

NEWS FROM
THE JEROME ROBBINS FOUNDATION

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A photograph of a man and a woman standing on a fire escape at night. The woman is wearing a floral dress and the man is wearing a blue suit. They are both looking upwards and smiling. The fire escape is attached to a brick building with lit windows. The background shows a city skyline under a dark blue sky.

Jerome Robbins

NOTICE
NO BALL PLAYING
NO CARRIAGES
NO PEDDLING
NO LOITERING
BUILDING AUTHORITY

“Project Springboard: Developing Dance Musicals” Has a New Home at New York Stage and Film as “Stories That Move: Developing Dance Musicals (inspired by Jerome Robbins)” by Gregory Victor

Project Springboard: Developing Dance Musicals has a new home at New York Stage and Film (NYSAF) and a new name. The project, set in motion by the Jerome Robbins Foundation, is now called **Stories That Move: Developing Dance Musicals (inspired by Jerome Robbins)**. The mission—to support artists creating dance-centered musicals—remains the same, and the first performances of a Stories That Move residency will take place in August 2023.

NYSAF was founded in 1985 to provide artists with a nurturing environment to support artistic process, promote collaboration between artistic peers, foster dialogue between artists and audiences, and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge from one artistic generation to the next. It is the perfect home for the initiative that began as Project Springboard.

The American dance musical is always in danger of becoming a lost art form. Neglect, indifference, or merely letting enough time to pass for new choreographers and dancers to lose their direct link with the preceding generation, and the dance-driven musical just might be another ghost from Broadway's golden age. What a shame it would be to lose the power of movement—motion and emotion as one. Under the guidance of NYSAF, Stories That Move: Developing Dance Musicals (inspired by Jerome Robbins) will continue to foster artists who share Jerome Robbins' beliefs about the importance of movement to tell stories, and to help make productions of their work possible.

Launched in 2017, Project Springboard: Developing Dance Musicals aimed to foster the continued development of selected projects, in partnership with not-for-profit theaters, with the eventual goal of mainstage production. Project Springboard was born out of an extensive inquiry, led by Mara Isaacs and the Jerome Robbins Foundation, into the role that choreographers play in the conception and development of new musicals. Overwhelmingly, in the two-year study, they heard from directors, choreographers, composers, lyricists, book writers, and theatrical and educational producers that while there is a genuine appetite for developing dance-driven musicals, there are limited avenues available to independent artists to develop these labor-intensive collaborations. It was out of these conversations that Project Springboard was created to encourage collaborations that incorporate choreographic and directorial ideas at conception, develop the work with dance fully integrated into the storytelling, and address the existing financial and practical obstacles to developing those ideas in early stages of development. With the two three-week residencies that were fully funded by the Jerome Robbins Foundation, the Howard Gilman Foundation, the Frederick Loewe Foundation, the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, and the Geraldine Stutz Trust, Project Springboard gave artists access to a safe space to explore ideas and mingle with other artists, as well as to develop new work in a supportive environment.

Representing the freedom to create, to experiment, and to try new approaches to developing new works, Project Springboard also aimed to foster the continued development of dance-driven projects in partnership with not-for-profit theaters, with the eventual goal of mainstage production. Previously awarded projects included: 2019 residencies *A Nation Grooves: A People's History of Hip-Hop*, led by Kambi Gathesha (creator/director/choreographer) and Sinan Zafar (sound design/sonic dramaturgy); and *The Quiet World*, led by Charles Sutton (director/choreographer), Will Van Dyke (composer), and Matthew Greene (book); 2018 residencies *Bhangin' It*, led by Rehana Mirza (co-book writer), Mike Lew (co-book writer), Sam Wilmott (composer/lyricist), Rujuta Vaidya (choreographer), and Amy Anders Corcoran (director); and *The Night Falls*, led by Troy Schumacher (director/choreographer), Ellis Ludwig-Leone (composer/co-lyricist), and Karen Russell (book writer/co-lyricist); and 2017 residencies *Untitled* created by Camille A. Brown, and *Here In the Bright Colorado Sun*, created by Susan Misner and Jonathan Bernstein.

Although Project Springboard did not accept any applications during the COVID-19 pandemic, Justin Peck contacted Ellen Sorrin directly, seeking support for a project that he was planning to undertake. Project Springboard: Developing Dance Musicals provided residency support for the project—*Illinois*, a music-theater work based on Sufjan Stevens' music and lyrics, directed and

choreographed by Justin Peck. The work was presented to an invited audience in July 2022 and this next stage of its development will premiere June 23, 2023 (and play through July 2nd) at Fisher Center at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

Two of the projects, *Bhangin' It* and *The Night Falls*, have had subsequent steps in their development in theaters, one in a regional theater in California and the other in a New Jersey university theater. This was an important component of the process and NYSAF will continue this legacy.

Ellen Sorrin, a director of the Jerome Robbins Foundation, described how Project Springboard began, and explained why NYSAF is a perfect home for the program: “Project Springboard really sprung from conversations that we had in the Robbins office first, about how Jerry was so involved in everything that he did. He was always in ‘the room where it happened,’ as Aaron Burr in *Hamilton* would say. He was very integrally part of things. He wasn't one of those choreographers where a director said, ‘I need a number here’ or, ‘I need a number there.’ That's why a lot of choreographers become director/choreographers, because they want to have that kind of participation in the process. So, we thought that we would try to develop a project that would incorporate the choreographer being in the room and be very dance-driven.”

For Jerome Robbins, the dance-driven show was essential to the American musical theater. Robbins was a primary architect of some of the most enduring works of the musical theater, most of which treated dance as an artistic element equal to the book and the score. He integrated dance, music, and scene work, structuring all three to tell the story as one continual event, beginning with *On the Town* in 1945, which was based on his 1944 ballet *Fancy Free*. By the time he conceived, directed, and choreographed *West Side Story* in 1957, the music, dance and scene work were not just integrated; they were fused in inception. “Conceived by” was a significant credit, with profound implications. When Robbins conceived a show, it meant that it was impossible to separate a musical moment from its staging. The movement a character shared conveyed as much as a song or a monologue. In *West Side Story*, it was only natural for teenage gang members, exploding with teenage energy, to dance their aspirations and frustrations. It made sense that time passed in *Gypsy* by showing children morphing into adults while performing on the vaudeville stage. In *Fiddler on the Roof*, it was essential for the community of Anatevka to celebrate the joy of a wedding with a traditional bottle dance. If film had its auteur, then Jerome Robbins was the equivalent in the musical theater. One idea, integrating all the arts, one vision telling one story, was Robbins' goal.

Ellen Sorrin added, “Jerry's great gift was that he told the story through his steps. We wanted to recreate that, if possible, with the people who were going to be applying for Project Springboard. One of the people who got very involved early on in the research and development and subsequent residencies was Mara Isaacs, who was the in-house producer at McCarter Theater Center in Princeton. She thought it was a great idea and we did a lot of research and development for about two years. We met with a lot of people—including producers who ran programs in educational and theatrical institutions—to see if there was a desire for something like this to happen and the response was that yes, there was.” The Robbins Foundation set the project in motion and has continued to fund it so that the artists' visions are realized in performance. Ellen Sorrin continued, “Part of the whole point of Project Springboard is that this is a beginning, this is not an end. This is a springboard. We wanted people to be able to bring their projects elsewhere and have them continue to evolve and to develop.”

As Project Springboard itself developed over time, Ellen Sorrin sought to find for it “a cultural home that would really nurture it and help it grow.” She described finding that home at New York Stage and Film: “I got in touch with the program officer at the Howard Gilman Foundation and had a conversation. She thought NYSAF was the perfect place for Project Springboard to go. I did too, and the more I spoke with them, the more I felt that way. They were very enthusiastic, and we have now made the transition with them. So, the project has a new home—it's in good hands—and I think it will really be a great home for it.” ■



New York Stage and Film: Haven for the Unfinished Story

by Liz Carlson and Isabelle Sanatdar Stevens

Founded in 1985 by three artists and producers—Mark Linn-Baker, Max Mayer and Leslie Urdang—theater and film artists have been seeking out New York Stage and Film (NYSAF)'s specific brand of individualized support for nearly four decades.

The cornerstone of our annual programming—the Summer Season in Poughkeepsie, New York—embodies our founding values: to support artists and the development of their new stories with resources that embrace process over product, while maintaining a communal and protected setting that is free from critical and commercial pressures. During the rest of the year, NYSAF's care continues in the form of NYC-based programming that emulates invaluable aspects of our Summer Seasons, with individuals and projects developing side-by-side in community with one another, and with many opportunities for audience engagement. As of 2023, the majority of NYSAF's programming is hosted in collaboration with Marist College, as all summer residencies and performances take place on their beautiful Poughkeepsie-based, Hudson River-adjacent campus, and much of our NYC-based offerings manifest within Marist's new, sunlight drenched multi-purpose spaces on 38th St and 5th Avenue in Manhattan.

Hundreds of stories have found their footing with NYSAF, and though “final product” is not our main focus, many of the works we have supported have made a formidable impact on the tapestry of the American theatrical canon. Tony Award winners *Hamilton*, *Hadestown*, *Side Man* and *The Humans* workshopped their characters with us; Broadway productions such as *American Idiot*, *Junk*, and *Bright Star* shared their stories on our stages; and Pulitzer winners and finalists such as *Doubt*, *The Wolves* and *Taylor Mac's A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* found the space necessary to explore and test limits. While projects' continued success is a great source of pride, we measure true success in a different way—we ask ourselves, *What was the impact of the process on the artist? Were they provided with the opportunity to explore authentically? Did they get to ask questions? Make brave choices? Embrace the unknown? Did they try, fail, and try again?*

Our commitment to flexibility manifests not only in our dedication to artists and their processes, but also within our own operations. NYSAF's greatest strength over our multi-decade history has been our desire and ability to adapt to the ever-evolving landscape that is art-making, while responding to the ever-changing needs of voices in-process. As such, absorbing the mission and programming of Project Springboard aligned seamlessly with our own established purpose, our celebrated approach to new stories-in-process (especially for the stage), and our capacity to adapt ourselves to the expressed need of the artistic community.

After a generous introduction to Ellen Sorrin and the Jerome Robbins Foundation by way of the Howard Gilman Foundation, it was immediately clear that NYSAF and Project Springboard had many shared goals and values. The prospect of rehoming Project Springboard to be a main pillar within the NYSAF umbrella felt organic... and absolutely exhilarating. Our multi-week musical workshops within our annual Summer Season have always been some of the most coveted developmental resources we offer—and now, having the opportunity to expand our reach and effectively support dance-driven musicals, we find ourselves grateful for such a joyful gift, and for the visionary leadership of those who preceded our participation in this work.

The artistic force that was Project Springboard will now be known as *Stories That Move: Developing Dance Musicals (inspired by Jerome Robbins)*—a name that hopefully embodies not only the physical manifestation of the art supported, but also the emotional, spiritual, and psychological impacts that these works will have on those who engage with them. Because of the importance of the stories told through these projects and in these physically engaged mediums, *Stories That Move* will support developmental opportunities year-round within NYSAF's larger scope of programming. Annually, at least one project will have a robust multi-week developmental workshop as a part of our Summer Season in Poughkeepsie, and one or two projects will receive early-phase residency support during the rest of the year within our homebase, New York City. For this inaugural year, the *Stories That Move* projects are being curated from within the NYSAF community, while an equitable and expansive infrastructure for submissions and selection processes are being thoughtfully crafted for future years. *Stories That Move* is being made possible with leadership support from the Jerome Robbins Foundation, as well as the Howard Gilman Foundation, the Frederick Loewe Foundation, and the Mertz Gilmore Foundation.

