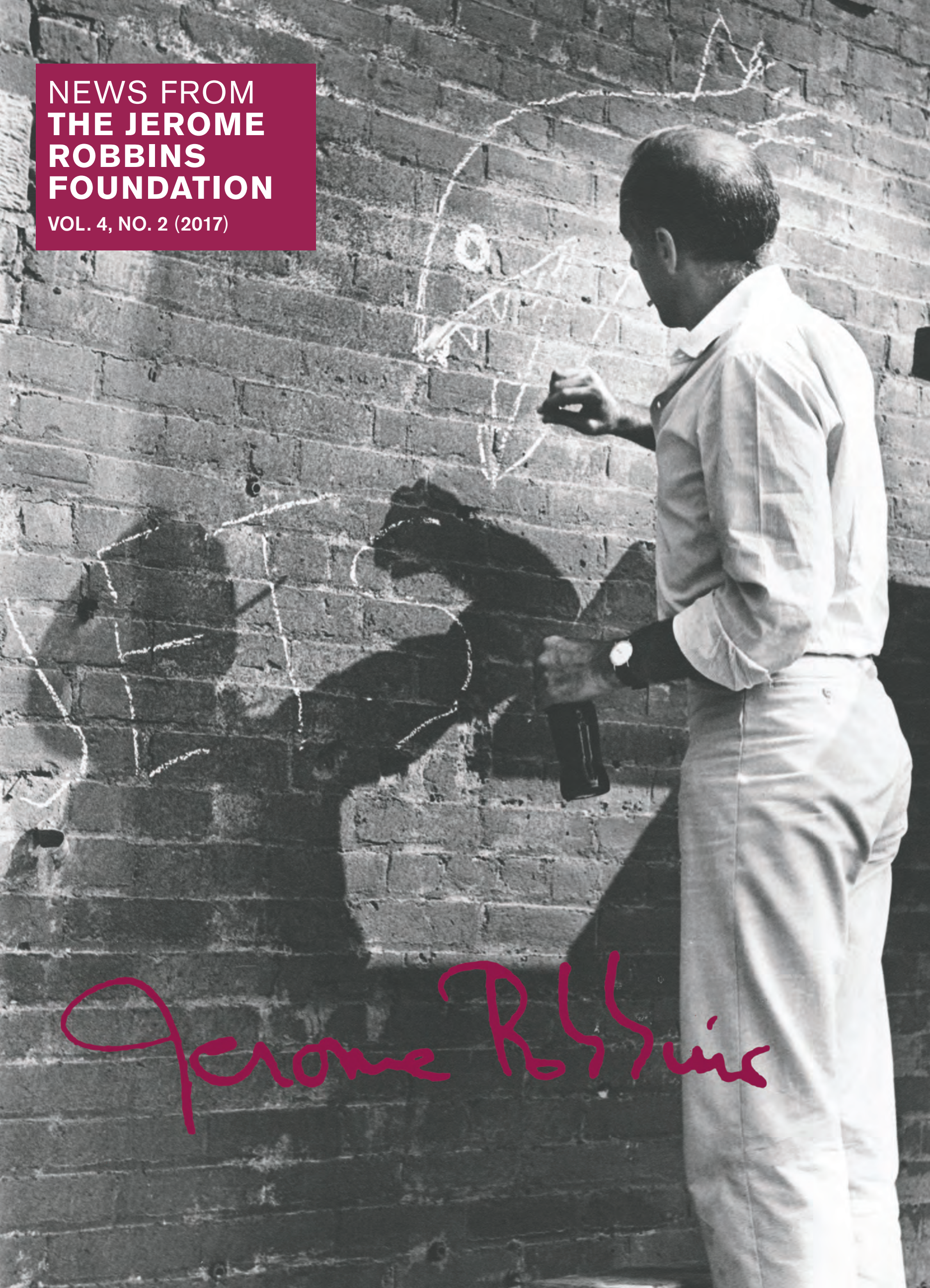


**NEWS FROM
THE JEROME
ROBBINS
FOUNDATION**

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Jerome Robbins

2018 is the year the world comes together to celebrate the 100th birthday of Jerome Robbins (1918–1998). One of the first events of the Centennial celebration will be the Jerome Robbins Symposium, taking place January 26, 2018 at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.



The Jerome Robbins Dance Research Fellowship

by Kathleen Leary

Jerome Robbins was a researcher. He visually documented life and human behavior through his many establishing shots of *West Side Story* during the movie's pre-production. A known bibliophile, he read exhaustively on a subject, always to understand as much as he possibly could so it could fortify a fictional world. He studied paintings and drawings, noting color, composition, and character relationships. All found their way into artistic projects.

Jerome Robbins was also a writer. He wrote to give direction. He wrote to categorize. He wrote to organize his thoughts. He wrote to describe what he would like to see visually. At a time when written correspondence was the primary form of communication, much of his life, concerns, and financial contracts ended up on the page. When the writing, doodling, and photography proved to be limiting, he danced. When he needed clarification, he put pen to paper again, practicality above all else, using the best creative tool for the job.

When choosing applicants for The Jerome Robbins Dance Research Fellowship we, in turn, chose participants who could express Robbins' life through different media in the way that he would have: through writing, dancing, photography, or a combination of these. The Jerome Robbins Research Fellowship was conceived and supported by the Dance Committee of The Jerome Robbins Dance Division in honor of Robbins' 100th birth year (in 2018). It was created to support scholars and practitioners engaged in graduate-level, post-doctoral, and independent research. Jerome Robbins Dance Division Curator Linda Murray notes: "The goal for the fellows was to discover new aspects of Jerome Robbins' legacy including, but not limited to, his photography, artwork, and writing, as well as his overall contribution to dance." To be considered, applicants had to submit a proposal by April 15, 2017.

The selection committee had three criteria for choosing the Fellows: an applicant's success in proposing the examination of under-researched materials in Robbins' collection, their plans for future community engagement with the archive, and a creative approach to the project. The following people were chosen after determining that they best fit the criteria: **Ninotchka Bennahum** (professor of theater and dance at the University of California, Santa Barbara), **Adrian Danchig-Waring** (principal dancer with New York City Ballet), **Robert Greskovic** (dance critic for the Wall Street Journal), **Julie Lemberger** (dance photographer), **Alastair Macaulay** (chief dance critic for the New York Times), and **Hiie Saumaa** (lecturer in English and comparative literature at Columbia University). Their appointment began on June 1, 2017, and will end on December 31, 2017.

As researching can be a solitary task, two events were organized so the Fellows could meet and share common research questions. Allen Greenberg, The Dance Committee Chair and President of the Jerome Robbins Foundation, hosted a welcome breakfast in July in which the fellows described their projects to their colleagues in the fellowship program, directors of Jerome Robbins Foundation, and Library staff members. In September, the Dance Division hosted a screening of rehearsal footage shot by Jerome Robbins of *Variations Pour une Porte et un Soupir*. (Robbins was experimenting with his film camera and asked Balanchine if he could shoot the rehearsal; Balanchine agreed, providing a rare look into a closed rehearsal.)

The Division created deadlines throughout the fellowship cycle to track progress, and Library staff offered their expertise to foster a supportive environment. Each Fellow had a meeting in September with Curator Linda Murray to discuss the progress they were making. Each Fellow brought a specific research skill set to the group; some knew how to navigate the Library's catalog exceptionally well, which would in turn yield the most material from the collection, while others were just beginning their journey. Supervising Librarian Phil Karg met with several of the Fellows to instruct them on how use the catalog more effectively.

The following are examples of three of the Fellowship projects:

- Dance photographer **Julie Lemberger** offers a creative approach to her project. In her presentation and written piece, "What He Saw/What She Saw – *West Side Story* and Other Views of Dance and Dancers Behind the Scenes: Discovering Photography by Jerome Robbins and Martha Swope," Julie is looking at "how two photographers in 1957 with different backgrounds and perspectives recorded and reacted to the making of *West Side Story*; what photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson called *the decisive moment*, when everything changed, what brought these two together and how it shaped their careers."
- **Robert Greskovic**, who writes about dance for the Wall Street Journal, has previously presented his work at our public presentations in the Bruno Walter Auditorium, and can be spotted frequently in our special collections reading room working on a variety of projects. Robert is still working on a title, but aims to make a presentation and/or to publish his thoughts and observations addressing his chosen focus. "The focus of my study of the work of Jerome Robbins is to explore what makes his ballets to the music of Frédéric Chopin tick. By this I mean not just the choreographic elements, about which a great deal has been said, but the broader picture, the full look of the stage when the curtain is up, including costume, lighting, and in some instances scenic design, aspects which, it seems to me, are often passed over in assessments of these works. In chronological order the ballets under scrutiny are *The Concert*, *Dances at a Gathering*, *In the Night*, *Other Dances*, and *Three Chopin Dances*, or what might be called "Other Dances at a Gathering," as has been suggested to me in conversation with Mikhail Baryshnikov, who worked with Robbins as he created this last of his Chopin dances for a television program called "Baryshnikov at the White House."
- **Dr. Hiie Saumaa**, lecturer from Columbia University's Department of English and Comparative Literature, is using the collection in a unique way. She is working on two different projects. One called "Jerome Robbins – Composer in Words," and the other a creative writing project in which she travels on a personal journey with Jerome Robbins, following the pages and entries of his visually stunning, collage-like journals. "Jerome Robbins was extremely active as a choreographer but he was also very close to the written word. His extensive archive includes numerous diaries, journals, short stories, poems, travel notes, plots for ballets, and reflections on the performances he saw. What was Robbins like as a writer? Why did he write? How did writing help him with his creative work as a choreographer? I am examining the creative and autobiographical writings in Robbins's personal papers. These works vividly demonstrate Robbins's bold experimentation with the written word, embodied reading, and layers of visual and verbal artistry. They also shed light on his contemplations on the role of the reading audience and the craft of writing itself."

These projects and three other thoughtful works will be presented at a symposium on **January 26, 2018**. During the centennial year of 2018 each Fellow will write a blog post, available on The Jerome Robbins Dance Division website, detailing their research findings that have taken place throughout the fellowship cycle. *To register for the symposium, please visit: nyprobbinssymposium.eventbrite.com.*

Kathleen Leary is the Education Coordinator for The Jerome Robbins Dance Division at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Her professional passions are educational equity and accessibility. After a hard day of empowering students through a performing arts-based curriculum, she likes to explore the wilds of Manhattan, read biographies, and visit historic houses.

A special *West Side Story*-themed *Seth Speaks* on SiriusXM was taped in New York City in July, 2016. Participants included Seth Rudetsky (host), Martin Charnin, Harvey Evans, Scott Wise, Jim Borstelmann, Liza Gennaro, and Andrea Burns. Highlights from the conversation follow.

A Sirius Take on *West Side Story*

Seth Rudetsky Martin Charnin, how did you get involved with *West Side Story*? As far as I know, you were not a singer/dancer/actor, per se, you were a visual artist. Am I correct?

Martin Charnin Well, I graduated from college—Cooper Union—where I was painting, and there was a column in the New York Times that said that Jerome Robbins was looking for the final two authentic juvenile delinquents for his company of *West Side Story*, and that they were having an open call. So I rolled up my t-shirt sleeves, put a pack of Lucky's in them, made my hair look like a duck's ass, wore the tightest jeans I had, and I went down there. Two thousand people were there and Ruth Mitchell, the stage manager, walked around the alley, and said, "Thank you. No. Thank you. No. No." She cut two thousand people down to two hundred, and I was still there. We'd done nothing. And I had on my glasses. They were big, Coke bottle glasses. I went into the theater at that point. The first person I met was Peter Gennaro.

Seth Liza's dad.