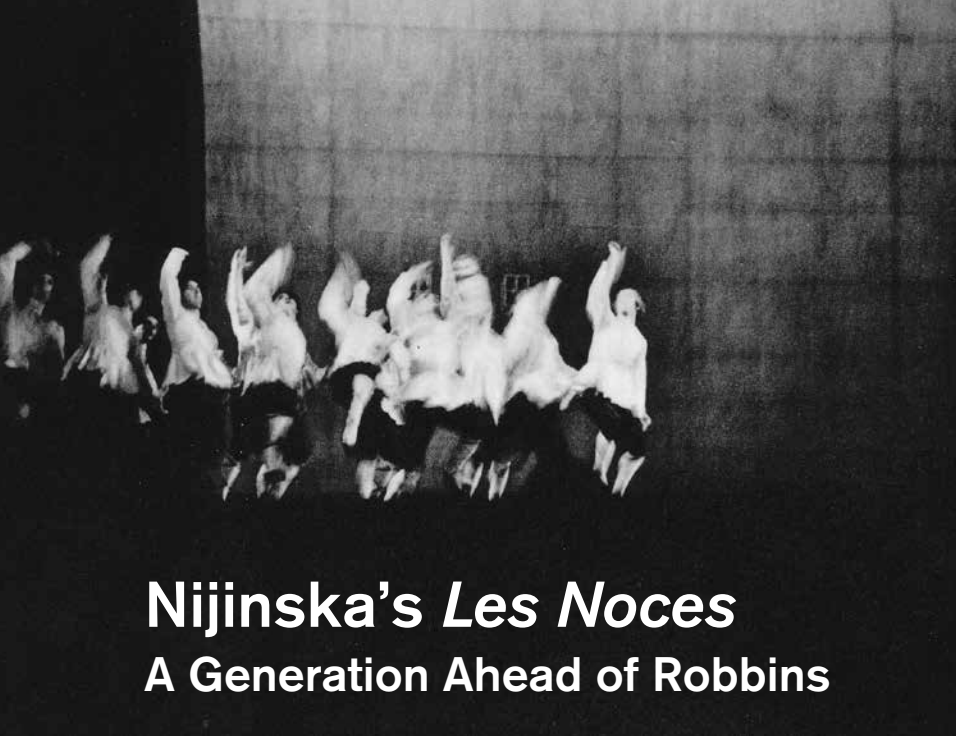
NYSAF is honored to share that our very first project that will receive support through *Stories That Move* will be workshopped as part of this upcoming Summer Season; *Paradise Ballroom*, co-created by Princess Lockeroo and Harold O'Neal, is a bold, energetic piece that follows a young dancer named Teddy. After being rejected by his conservative parents, Teddy flees Buffalo and finds refuge and community at the Paradise Ballroom—an underground LGBTQ+ safe-haven in West Los Angeles. Surrounded by supporters and mentors, he develops his dancing skills and learns the ways of Waacking, but when a shady producer promises fame and success, Teddy turns on his found family and loses his way. A musical about forgiveness, community, and the importance of living one's truth, *Paradise Ballroom* is an exhilarating and impactful piece—a perfect inaugural project to be supported by the *Stories That Move* program. ■

The 2023 NYSAF Summer Season will run on the Marist College campus in Poughkeepsie, NY from July 14 to August 6; *Paradise Ballroom* will be presented August 4–6. Further information about the 2023 NYC-based programming and the 2024 submissions process is forthcoming. More information about NYSAF, our overall programming, and access to Summer Season tickets may be found at www.newyorkstageandfilm.org.

Liz Carlson (Interim Artistic Director, she/her) is an NYC-based creative producer and director committed to the development of new stories. Prior to stepping in as Interim Artistic Director, Liz produced and directed with NYSAF in various capacities for 15 years, notably as the full-time Artistic Producer for the past seven, supporting artists such as César Alvarez, Jaki Bradley, Lyndsey Bourne, Lily Houghton, Keelay Gipson, Jessica Huang, Melissa Li & Kit Yan, Don Nguyen, Brian Quijada & Nygel D. Robinson, Kirya Traber, Lauren Yee, and hundreds more. Liz also served as the Artistic Director for the new works incubator *Naked Angels* from 2013 to 2016. As a director, Liz has developed plays and musicals with *Ars Nova*, *The Dramatists' Guild*, *Ensemble Studio Theatre*, *The Flea*, *Keen Company*, *Manhattan School of Music*, *Manhattan Theatre Club*, *The New Group*, *Playwrights Horizons*, *The Playwrights Realm*, *Signature Theatre Company*, *Williamstown Theatre Festival*, and more.

Isabelle (Fereshteh) Sanatdar Stevens (Producing Assistant, she/her) is a writer, performer, and artist whose work tends to center love and loss, responding to questions that don't have concrete answers. Low-income, Queer, Iranian-American with a found family from different backgrounds, there's a dream in her heart that is always reminding her of its presence: to amplify her communities' voices, experiences, and languages, and put them on U.S. stages front-and-center. A 2023 Pipeline Project Artist at *NewRep Theatre*, and part of *Fresh Ink Theatre's* 2023–24 Season, Isabelle's work will have several public sharings this upcoming Fall. Isabelle is a recent graduate of *Smith College* where she studied Theatre, English, and Translation. She is a rising second-year MFA Playwriting Candidate at *Boston University*.

(left) *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* by Taylor Mac, musical workshop, NYSAF 2016 Summer Season. Photo by Buck Lewis. (center and right) *Paradise Ballroom* co-creators Harold O'Neal and Princess Lockeroo.

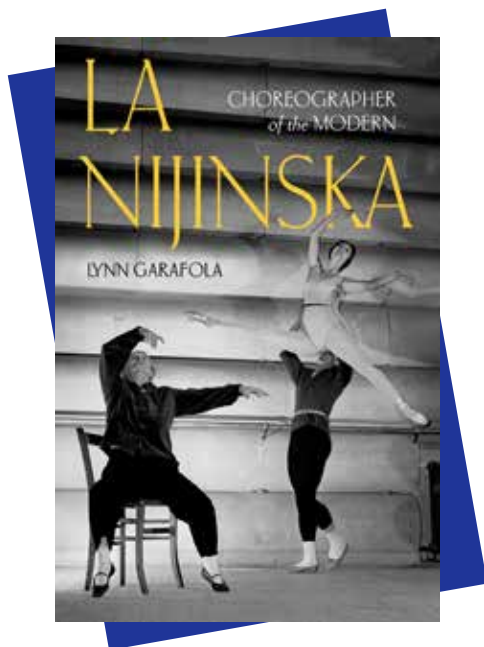


Nijinska's *Les Noces* A Generation Ahead of Robbins

(above) *Les Noces* performed by the Colonel de Basil Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, 1936. Alexey Brodovitch, *Ballet* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1945), Plate 50. (below) Alex Gard, " 'Ballet Russe' in Process of Rehearsal," New York, 1936.



Director General de Basil and Bronislava Nijinska at work on the new ballet, "The Nuptials," by Stravinsky. At the right is Tamara Grigorieva, the bride



In 1965, the twenty-fifth anniversary season of American Ballet Theatre was the setting for Jerome Robbins to return to the company with a new ballet. It would be his first work for the company since *Interplay*, 19 years earlier. For the celebration of the troupe where he began his professional choreographic career, Robbins staged his version of *Les Noces*. It was set to an Igor Stravinsky score that George Balanchine himself had declared could not be choreographed (*Dance Magazine*, May 1965). The vision was ambitious, but the ballet was a success.

Robbins concluded: "Although I have completed the ballet, I haven't finished with it. It is too deep and complex a work not to remain challenging. There may be other routes, and I'll want to try it again if the opportunity comes." True to his word, the ballet was restaged for the Royal Swedish Ballet, the Hamburgisches Staatsoper, the Teatro alla Scala, the Finnish National Ballet, and the Norwegian National Ballet. Robbins was still revising the choreography when he restaged *Les Noces* for the New York City Ballet just months before his death in 1998. The urgent, rhythmic piece was his final work.

In *La Nijinska: Choreographer of the Modern* (Oxford University Press, 2022), dance historian and critic Lynn Garafola has written the first biography of Bronislava Nijinska, one of the most innovative choreographers of the twentieth century, and the choreographer whose *Les Noces* preceded Robbins' success. Robbins stated that he had not seen Bronislava Nijinska's *Les Noces* prior to making his ballet. He also declared that had he seen her work, he might not have attempted to create his own version of the dance cantata.

What follows is an excerpt from *La Nijinska* – a description of the ballet's New York premiere in 1936.

Les Noces in New York

Arriving in New York on March 25, 1936, Nijinska rejoined the Ballet Russe on the last leg of a six-month tour and immediately began rehearsing *Les Noces*, which was scheduled to premiere at the Metropolitan Opera House on April 20. How the company found the time and the dancers the energy for this huge project is anyone's guess. The Met season, which opened on Easter Sunday, April 12, crammed nineteen ballets and twenty performances, including five matinees, into the next two weeks, leaving the overworked dancers without a day off. For the Ballet Russe dancers the project was daunting. According to Sono Osato, they only learned about it when they reported for rehearsal in the Met's vast, top-floor studio. "In next ten days, we do Nijinska *Les Noces*," de Basil announced. The dancers looked at each other in disbelief. "With only ten days to complete the mounting of the ballet," Osato wrote,

Nijinska worked with extra determination. She never changed a movement. Again and again, she took our damp arms in her gloved hands, pressing them down with the command, "Down, more down!" Impatient with our failure to grasp things immediately, she'd yell, "Poot feet in ground, *more!*" Then grunting, she would crouch her small plump body, rounding it over her knees, and inch forward like some animal in search of food. At night in my dreams, I heard the counts and Nijinska's voice shouting repeatedly, "*Zemla! Zemla!* Earth! Earth!"

Without any time to have the ancient Russian peasant rituals explained to us, we had to let the pulsating music and bizarre choreography teach us what we had to know. Dancing in a haze of exhaustion, we were mesmerized by the peculiar sounds and throbbing energy of the score. We drove ourselves relentlessly, almost fanatically. The ten days passed in one huge effort, sustained by a curious sense of exaltation.

The dancers had rehearsed with counts and a single rehearsal piano, but until the first orchestra rehearsal, they had never heard the music. Now, it overwhelmed them – the chorus of Russian voices, the wail of the soprano, the tympani, the four pianos. In despair they moved from tableau to tableau, counting and swearing in confusion, while de Basil kept rushing onstage to placate Nijinska in her mounting distress. Backstage the Russians were crossing themselves. Nijinska, wearing an evening gown and impassive as always, stationed herself in the first wing. Wrote Osato:

The curtain went up, the ballet began, and as we struggled through it, she became more and more agitated, hissing the counts so loudly that the audience might have heard her. She had worked herself up to such a pitch that by the last movement, it wouldn't have been surprising if she had plunged onto the stage and led us through it herself.

When the curtain fell the dancers were spent. They heard nothing.

Then the applause began, slowly at first, but then growing and swelling into a low roar, punctuated by shouts of "Bravo!" Our fear and fatigue turned into pure joy.

Nijinska herself was called repeatedly before the curtain and received some of the "most roundly earned bravos of the season."

The next day in the *New York Times* John Martin pronounced *Les Noces* "one of the great works of our time."

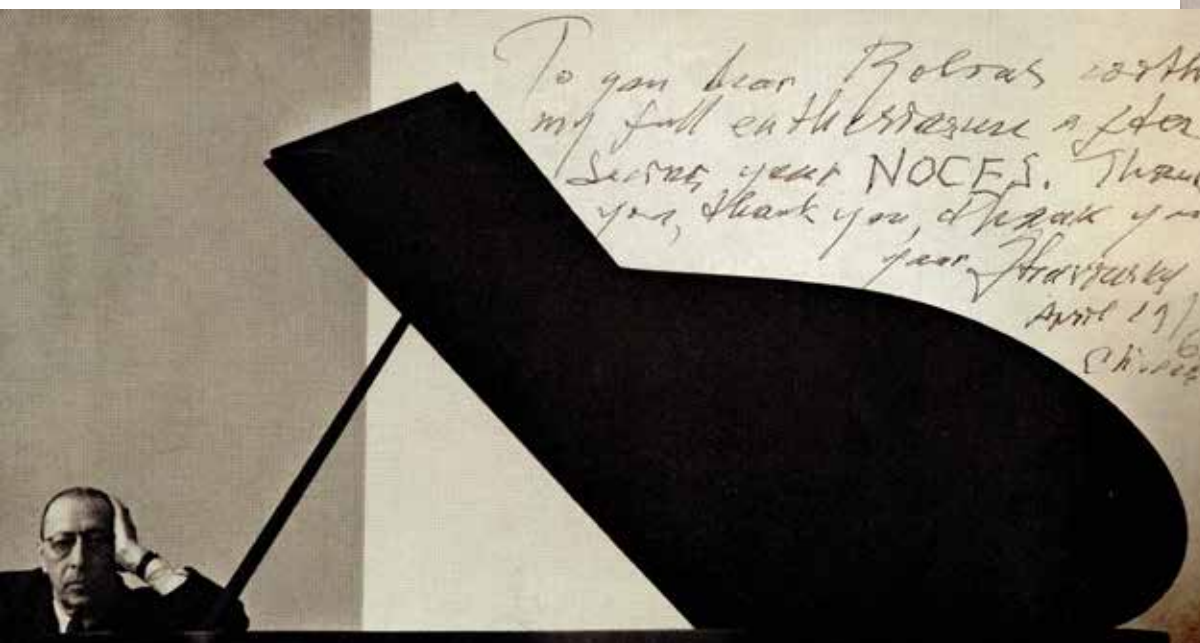
Here is in essence a peasant ceremony, though there is only the merest hint of actual peasant material in it. It is overcast with profound mysticism, almost with a kind of terror for the solemnity of the occasion, yet there is no overt statement of any such attitude. The full vigor of the emotional undercurrent which dominates the action is revealed not through any emotionalizing on the part of the dancers, but through the sheer eloquence of the choreography projected as simply as possible. The faces are masklike; there is nothing fairly to be called miming; there is only that kind of creative movement which comes out of an inspired composer when he is carried away by his material.

Edwin Denby, in his first dance review for *Modern Music*, declared the ballet "one of the finest things one can see anywhere." He noted that Nijinska had used few movement "motives," but that they all "accentuat[ed] the direction into the floor." He noted, as Martin had, the "special significance and hardness" of the pointework, which he likened to "tapping," and wrote that the "general downward direction [gave] the heaped bodies a sense beyond decoration and...the conventional pyramid at the end the effect of a heroic extreme, of a real difficulty." Finally, he commended "the stillness of the...company at the end after all their frenzy," calling it a "climax of genius." For the dancers he had only praise. "The way they are overworked," he wrote, "by the management is inhuman... that they can still offer so much is a miracle."

Martin was sufficiently fascinated by the ballet to devote a long Sunday essay to it. He praised the Ballet Russe for producing one of the season's "most distinguished events," especially because it was inconceivable that the ballet would ever prove popular at the box office. "It has...no personal display, not a moment of coyness; it is exclusively for those who can take their dancing without syrup and do not object to be disturbed by it" – possibly an allusion to the city's vibrant modern dance community. As Marcia Siegel points out, *With My Red Fires*, which Doris Humphrey began choreographing in the aftermath of the Ballet Russe season, covers some of the same conceptual ground as *Les Noces*. And surely there are echoes of *Les Noces* in the rhythmic dynamism and relentless masses of Martha Graham's *Chronicle*, which premiered at year's end. ■

Lynn Garafola is Professor Emerita of Dance at Barnard College, Columbia University. She is the author of *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance*, editor of *José Limón: An Unfinished Memoir* and other books, and curator of several exhibitions, including *Dance for a City: Fifty Years of the New York City Ballet* and *Arthur Mitchell: Harlem's Ballet Trailblazer*.

(right) Jerome Robbins' response to Doris Humphrey's invitation to stage *Les Noces* at the Juilliard Dance Theatre, 1958. Jerome Robbins Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.



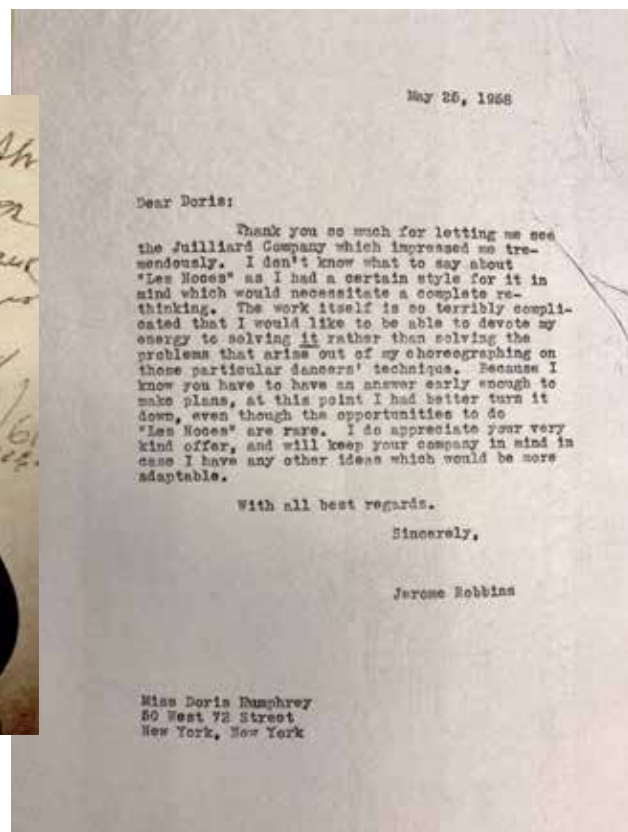
(above) A gift from Igor Stravinsky to Jerome Robbins after the premiere of *Les Noces* in Chicago, presented by American Ballet Theatre at the Civic Opera House on April 19, 1965. "To you dear Robins [sic] with my full enthusiasm after seeing your NOCES. Thank you, thank you, thank you, Igor Stravinsky April 19/65 Chicago." From the collection of Jerome Robbins.



Bronislava Nijinska, mid-1930s. George Balanchine Collection, Harvard Theatre Collection.

Notes

1. Sono Osato, *Distant Dances* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 97.
2. *Ibid.*, 99–100.
3. The pianists were Pauline Gilbert, Hannah Klein, Joan Blair, M. Alfred Thielesker; the vocal soloists Jeanne Palmer, Helena Schedova, Ivan Velikanoff, and Vasily Romakoff, with the chorus provided by the Art of Musical Russia, Inc.
4. Osato, *Distant Dances*, 101.
5. John Martin, "'Les Noces' Given by Ballet Russe," *New York Times*, April 21, 1936, 27.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Edwin Denby, "Nijinska's 'Noces,'" *Modern Music*, May–June 1936, 44–5.
8. John Martin, "The Dance: Revival of Nijinska's 'Les Noces,'" *New York Times*, May 3, 1936, X7.
9. Marcia B. Siegel, *Days on Earth: The Dance of Doris Humphrey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 163.



“I wasn’t in a position to judge him. I was trying to understand him...”

An interview with Jennifer Homans (author of *Mr. B*)

The Lifelong Peer Learning Program (LP²) at the City University of New York Graduate Center is based on a model of adult continuing education known as peer learning. Students participate in weekly study groups that mirror the content and structure of college courses. The following is an edited version of an interview that took place between LP² member and Dance/NYC board member Ed Brill and writer Jennifer Homans as part of an LP² “Fridays@1” speaker series streaming event in March 2023, in which they discuss *Mr. B: George Balanchine’s 20th Century*, Homans’ critically acclaimed biography of George Balanchine (published by Random House).

Ed Brill The book is really three things in one. It’s the story of a remarkable life, and the story of the man’s artistic achievement, and of the ballet company that he built. Somehow you managed to combine all of that into one terrific book. What led you to take this project on?

Jennifer Homans There are several other biographies. Most of them were written either while he was alive or shortly after his death. None of them were really archival and I’m a historian, so it seemed to me that there was a story that could be told, now that enough years had passed since his death in 1983, so that there was a way to see the story from a perspective that hadn’t been given before.

EB What was the biggest challenge that you faced in researching and writing this book?

JH The book’s subtitle is *George Balanchine’s 20th Century* because it *is* a twentieth-century story and it’s vast. It spans from Imperial Russia—he was born in 1904—it goes into the First World War and the Revolution. Huge events, obviously, on the Russian landscape, and into the Russian avant-garde that had started before that and was given an extra political motor afterwards. And then he emigrated to Europe—first Germany and then Paris. He was sort of all over Europe in the interwar period. So, then you’ve got *that* world, and then he moves in 1933 to New York City, thanks to Lincoln Kirstein. And so, you’ve got *that* world, and he’s there from ’33 to ’83 when he dies. So, that’s half a century of work and life.

EB One thing that occurred to me is that there are at least three major achievements in his choreographic career that came after a devastating romantic loss, beginning with *Concerto Barocco* in 1941, when he split up with Vera Zorina. Then *Agon* came after Tanaquil LeClercq, his last wife, who contracted polio. He spent eight months with her recovering, and that was a very low period for him.

And then his attempted relationship with Suzanne Farrell, which was unrequited, and then his bouncing back from that with the Stravinsky Festival in 1972, with some of his greatest masterpieces. It seems like he almost had to go through this terrible period of loss and depression to bounce back with these incredibly genius works.

JH It struck me that this is a man whose life has basically been structured by loss. The losses started with the war and the Revolution. When he left Russia in 1924, he did not see his family—except for his brother Andrei—ever again. He had great loss in his life—sad, lonely moments, depression, and then, a bounce back, in a way. It looks that way to us, but I think if you look at it from him, it’s a monumental will to rebuild and to go on. And he had that in him.

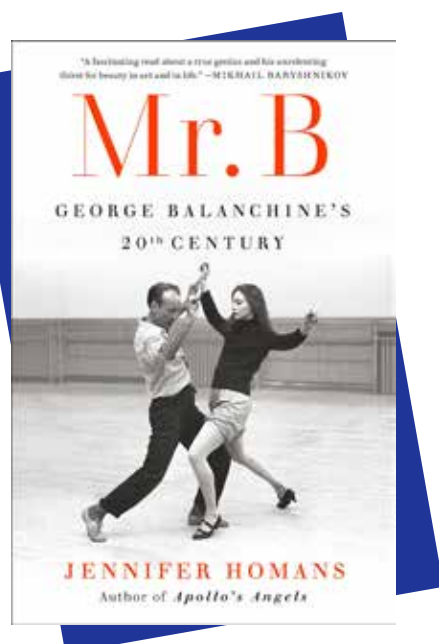
EB How did you approach the question of his relationships with women?

JH My approach was really to lay it all out, almost in cold blood, as it were, like “Here’s what happened. Let me say as much as I know about what happened.” As a historian, I wasn’t in a position to judge him. I was trying to understand him and understand what the elements inside him were, and inside his dances that we can access. Obviously, even the idea of getting inside someone else’s own mind is a little crazy. It’s obviously impossible, but to the extent that we can try to figure out what was driving this man. The relationships with women, the idea of love, and the idea of erotic love, were very, very important to him, and to his dances, and to the women who were his dancers.

EB There’s one passage in your book that, with your permission, I’d like to read, because I think it summarizes what you’re saying. You write,

To make dances, he needed to be physically attracted to a dancer, and she had to be a great dancer—or to have that potential, some ember or light inside of her. He was like an animal sniffing out this light... Pursuing a woman, winning her, and nurturing and lavishing everything he knew upon her—that was the primary object of his life and art. Without love and eroticism, he would shrivel up inside and run dry. That’s what the NYCB was—a whole company of women who might, just might, become great dancers—and their striving and womanly beauty, if he could help them find it, was the material of his dances. Love of a woman was his breath, his inspiration...

JH It’s complex because they would say things like, “He knew us better than we knew ourselves.” He would say, “You have to *want* to do it. I can then give you the work that can help you find your best self.”



EB Would you explain what it was about Balanchine that made him so great in everyone's opinion. How did he change ballet, and what were the qualities that he had that made him such a great choreographer?