Martin Liza's pop. Peter Gennaro said to me, "Okay, I want you to walk from stage left to stage right." And I said, "I don't know how to do that." I didn't know stage left and stage right, because I'd never done it. He also said, "Snap your fingers while you do it." And I did. But I was the only one in that entire group of two hundred people who didn't have to wet their fingers to snap.

Seth Now why is that?

Martin Because I could naturally (*snaps fingers*) snap my fingers.

Seth Wait—that put you a cut above the rest? Then what, you got a callback?

Martin Those two hundred people became fifty. And fifty people then went downstairs, into the lobby, and we met a young man in a shirt and tie, who said, "I want you to sing your eight bars if you have eight bars. And I did. I sang the only song that I really knew, which was "I Wish I Were In Love Again." I sang it, and then the young man said, "Do it again, only faster." And then he said, "Terrific."

And I moved up in the pecking order. And that was Sondheim, who wanted to hear how quickly I could get the words out, how well I could spit 'em out. And, having done that, I then went to another lobby, where I met another young man in a shirt and a tie, who said, "Read this line of dialogue." And I read it. And I got a laugh. I thought I was dead, because nobody else got a laugh. That was Arthur [Laurents], and the only thing he wanted to find out was whether or not anybody could get a laugh saying "Ooh! It hurts! It hurts!" And I got a laugh, so that instantly put me one level higher.

Seth Did you know it was a laugh line?

Martin No. I read it that way because it was funny. He told me the situation and then I read the line. Then, finally, I met Jerry [Robbins], who asked me to walk across the stage—after Peter had prepped me—and snap my fingers, which I did. He didn't ask me if I could dance, interestingly enough. And then, finally, the last person I met was Lenny.

Seth Bernstein.

Martin Yeah, and he said, (*singing the three notes from "Maria"*) "Sing 'ba-'ba-'ba'. That was it. He just wanted to hear me do those three notes. I did it. I was one of the four guys who stood in the wings when Tony sings, "Maria."

Seth Ahh.

Martin I'm number three, if you listen to it. And then a man named Carl Fisher, who was the General Manager, took me upstairs and said, "Can you come to work tomorrow morning? \$265 a week." I'd never made a dime before except waiting on tables, maybe, in the summertime. And so I came to work the next morning, and I was in *West Side*.

Seth I want to segue to the most current *West Side Story* member, Andrea. So, Andrea Burns, I know you moved to New York City, you grew up obsessed with *West Side Story*—like I did—

Andrea Burns Yes.

Seth You were at NYU. Had you ever played Maria before?

Andrea I had played it in high school, in tenth grade, which was three years before I was in New York.

Seth And why did you want to play the role again?

Andrea I just always loved it. I thought it was the most amazing collaboration and I still feel to this day that it's one of the greatest pieces of art that we've ever created in this country. I loved everything about it. But I was in college at the time, at NYU, and I read about it in *Backstage*. So I went just to see what it would be like to go to a New York audition. I had no intention of actually getting it. It was *West Side Story* and I thought, *That'll be a really fun one to go to!*



A moment during the pre-show, onstage warm-up for the original Broadway production of *West Side Story*, 1957. Left to right: Chita Rivera, Jerome Robbins, Lee Becker (Theodore), and Al Di Seo. Photo from the collection of Jerome Robbins.

Seth And what did they ask you to do?

Andrea They were looking for two Shark girls, who could understudy Anita and Maria, respectively. I had gone to a performing arts high school, and a wonderful guest teacher named Clay James came and taught us. He had worked with American Dance Machine, so he knew the original choreography to “America,” and I was freaking out that he had taught it to us. Of course, I went to the audition pretending that I was learning it on the spot. I had always danced, but I considered myself more of a singing actor. I made every cut because I knew the choreography. By the end of it, Alan Johnson was there and he asked me to sing the “Tonight” quintet, to hear if I could do the high C at the end. I think it was on a Friday, and he asked, “Do you have your passport? We’re leaving on Monday.”

Seth First of all, what’s hard about dancing “America,” since we have Liza Gennaro right here?

Liza Gennaro It’s fast. The footwork is very fast. My father’s work was highly articulated and sharp. The speed of doing those dance steps at that tempo is part of what was difficult about it. Also, the pelvis movement. My father had studied at the Katherine Dunham school, so those kind of pelvis movements were very natural to him. The combination of what he was doing with the feet, and then he also had some classical training so it’s line, it’s speed, it’s articulation of the pelvis, and on and on.

Seth And why didn’t Jerry Robbins choreograph those numbers? Why did he ask Peter Gennaro to do it?

Liza Well, Jerry Robbins already knew my father. My father had done several shows with Jerry Robbins before *West Side Story*. He had done “Steam Heat” in *The Pajama Game*, which Robbins co-directed. He had done “Mu-Cha-Cha” in *Bells Are Ringing*, which Robbins directed. And he had done a production of *Miss Liberty*, I think, and a production of *Call Me Madam*, so he’d had a lot of exposure to Robbins. On *Bells Are Ringing*, my father said that he would always practice by himself—he would get to the theater early and rehearse on his own—and he would see, out in the wings, Robbins watching him. Robbins’ next show was *West Side* and Robbins came to him and asked, “Would you assist me?” And my father said, “No, but I would co-choreograph.” So he offered him a co-choreographer position, but then he had him sign a contract, which gave him co-choreographer credit but basically said that Robbins owned the choreography.

Seth Okay, Andrea, tell me about the Anita leaps that I’m obsessed with (*playing “America” on keyboard*), the crazy foot to the back of the head.

Andrea Really the hardest part is hitting that pose at the end. Not tipping over.

Seth Not falling? Good to know. And what about playing Maria? What’s the hardest part about singing that role?

Andrea High C.

Seth That’s the hardest part?

Andrea I think so, just because there’s such anticipation.

Seth Carol Lawrence said to me the hardest part for her was doing the balcony scene because it was so quiet. She didn’t have a body mic and the scene took place all the way upstage, so it was hard to keep the voice quiet while also projecting. But I guess you got to wear—

Andrea Microphones. Yes.

Seth Now I want to talk to the two *Jerome Robbins’ Broadway* cast members. We have Scott Wise, who played Riff in the *West Side Story* section, and we have Jim Borstelmann, who was a swing—and I’m sure went on many times. First I want to ask you, Scott Wise, what did Jerry Robbins tell you about playing Riff?

Scott Wise It went on for months. And we had about a month of butting heads.

Seth You and Jerry Robbins?

Scott Absolutely.

Seth Without being fired?

Scott I was kind of shocked. He threatened to fire me. It was a very odd month, with a lot of tears, a lot of anxiety.

Seth What were you fighting about?

Scott I just wasn’t doing it right. I could not get past, “Okay, we’re going to start. You’re standing on the stoop.” (*He hums the first three notes of “The Prologue”*) “O.K. Stop!” (*Again, he hums the first three notes of “The Prologue”*) “Stop!” And that went on and on. We never got through, I don’t think, four counts of eight during the first few weeks. I mean, he was screaming and yelling at me that I was not doing it and that he was going to get someone else. He also took me aside and said, “You can’t be starstruck by me, and you can’t let me get to you,” which I thought was kind of sweet. Finally, one day, I figured that I had nothing to lose. So I was standing in the room at the 890 Studios and I realized I was in a place that I owned. I’ve grown up in studios and onstage. Once I changed my train of thought to *I’m on my stage*, he said, “Perfect.” He absolutely let me go with it, and then we did a run through and he never gave me a note on any number that we did from that point on.

Seth Just a mindset was all you needed.

Scott It was my “I’m-working-with-Jerry-Robbins!” attitude that was killing me.

Seth And Borstelmann, talk about the first time you went on as a swing. As far as I know, there was an accident. First of all, describe what a swing is, for those who don’t know.

Jim A swing understudies everyone in the cast. I covered seven different people, so it got a little confusing. Once I turned downstage and I was supposed to turn upstage and there was the portal right there—so bam! Right into the portal! My tooth came out through my lip and the blood spat, and I went into the wings, and I was just feeling that energy, ‘cause it’s live theater—you don’t feel any pain. And [stage manager] Beverly Randolph was saying, “Get him out of here. Get him to the hospital!” And I said, “No! We’ve got the ear piercing to do! I have to be there to catch Joey McKneely!”—who I didn’t catch, because I wasn’t there! Beverly said, “You’re not going anywhere.” So Joey did the big leap, and I’m the Shark who wasn’t there to catch him. So he hit his head, split it open, and blood was everywhere. By this time, Christophe Caballero picked up my tooth that was on the stage, came off, gave it to Beverly, and someone after the show asked, “Is it always this realistic? The rumble—it was just fantastic!”

Martin The same thing happened to me on opening night in Washington, DC., when the set arrived late. First of all, the title of the show at that time was *East Side Story*. It then changed to *Gang Way!* and then to *West Side Story*. But the sets all had “Gang Way!” written on the back of them, to identify them. Anyway, the rumble came in last. It was the last piece of scenery to arrive. The big fence had barbed wire on the top and my exit in the rumble was to leap on a Shark and then go up to hang onto the fence, and then go over it, which I was able to do in rehearsal because we didn’t have a fence. We faked it. But then we got to opening night and Oliver Smith’s set arrived and they had neglected to cut the top two pieces of wire off and I ended up with stigmata. But, truth be told, no one was ever *not* injured in that show.

Seth I want to talk to you, Harvey Evans.

Harvey I was doing a show called *New Girl in Town*, with Gwen Verdon and Bob Fosse and George Abbott and Thelma Ritter. It was a really big show, but it was produced by Hal Prince and Bobby Griffith. We had just opened in New York and we heard rumors that Jerry Robbins was going to do this show and we knew—as much as I love Fosse—that Robbins was the king. So we unofficially heard that they would not take us out of one show and into the other, because Hal Prince and Bobby Griffith were also producing *West Side Story*. None of us auditioned, but we were invited to the gypsy run-through and when I saw it, it was totally life changing, and I became obsessed with wanting to be in *West Side Story*.

Seth When you say it was life changing, what was life changing about seeing *West Side Story*?

Martin Everything.

Harvey Everything. The music, the choreography was beyond brilliant. Nobody had thought of a serious musical like that, where people die. You can’t name a thing that wasn’t revolutionary about it.

Martin “Life changing” is really the best way to describe what *West Side* was. To begin with, none of us were really that much in the business. We weren’t hardened the way you can be, after being in twenty shows. And we were all feeling the same thing. Jerry was very careful to make sure that the Jets stayed Jets and the Sharks stayed Sharks.

Seth How did he do that?

Martin To begin with, by putting us in different hotels. Making sure that we did not fraternize in any way, shape or form, which we kind of honored, for a little while.

Seth Let's talk about a young Sondheim. Was he intimidated by all the mega-power around him?

Martin Not really. He was resentful of a lot of it, because he was co-writing the lyrics. Lenny had written a lot of those lyrics.

Seth Do you know what Lenny wrote?

Martin He wrote a lot of "Tonight." He wrote a lot of "Somewhere," "I Have A Love." I don't know specifically. I do know that Steve never talks about *West Side*. He does not refer to it in his catalogue of great works. *West Side* and *Gypsy* fall very low in the Sondheim catalogue.

Seth Was there any big moment that changed in the rehearsal process?

Martin The only new moment that I remember was during the gypsy run-through that Harvey came to. It was the first time that Larry Kert sang "Something's Coming." It had never been sung in front of an audience. Ever. Until that run-through.

Seth Had you guys heard it in rehearsal?

Martin We had heard it in rehearsal and we thought it was extraordinary. But we wondered, and Larry came offstage weeping. I remember very specifically, because it was breathtaking and it really stopped the show. And he was so thrilled with how it had fared in front of an audience.