JH There's so many answers to that, but I suppose one way of summing it up is to say *Agon* was certainly a dance that was mid-century, mid-of-his-life – it came right after the Tanaquil Le Clercq debacle, as it were, or tragedy of her illness. And Stravinsky had been ill as well, at that time. Then he and Stravinsky, together, make this dance that has been in process for years before, but it finally comes to fruition and he is at the height of his efforts to make dance its own art, so that it's not dependent on narrative, it's not dependent on plot, it's not dependent on furniture on the stage or any kind of props. In *Agon* you've got a partially 12-tone score, you've got an empty stage, you've got just a blue cyclo backdrop, you have 12 dancers, and they're costumed only in practice clothes, so the full body is revealed, and then a lot of light, and then a dance that is some 20 minutes long, and just propulsive, rhythmic. Everything he knew about that kind of dance is in this ballet, which the dancers describe as being on the top of a mountain about to fall off. It's an extraordinary experience, and it's not a kind of dance that anyone had ever seen before.

EB I think you said it's mathematical in nature.

JH It's mathematical. Absolutely. How many ways can you do 12? And it also has a mystical dimension too. There were impulses from his experiences with Tanny there too. The idea is, can you bring abstraction to dance? And this is the way he did it. That's what defined it for much of the 20th century. I think he also – and you can see this in *Agon* too – he found a way to reorganize the human body. One of the goals is balance and symmetry and harmony of the body. Whereas what Balanchine did is he put the whole thing off center. I attribute this to his whole experience – really, he started with a body that had been destroyed. He saw all those dead bodies in the street. He saw the crippled people in the war. And then the Second World War. The idea of the human body as something whole just is not an easy 20th century notion, so I think what he did is he pulled everything off center. His body is organized purely by energy and physics, so that there are oppositions and ways in which the body can stabilize itself. But the default is a kind of chaos and imbalance. If you take a moment in his choreography and you stop it and pull the people away from a dancer, she's likely to fall because she's in the middle, she's moving. It's all dependent on motion and movement, so that you're always going somewhere. You're going *through* a movement. You're not balancing or staying or – he hated – posing. There's a way in which he really does give us this 20th century body, which is geared to speed, to the machine, to the ways in which life is both more energized, more in motion, but also completely decentered.

EB It's not easy to write about dance, to put dance into words. Maybe it's because of your background as a dancer, but I thought you did an extraordinary job of making the reader feel as if we're inside the dance. I think you said that he was almost more of a musician than a choreographer, and in some ways his dances are not dances *to* music – they're really another dimension of the music.

JH Exactly. It's something that is pivotal to the story of Balanchine and to the 20th century world he lived in, which is that he was well-trained in music. He got himself an education in St. Petersburg and he continued that education. He would write to Nabokov and say, "Send me exercises. Send me things. Teach me." He was constantly learning. He was so fluent in music that on several occasions he conducted his own dances. He could read a score, obviously, and he could transcribe a score. He could make a piano reduction, and he did. He often spent months, if not years, with a score before he went into the studio and choreographed it. There's this idea that he just walked into the studio, and it poured out of him – this was the experience of many of the dancers – but he had studied the musical structure so deeply. This was something he did alone and with musicians and composers. It was a world he lived in. And, of course, his father had been a composer and there was a lot of weight put on the value of composing. I think all of that went into his absolute sense of himself as a musician choreographer. The dances, if you start to look at them – and there's some scholarship on this now – the ways in which the dance is not, as you said, *to* the music, it's not a simple, regulating movement to musical elements. It's an interpretation of a musical score, with a dance score. The way I think of it is, in a way they live side by side, and they merge in the performance. The complexity of this process – because these two things are both living things, as we know when we go to a concert. The music is going to be different depending on the night,



George Balanchine's *Agon* at New York City Ballet, 2007. Photo by Kyle Froman.

depending on the people, and the dance is going to be different too, depending on who's dancing, what they're like, what they ate that day. Everything is different and there's a lot of give in these scores. And yet they're somehow enmeshed in a way that illuminates both parts, so that you feel that you hear more music, or more different kinds of things in the music because of what you're seeing in the dance. And, of course, the music will make you see the dance better. He's worked that out. That's an analytic process.

EB You say in your book that he didn't think his ballets would last after he was gone.

JH No. In fact, he was quite sure of it. I don't think he cared whether they lasted except so far as they would serve the dancers that he knew. But he would say, "My ballets with dancers I don't train, dancers I don't work with, with dancers I don't know, those won't be my ballets." Because it was a live act, because it was in the present moment, and it's gone when it ends. And, as he put it, "You might be dead tomorrow, so live now. Create something that's alive right now. Us, here, working together." ■

Ed Brill is a retired lawyer who fell in love with ballet when he attended the opening night of the historic Stravinsky Festival shortly after moving to New York in June 1972. He coordinated a Study Group on Jerome Robbins in 2019 and is preparing a Study Group for LP² on George Balanchine for Fall 2023. Ed is a member of the Board of Dance NYC.

Jennifer Homans, who was named *The New Yorker's* dance critic in 2019, is the founder and director of the Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University, where she is also on the faculty. *Mr. B*, her highly regarded biography, was a finalist for the 2022 *National Book Critics Circle* award. Ms. Homans had full access to Mr. Balanchine's papers and many of his dancers in researching and writing her comprehensive history of his life and times. Her previous book, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*, was also an NBCC award finalist in 2010. A winner of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2013, Ms. Homans began her career as a professional dancer with the Pacific Northwest Ballet and has also earned a Ph.D. in modern European history at NYU.

For more information about the Lifelong Peer Learning Program (LP²) at the CUNY Graduate Center, visit LP2nyc.org.

Ballet Meets Broadway

West Side Story Suite Returns to Miami City Ballet

(top left) Miami City Ballet dancers in *West Side Story Suite*. (top right) Ellen Grocki and Ariel Rose. (bottom left) Alexander Kaden, Ariel Rose, and Damian Zamorano. (bottom right) Isadora Valero and Chase Swatosh. Choreography by Jerome Robbins © The Robbins Rights Trust. Photos © Alexander Iziliaev.



This year's theme for the Miami City Ballet (MCB) Gala was *West Side Story*. At the Gala, guests were treated to an excerpt of Jerome Robbins' *West Side Story Suite*, with MCB's dancers singing and dancing to live musicians performing Leonard Bernstein's "Cool" and "America." The Gala also celebrated Artistic Director Lourdes Lopez's decade of accomplishments with MCB and the MCB School's 30th anniversary. In May 2023, MCB performed *West Side Story Suite* for audiences in Miami, West Palm Beach, and Ft. Lauderdale. Earlier in the 2023 season, the company also performed Jerome Robbins' *Afternoon of a Faun*, as well as the company premiere of *Antique Epigraphs*.

The following account of the MCB dancers' experiences as they prepared to perform *West Side Story Suite* first appeared on the Miami City Ballet website (miamicityballet.org).

What is it like for a dancer to get up on stage...and *sing*?! Terrifying. Thrilling. Maybe a little bit of both.

"After all the fear," says dancer Ellen Grocki, "it's actually liberating on stage. Then it's a totally new experience and you want to sing all the time. It's a whole other way to express yourself."

With the return of *West Side Story Suite* in Miami City Ballet's third program of the 2022/23 season, *Fresh & Fierce*, Ellen and three of her fellow MCB dancers—Nathalia Arja, Andrei Chagas, and Bradley Dunlap—will get to revisit this musical theater extravaganza that has them dancing, singing, and acting.

For Bradley, getting another chance to play Riff, a character he describes as "pretty complex," is what he is looking forward to. "It's one of the few roles I walked away from wishing I had another chance."

He's had time to rethink his approach to Riff, who he originally portrayed as aggressive, then playful. "I imagine he's quite an insecure individual who is working to hide that. In that sense, I would love to explore him a little more and give him more depth. And not try so hard to get that message across, to relax a little more into the character."

Nathalia and Ellen have previously performed the role of Anita and each of them feels a connection to the character in different ways.

"Being Latina, it's one of the roles that I can relate to most," says Nathalia, who is Brazilian. "As soon as I was learning the steps, I thought, 'Oh, this is

familiar,' not because I've done it, but because it's in my culture. It's the kind of moves that I grew up dancing. So, I instantly found that connection with Anita."

And when Ellen puts on the Anita wig and iconic purple dress, "I can throw the sass and the attitude," she says. "That really helps put me into character. I may not look like her on the outside, but I can feel her when I put on the costume."

Getting into character is one thing, but the preparation for the singing is just as much a mental process as it is technical training.

The dancers with singing parts get professional coaching. Ellen also describes practicing at home a lot—singing in the closet, shower, or car. Then she has to do it in a studio rehearsal where it may not sound the same and she's dancing at the same time.

Despite her nerves and the challenges, she slowly built her confidence and got to the sweet spot to "break through that barrier. When you feel like you know what you're doing, you can really go for it and push it."

For any ballet dancer who has ever dreamed of performing on Broadway, *West Side Story Suite* is their moment to feel what that's like.

That dream became a reality for Andrei, and he now knows that feeling well. He left MCB in 2017 to appear in the revival of *Carousel* on Broadway. Not only that, he played a Shark in Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-nominated remake of the classic *West Side Story* film.

The last time he performed in MCB's production was for the company premiere in 2014. He remembers that Chita Rivera, the original Broadway Anita, was invited to MCB's Open Barre series to speak about her career and share her experience. After watching him in a rehearsal, she turned to her friend, Richard Amaro, and said "Who's that guy in the pink shirt? He's a good actor; he should be on Broadway."

A few years later, Andrei was stepping on to the famous Imperial Theater stage in New York City to make his Broadway debut. He went on to get nominated for a Chita Rivera Award, which recognizes dance excellence on Broadway.

Now that he's back at MCB, it's a full-circle moment.

"I realize how fortunate I am, and it's been an amazing career and I'm so thankful and glad. Coming back to be a part of this production, I'm just very excited and looking forward to share with my peers all that this career has brought to me. I hope we have time to play, meaning literally *play*! It should be fun. It's fun to create your own story yet tell the same story all together." ■

“There’s a place for us...”

Two International *West Side Stories*

Sending *West Side Story* Around the World

A conversation with director Lonny Price
and choreographer Julio Monge

Gregory Victor What is it about *West Side Story* that demands a new production in 2023?

Lonny Price It’s one of the masterpieces of the musical theater. Its score is unsurpassed. Mr. Robbins’ work is unsurpassed. It’s the pinnacle of what dance—and storytelling in dance—could be in the theater. It’s a timeless story, and it’s sadly about something that’s current—which is xenophobia and how we vilify the “other” in society. Also, the context with which we approach the show is that it’s about—for me—the American dream, and the lie of the American dream, and that these kids are entitled to a future and a present that is fair. You know, we’ve been talking a lot these days about privilege and all of that, and both the Sharks and the Jets are suffering from not being given access to the American dream—one for socioeconomic reasons, and one for the color of their skin. And yet all around them is America saying anybody can make it here, and it’s a lie. The idea of this production was the context of the American dream as a myth, which fuels the anger and violence in some ways. When you ask, “Why today?” Xenophobia is on the rise everywhere. So, it’s always, sadly, topical.

GV Since you used the “masterpiece”—

LP Yes.

GV I did a Google search, and I typed “Why *West Side Story* is—,” and before I could enter another search term, the first term that automatically came up was “—problematic.”

LP Because there are so many articles about that.

GV Followed by, “Why *West Side Story* is a masterpiece.”

LP Oh, that’s brilliant. Isn’t that interesting?

GV It’s not always been that way.

LP That it is problematic?

GV That it’s so openly acknowledged that there’s a duality to the material. How do you reconcile—

LP I’m not sure I know what the problematic aspect of it is. Julio is a more authentic person to talk about this, but I think that they’re on the right side of all of it, and Julio was very helpful in educating me.

Julio Monge I think, historically, from 1957, there was a divide, but not as sharp.

GV Didn’t the recent film version extend the conversation?

JM Definitely. That’s what starts that beyond the theater. From the beginning, there was always a sector that reacted to it. I have been in touch with a lot of folks, some of them friends, who lived in that time. I even remember this lady from Houston Grand Opera, when I did *West Side Story* there, who was on the Board—a very well-off lady—who was Afro-Puerto Rican, and she said, “That movie made us so proud. I was a kid in the Barrio, and I looked at that. It was the first time they mentioned our names—the name Puerto Rican—in a major Hollywood film. We were on the map.” And I have another friend who’s now 92. He was in Italy at the time. And he said, “Julio, in Europe the perception of us was that we were tough. Nobody fucked with us! We are strong!” And I think that now it has given permission for further discussion—which is very positive—after the #MeToo movement, and after everything that we’re living through. That’s why these articles are more mainstream.

cont’d on p. 10

StageAround in Japan

A perspective from director David Saint

A production of *West Side Story*, directed by David Saint, with Jerome Robbins’ original choreography restaged by Julio Monge, opened at IHI StageAround Tokyo in 2019. StageAround seated audience members on a rotating auditorium that moved from fully realized set to set, while surrounding curved projection screens framed each setting.

David Saint shares his thoughts on the production.

After working with Arthur Laurents on the 2009 Broadway revival of *West Side Story*, followed by directing the National Tour for four years myself, and then working with Tony Kushner on the screenplay and serving Steven Spielberg on the new feature film as Associate Producer, I wasn’t sure what more I could do with *West Side Story*.

Then producers Kevin McCollum, Kumiko Yoshii, and Robin de Levita called. They made me a unique offer. They asked me to direct a revolutionary new 360-degree production in Tokyo called IHI StageAround™.

I flew to Amsterdam to watch a large production of *Soldier of Orange* in the prototype of this new design of a theatre. It was like nothing I’d ever seen before! The theatre is built on a huge footprint where the structure is like a giant donut shape with the audience being the massive “donut hole” center, where 1,400 seats occupy a central ring that is built to rotate very slowly. The second ring moving toward the outside of the donut is a 12- to 15-foot-deep circle that remains stationary, on the far side of which are large IMAX-scale curved screens. These can be opened to reveal scenery at any given place. The third ring, on the outside, is filled with extremely large permanent stages on which up to 60-foot-deep sets can be revealed. These stages that are revealed form a circumference the width of twelve typical Broadway stages.

My mind was racing with the possibilities for this epic production of *West Side Story*. I immediately recruited the brilliant Broadway design team of Anna Louizos on sets, Ken Billington on lights, Lisa Zinni on costumes, and Ben Percy from 59 Productions on projections. The next step was to design the entire Upper West Side of Manhattan in the 1950s, as the area was being demolished, welcoming a new era at a time of extensive migration, especially from Puerto Rico.

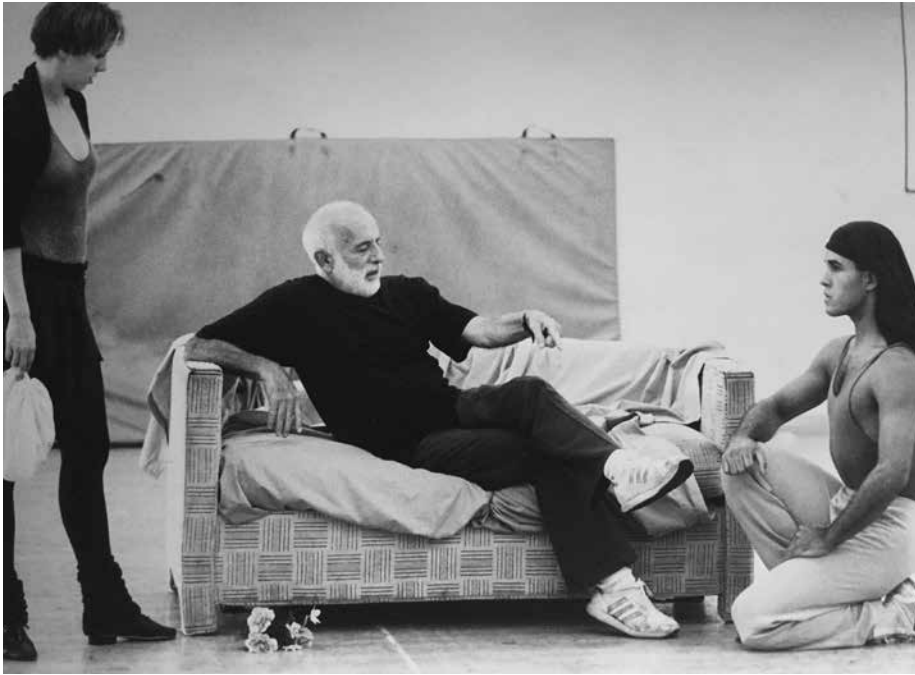
I worked with Anna on the many different scenic possibilities for the show. In typical productions of *West Side Story*, the scenery has to be minimal or very portable to accommodate the large areas needed for the classic Robbins choreography. However, due to the gigantic “real estate” available here, we would be able to do both! A football field of empty space for the dream ballet, and also a permanent two-story, detail-filled drugstore for Doc to rival that of any movie set!

My process began with Arthur’s book and every design site it mentioned or suggested. Some were easy, like the drugstore—except I decided to move the basement to an upstairs storage room with a complete stockroom above, with an onstage set of stairs to access it. Not only were Anna and her great props designer Kathy Fabian able to dress the stage with an extraordinary number of vintage items, large and small, but I was allowed new opportunities in the staging: Riff following Tony up and down the stairs, desperate to entreat Tony to come to the gym dance, as well as Doc going up to the hiding Tony as he is forced to deliver the news of Maria’s alleged death.

In addition, the magnificent “Cool” could be danced right inside the store due to that 15-foot permanent floor in front. This allowed Ken to do some of the most dynamic, dreamlike lighting featuring their giant shadows on the drugstore wall. A smashing effect. The internal, repressed feelings of rage emerging right from their grasping limbs, taking over the whole set visually!

While the Bridal Shop and Maria’s bedroom are specified in the book, I decided to place her bedroom upstairs from the shop, where she shared a second-story apartment with Anita and Bernardo, complete with a working bathroom for Anita to get ready for the Dance during the “Quintet.” There was also

cont’d on p. 14



GV These days, *West Side Story Suite*—a ballet version that Jerome Robbins created after a similar version of it appeared in *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*—sometimes poses a challenge to Artistic Directors, who might potentially feel the threat of an audience's cultural criticism, and therefore, might not include the ballet in their company's repertory.

LP Isn't that interesting? Because they feel it's racist?

GV For various reasons, no doubt. There's a tendency to latch onto one aspect of an artistic work and view it solely through that lens, while *West Side Story* has so many things going on—

JM From my experience, now that I've worked on the film with Tony Kushner, and I've worked on the language of it—all the Spanish in it, that's my work—I had to face that kind of scrutiny. My experience has been that most people are, sort of, repeating these parrot-like ideas about the prejudice that's in it, but they're not informed about the film. They haven't seen it. They don't know it well. There's a lot of political reaction, but a lot of it comes from ignorance.

GV It's worth acknowledging that Jerry Robbins created a lot of work that tends to still resonate and—

LP Agitate. Which is great.

GV Whether it's *Fiddler on the Roof* and families being forced to leave their homes to become migrants, or *Fancy Free* and #MeToo, or *West Side Story* and cultural appropriation. In his work, Jerry always sought the truth, which leaves us with fragments of it still floating around, waiting to be resolved.

LP Well put.

GV This raises a question about revisiting theatrical works—should we ever do a work from the past that we would never accept today?

LP Well, I think there are certain shows you can't do anymore—and I think, maybe, for good reason—that are too misogynistic, or racist, and I think they shouldn't be done. If you can do a fix on them—if there's a way to do them and massage them so that they are not offensive. Do no harm. Theater shouldn't make people feel disincluded in the world. I think it's high time that we stop defending people.

GV Have you ever dealt with topic or issue in a revival that you've directed where you've had to make adjustments?

LP Well, we're going to do *Peter Pan*—another of Mr. Robbins' works.

GV Aren't you working with Larissa FastHorse, who's rewriting some of the book?

LP I am. Larissa has, I think, handled the Indian issue in that magnificently, whereas it is no longer offensive, but it is celebratory and beautiful, and moving.

JM That's great.

LP That is a show that we have been able to do in a way that is so inclusive and so loving. There are fixes, but then there are certain shows—can we do *The King and I* anymore? I don't know if we can. I did a revival of *South Pacific*—a concert *South Pacific*—which I thought was totally on the right side of everything. "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught" and all of that. We had two Asian violinists in the orchestra, and they quit. They said, "We can't play this." And I said, "I need to understand why." "The way Bloody Mary talks—the Pig-English of Bloody Mary—is the way my mother talked when she came to this country. And she was made fun of. And you use that character for laughs—'You a damn sax man,' and 'cheap American,' and all that." She said, "I can't watch people laugh at something that caused my mother so much pain." And you know what? I got it. Now, who would have thought *South Pacific* is racist? Oscar Hammerstein was nothing *but* anti-racist. Yet, in that play—innocently, I'm sure—is a character that is offensive to people. Either she needs to be rewritten, or we can't do that anymore. It's very tricky. Look at *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. It's completely misogynistic. Unless you do it with an all-male cast, or an all-female cast—unless you do a dance on it—women don't want to be seen like that anymore.

JM Right.

LP It's all about objectifying a woman's body, and it causes a lot of harm. So, we've got to look at each case individually, but I think a lot of shows are going to be retired. We'll sing their songs, but we can't do their scripts.

JM I can put the original script of *West Side Story* by Arthur Laurents, from 1957, in front of you and I would dare you to point out any prejudicial thing there against Puerto Ricans. I cannot say the same about the movie, and I think the movie was what brought those prejudicial layers.

LP The Robert Wise movie. The original.

JM Yes, because it was under Hollywood's prism, and you couldn't have interracial couples. Hence, Natalie Wood kissing Richard Beymer.

LP And all that dark makeup.

JM Yes, that was acceptable. That's Hollywood. But the original, it is absolutely well researched. They gave us two of the strongest female characters in the cannon of musical theater—Maria and Anita.

LP For sure.

JM And they're Puerto Rican.

LP Absolutely.

GV I recently read a letter that Jerome Robbins wrote to Leonard Bernstein and Arthur Laurents in 1956—while they were still shaping the show—saying that he didn't like what was happening to a character in a certain scene, and that he didn't want any characters onstage that felt sorry for themselves.

LP Do you remember the character that he was referring to?

GV Anita.



LP Anita feeling sorry for herself. No, she certainly doesn't feel sorry for herself.

GV And Bernstein wrote "All too true" in the margin of the letter. They wanted to empower –

JM They did. In watching it this past week – I was in Frankfurt watching the international tour – and seeing the number "America" was a relief from the rest of the evening. Because you have this macho, macho, macho, testosterone-driven story, and then this piece in the middle, where these females celebrate their power.

GV And the number also sets up Act Two – the tragedy of the violence against Anita – in that it establishes Anita's belief in the idea of America.

LP Yes. And she doesn't tell on Maria, with Bernardo. If she had done that, the rumble wouldn't have happened.

JM Puerto Rican women at that time were at home, watching the kids and sewing, as a traditional thing for centuries, while the men were working or whatever. So, when this whole crisis of migration in the 1940s and '50s happened, New York was going through a financial crisis. One of the industries that survived was the textile garment industry, and they say that it survived on the shoulders of Puerto Rican women.

LP That's true.

JM And for the first time, these women were having a say, and bringing the bread to the table. So, when Anita says, "I like to live in America," what she's saying is, "This is me fulfilling all my dreams." The guys have a different position. That's why Bernardo thinks she's been brainwashed because the men have it hard. They don't have jobs. There's no work for men.

GV In terms of the violence of the piece, if you research the gang violence of 1957, it's chains and bricks and bottles and knives, but it's very rarely a gun. For Arthur Laurents to include a gun was a way of upping the stakes, but also a way to show where we were headed if we didn't address the issue of gangs.

LP Right. This is where we're going.

JM That was the beginning of the use of guns in gangs. He's observing that. What we have now – that's when it started.

GV When you stage *West Side Story* today, how do you determine the progression of the violence? From what I can tell, your production is very true to the spirit of the original.

LP Absolutely.

GV In a more desensitized world, how do you achieve the power of the violence in the original?

LP It's very clearly a period piece, and I think the fight is scary, even in terms of today. Seeing these characters that we care about. And it's very violent. They're not kidding around. And the surprise of it escalating into the stabbing. None of them meant that to happen. So, I don't think it's an issue.

JM We can't forget that we're not telling the story of criminals. This is the story of kids who are on the edge, falling into it. It's what happens to them because they pushed it over that edge.