Seth Harvey, you became close friends with Larry Kert. What was he like?

Harvey Oh, my God. Funniest guy in the world.

Martin Yep.

Harvey We got to do *La Cage* together. That was one of the treats of my life.

Seth He didn't get along with Jerry Robbins, right, Marty?

Martin Everybody didn't get along with Jerry Robbins. But, I temper that by saying that we were in the presence of four people who were at the top of their form, who never—interestingly enough—worked together again.

Seth Scott Wise, what was the hardest thing about dancing that show?

Scott Remember, doing *Jerome Robbins' Broadway* was quite a bit different than doing *West Side Story* alone. We were doing the Reader's Digest version of *West Side Story*. The hardest part about that was that we weren't doing "Cool," and then some scenes, and then the fight scene, and then more scenes. We were doing every dance section of *West Side Story* back to back.

Seth So it was like "Prologue," "Cool," "Rumble,"...

Scott It was like this marathon. I remember the first night that we ran the show, I was lying there on the stage, thinking to myself, *I have to do this eight times a week?*

Martin But you never wanted it to get easier.

Scott No. You're absolutely right.

Martin We all felt that. You couldn't screw around.

Harvey There was a time in "Officer Krupke" that we started laughing, and I think you might have been a little bit of the instigator.

Martin You're absolutely right.

Harvey We could not stop laughing.

Seth Why? How did he instigate it?

Harvey I don't know, the details are gone, but Ruth Mitchell would stand in the wings, and the only way we stopped was—we called him "Big Daddy"—Jerry came and stood in the wings one night.

Martin Yeah.

Harvey The word got out—"Big Daddy's in the wings!"—so no more laughing.

Seth My final question is for Harvey Evans. Who did you play in the actual film version of *West Side Story*?

Harvey A character named Mouthpiece. Gee-Tar on Broadway and Mouthpiece in the movie. I don't know if there's a Mouthpiece in the show in New York.

Jim There is. I played it in high school. I didn't know who that was, and now I know!



Photo taken by Jerome Robbins in the wings at a performance of *West Side Story*, during its pre-Broadway tryout in Washington, D.C. (1957). Note that the upstage side of the scenery is labeled GANG WAY DRUG STORE.

Seth The choreography in the film was very much the same, wasn't it?

Harvey Mainly the Prologue. He took the Prologue that we rehearsed in California, and he shot it on location here in New York. The only time that we were on location was the Prologue. He would look at the street and say, "Oh, steps! Okay, Robert Wise, let's put the camera down here and have the Jets run that way, up these steps." Poor Russ Tamblyn, who was not the trained dancer that we all were. We were trying to do this step, and do the new part and the old part, and we all knew that he had thirty versions of each step. He'd say, "Do twenty-nine now."

Seth And that was Jerry Robbins?

Harvey That was Jerry.

Scott I have a question about the movie. During "Cool," is it true that he had everyone running it, offstage, and then, when they would cut, he would continue to run it, and then come back and film more, so that by the time the guys had done "Cool," they had actually done it a good twenty times?

Harvey Absolutely true, even when it was in the can. As a joke, when we finally knew we would never have to do "Cool" again, we burned our kneepads in front of his office.

Seth Oh, my God.

Harvey But it's like Martin said. You want to be the best you can be, and we were young and we had energy and all that. We didn't mind it. It's like, "Oh, my God, I'm a method actor now. I'm doing "Cool"! Chita said it best. She said, "He brings the best out of you, so you can't—"

Martin You can't fault him. You never could. You really couldn't.

Seth What a nice ending. You guys are all amazing. Bravo, *West Side Story*. Bravo, everybody!

Seth Rudetsky is the afternoon host on Sirius/XM Satellite Radio's *On Broadway* as well as the host of *Seth Speaks* on Sirius/XM Stars. He was the Artistic Producer/Music Director for the first five annual Actors Fund Fall Concerts including *Dreamgirls* (recorded on Nonesuch Records) and *Hair* (recorded on Ghostlight Records, Grammy Nomination). In 2007 he made his Broadway acting debut in *The Ritz* for The Roundabout Theater. Off-Broadway he wrote and starred in the critically acclaimed *Rhapsody In Seth* at the Actors Playhouse and has also appeared on TV. As an author, he penned the non-fiction *The Q Guide to Broadway*, and the novels *Broadway Nights* and *My Awesome/Awful Popularity Plan*. Recently, he co-wrote and starred in *Disaster!*, and he currently writes a weekly column on *Playbill.com* and tours the country doing master classes and performing his one-man show "Deconstructing Broadway."



WEST SIDE STORY

"WEST SIDE STORY"

NEW YORK LOCATION LIST

1. PLAYGROUND - STREET AND ALLEY - 110th - between 2nd and 3rd
2. BACK ALLEY - WEST 24th - 25th - between 8th & 9th - condemned area
3. ALLEY WALL - BACK OF WEST 26th - between 8th & 9th - condemned area
4. WAREHOUSE - 28-29th at 12th AVE. - WHITE AND GREEN
5. WAREHOUSE - GARDNER - 59th at 12th - BRICKED ARCHES
6. SLAUGHTER HOUSE - 41st - between 11th and 12th
7. PARKING LOT - 49th between 11th and 12th - H & H
8. PARKING LOTS - 61st - between 10th and 11th - TWO LEVELS -
BUILDING WITH BIG PIPES
9. WALL AND ALLEYWAY - 321 WEST 53rd - FIFTH AVE. COACH LINES
10. PAINTED WALL - " " " " " " " "
11. POOL - 533 WEST 59th - between 10th and 11th
12. COMMERCIAL ALLEY AND FENCE - between West 59th and West 60th -
between 10th and 11th
13. STREET - 68th WEST OF AMSTERDAM - condemned area
14. STREET - 71st WEST OF AMSTERDAM - DEAD END SECTION OF BROWNSTONES
15. HANDBALL COURT AND FENCES - 126th AND AMSTERDAM
16. DEAD END STREET - PASSAGEWAY AND RED WAREHOUSE WALL -
128th AND AMSTERDAM
17. GIANT STONE WALL & STAIRWAY - 134th and 12th AVENUE
18. GIANT STEEL OVERHEAD STRUCTURE - 134th and 12th AVENUE
19. HOUSING PROJECT - EAST 106th and FIRST AVENUE
20. GOOD ALLEY - WIDE - WITH SIDEWALKS - MADISON AND BIRMINGHAM
21. PLAYGROUND AND STREET - WEST 47th - between 9th and 10th Avenues
22. WIDE ALLEY AND COURTYARD - WEST 47th near 10th AVENUE --
(ENTER 678 - 10th AVENUE)

On a morning in 1960, Jerome Robbins (and co-director Robert Wise) began filming *West Side Story* on West 68th Street in Manhattan. Just past the frame of the camera stood blocks of boarded tenements, the "condemned area" destined for demolition, site of the future Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

Jerome Robbins: "We found an ideal playground on East 110th Street, straight in the heart of the Puerto Rican area. So what you see in the opening is a combination of West Side and East Side. The dancers would jump up on the West Side and come down on the East Side."

West Side Story and the Birth of Cool

by Joel Dinerstein

From *The Origins of Cool in Postwar America*
(University of Chicago Press, 2017)

The production number of “Cool” in *West Side Story* marks the crossover moment of the most important American cultural export of the twentieth century: *cool*. As coined by African-Americans in the 1930s, the term was a password for a certain stylish stoicism, an everyday equipoise. To *be cool* was a state of mind: it meant, quite simply, to survive with style and dignity. The legendary tenor saxophonist Lester Young brought the term’s core four meanings into jazz culture: “I’m cool” — I’m relaxed here in my own style; to “be cool” — to be calm and detached in defiance of systemic racism; “Cool!” to register aesthetic approval; and, finally, “Cool it!” — calm down, lose the heat, control your emotions.

In the film version of *West Side Story*, a character named Ice sings “Cool,” advising gang members to control their anger and cool their jets. Cool has always had these positive connotations: *to cool* means to soothe, to relax, to calm someone, to help a person “get it together.” Bernstein and Sondheim managed to retain the meanings of a generation earlier, as in bluesman Big Bill Broonzy’s “Let Me Dig It” (1936): “I’m gonna cool you, baby/ until the ice man comes.” In the 1960s, the art historian Robert Farris Thompson found precedent for this “cool” sensibility in thirty-five West African languages and here they are in the spoken intro of the film’s production number:

Ice: “You wanna live in this lousy world? Play it cool.”

Riff: “[But] I wanna get even.”

Ice: “Get cool.”

Action: “I wanna bust.”

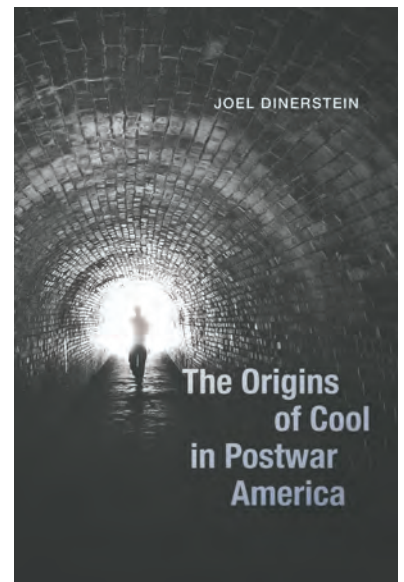
Ice: “Bust cool.”

It’s handy to have a character named Ice sing “Cool,” and the lyrics complete the metaphor: “Got a rocket in your pocket? / Keep coolly-cool, boy / Don’t get hot, man / you’ve got some hard times ahead.” In effect, a cool person takes the heat out of a given situation — by suppressing emotion and ego, by calming others down, by keeping his or her cool. (Even the use of “man” here — “don’t get hot, man” — comes from jazz musicians’ greeting of “Hey, man.”)

Jazz was the dominant subculture in postwar Manhattan and jazz fans such as Jack Kerouac, Norman Mailer, and Leonard Bernstein quickly brought the musicians’ new philosophical concepts — “cool” and “hip” — into their work. The proof is in the musical pudding: the phrase “playing it cool” pops up in songs throughout the ‘50s as an emotional mode, a strategy of masking emotion. To *play it cool* combined performed nonchalance with repressed vulnerability: in Ellington’s “Satin Doll” (1953) — “She’s nobody’s fool so I’m playing it cool as can be”; in Elvis’s “Fools Fall in Love” (1957) — “They’ve got their love torches burning / when they should be playing it cool”; then in “Cool Love” (1957), rockabilly queen Wanda Jackson’s answers her ex-boyfriend Elvis — “You been playing it cool / I been playing a fool / Now don’t you give me that cool love.”

Cool has been a global term for more than two generations — with a range of meanings — yet the original meanings have been preserved in “chill,” a similar term chosen by young African-American men in the early ‘80s once “cool” had been appropriated by white Americans. It is obvious enough: “cool it” = “chill out”; “she’s cool” = “she’s chill”; “I’m chillin’” means “I’m surviving with style and dignity.” Looking back from “chill” to “cool,” we can still see the original meanings Langston Hughes laid out in his poem, “Motto” (1951): “I play it cool / and dig all jive / That’s the reason / I stay alive.”

Joel Dinerstein is a Professor of English and American Studies at Tulane University and the author of several books on race, popular music, and cool, including *The Origins of Cool in Postwar America* (2017), *Coach: A Study of NY Cool* (2016), *American Cool* (2014), and a cultural history of big-band swing, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African-American Culture* (2003). He was the curator of *American Cool* (2014), an acclaimed photography and history exhibit at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC. He has also served as a consultant for jazz and popular music for HBO’s *Boardwalk Empire*, the NEH, and Putumayo Records.