LP You have to be really careful that they always seem like kids, and to cast them as young as possible, so that that out-of-control moment is not premeditated.

JM It's an accident. It got out of control.

GV Would you hope that an audience leaving *West Side Story* today is full of optimism, or pessimism?

LP That's a great question. It depends on if you believe in the possibility of "Somewhere." ■

On Broadway, **Lonny Price** directed *Sunset Boulevard*, *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*, *110 in the Shade*, *'Master Harold'... and the Boys*, *Sally Marr... and Her Escorts* (co-written with Joan Rivers and Erin Sanders), *Urban Cowboy*, *A Class Act* (Tony Award-nominated book co-written with Linda Kline), and *Scotland, PA*, which had its world premiere at Roundabout Theatre Company's Laura Pels Theatre in the Fall of 2019. West End credits include *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*, as well as *Sunset Boulevard* (with Glenn Close), *Sweeney Todd* (with Emma Thompson), and *Man of La Mancha*, all for the English National Opera. Film and television credits include his film version of the New York Philharmonic's *Sweeney Todd* and *Company*. He also directed the stage and filmed versions of his tribute to Stephen Sondheim, *Sondheim: The Birthday Concert!* (Emmy Award). Other Philharmonic collaborations include the "Live From Lincoln Center" broadcast of *Camelot*, *Candide*, *Sweeney Todd* (Emmy Award), and Sondheim's *Passion* (Emmy Award). Additional television credits include *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill* for HBO, as well as episodes of "2 Broke Girls," "Desperate Housewives," and "The Jack and Triumph Show." For his first feature, *'Master Harold'... and the Boys*, he received a Best Director Award from the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival. His documentary, *Best Worst Thing That Ever Could Have Happened* premiered at the New York Film Festival and was named one of New York Times' Top 10 Films of 2016, and his other documentary *Hal Prince: The Director's Life* (PBS) was released to critical acclaim as well.

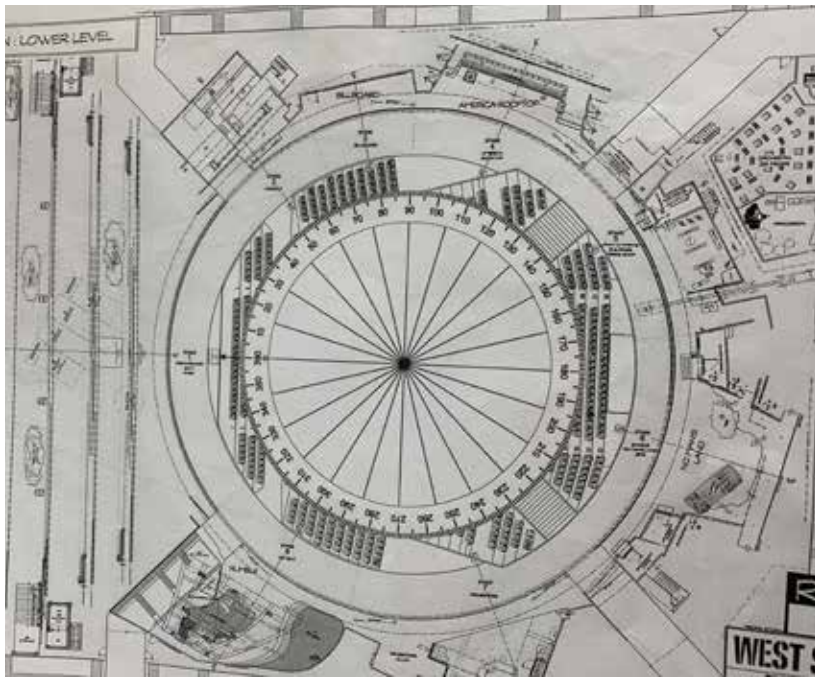
An actor, director and choreographer, **Julio Monge** has performed on film and television as well as on numerous Broadway and international theater productions. Choreography works include Tony Kushner's adaptation of *Mother Courage and Her Children* starring Meryl Streep, and the musical *Radiant Baby*, both directed by George C. Wolfe. He recently directed the English language US premiere of Jacobo Morales' play, *Bipás*, at George Street Playhouse. He also collaborated closely with writer Tony Kushner and served as artistic consultant for the new film version of *West Side Story*, directed by Steven Spielberg. Julio has staged Jerome Robbins' original *West Side Story* choreography for Pittsburgh Ballet, Opera of Australia, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Tokyo in Stage Around, and at Chungmu Art Center in Seoul, South Korea.

(p. 10, left) Charlotte d'Amboise, director Jerome Robbins, and Julio Monge rehearse "Dreams Come True" (from *Billion Dollar Baby*) in *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, 1989. (p. 10, right) Charlotte d'Amboise, Nicholas Garr, and Julio Monge rehearse *West Side Story*'s "The Dance at the Gym" in *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, 1989. Photos by Martha Swope, courtesy of Julio Monge.

(p. 11, left) Company members of the current international tour of *West Side Story* perform "Cool." (p. 11, right) Company members perform "America." (pp. 12–13) Melanie Sierra (as Maria), Jadon Webster (as Tony), and company members of the current international tour of *West Side Story* perform "The Dance at the Gym." Set design by Anna Louizos. Photos by Johan Persson.







(top) Ground plan for the Tokyo StageAround production of *West Side Story*. [Note from director David Saint: "The long process of determining the degrees of each turn and direction of rotation was worked out with this center compass on top of audience circle in the 'donut hole center.'"]

(bottom) One-third of the set model for the Tokyo StageAround production of *West Side Story*. Set design by Anna Louizos.

(p. 15)
Cast members of David Saint's StageAround production of *West Side Story* in Japan, 2019.
(top) Performing "Cool" in Doc's Drugstore.
(bottom) Final scene at Central Park's Bethesda Fountain. Photos courtesy of David Saint.

an actual window leading to the fire escape landing where Tony and Maria sing "Tonight."

One more delight: Anna and I had the fire escape balcony slowly move forward in the sky about 20-feet out over the audience during their love song, while Ben and Ken created a moving image of the background complementing the young lovers' ecstasy. This let us see them fly up above the tenements and eventually into the star-filled sky and an emotional impressionistic swirling background for the sensational soaring ballad.

Another was the set for the Rumble that ends Act One. They agree to meet "under the highway," but that highway was falling apart and was a junkyard of old cars and other items, all of which were right next to the Hudson River. So, here we brought in old car wreck pieces from the period to form a mountain for the gangs to negotiate as well as the Hudson River itself. Now when a knife is knocked out of Riff's hand into the water, another Jet, followed by a couple of Sharks, could jump in the dark water with the George Washington Bridge in the distance to continue the fighting in the river. Our tremendous dancing and fight choreography in all these new settings were conceived by Julio Monge recreating the original Robbins choreography, and Ron Peretti as fight consultant.

As I worked to create new locations in which scenes could take place, I was very mindful of the film and the new sites they chose for scenes, like the subway and the Cloisters. I didn't want to take any of their designs. But the one of which I was most proud was the site for Tony's death at the end. All of the scenic reveals were a surprise. Many in the audience couldn't figure out how we changed sets so quickly. The truth is that the sets never moved, the audience did. But because the engineering of the movement was so slow, and sometimes in opposite directions, they never felt like they were moving.

I decided in a final *coup de théâtre*, I would reveal our trick. After Tony learns from Doc of Maria's death, he runs through the neighborhood trying to find her killer, Chino. So, I decided to pull back the curtain of the screens and follow Tony as he ran counterclockwise, while the audience rotated in the same direction, and they saw him running through every location of the play—Jet neighborhoods, Shark neighborhoods and all, showing us the "trick" of the production—and yelling for Chino as he ran. And finally, he comes upon a new set where the piece will end: Bethesda Fountain in Central Park. Anna created an astonishing replica of the fountain, the double staircase and arches, as well as all the real trees filling the park! The fountain's Angel had originally been designed to bless the ailing and wounded, so how fitting for Tony himself. The scene was massive and iconic New York City, while Ken's haunting lighting helped us bring this tragedy to new heights.

In addition to Tony's sweeping run at the end, that middle slice of permanent stage provided me the chance to have fights and kids running constantly but also, in a dazzling effect, several Jets members riding motorcycles around the circle, heightened by Ben's videos on the screen moving in the opposite direction, creating the illusion of them driving twice as fast!

Two final things I'd like to mention: the meticulous work by all the Japanese artists in constructing these remarkable sets—flawless; and my pride in the fact that every decision was based on enhancing the material. Nothing was arbitrary. No new "concept," but only a deep understanding learned from many years of working with Laurents and Sondheim directly, and always respecting their genius, as well as that of Bernstein and Robbins.

The piece itself is obviously still relevant, timeless in its universality. Arthur always told me the whole thing can be summarized in one sentence: "It is about the struggle for love in a world of bigotry and violence." A production of *West Side Story* needs both, in equal measure: the romance and the world of bigotry. Respect the essence of what they wrote. ■

David Saint is an award-winning NYC-based director who has directed 11 shows written by Arthur Laurents. He worked with Arthur on the 2009 Broadway revival of *West Side Story* and also directed the subsequent tours of the show, including one that opened the Theatre Orb in Tokyo, as well as at the Hollywood Bowl. He has directed on Broadway, off-Broadway, and regionally including at The George Street Playhouse, where he has been Artistic Director for 23 years. Under his tenure many shows have moved on to Broadway, including *American Son*, *It Shoulda Been You*, *Clever Little Lies*, *Proof*, *The Toxic Avenger*, and *The Spitfire Grill*. He is Associate Producer on the recent movie of *West Side Story* directed by Steven Spielberg, Executor of the Laurents Estate, and President of the Laurents/Hatcher Foundation. Mr. Saint has directed premieres by such well-known authors as A.R. Gurney, Anne Meara, Jonathan Larson, Aaron Sorkin, Wendy Wasserstein, Joe DiPietro, and others, directing stars like Elaine May, Jack Klugman, Marlo Thomas, Paul Rudd, Kathleen Turner, Keith Carradine, and more. He is the recipient of the Helen Hayes Award, the Alan Schneider Award, the L.A. Drama Critics Award, several Drama-Logue Awards, and nominations for Outer Critics Circle Award, and Drama Desk Award.





“I have known Sonja Kostich for many years — as a talented young dancer and as co-founder of OtherShore — and I have watched as she brought new life and energy to Kaatsbaan. I am honored that she brings her talents to BAC and am confident that her creative vision, financial savvy, and love of the arts is precisely what BAC needs to head into the future.”

— Mikhail Baryshnikov,
BAC Founder and Artistic Director

Baryshnikov Arts Center Moving Forward

by Sonja Kostich

When I think of Baryshnikov Arts Center (BAC) I am immediately filled with excitement. Because of the incredible work done over the past 18 years, BAC finds itself poised for truly unprecedented growth in line with how we see arts and culture in NYC and around the world—ready for revitalization post-pandemic. BAC is prepared not only to continue being an important part of the artistic landscape but to truly step forward to be a leader defining what innovation in the arts can be: supporting a diverse range of artists at all stages of their careers; bringing in audiences and supporters and providing them with transformative experiences worthy of their time and support; and creating meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships that integrate with BAC’s mission, all as an extension of Misha’s vision and life’s work. He has been a significant force, leader, mentor, and role model for decades, and BAC will continue to level up into an artistic and business force with a worthy mission that uplifts and serves. BAC is deeply grateful for our wonderful partners—including the Jerome Robbins Foundation—a reflection of the special relationship that existed between Misha and Jerry.

Baryshnikov Arts Center is more than a single “place;” it is an international community, headquartered in NYC, one of the most artistically and economically interesting cities in the world. Now is the perfect time to further strengthen our brand and get the word out about our spaces, our programming, and our future vision. Alongside our current programming, which has incredible artistic integrity, we are looking to further diversify our programming, develop more interdisciplinary collaborations, and broaden our audiences and supporters. What is so wonderful about eclectic programming is that audiences may suddenly find themselves falling in love with an art form that previously they had not been exposed to or thought would be of interest to them—for example, people who come for a music concert but stay for a dance show or culinary event. We value the potential to bring people together in unusual ways across the dance, theater, performance art, poetry, fashion, film, food, and music worlds, sparking new interests and relationships. That is truly exciting.