Jerome Robbins’ *The Concert* at the Perm Ballet Theatre, 2017. Photo by Anton Zavyalov.

**Ballet Society &
Eakins Press Foundation
are proud to announce
DANCE INDEX
an archival publication website
& a new serialized print publication**

Like other arts, dancing has survived every disaster the world has known. It seems to exist instinctively in response to some blind necessity, which in an almost preposterous sense, ignores all the frightening facts of human survival.
—Lincoln Kirstein, from *Dance Index* Volume 1, No. 1 (January 1942)

Ballet Society and Eakins Press Foundation are pleased to announce the digital and print Dance Index Project. This new venture consists of a website that makes available for free the 56 issues of the original publication from the 1940s, while simultaneously publishing new and relevant world dance scholarship as single author/subject monographs on a biannual basis.

The journal *Dance Index* was founded by Lincoln Kirstein in 1942. Over the following seven years 56 issues were published, presenting original scholarship on a wide range of dance subjects. Almost seventy years after the last issue of the magazine in 1949, it still serves to educate and connect audiences to important histories. It is an essential if hard-to-find tool for dance scholarship, consulted in libraries wherever it is available.

Of the importance of *Dance Index*, the renowned dance ethnologist Allegra Fuller Snyder wrote:

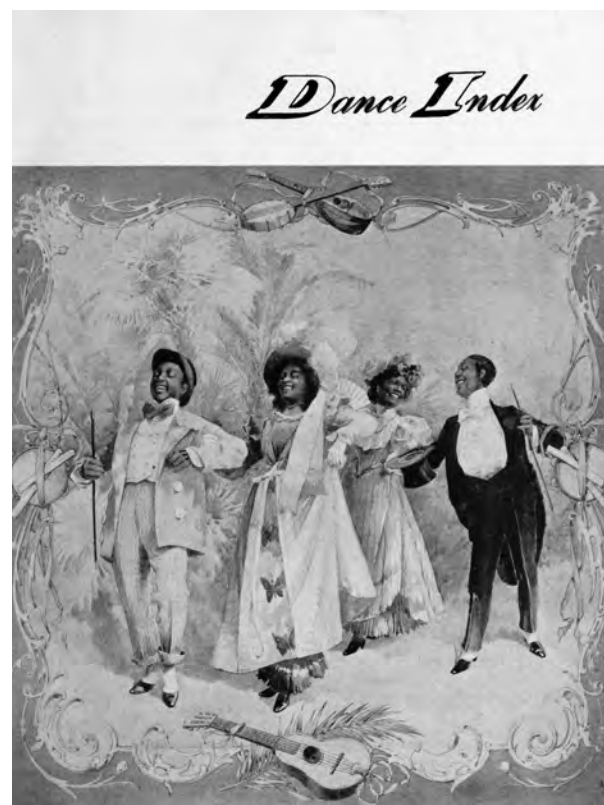
As one learns to read and understand dance, one discovers geography, economics, philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, religion, sociology, an immense body of knowledge of humanistic ideas is embedded in the dance and the dance event. But this embedding is totally integrative. It is not isolated communication, it is in the experience itself, it is the event, and the event is life. Dance can open up our understanding of a whole culture. In many cases, it can be, in fact, a microcosm of that culture.

In the spirit of its predecessor, the new *Dance Index* examines the multi-dimensional richness and diversity of the world of dance. Our mission, in homage to Kirstein's life work, and to the vision and relevance of the original *Dance Index*, is to continue to use the publication to connect the past to the present—specifically, to highlight current ideas and practices in the broadest possible definition of dance throughout the world and its cultures, and to anchor them in historical context. We will do this by commissioning authors, one per issue, to write on subjects as varied as photography, American vernacular dance, dance notation, *Commedia dell'Arte*, and ethnochoreology, to name a few. We will look at current practices through the lens of history to provide new scholarship with the means to reach appreciative contemporary audiences.

Concurrent with the publication of this issue, Ballet Society and Eakins Press Foundation, in collaboration with Internet Archive, have made all 56 issues of the original *Dance Index*, in their entirety, available online. The catalogue is completely indexed and searchable.

The first issue of the new *Dance Index*, "When Noguchi Took the Stage" by Edward M. Gómez, explores the subject of Isamu Noguchi and his costume and set design. About this work, Gómez notes:

Perhaps unexpectedly, for all the literal weight and mass, ambitious scope, monumental scale, and real or would-be gravitas that characterize Noguchi's widely varied creations, from delicate, wire-and-paper lamps to earnest declarations in stone, in the end many of them seem to add up to an art of peculiar, often ungraspable immanence.



In 2018, *Dance Index* will be publishing a special issue to commemorate the centenary of Jerome Robbins. This issue will explore his invaluable contribution and his legacy as a dancer. Though not always remembered for his innovations as a dancer, Jerome Robbins combined his varied training and techniques to develop an inimitable style forged in roles such as Petrouchka, Hermes in Helen of Troy, and Tyl Ulenspiegel. Using many of his own writings and journal entries from his archives at The New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division, this issue will celebrate Robbins' contributions and influence on the evolution of an American aesthetic.

Archival and new issues of *Dance Index* may be found at: www.eakinspress.com/danceindex.

Archival issue:
Dance Index Volume 6 No. 2 (February 1947)
"Juba and American Minstrelsy"
by Marian Hannah Winter

New issue:
Dance Index Volume 8 No. 1 (Fall 2017)
"When Noguchi Took the Stage"
by Edward M. Gómez

MOVES

A CLOSER LOOK

by Gregory Victor

PREMIERE: July 3, 1959,
Teatro Nuovo (The Festival
dei Due Mondi), Spoleto, Italy
MUSIC: Danced in silence
CHOREOGRAPHY: Jerome Robbins
LIGHTING: Nananne Porcher
COMPANY: Ballets: U.S.A.

“*Moves* is a ballet conceived to show the possibilities which pure movement holds for the public’s imagination and attention. Music, scenery, costumes are all so many restrictions. In this experiment—for it is an experiment rather than a statement of principle—it was a question, when all these elements were absent as well as all dramatic expression on the dancer’s faces, of evoking in the spectator, using movement, rhythm, form and their interplay, an imaginative ballet similar to that suggested by the music.

The body, that marvelous instrument of both the dancer and choreographer, has its own laws. So, whereas, my plan was to produce an abstract ballet, certain general directions, certain lines of conduct emerged by virtue of the mere presence of a group of human beings. The possibilities of the human body are endless. Why not use them all? Why limit ourselves to a set language which, in spite of its good qualities, is no longer fit to express the feelings and problems of today?”

—Jerome Robbins, *World Theatre*, Winter 1959

Moves features dancers dressed in practice clothes. The movements they make, a mix of classical and modern, are danced to a rhythm they create amongst themselves. Seemingly spontaneous impulses flow throughout the group as they take cues of one kind or another—a turn, a release, a glance—to propel the piece. Relying on each other, the dancers are their own orchestra, with collective instinct their conductor.

Originally, Jerome Robbins had commissioned a score from Aaron Copland, for a ballet he planned to create for the second season of his company, Ballets: U.S.A. Copland fell behind schedule in composing his series of waltzes, and Robbins was eventually in rehearsal with no score. Robbins would visit Copland, who would play him a fragment, and then Robbins would head back to rehearsal with Copland’s rhythms in his head. Robbins choreographed, while only giving the dancers counts. Suddenly he looked at it and thought it was fascinating without any music, so he went ahead and choreographed the whole ballet to silence. Robbins wanted the audience to concentrate on movement alone—to explore movement that could only be interpreted as movement.

Moves may not have a score, but it has music all its own: the breath of a dancer, the slap of a hand upon a thigh, or the occasional squeak of a pointe shoe upon the stage. Removing the score suddenly leaves the audience to its eyes alone, and to its own responses to movement. And audiences sense their own participation; no one makes a sound. Robbins had confidence in the capacity of the audience to pay attention, to understand, and to imagine, in kinesthetic sympathy.

Moves premiered in Spoleto, Italy and caused a sensation:

“*Il Messaggero* of Rome pronounced it ‘a masterpiece by a great genius—a turning point in the dance.’ And it went on to call Mr. Robbins ‘the great maestro who can proudly claim to have taken from the hands of the great Russian teachers the scepter of choreographic supremacy of the contemporary world.’ Wow!”

(John Martin, *New York Times*, July 19, 1959)

“*Moves* is full of shifting moods and choreographic invention showing Robbins at his best. It is superbly danced by the company and it is evident that much work and iron discipline has gone into it for there is a rhythmic entity in spite of the lack of a given musical pattern.”

(Trudy Goth, *Dance News*, September 1959)

“Ingenious and complex, it has a design of patterns that tumble over each other in bewildering profusion, until it seems that every possible avenue has been explored. It has a tremendous beauty of abstract line and shape, and the entire company deserve the highest praise. A masterpiece of rehearsal.”

(*Evening Dispatch* [Edinburgh], September 8, 1959)

“The absence of music and the odd mixture of movements, classical, modern and naturalistic, combine to bounce us *out* of the theatre into a fresh awareness far removed from our usual level mood of evening apathy.”

(Richard Buckle, *Sunday Times* [London], September 13, 1959)

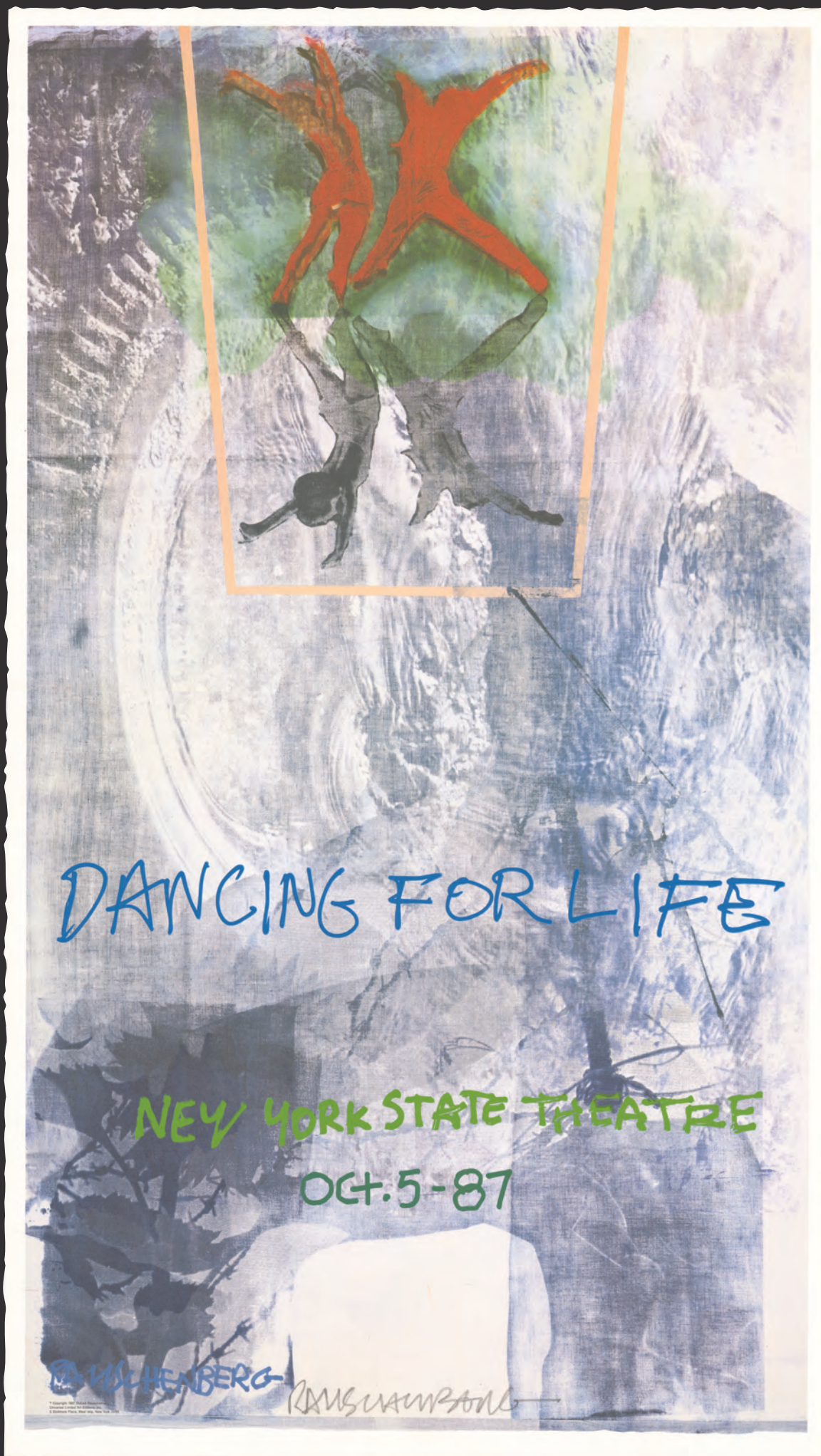
The ballet’s first U.S. performance took place at the ANTA Theatre, New York City, on October 8, 1961.

Jerome Robbins' Moves at New York City Ballet. Photo by Paul Kolnik, courtesy of New York City Ballet / Communications and Special Projects.





**Dancing
for Life**
by Ellen Sorrin



This lithograph (ink on paper, 95.6 x 53.3 cm), was designed by Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) to support “Dancing for Life.” It was sold by mail and in the lobby of the New York State Theater during the event.
© Robert Rauschenberg, Image courtesy of Universal Limited Art Editions.

The New York Times ad read:

**WHEN AIDS IS STOPPED, WE WILL DANCE FOR JOY.
ON OCTOBER 5TH, WE DANCE FOR LIFE.**

Dancing for Life was the idea of Lar Lubovitch, who, in 1986, brought members of the New York dance community together to explore, no, to insist, that a benefit be planned by the dance community in support of those affected by AIDS.

The arts community was hard hit and the losses were mounting. We had all lost someone; most of us many someones. With no cure in sight, AIDS was a death sentence.

There was no question that Lar's mission would be fulfilled, but finding support in the early days of AIDS for Dancing for Life would be a huge challenge. There was not much sympathy for those who had died from or had contracted AIDS outside of our world. We had no idea how challenging our work would be.

Behind the scenes, before the New York Times ad for Dancing for Life appeared in the summer of 1987, we could not raise corporate or foundation support for Dancing for Life. Because AIDS was looked upon with stigma and fear, very few sponsors dared to come forward. But Dancing for Life had its heroes. Its tireless board—Bob Yesselman, Cora Cahan, Charlie Ziff, Richard Caples, and Charles Dillingham, among others; the dance community's corporate friends—Zack Manna at AT&T and Stephanie French at The Philip Morris Companies; and Dancing for Life's committed benefit co-chairs—Anne Bass and Nan Kempner—all rallied.

Zack told us he could not donate money to the event, but he could underwrite a New York Times ad, in the business section. AT&T became our first corporate sponsor. Stephanie French, then head of corporate contributions for Philip Morris, and a fearless pioneer in the arts, hosted a corporate and foundation luncheon, pledging \$25,000 to the event. The New York Marriott Marquis Hotel followed. We could carry on with our planning, barely.

Thirteen New York-based dance companies would perform on the stage of the New York State Theater, the home of New York City Ballet, in support of those who were sick, their loved ones, and those whom we had lost. The money raised would be for AIDS care, education and research, with Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the National AIDS Network, and the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AMFAR) the primary beneficiaries, with the Village Nursing Home, the Community Health Project, St. Vincent's Hospital, Hale House Center, and the Fund for Human Dignity among the other beneficiaries.

Jerome Robbins was invited to be the artistic director and his answer was an immediate yes. I had been engaged as the executive producer of the event. We had all been advised to fasten our seat belts. It was prescient advice.

The planning was intense. Once the ad in the Times ran, we sold out all of the tickets offered at affordable prices, from \$25 to \$100, an important goal in our strategy of making the event accessible to everyone. Anne and Nan worked with the event planners to sell the tables that would ensure the financial success of the evening.

Jerry and I began planning. Each company's artistic director was contacted to propose the repertory they wanted their company to perform. Videos were sent for Jerry to use to create the program. Jerry's challenge was to place these dances into an evening that would not only be an artistic success, but would remind people why we were in the theater on October 5, 1987.

Lar had recently created a work to Mozart's Clarinet Concerto #622, which contained a male duet; tender and beautiful. We knew it would bring down the house and Jerry placed it well in the evening.

Jerry wanted the companies to perform their individual excerpts but he also wanted dancers from different companies to perform together in a finale. He chose the fourth movement into the finale of George Balanchine's *Symphony in C*, with music by Georges Bizet, as the artistic vehicle. There was a principal couple in each of the ballet's four movements, and in the finale, each couple was featured again. It would work perfectly, with the addition of the demis and corps from New York City Ballet, joining the principal couples in the finale. Susan Jaffe and Ricardo Bustamante from American Ballet Theatre, Leslie Carothers and Ashley Wheeler from the Joffrey Ballet, Merrill Ashley and Jock Soto from New York City Ballet, and Virginia Johnson and Donald Williams from Dance Theater of Harlem danced. Susan Hendl, a ballet mistress at City Ballet, brilliantly rehearsed the finale.

In shaping the evening, Jerry organized two sections of the program into "Dancing to Bach" with *Marble Halls* by the Mark Morris Dance Group, *Concerto Barocco* by the Dance Theater of Harlem, and *Esplanade* by the Paul Taylor Dance Company; and "Dancing to Mozart" with New York City Ballet dancing *Divertimento #15* and Lar Lubovitch's *Concerto Six Twenty-Two* male duet to the adagio section.



Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians performed *Magnetic*; the Joffrey Ballet *Kettentanz*; Merce Cunningham *Fabrications*; Feld Ballet *Embraced Waltzes*; Martha Graham *Acts of Light*; Alvin Ailey *A Song for You*; Twyla Tharp *Eight Jelly Rolls*; and American Ballet Theatre *Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes*.

Every dancer, conductor, lighting and costume designer, composer, and solo musician who participated in Dancing for Life donated their time. Each and every one a hero.

The entire production team contributed their time, and there was a lot of it. Perry Silvey and Mark Stanley from NYCB and Lori Rosecrans from ABT were the fearless organizers of the stage schedule and the performance. They organized the backstage seamlessly. All heroes.

There was an army of volunteers, all friends, who spent the entire day and evening with us, escorting dancers to and from the stage, answering questions, getting coffee, lunch, guests at the stage door, whatever was needed—and changing into evening wear in a nanosecond. We could not have succeeded without them.

During the day when we rehearsed, Jerry was very nervous. He wanted to please his peers, he wanted to please the audience, and most of all he wanted to pay tribute to a disease that had already taken too many friends and colleagues. Jerry worked harder than anyone. He agonized about the program order, how to create a whole from such different music and choreography, how to give the evening context and meaning, how to honor his art in this once-in-a-lifetime event.

What an evening it was! Those who attended will always remember it. Those who participated will always have the memories of a community rallying against an unexpected and unwelcome intruder. Those of us who planned it will always remember the challenges but more so the triumphs.

I will never forget Jerry's smile as the evening came to an end, standing in the middle of the stage, surrounded by the artistic directors of the 13 companies, the dancers, the Dancing for Life board of directors and the production team—all applauding, crying and hugging.

If you look at the program from Dancing for Life, you would see that it was a well-planned benefit for a good cause. But it was so much more than that. It was a triumph in the face of tragedy; it was a push against something that was larger than we were; it was a realization that the fight was just beginning.

Thirty years ago this past October 5th, Dancing for Life was in the theater. It was an event that defied many odds, with the dance community coming together for a shared moment in time that lives on in all of the hearts of those who were there and are still here.

Ellen Sorrin is the director of the George Balanchine Trust and a director/trustee of the Jerome Robbins Foundation/Robbins Rights Trust. She is the managing director of the New York Choreographic Institute. She serves on the board of the Gilbert Hemsley Lighting Programs.



Austin Pendleton recalls Jerome Robbins: “He changed my life, that man...”

Gregory Fletcher Jerome Robbins' Off-Broadway production of *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Momma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad* was the New York theatrical debut for playwright Arthur Kopit [whom I had the pleasure of interviewing in *Jerome Robbins*, Vol. 3, No.1, 2016], as well as for the young actors playing Rosalie and Jonathan: Barbara Harris and Austin Pendleton.

Austin Pendleton Yes, it was an astounding, almost freakish piece of good luck that fell my way on December 5, 1961. I had only just graduated from Yale in June—not from the Drama School, I was an English major, but I was in all the plays at the Dramat, an extracurricular group. I did *Waiting for Godot*, *The Government Inspector*, and two original musicals written by Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire. The only two I wasn't in were the ones I wrote in my junior and senior year. After graduation, I spent the summer travelling in Europe and knew at some point I would end up in New York, which I did on September 14th, 1961. And by December 5th, I had my first audition for *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...*

I was studying acting with Mario Siletti at the Stella Adler Studio. He was very extravagant; I liked him very much. The class was every Friday evening, and afterwards the other students and I would hang out and drink. I was non-Equity and when I'd hear of an audition someone was going to, I'd show up and try to get in. I was twenty-one years old but only looked fifteen. I can't remember what else I did those first few months—I got drunk a lot at night. I didn't have time to get anxious that my life wasn't going anywhere yet. It was all very pleasant.

GF As a new, non-union actor in town, how'd you end up in front of Jerome Robbins?

AP On Thursday, November 30th, I got a call from an actress friend of mine, Nancy Donahue, who I had met at Williamstown the prior summer when we were both in the non-Equity company. She had played some large roles that summer and signed with an agent—Deborah Coleman. Nancy had telephoned because she'd heard from her agent that Jerome Robbins was having a hard time finding who he wanted to play the teenage boy in *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...* Nancy had sung my praises and set up a meeting for me to meet her agent the very next day. When I went in and met Deborah Coleman (and her husband Jack Rosenberg, who was also an agent), they took one look at me and said, “Well, you look the part,” and they called the casting director Terry Fay. “Send him right up,” she said. I hurried to Times Square. Her office was dark, and I couldn't see her face, but she had that sound of exhaustion. It was the sound I got to know after a while of someone casting a Jerry Robbins show. Jerry had a lot of trouble making up his mind—always very worried about casting. Terry agreed that I had the right look for the role and set up an audition for the following Tuesday.

Fortunately, the script had already been published, so I had the entire play and I spent all weekend working on the audition. I didn't do anything else. I called up Nancy and other actresses I knew and went over the scenes with them. The audition was in a Broadway theater, on the set of *Mary, Mary*, which was a big

Left to right: Zero Mostel, Leonard Frey, Gluck Sandor, Austin Pendleton, and Joanna Merlin in *Fiddler on the Roof*, 1964. Photo by Friedman-Abeles, courtesy Billy Rose Theater Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

hit at that time, produced by Roger Stevens who was co-producing *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...* along with the Phoenix Theatre. I showed up at the stage door a little before my appointment and waited on the backstage steps that led up to the dressing rooms. Three o'clock came and went. Actors were coming in and out, going through the passage in front of me, onto the stage, and twenty minutes later, coming out, usually looking upset. I recognized many of them from seeing Broadway productions, which at that time were wildly inexpensive. Four o'clock came and went. More actors came in and out, not for the role of the boy—I think that role had already exhausted the acting pool in New York. Some brilliant young actors had already been seen for the boy: Martin Sheen, Ralph Williams, some of the very best. Five o'clock came and went. The waiting hadn't been unpleasant. I knew sooner or later they'd have to call me in, and it was fascinating seeing all these actors come and go. It kind of relaxed me. Six o'clock, the end of the day, and a man came out—William Daniels, the actor, who turned out to be Jerome Robbins's assistant. He looked right at me and asked, "Who are you?" "I'm your three o'clock," I said. He looked at his list. "We skipped you; we forgot." He quickly looked out onstage and saw that Arthur Kopit and a couple people had already left through the front, but Jerry was still there putting on his coat. He gestured for me to follow him.