Baryshnikov Arts Center’s mission is to provide financial, administrative, artistic, and space support to diverse artists working in multiple and intersecting artistic disciplines. We are constantly revisiting what that means specifically for artists today—almost 18 years since BAC was founded—and how we can structure our business, operations, fundraising, and partnerships to be uniquely impactful. The trajectory of Mikhail Baryshnikov’s artistic life represents what so many artists aspire toward: diversity of artistic opportunities, freedom to evolve as an artist without imposition, and the ability to collaborate with people from a variety of cultural and artistic backgrounds, within a community that supports and upholds their artistic endeavors. One of the things that has always distinguished Misha from other dancers, and that dancers have always regarded with such awe and respect, is his ability to transcend the boundaries of artistic disciplines; the fact that many types of artists and people from other industries have been interested in working with him was really something that Misha opened up for future generations of dancers and which we now enthusiastically witness more

broadly. I think one of the most exciting things about BAC’s programming is the emphasis placed on cross-discipline collaborations and our curiosity about bringing seemingly unlikely artists together to create something undiscovered or beautifully new. This is something that we will focus on and continue to hone as a core value as we look to 2024 and beyond. The work that Baryshnikov Arts Center does—meaningfully supporting artists’ most ambitious creative endeavors, fiercely protecting artistic freedom, sharing transformative experiences, and providing a sense of belonging and community—moves the world forward and changes lives. That is what BAC strives to facilitate.

Finding one’s home, whether it’s a physical or a metaphorical place—well, you are truly fortunate if you know what that means—is what Misha provides. Since first meeting him as a ballet student at age 15, I have witnessed him provide a place and a vision for so many. I am so grateful for this opportunity to be a part of what Misha created, to work with him on BAC’s future vision, and to be a part of the incredible Baryshnikov Arts Center community where we work every day to create and secure a place of belonging—where artists, our staff and board, audiences, supporters, and partners can share interests and passions, do good work that we can be proud of, and have fun together. What more could one ask for in this life? It is a dream come true.

Looking to the immediate future, Baryshnikov Arts Center is going upstate this summer to honor Misha for his 75th birthday. Co-presented by BAC and Kaatsbaan Cultural Park, on Kaatsbaan’s idyllic 153-acre property in Tivoli, NY, the event on June 25th features an afternoon concert by influential musicians of the 20th and 21st centuries whose work has inspired Misha throughout his life in the U.S.: American avant-garde artist, composer, and musician Laurie Anderson; Canadian jazz pianist and singer Diana Krall; Russian-born American singer, songwriter, and pianist Regina Spektor; and North America’s leading practitioner of Japanese flutes and percussion Kaoru Watanabe. The program also features a musical performance by choreographer Mark Morris and remarks by actress Anna Baryshnikov.

The Baryshnikov Arts Center community is thrilled to have an opportunity to celebrate its Founder and Artistic Director, Mikhail Baryshnikov, living legend and cultural icon, who has dedicated his life to supporting generations of artists and enabling true artistic freedom for so many. This milestone fundraising event honors his life’s work and the community he has built, providing an artistic home for the creatively brave from around the world.

I hope you will join us at Baryshnikov Arts Center as we continue to develop and move forward in service to our beloved community! ■

Sonja Kostich is Executive Director of Baryshnikov Arts Center, founded by Mikhail Baryshnikov in 2005. Prior to BAC she was the Chief Executive & Artistic Officer of Kaatsbaan in Tivoli, NY. Her dance career spanned over 20 years, including with American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Zurich Ballet, White Oak Dance Project, and multiple projects with Peter Sellars and Mark Morris. She holds a BBA in Business Administration and an MA in Arts Administration from Baruch College. Previously she worked at Goldman Sachs in the Finance Division and at New York City Center, Mark Morris Dance Group, and was co-founder of the dance company, OtherShore.

(above) Amanda Szeglowksi’s *Untitled Memento Mori Project*, 2022. Photo by Maria Baranova.

What Is Necessary

Jennifer Tipton and Dana Reitz

Discuss Light and Dance

The Baryshnikov Arts Center (BAC) is the realization of a long-held vision by artistic director Mikhail Baryshnikov who sought to build an arts center in Manhattan that would serve as a gathering place for artists from all disciplines. BAC's opening in 2005 heralded the launch of this mission, establishing a thriving creative laboratory and performance space for artists from around the world. BAC's activities encompass a robust residency program augmented by a range of professional services, including commissions of new work, as well as the presentation of performances by artists at varying stages of their careers. In tandem with its commitment to supporting artists, BAC is dedicated to building audiences for the arts by presenting contemporary, innovative work at affordable ticket prices. (For more information, visit bacnyc.org)

In this issue, we focus on illustrious lighting designer Jennifer Tipton, who has created many memorable moments at BAC. In November 2022, she shared *Our Days and Night*, an exhibit of light in BAC's Jerome Robbins Theater. *Our Days and Night* was designed to show the relationship of the earth to the sun, tracing the origin and precarity of the sun's support of life, and exploring the visual archetypes of the seasons.

In 1993, Jennifer Tipton began a collaboration—an inquiry into the climates of movement and light—with choreographer, dancer, and visual artist Dana Reitz. Their investigation, begun in a laboratory at The Kitchen, led to movement/light workshops worldwide and, eventually, the dance *Necessary Weather*, which was credited to Reitz, Tipton, and dancer Sara Rudner equally. Sixteen years later, *Necessary Weather* was performed at the Baryshnikov Arts Center. A fully collaborative work, Reitz was as much involved with the lighting as Tipton was with the movement structure. The two artists aimed to dispel preconceived ideas about the interrelationship between movement and light, creating what they called “a journey, in silence, along the edges of dream and real time.”

Recently, the *Jerome Robbins* newsletter brought Jennifer Tipton and Dana Reitz together, after an extended time apart, for a conversation about light and dance. Here are select responses from the two artists.

Are there preconceived ideas about the interrelationship between movement and light?

Jennifer Tipton Lighting designers are known as technicians and not as artists. In my lifetime I thought this would change, and that makes me very sad.

Dana Reitz A lot of the history of the way people in dance work with light is that at the last minute they bring in a lighting designer to “do something” with the choreography. In a last-minute rush, usually without much rehearsal time. The sadness about that is dancers don't really know, themselves, the impact of the light on their performances. They don't have a chance to see it from the outside, in terms of the technical schedule. It is very rare that a dancer will be able to step outside and see what that light does to that movement. So, Jennifer and I really started with this frustration. We wanted to work more deeply with how light affects movement, and how the way you move affects how you see the light. We did a couple of earlier things together and the more we worked together, the more we realized we needed workshop time to really study and really look at that, so we set up some workshops with professional lighting designers and choreographers to investigate and to watch the impact of one thing on another. At the beginnings of *Necessary Weather*, we rented out The Kitchen space, and in the month of August, when we were in downtime, we had a workshop in the mornings for professionals to come and join us in this investigation, and the afternoon was spent on our work. So, we had time—which is an incredible luxury in the theater world. We actually had time to watch, and feel, and suggest, and change, and find out what *is* the impact—

JT And at a certain point, you asked, Dana, “What, to you, is the most important thing? It's *Necessary Weather* we're doing. What, to you, is necessary?” I said, immediately, “Side lights.”

Your first collaboration, in 1987, was *Solo in Silence*...

DR Yes. Many years ago. I had done a lot of my own lights, up until working with Jennifer. I asked Jennifer in when I was taking apart previous pieces and putting them together, so that different light stayed from different pieces. I really wanted to work with her and to collaborate and find the throughline, from beginning to end, that made sense. Jennifer was great at that and could find the score from beginning to end that—in terms of light—was a consistent world, so that all those other entries of different pieces, whatever that world is that underlies it, can hold all those different shifts. Eventually it morphed into more working with Jennifer from the beginning on a piece, rather than after, having already these ideas and the movement score, the basics.

JT If you have light in the room, when you're doing the work, it makes a huge difference. And it does lengthen the time it takes. You have to have that time, and the light, available. That's not inexpensive. Light is the rehearsal process. Working with a theater group like The Wooster Group, we have light, with makeup and costumes, all the time. The piece that we're working on now—*Symphony of Rats*—is going to start performances in October. We're working with light and costume and makeup from the beginning.

DR It just depends. Wooster Group has their own situation, so that makes it a whole lot easier. *Necessary Weather* took a couple years, finding different situations that had lighting equipment, so that we could try it in different situations—

JT And learn the difference. I'll never forget the place where we had done all of our rehearsing and work, and we were all set to go, and a few hours before the performance they turned on those big red “Exit” signs right there next to the stage. I mean...

In *Necessary Weather*, what discoveries did you make?

DR That's huge.

JT You have to see the piece to know what discoveries were made.

When you performed the piece again at BAC in 2010, how was it different from the original performances?

DR Proportions. We're older. Different abilities shift.

JT The framework was the same. We didn't go about changing things, but it was different.

DR But every day is different anyway. I think in terms of the light/movement mix is the understanding that that day, that performance, that time, that audience, that expectation, shifts your timing. So, in terms of “essential nature,” the timing of the day, you have to allow for different response to that very same light timing.

JT And when you're dancing with someone, you have to also listen to their response.

DR Exactly. So, we may set in the board that at three minutes a light shifts—we know that ahead of time, we've scored it to that—but the way we feel about it, and the way we enter that transition, and the way we leave that transition is up for grabs.

When creating a piece and lighting it, are you considering the perspective of the dancer as well as the perspective of the audience?

DR Absolutely. When you're performing onstage, the light—if Jennifer's side light comes in and if it's a low shin light and it's blinding, it affects how you feel in the piece. But also, as a performer you also have an understanding, sort of, of how it appears from the outside. So, our whole collaboration was about stepping inside and outside. So, Jennifer would come into the space and feel the light herself, and then I would step out and look at the light from afar, and the movement from afar, and keep switching positions and switching ideas to get both the inside and outside experience.

JT And may I say, the remarkable thing is how different those two places feel. So often I have, in my life, sat and watched dancers and said, “Look! Just six inches to your right and you'll be in the light! Why can't you get there?” And it's clear

to me there's this beam of light that's shining across the stage, and the dancer just doesn't get in it. And then I go on the stage, and I am totally blind. I can't see that beam of light. It's not visible when you're close to it.

Can you describe the dancer's onstage partnership with light?

DR It's great because it's so rich. It alters the space so clearly. And so then how I shape my timing and how I shape my nuance has to do with how I feel about that light right at that moment. So that the essence of, say, a dimming at this point, I might go fluttering one day, and another day I might go like this. So, playing with light as a partner is about how I get in and how I get out.

JT And may I say that I learned from Dana what that word "attention" means, because if she, the performer, is paying attention to the light, then the audience is aware of the light. When she's paying attention to something else, then the audience is aware of *that*. So, the audience's attention sort of goes in and out of the material as well in a very musical and rhythmic way. It's quite amazing to me.

DR To me it's a layering of attention. Say you've got an ensemble of musical instruments and they're playing, when all of a sudden you hear this particular instrument, or that one, or this one—something comes to the fore, something recedes—that weaving of time and attention, the audience will go with you. But they also have the ability to look around the space whenever they feel like it. The audience has the ability to close their eyes, come back to it, do all sorts of things with it, then they open their eyes and ask, "How'd she get there?" Everyone's attention keeps shifting. I have great fun with timing, knowing full well that we've plugged in three minutes for this, or a minute fade into this, or two seconds of this, or that's there's all sorts of, a musical score basically—the light dance score. It's a landscape, so the weaving of all that is scripted, but the nuance of it is at the moment.

JT On the other hand, there was that dancer who came up to me and said, "You have a light out." And I said, "Oh? Where?" She said, "It's the one I go and put my face in every—"

DR Exactly. Some people really get it, and some people don't. But again, unless you have some way of looking from the outside, at the impact, you'll sense—you know, you go in there with antennae in a different way—that you're sensing it in a different way. And so, that experience of stepping two feet over here, or two inches over here, you can feel it on your face. Or you can feel it on your hands. Or you step behind it, and you realize that your hands are in the light, but your face is not. The fun of it is finding out all those boundaries.