Jerry greeted me and was very nice, and laughed, "Three hours you've been out there waiting?" He felt badly, and I tried to make light of it. He took a seat and indicated that Bill and I should sit on the sofa center stage. Bill was to read the girl's role. "Just the first two pages," Jerry said. I opened the script, pretending I hadn't memorized it. Back then, actors were told, "Don't let them know you've learned it because they'll think, 'Oh, he's just giving his opening night performance.' Work on it, and in fact *learn it*, so you know what you're doing, but always use the script." Jerry reiterated to only read the first two pages. The full scene was easily twenty-five minutes, and obviously Jerry wanted to go out and have a drink or he was meeting somebody. We started to read the scene, and when we came to the end of the second page, William didn't stop. Three pages, four, five, and Jerry didn't stop the scene either. We kept going. I felt that the scene was really working. I don't think I've ever had a feeling like that in an audition ever since. We ended up reading the entire scene—all the way through.

Afterwards, Jerry came over to me and said, "That's one of the best auditions I've ever seen in my life. Who are you?" The character I was reading for, Jonathan, had a speech problem, and so did I at that time. I still do at times—just talking about it, I have it. Jerry asked, "Do you actually stutter? Because that sounds like a real stutter, not an acting stutter." I admitted, "Yeah, I do. A little bit." Although when acting in plays, usually, I didn't stutter at all, which is a large part of the reason I went into acting. It was pleasant to go somewhere and not stutter. "Come back on Friday," Jerry said. "So Arthur Kopit and the others can see you."

On Friday, I went to the callback audition and totally blew it. I didn't have any of the craft, where I could make it happen again. As I read the scene, it kept getting worse and less spontaneous. Finally, Jerry said, "Thank you," and tried to be pleasant, but I knew I blew it. Arthur Kopit was not impressed; I wouldn't have been either. No one would've been. If that had been my first audition, Jerry Robbins wouldn't have been impressed either.

The next day the phone rang. It was Jerry: "Could you come over to my apartment?" He lived on East 74th. The first thing out of his mouth was, "What happened yesterday?" "I blew it; I don't know." I didn't know what else to say. "I guess you haven't been that well trained," he said. And I agreed. He asked about some of the roles I had played at Yale, and we talked about Williamstown. I told him, I had never been to a callback before. There was nothing I could say to make up for Friday. "Well, Tuesday was so great," Jerry said. "But now I have to convince the others who only saw you on Friday." He gave me some notes to work on and gave me a time for Tuesday. Jerry was very encouraging, and the second callback went much better. Not anything like the first audition, nowhere near that exciting, but it was okay. And he called me back twice more, reading with different actresses he was seeing for the role of the girl.

It was Christmas time, and I decided to go home to Ohio. I had it in my head that the auditions were over and I didn't get it. *Oh well*, I thought. I decided to stay home for the month of January and chill. But the day after Christmas, I got a call saying I was scheduled for another callback the next day. "No, I want to stay in Ohio for a while." "Austin, *Jerome Robbins* wants to see you." "But it's not going to work," I said. "It's getting embarrassing and all I do is disappoint him." "Get on that plane."

I flew in that night, and the next morning I went in and was introduced to Barbara Harris. I had heard of her and knew she had come to New York earlier that fall, performing with Second City, an improvisational show from Chicago. We started reading the scene together and, half a page in, it took off—an even better audition than the first one I did. Never before had I worked with an actor like Barbara. Whatever was happening, she'd go with it. And it was wonderful. That morning, Thursday, December 28th, Jerry pulled me aside and told me I had the part. He told Barbara that day too. Come to find out, he had called her in several times, also.

The role of the mother had still not been cast, and we were a little over two weeks from starting rehearsal. A few days later, I read in the papers that Jerry had cast Jo Van Fleet to play the mother. I said, "Jo Van Fleet—Jesus Christ!" I had seen her onscreen in "East of Eden," and so many times onstage. In my freshman year at Yale, I came in to see her in *Look Homeward Angel*. In standing room, I watched her several times. She was so real, fascinating, complex, and immediate. And in two weeks, she'd be playing my mother.

Rehearsals were difficult; the play was difficult. Barbara Harris was the first one to find it, and that was the last twenty minutes of the final tech rehearsal. In the scene at the end, when my father's corpse falls out of the closet and onto the bed where Barbara's character is seducing me, my character gets so upset that I murder her. When the corpse fell on us, we fell off the bed, and Barbara started making it so funny. She discovered the dark comedy in the play like I'd never seen. Coming from an improvisational background, Barbara was always changing things, going with instincts, and Jerry was running up and down the aisle, saying, "Please, Barbara, don't change it, don't change it." But of course, he was thrilled, and the show was unexpectedly brilliant. The feeling of depression that many of us had felt about the play had suddenly lifted. At the last minute, everyone knew we had finally found the show. It was liberating. We all stopped feeling anxious. During the previews, we were a smash hit.

On opening night, we took a nosedive. It was pouring rain, and the opening night crowd was stiff and unresponsive. All the glitter of show business was there to see the new Jerry Robbins production that everyone had been saying was so great. But it wasn't happening. And those were the days when all the newspaper critics came to the opening to write their reviews. Even the opening night party was stiff. My family, friends, and I snuck out and found refuge from the torrents of rain in a nearby restaurant called Sardi's East on East 54th. It was exactly what it sounded like, the same owners of Sardi's, trying to reproduce the magic of their West Side restaurant. But it didn't work, nor did the restaurant last long. It was a dreary Monday night, and we had the whole place to ourselves. Just as we had ordered a big meal and lots of drinks, and were beginning to relax, in walked Arthur Kopit and his family. They sat a few tables away from us. We were all gracious, but it felt like he had watched his whole future fall apart that night. One of my roommates was a copy boy at the *Times*, and he arrived with two of the reviews hot off the press. Arthur joined us, and my friend had to read them aloud. They weren't awful, but they weren't very good. By no means horrible. They were good for Barbara, and respectfully alluded to me and Jo.

Tuesday was our off day, and I was massively depressed. The rain hadn't stopped, and I went and saw a couple movies that I knew would be very gloomy. Performances resumed on Wednesday night, which was when all the magazine critics were scheduled to see the show. Like with the previews, it went great. All the magazine reviews were better than the paper reviews. And the Phoenix Theatre had subscribers, so it ran a few weeks with a guaranteed audience, which then generated word of mouth, and we ended up running a year.

What really turned things around, three weeks after we opened, was an announcement in the papers that Richard Rodgers and Alan Jay Lerner were going to write a new musical together. Rodgers had lost Hammerstein who had passed away, and Lerner and Loewe had split up. These two giants of the musical theater came to see *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...* and announced that they were going to write a musical for Barbara Harris. Overnight, you couldn't get a ticket; everyone wanted to see this girl. Barbara's background was in Brecht, Chekhov, and improvisation; she didn't know anything about musical theater. She would come to the theater bemoaning, "They keep giving me their albums. Have you ever heard of *Carousel*?" She would actually say this. I said, "Yes, it's not bad." As more albums were delivered to the theater, Barbara and I went out after the show for drinks, and she'd go back and forth between, "I don't want to be a star," and "Have you ever heard of *My Fair Lady*?" She had never heard of *My Fair Lady*! "*Camelot* is terrible," she told me. "What am I supposed to say?" "Just tell him it's great," I said, "that's all." The new musical for Barbara was delayed, and finally Richard Rodgers quit because he grew impatient with the work habits of Alan Lerner. He sided up with Burton Lane and three or four years later, the musical was complete: *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*.

Around the same time that tickets became scarce for *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...*, I began to get ambushed by the stuttering and lost control of it. I began to panic. Jerry had always tried to get me to stutter more, and I always said, "I will, I will," but secretly I wasn't planning on it. The stuttering is written into the dialogue, very woven into the rhythms of the writing. One night, it suddenly exploded—way too much. To the point, the stage manager asked me, "What's happening?" Then it would happen a week later and more and more. Finally, I said to the stage manager, "I've got to quit the show." The next day, I got a call: "Stop by and see Jerry on the way to the theater. He wants to talk to you." He lived two blocks from the theater. Jerry said, "I don't want you to quit." "But it's really getting out of hand. It's pretty terrible." "I know. I hear. But I don't want you to quit. You'll never act again if you quit this show. You won't be asked to and you won't want to. So, I want you to act. Tough it out somehow; figure it out. But stick with it."

Can you imagine—that was so marvelous. I was handing him an excuse to get me out of the show, and he wouldn't do it. I always think about that moment. I began to go to a school that worked on stuttering. The treatments, in that day, were kind of primitive. But there was one approach that had some effect. But the problem would come back, and finally I said to Barry Primus, who played one of the bellboys, "I don't know what to do. Jerry wants me to stay, but I can't seem to get a hold of it."

"I know just what you should do," Barry said. "Take the train down to 14th Street and go audition for Uta Hagen."

GF And here you still are. [Indicating the rehearsal studio at HB Studios, named after Uta Hagen and her husband Herbert Berghof, where this interview was being conducted. Austin has been on faculty at HB Studios since late 1969.]

AP Yes, that summer, I began studying here with Uta. And of course, she wasn't a speech therapist, but she taught the techniques of acting where you could use whatever was happening. At that time, the Off-Broadway performance schedule included two Saturday night performances: one at 7 o'clock and one at 10 o'clock—followed by a Sunday matinee and evening performance. By February of 1963, I was exhausted, and the stuttering came roaring back. Finally, Jerry agreed to let me go.

GF Was the stuttering a problem in the Lincoln Center Training Program? Or did it disappear when you no longer had to embody Jonathan?

AP Exactly right. As a matter of fact, the Lincoln Center Training Program invited me into their company for the following season. My first role was to be in Arthur Miller's *After the Fall*. A small role, but to be in a new Arthur Miller play, directed by Elia Kazan—I was fine. I had just got back from a summer at Williamstown, expecting to begin rehearsals at Lincoln Center when I was sent for an audition of a new musical entitled *Tevye*. "Who's directing?" I asked my agent. "Jerry Robbins." Renamed *A Fiddler on the Roof*, Jerry had me read for the role of Perchik—six times! I really wanted that part. Then Jerry said, "While you're here, will you read the tailor, Motel Kamzoi?" I read it cold, and the next day I was cast as the tailor.

GF I gather there were no ill feelings between you and Jerry when he let you go from *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...* Obviously not, since he cast you in *Fiddler*.

AP He was very sweet when he fired me. He wrote me a beautiful note, but I just couldn't handle it anymore. So yes, I was very surprised, seven months later, to be cast in the new Jerry Robbins musical. I went to Elia Kazan's office to break the news, but he already knew why I was there. I asked him, "How did you know?" He said, "What, you don't think we talk?"

The sad thing was, *Fiddler* was delayed and I could've done the opening season at Lincoln Center, but nevertheless it was a productive time for me, studying voice, acting, dance, and working with Jerry prior to the rehearsals.

GF I imagine the rehearsal process was very different from *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...*?

AP We had an out-of-town tryout that was filled with drama. The financial investment to get us to Broadway was not complete. They had enough money to open out-of-town, but as investors were brought in to see the show and raise the additional funds, the needed money wasn't coming in. It was the days where there was only one producer—Hal Prince, and there was talk that we'd close out-of-town. But somehow, in the end, Hal Prince found the rest of the budget.

We started off in Detroit—in August. I don't recommend it. We got an awful review in *Variety*, which said the only good thing about the show was Zero Mostel. People were crying all afternoon at rehearsal. Between the rehearsal and performance that night, my agent called me and asked if I had heard about the *Variety* review. "I've heard of nothing else all day," I said. "I hear they're going to fire Jerry Robbins." I thought to myself, *Who do you get when you replace Jerry Robbins?* He's *who you get when a show is in trouble*.

That night, Jerry was standing alone at the bar while the cast was in the back getting drunk and figuring out who was going to sleep with whom—a musical out of town, there's nothing like it, particularly a pressured musical. So, I said to Jerry, "What are you going to do?" What Jerry did not do was panic. He looked at me and said, "Ten things a day." And that's what he did. At some undefinable point, the show got better, and people from the industry—their responses started to profoundly change. And Jerry wasn't fired. Hal Prince wasn't an idiot at all.

GF Do you remember any specific choices that improved the show?

AP In act two, they added the song, "Do You Love Me?" And Jerry kept working on a ballet in the second act, version after version, but he never found what he wanted and it was cut. Lots of cuts and clarifications. When I wasn't onstage, I would stand backstage and watch him rework the scenes. It was amazing to watch. The scene where the women prepare for the Sabbath, maybe a four-page scene, he must've restaged it twenty-five times, I'm not exaggerating. Anybody else would've thrown that scene up in a couple hours and left it alone. But Jerry wasn't satisfied until everyone's eye knew exactly where to go, every little nuance, the family relationships, effortlessly picked up, so clearly that the audience took his direction for granted.

In Washington, D.C., Jerry and I had a big fight over some of his notes. I felt he was being so mean to me—the things he said, just awful. I was livid and told the stage manager, "I don't want him to speak to me for a week!" And he didn't. In rehearsals, he would say, "Tell Austin to cross left." At the end of the week, he was very happy, like our fight had never happened.

GF Were you able to let it go, too?

AP You know what—he was right. I was getting really sloppy. He told me I was good in Detroit. "But in D.C., you're unwatchable." And he didn't stop there. "You got one thing going for you as an actor—tenacity. But when your work gets sure of itself onstage, you go limp. It's so bad; I can't watch it." And there was more, but...he got very personal. He knew right where to slice. By the end of the week of silence between us, my performance was not only back to where it was in Detroit, it was even better. Jerry agreed. "This character you're playing, he has to fight for everything he gets. That's why when you're on, you're good, because you have that as an actor. There's no reason you should even be on the stage, but you fight for it and, at those times, I can't take my eyes off of you. That's what I like."

I've never forgotten that. Sometimes, I'll tell my acting students the kind of notes Jerry gave me, and they'll say, "No, he shouldn't have talked to you like that." Jerry may have been brutal, but the work got better because of it. When you're not delivering the goods, pray that you have a director who will really frighten you, as he did to me. And not only was he right, but he got the performance he was after. Some of my students have responded, "No, I need a nurturing atmosphere." "Then you shouldn't be in this business." Directors are people trying to put on a show, and if you're not pulling your weight—if they take the time to really confront you, you should be grateful.

GF Did Jerry ever go after you in *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...*?

AP No, he saw how fragile I was. I wouldn't have been able to take it. But he knew in *Fiddler*, I had more experience, more instruction, more craft. I could take it.

GF Despite the one week of silence between you two, I'm glad you survived it. I'm told there are a few actors out there who may not have survived their time with Jerry.

AP Oh, yeah, he knew how to get very personal, very mean when he had to be. This is what he said to me after the Washington, D.C. performance that caused our week of silence. He was describing his reaction to the wedding scene. "I had to go out into the lobby," he told me. "I couldn't stand the idea of that young woman getting married to you."

He knew how to slice. But he was right. When he wouldn't let me leave *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...*, and then when he really confronted me in *Fiddler*—he changed my life, that man. Changed my life.

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THE BUSINESS OF SHOW

At Collaboration's End

Ownership Rights in a Joint Choreographic Work

by Kimberly Maynard, Esq.

Great dances are not created in a vacuum. A choreographer's instruments are her dancers; she often uses her dancers to experiment with new choreography and to craft new choreographic works of art. But dancers can be more than instruments, more than inspiration. Often, they contribute their own ideas to the choreographic process, and frequently those ideas are expressed as choreography that becomes part of the dance. In these instances, dancers are true collaborators who, under copyright law, may be joint owners with their own rights to perform the choreographic work.

This article discusses the basic tenets of copyright law, the implications of creating a jointly owned work, what steps can be taken to avoid joint ownership, and what issues joint owners of a collaborative choreographic work may wish to address through contract. The information in this article is intended to provide a high-level understanding of the most common issues related to collaborative choreographic works, but is not an exhaustive analysis. Readers who wish to address ownership and other rights related to collaborative works, joint ownership and/or choreography should consult an attorney with specific knowledge of copyright law.

Copyright: briefly defined

Copyright is a legal right that gives the author of an original creative work exclusive rights in that work, including the right to prohibit others from performing or otherwise copying it. Copyright arises once a work has been fixed in a tangible medium of expression. For dance, this may be when the work is memorialized in a video, in the notes of a choreographer or dancer, or in a more formal notation system. Generally speaking, the owner of a copyright in a choreographic work owns the particular sequence of movements that comprise the choreography. As the owner, the choreographer can prevent others from performing that sequence of movements, creating and performing a new work that is closely based on the choreography, filming the choreography, and displaying or distributing a film of the choreography.

Joint ownership of a collaborative choreographic work

Typically, the author of a dance—and the owner of the copyright in the choreography—is the choreographer. However, when a choreographer goes beyond using his dancers as instruments, and works with them as collaborators who contribute their own creative expressions to the choreography, copyright law may dictate that the dancers are joint owners of the work. As such, they have equal rights to the work.

Absent a contract to the contrary, joint owners of a choreographic (or any creative, copyrightable) work each have the same, non-exclusive rights to the work. Practically speaking, this means that each joint owner can license, non-exclusively, the work to be performed by any other company, including one that may not have the necessary technique to perform the work as intended. This also means that two or more joint owners might license the work to two different dance companies that will perform the work in the same city at the same time. This can create issues, including issues for presenters, who may refuse to present a work if there is a possibility that they will face competition from another presenter showing the same work in the same city during or around the same time period.

Contracting around a jointly owned choreographic work

Although copyright law's default (generally speaking) is that all contributors to a work are joint owners, a company, choreographer or dancer can avoid this conclusion and the myriad issues it raises by entering into a simple contract that clearly lays out every party's responsibilities and rights. However, as with all contracts, each term has consequences that every artist should consider.

From the choreographer's perspective

Choreographers who work with dancers on a project-by-project basis and who rely on those dancers to contribute to the creative process may consider entering a contract with terms stating that the choreographer will own all the copyright in the choreography and that any rights held by the dancers are assigned to the

choreographer. This is often understood by dancers when they sign on to a project, but putting it in a contract is a simple way to ensure that the choreographer is the sole owner of the work and can control when, where, and by whom the work is performed in the future. It also allows the choreographer to guarantee to presenters that the work will not be performed by another company a block away two weeks earlier.

From the dancer's perspective

While the above arrangement is typically ideal for choreographers, it has some consequences that dancers should consider, especially if they have their own choreographic aspirations. Specifically, once a dancer assigns all rights in choreography—or in portions of a choreographic work—to someone else, she cannot use the same choreography in a different work. If this is a concern, then the dancer may consider negotiating “carve outs” in the contract that acknowledge the dancer's rights to reuse choreography in his own works. This can be a simple solution where the dancer's individual contributions amount to a relatively small or distinct portion of the work.

One important caveat is that ideas themselves are not protected by copyright law. Thus, a dancer who assigns rights in choreography about an idea, such as a romantic relationship, is not prohibited by copyright law from making his or her own work about a romantic relationship. Instead, she will only be prohibited from using the same expression, i.e., the same choreography, to convey that idea.

From a dance company's perspective

A dance company that employs its choreographers and dancers and intends to solely own the choreography can take a slightly different approach than choreographers. Under copyright law, if a choreographer or dancer is an employee of the company and is hired, at least in part, to contribute choreography to dances, then the choreography will be deemed a “work for hire” and be owned by the dance company. Note, however, that the work for hire doctrine only applies where contributing choreography is within the scope of a choreographer's or dancer's employment. Because choreographers and dancers typically have many jobs, and are often strategically laid off, there is a risk that the work for hire doctrine may not apply to certain choreography (in which case the choreography would belong to the choreographer and/or dancers who created it). To protect against this, dance companies should include provisions in their choreographer and dancer contracts assigning all rights to the work to the dance company.

Addressing joint ownership

Though many parties will wish to avoid joint ownership, there are times when it is beneficial, including when all parties will contribute equally to the choreography or have different connections that can be used to strategically exploit the work after it is complete. In those instances, joint owners who wish to streamline the process of licensing the work may wish to consider entering a contract setting forth key issues likely to be raised by presenters or others seeking to license a joint work, such as:

- Which joint owners will be able to license the work to third parties;
- Which joint owners will be able to perform the work themselves;
- In what territories will each owner be able to license the work;
- How often can the work be licensed;
- Who will reconstruct or stage the work on licensees;
- What licensing fees are appropriate (and who will receive those fees);
- What types of dance companies can license the work; and
- How each owner will be credited.

Agreement on these and other terms will not only avoid misunderstandings among the joint owners, but will also give companies and presenters who wish to license the work comfort that they will be able to perform the work as originally intended and will not risk drawing complaints from other joint owners.

In sum

Copyright law allows for many ways to allocate ownership of collaborative works, most of which can be arranged through clear contracts that contain the appropriate legal language. Best practices include hashing out ownership early on, and then creating a contract that reflects the ownership arrangement. While this requires more work up front, it can save confusion, time and energy later—and can allow dance artists to focus on what is most important: creating and performing dance!

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Jerome Robbins, in my mind's eye

by Sondra Lee



Award-winning dancer, actress, director, and teacher **Sondra Lee** first appeared on Broadway in *High Button Shoes* (choreographed by Jerome Robbins). She was the original Tiger Lily in *Peter Pan* on Broadway, a role that endeared her to millions when it aired nationally and worldwide on television multiple times. She then acted in many plays and movies. She created the role of Minnie Faye in *Hello, Dolly!* and danced in Jerome Robbins' company, *Ballets: U.S.A.* On screen she appeared, quite memorably, in Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. Her memoir *I've Slept With Everybody* is an insightful and entertaining look at her life in the world of dance and the theatre.

How to begin? Just the name Jerry R or Jerome R still brings back a flow of images... My responses go way back in time... Not like a subject to be fulfilled like an article about "Jerry," but observing him at work on a particular project or subject or text. SO IF I MAY, I shall just wander about in my mind's eye.

Now there he is... wearing his usual "work clothes." Jeans or black pants or chinos, sometimes beige... work shirt... or tee shirt, sometimes flannel sweat-shirt... sometimes sweatpants. Clean, always clean. You watch him quietly as you see the eyes! Ah, the eyes in that head, filled and moving with those ideas! Stay out of his way when you see those eyes!! Tommy Abbott from *Ballets: U.S.A.*, and Johnny Jones, Jay Norman, or Pat Dunn, we would all share that knowing look—stay out of his way! We were 16 of us in that company on our way to this place called Spoleto. *Ballets: U.S.A.* But more about it later. So many are now gone, but I see their faces as I write this. The great piano-duoists, Gold and Fizzdale. They came to be with Jerry and took a little villa there, piano and all. Arthur and Bobby were great cooks and wrote cookbooks filled with wonderful recipes. Jerry cared very much about cooking properly, worrying about ingredients, I mean really concerned. Worried, then pleased when it came out well.

I just now see Jerry at the piano, not a big fancy one, but a small upright in his apartment on East 58th Street. He looks like a small boy studiously trying to play a piece of Chopin! Now I see Jerry in the little darkroom he had in that apartment, a tiny closet it was, where he studiously developed his photos. He was a good photographer. Ah, now I see him walking the dog. I remember at least three of them... all pretty funny-looking. The first one I remember was a Brussel Griffon. At one time, one of them was found missing, and I think Jerry got in touch with the radio people and entered a plea to find his dog. He was beside himself to find her, I think she was found!

Jerry was for me a quiet man. Curious about many things. Always looking at objects simple and beautiful. When he went somewhere he brought me things. They are things I still see everyday and I never tire of them. Something from Israel to hold incense, or a little Buddha or a silver trinket. I would ask why this? Or that? "Because they are special, they are special." I just flashed on an image of Chris Pennington—don't ask why. Jerry smiled at his name. I do too, to this day. Jerry loved looking around in a super market, just like you or I, not like a genius... he just was one!

He was an observer. His vision came from questions he had about what he observed and *then* went to the core of—he did his homework—to understand them. Homework... some of the dances in *Fiddler* came from homework—I burst into tears every time I see the bottle dance—things he remembered, observed, and absorbed... essences. Things he wanted to, needed to, understand. Some themes came from questions he asked on many subjects. Alienation, abuse, visual, sensual, sexual, tradition, history, memory, humor...

After he passed, I was so touched to find he had kept my letters to him. Some were funny and questioning, and now I see they were beginning to be observant! I think it was Deb or Amanda, two of his great biographers, who shared them with me. He was not resistant to asking questions. He taught me that!

Oops, here comes a raft of images and sounds, so hang on. I am like a broken field runner here. Bear with me!

My phone would ring, and he would say, "Hi, what's up?" and then he would giggle. This was a frequent call. "What are you wearing?" was another. He said that one was a favorite call he'd make to Tanny. He spoke so often about Tanaquil Le Clercq, how very much he cared for her. He was at ease with Tanny. My favorite thing was to call him and say, "Hey Jer, you wanna hear a funny sound?" He would giggle and after a moment of silence I would HANG UP!! I'd do it from all over the world! Childlike, yes. Innocent, goofy, fun... Yes!

These images bounce around in no particular order and I write them as they appear. Jerry had an apartment on East 55th Street. I guess it was considered fancy since it was on or near Park Avenue. There was a tiny alcove with an upholstered chair in it. He swore there was a ghost, and she would come and sit in that chair. He swore he saw her, and I swear I think I did as well. One evening we were a small group. Buzz Miller was there—an incredible dancer Buzz, later he was a partner of Jerry's—and Jerry had a girlfriend named Rose. Jerry was all excited about this sophisticated drink he heard about called Pimms Cup No. 1, and you added a piece of cucumber! Wow! Were we feeling like the hoi polloi of Broadway!

Around that time, he asked me to take him to my acting teacher, Stella Adler. He really wanted to know about the acting process and the Actors Studio. I did bring him to Stella and he took her class, I think, on script breakdown. It was at the beginning of his curiosity about working on plays as a director with actors. He did something at the Actors Studio, but the actors didn't understand him or his process, and they did not show up after a few sessions with him! I kid you not! I was out of the country at this time, but I had heard. I am a long time member of the Actors Studio and the story is legend!



left: Sondra Lee and Jerome Robbins on tour with *Ballets: U.S.A.*, 1958. above: Dancers from *Ballets: U.S.A.* perform Jerome Robbins' *N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz*, 1958. Photos from the collection of Sondra Lee.

There are so many books and references about this Jerome Robbins. I have been interviewed many times. Each of us has our version of Jerry, all truthful to our memory of him. It was an honor to have been in something he created or just to have watched him work. These images are mine. I knew him for many years and told these things only to qualified biographers like Amanda Vaill and Deborah Jowitz, and had no intention to write a book about him. But as my life reminds me, I am not the young gamine I was, so I am impelled to tell what I know to the Jerome Robbins newsletter, and tell what I know and honestly remember...in my own words.

He allowed me to be naive and childlike and enjoyed that about me. I believe he was like that as well. He didn't mess with my youth, but treated me to the world he was just learning about himself. He was teaching me about accepting my talents and growing up to be an artist. And to always be curious about things.

There are so many stories about *High Button Shoes*. One night, during the performance, in the bathhouse sequence, Jerry came flying out of one of the doors with a tambourine in hand in the Mack Sennett gypsy dance section! We all had fun, crazy fun. And there he was, dancing away with all of us, running in and out of all those doors! It was an inspired moment — HIS! But each step was perfect...or else!

Jerry read the newspapers daily, and the first thing he read were the obits! I do that today, but it came from him. When he was nervous and emotional, he stuttered. His eyes were shifty! He always wanted to know where the new dance references came from — uptown, downtown, Chinatown, voguing — and he would be quiet and watch. He observed and absorbed. The first time he went to Israel he was deeply impressed. Really connected! It affected him greatly!

Jerry gave me the nickname Peanuts. It stayed for years. People who did not know me called me Peanuts. One day I asked him, "Why Peanuts?" He said it was from the Charles Schulz cartoons. I asked, "Which character am I?" He said, "All of them! SONDRA, YOU ARE ALL OF THEM!"

I received a call from Jerry: "Come stand with me tonight at the back of the house. I have a new ballet. I am really nervous." That ballet was *Watermill*, with Eddie Villella. It was again dangerous subject matter, and new, experimental. It was amazing! I am not sure, but I think there were boos! Eddie was wonderful. The set was wonderful, and I think there were sounds in the background at some point of dogs barking. God, the courage that man had!! The ideas, visions, joys, fears...

Nora was a comrade, Eddie, Tanny too...and Mr. George B.! "Go do it," they were eager! *The Cage*, *Age of Anxiety*, Nora Kaye, power! Meticulous about details. The core was there. Fearless! Telling it like it was when it happened! Like actors do when at their best! That's why he was so meticulous! Why he did it — and changed it — and did it again, and drove us crazy sometimes. Like the time he took for the rape scene in *N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz* with Pat Dunn — the glorious Pat Dunn. We all were bruised, cuckoo, and exhausted a lot working with Jerry. But it was Jerry Robbins — that mind, that humor, that truth, that challenge — so who really cared?

Over the years I was curious about the women as well as the men in his life. At the time they were there, Rose, Lee, and Chris C., I knew. And he adored classy Slim H., a producer's wife, and others who said they were there. Buzz

Miller, of course, I knew and danced with often. Brian Meehan was with him when he passed. What a dream of a friend he was. I loved Sonia, his sister and one of the great influences in his early life, and the Cullinens, who treated me like family and made me feel special, when I met them.

The hayride in Los Angeles, California was a night to remember! Marlon Brando and his father decided to go on a hayride. They rented a truck and put some hay in it. Of course the older Brando took his car and his lady friend, but Jerry decided to drive the truck, as he was just back from Israel and was feeling masterful — perhaps a bit Sabra. He went topless with a bandana on his head. And in the truck was Movita, Marlon, a sister of Pier Angeli, a friend, an Irish chap, an old friend of Movita's, and I think, yes, it was, Adolph Green! I cannot remember if there were others. We drove for hours and hours to...nowhere, and ended up in a 25-cent public pool! We swam in the kiddie pool and headed for home...on the freeway...when all the tires blew and we ran out of gas! There we were on the freeway, and in the truck were great movie stars, a famous choreographer and a lyricist, announcing we needed help. "Help! Help!!" No one responded! The cops saved us and Brando's dad escaped on his own. Then we went to a brothel in Tijuana and got thrown out for saying, "Fake! Fake!" That was the hayride!

We all loved to play quiz games, charades, music memory games — hilarious — and exchanged books and stories, like we all do at times. The excitement of finding a poem, a piece of new music, new writers, new designers, new ideas!

Jerry's hands were so expressive, even when he worked on his photos. Be they trees or gestures, they were pure, not made up...Sheldon Harnick once asked me what would I suggest if Jerry got snarky, which he was well known for. This was at the beginning of *Fiddler on the Roof*. "Humor!" was my reply, "Approach him with humor!" Sheldon still quotes me.

One time in Los Angeles, Jerry took me to a fancy Japanese restaurant — my first! We got drunk on the sake and the wonderful food. All the customers deposited their shoes outside, before kneeling at the low tables inside the private dining rooms. Jerry and I stole only one shoe from outside each of the private dining rooms. We heard about it at a party weeks later, from some people who were still searching for their left shoes from a Japanese restaurant. Mr. Robbins and I made a quick tiptoed getaway!

More about Jerry, my images of him as he aged. He shuffled a bit as he walked, and he was losing his hearing. Oh, there — it just came to me! There was this dance, this experiment, a little dance in Spoleto to Dave Brubeck, with Pat Dunn and me at the Teatrino delle Sei, the small theater in Spoleto. NEW sounds! New ideas! And a short piece with Paul Sand. Breaking old ballet modes, he did that. Observation, absorption! Deciphering becomes active movement, or speech, but clearly his. His process, genius, why he kept it going until clearly it was what he meant.

When I was in *High Button Shoes*, my first show, I overheard someone say, "He can't speak to me like that." I WAS young and wide-eyed! I had no idea about anything at all, so new and exciting and overwhelming...but I went up to him, seriously, and said, gravely, "Mr. Robbins, I think we should have a coffee." Jerry turned to me and said, as seriously, as gravely, "WHY?" After a long moment, eye-to-eye, I said, "I DON'T KNOW!" And that was the beginning of a life-long commitment between us.

Jerome Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering* at Hamburg Ballet, 2017. Photo by Kiran West.

News from The Jerome Robbins Foundation

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JANUARY 2018

12, 13, 14
**CIRCUS POLKA / IN THE NIGHT /
THE CAGE / OTHER DANCES /
WEST SIDE STORY SUITE**
Miami City Ballet, Miami

13, 17, 20, 21
DANCES AT A GATHERING
Stuttgart Ballet, Stuttgart

26
THE JEROME ROBBINS SYMPOSIUM
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
at Lincoln Center, New York

27, 28
**CIRCUS POLKA / IN THE NIGHT /
THE CAGE / OTHER DANCES /
WEST SIDE STORY SUITE**
Miami City Ballet, Fort Lauderdale

Upcoming Jerome Robbins performances & events

FEBRUARY 2018

2, 3, 4
**CIRCUS POLKA / IN THE NIGHT /
THE CAGE / OTHER DANCES /
WEST SIDE STORY SUITE**
Miami City Ballet, West Palm Beach

7, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18
GLASS PIECES
Joffrey Ballet, Chicago

10, 11, 16, 17
DANCES AT A GATHERING
Stuttgart Ballet, Stuttgart

MARCH 2018

15, 16, 17, 18
FANCY FREE
Cincinnati Ballet, Cincinnati

16, 17
RONDO / SEPTET / CONCERTINO
New York Theatre Ballet,
92nd Street Y, New York City

16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24
INTERPLAY
Ballet Met, Columbus

16, 21, 23, 26
THE CONCERT
Vienna State Ballet, Vienna

20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
**FANCY FREE / THE CAGE / OTHER DANCES /
OPUS 19, THE DREAMER**
San Francisco Ballet, San Francisco