With so much about making sure a dancer's got the steps right, or the angles right, or this right, or that right, is that the environment itself is the last thing they consider. So, I try to put it up front, and light as part of the environment has a huge impact. I don't use music for the very reason that I don't want that other impact to tone it. So, the musicality in silence is very fluid. But with light, I want to make sure that the light's there for a reason, and that it's not just hanging out there as a piece of musical wallpaper. By the way, I love music, so don't get me wrong.

JT Well, music is very subtle and very evocative to human beings, and you can't deny that. You can't stop that. If you have music, your audience will respond to it the way that they do.

Jennifer, you premiered *Our Days and Night* at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, correct?

JT I guess I had the idea about this when Dana and I would do workshops, and part of workshops is always setting the lights with cues and then having them happen in sequence without anybody saying a "Go" or anything like that. In total silence. And I've always loved the way that the audience sits there in total silence and watches the lights. Based on that, I said, "O.K., well I want to tell a story with light." So, I told the story of human beings on Earth. I was going to do it without human beings, but then it seemed necessary to have a couple of human beings. So, I had a man and a woman, and the story on the planet, and that, basically, was what it was. The light told the story of that. Now, I did cheat—I did have some sound. Not music, but sound. But the whole first part was in total silence, just watching the light.

Jennifer, this year marks the 50-year anniversary of *Celebration: The Art of the Pas de Deux*. Is there anything you can share about that piece?

JT That piece, for me, was the best lighting that I have done in my life. When it was over there was only one thing that I wanted to change, and that is that there was a light that was too hard to reach. I wanted it to be two different colors and I had to make a compromise and have it be only one color in the evening. I love pas de deux and this was a series of pas de deux, and to make beautiful dancers beautiful is, to me, just such a joy. And that's what I did for those 12 pas de deux, and the beginning and ending made by Jerry. It was an extraordinary event and happening in my life and I remember it always as never being able to top it.

What's next?

JT At the Wooster Group, I'm doing *Symphony of Rats*, which will open in November, I think.

DR I'll be doing a solo at Roulette in Brooklyn on October 19, 20, & 21. I haven't been back since the beginning of COVID, so it'll be nice to just do it. It's a simple space, but light will definitely be an integral partner.

JT I'm getting to the point where I'm doing just remounts. I'm doing *Il Trovatore* in San Francisco, and also, with San Francisco Ballet, I'm doing the Balanchine *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that I did in Paris. So, that's coming up.

DR I want to tell one story from decades ago. I was being interviewed outside in the bright sunlight on a hot day, and I was sitting under the eaves of the roof, and the interviewer said, "I don't understand why you think light has such an impact." And she was sitting in the hot sun. I was in the shade, literally two feet away. And after a while, her perspiration was coming down and she was getting more and more edgy, more and more upset, and I asked, "Would you like to come into the shade?" When she moved to the shade, she said, "Oh. I get it." So, to me what's fun on the stage is not just the lit space, but the unlit space. The shades and the shadows are all extremely powerful, so why not play with that?

JT So, what *is* the most important thing to you?

DR In lights?

JT In starting a piece that's going to have movement and light.

DR Time and space. There is no way in, other than to start somewhere, and I think that I'll have ideas, in terms of movement, in terms of, you know, the *need* to make that piece, the need comes first. The need to do something and the need to investigate something. And then, when it comes with light, the need to find out what actually can work together to make that idea more visible. ■

Dana Reitz often uses silence as a means to reveal the musical nuance of movement itself. On her own and in her collaborations with lighting artists such as Beverly Emmons, James Turrell, and extensively, Jennifer Tipton, she has pioneered the use of light as a physical partner. Her woven movement and light scores—essential, spare and fleeting—create a continually shifting perception of time and space. For her recent work, *Latitude*, she designed a mutable light field at moments altered by the presence of several wooden sticks.

Her performance projects include *Necessary Weather*, a work with Tipton and dancer Sara Rudner, *Unspoken Territory*, a solo she created for Mikhail Baryshnikov, *Shoreline*, *Private Collection*, *Lichttontanz*, *Suspect Terrain*, *Circumstantial Evidence*, *Severe Clear*, and *Field Papers*. She and Baryshnikov toured together with a program of solos; she later created *Cantata for Two*, a duet for Baryshnikov and Kabuki master Tamasaburo Bando (Tokyo). *Latitude*, performed by Reitz with Elena Demyanenko and Yanan Yu, was produced and presented by Lumberyard Contemporary Performing Arts at New York Live Arts in February, 2018.

Reitz has toured, as a performer and mentor, throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and the US. Since 1973, she has been commissioned/produced by multiple venues internationally including Festival d'Automne (Paris), The Hebbel Theater (Berlin), The Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal), The Dance Umbrella (London), BAM's Next Wave Festival, and the Lincoln Center White Light Festival (New York). She is the recipient of two Bessies, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and multiple awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, including one as part of American Masterpieces, Three Centuries of Artistic Genius, sponsored by the Flynn Center (Vermont).

Jennifer Tipton is well known for her lighting for theater, opera and dance. Her recent work in theater includes *To Kill a Mockingbird* for Broadway, Beckett's *First Love* for zoom and all of Richard Nelson's Rhinebeck plays. Her recent work in opera includes Ricky Ian Gordon's *Intimate Apparel* with libretto by Lynn Nottage, based on her play by the same name, at the Lincoln Center Mitzi Newhouse Theater; her recent work in dance includes Lauren Lovette's *Pentimento* for the Paul Taylor Company and Balanchine's *Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Paris Opera Ballet. Among many awards she has received the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize in 2001, the Jerome Robbins Award in 2003 and in 2008 she was awarded the USA "Gracie" Fellowship and a MacArthur Fellowship. She was the recipient of the 2019–20 Cage Cunningham Fellowship, an award established in 2015 for artists who demonstrate John Cage and Merce Cunningham's commitment to artistic innovation. She has lit Paul Taylor dances since her beginning in light.



Liz Gerring and Ain Gordon in Jennifer Tipton's *Our Days and Night*, 2022. Photos by Maria Baranova.



Dancing with Ghosts: Legacy and Lineage

by Jean Butler

It is hard to imagine I wrote this essay eight years ago. When I read it today, I am reminded how the seeds of Our Steps, my not-for-profit organization dedicated to expanding the way we think about the history, practice, and performance of Irish dance, were planted some time ago.

By 2018, four Irish dance master practitioners from the New York area passed away in quick succession, their steps and stories passing with them, their personal histories lost forever. Something had to be done.

Our Steps began with an urgent and ambitious goal – to initiate the first-ever living archive on traditional Irish dance and to use this archive as a generative creative resource. With our partners at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, Our Steps has created over 100 hours of never previously documented video and audio material; recreating Irish dance steps that date from 1950 to 1990; accumulating over 50 oral history interviews. This material inspired and was incorporated directly into my recent intergenerational dance theatre work, *What We Hold*, which premiered at the Dublin Theatre Festival 2022 to critical acclaim.

The sentiment and words I conjured in 2015 are as potent to me now as they were then. Although my artistic path has forever widened beyond traditional dance, my love for the form, culture and people who have come before me has only deepened as I get older. My commitment to documenting the ghosts of Ireland’s dancing past (and present) is evident in the urgent and ongoing archival work of Our Steps, which I hope, will be part of my own dance legacy.

We are currently planning the 2024 NY premiere of *What We Hold*. To sign up to our newsletter for updates, more information or to support our work, please go to: our-steps.com. Thank you to Allen Greenberg and the Jerome Robbins Foundation for republishing “Dancing with Ghosts” and to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for their continued archival support and partnership of Our Steps.

– Jean Butler

(above) Jean Butler, 2022. Photo by Ste Murray.
Essay originally published in June 2015 at danspaceproject.org

At dance talks I tend to take endless notes, writing down every poignant utterance, capturing the words of others in ink, making thoughts permanent. Documenting, for myself. To read these notes after the event, on the subway home perhaps, or months later as I trawl through the thousand notebooks that contain sometimes undecipherable script, I continue to be inspired. That is only part of the reason for my note taking and notebook filling compulsion.

Truth be told, most of the time I am afraid of missing out, of forgetting something important, or beautifully stated, or both. Afraid that if I do not write it down, I will not remember it. I love to listen to dancers talk about their work, where it comes from, why, and how it happens. I love to feel the moment when the light bulb goes on and I think: *I know how you feel, I know what you are talking about, I belong.*

On Friday February 13, I entered Danspace for Silas Riener’s workshop and in honor of Cunningham, decided to abandon my notebook. Whatever I would write as a commissioned respondent to Claudia La Rocco’s ‘Dancers, Buildings and People in the Streets Platform’ would be left entirely to *chance*. Over the course of the platform, I attended Riener’s Cunningham workshop, the opening Conversations without Walls, Dance Dialogues: Kaitlyn Gilliland and Will Rawls, Silas Riener and Adrian Danchig-Waring, Kaitlyn Gilliland’s Serenade workshop, and Dance Dialogues: Sterling Hyltin, Jodi Melnick, Sara Mearns and Rashaun Mitchell.

So, what didn’t I write down? And what do I remember?

Many things of course, but the thing that sticks with me most is Adrian Danchig-Waring’s remark about *dancing with ghosts*. Adrian had never met Balanchine, his movement master, though he talked about being part of his legacy with great reverence, about being an interpreter of an interpretation of something Balanchine once thought and made. But Balanchine is no longer with us, as we know. Adrian never met him and neither did Kaitlyn, whose workshop on Balanchine’s *Serenade* was so beautiful, so honest, and so generous. So moved by a particular part of the music, Kaitlyn cried repeatedly every time it played, and I thought of the little deaths that occur every time a dance happens to never happen again. The idea of Balanchine’s ghost haunting the company stays with me. The legacy of Merce Cunningham and the profound insights into his work revealed by Silas, in what was essentially a private class, hang in my mind.

The question of legacy, of masters, of absence and inspiration stays with me.

Who are my dance ghosts then? Four people came to mind, some of which were taught by my dancing master, teacher Donny Golden. They are Steven Gallagher, Laura Kelly, Winiford Horan and Frieda Gray. These dancers, great dancers in the tradition of Irish dance, unknown to most who will ever read this post are my ghosts. The most important difference between Adrian’s ghost and mine though, is that all my ghosts are alive.

When I was a young girl going to Irish dance classes 5 days a week in Long Island, Brooklyn and the Bronx these 4 dancers were talked about in hushed tones, as if having witnessed their dancing was such a remarkable, life-altering experience to talk about it could only be done in the quiet tones of a haunting. These dancers, all one and two generations older than me, had finished dancing; quit with nowhere else to go, nowhere else to dance. No record, home video, documentary footage existed of their performances, their achievements, their impact. How they danced would always be a figment of my imagination. I would never know, but I wanted to dance like them, be talked about like them. I wanted to haunt someone someday.

When I finally met and befriended a few of my ghosts years later I thanked them for being these immortal role models of my youth. Though completely unaware about the impact their dancing has had on generations after them, these friends, these supernatural dance gods and goddesses turned humans, will always have a slight glow, an aura around them that lingers.

It was the *not seeing* and the *not knowing* that was the thing. I had to imagine how they moved and what moved them to move an audience. Balanchine, Cunningham, The Judson Dance Theatre and Edwin Denby; I did not know these names growing up. Having come from an entirely different and segregated traditional dance world, I did not know some of these masters until relatively recently. So, in some ways they are double ghosts to me. But I can see their work, their impact, and their legacy. And that makes them very, very ALIVE. ■

Dancer, choreographer, and scholar **Jean Butler** is a leading figure in the world of Irish dance performance. She is best known for co-choreographing and originating the female principal roles in *Riverdance: The Show and Dancing on Dangerous Ground*, the latter of which was praised by Anna Kisselgoff of *The New York Times* as “channeling Irish step dancing into genuine artistic expression.”

Since 2006 Butler has worked in a contemporary dance context, with commissions, residencies, and presentations around the globe, bridging the gap between a culturally specific form and a contemporary approach to dance-making.

As a scholar, Butler has taught through the Princeton Atelier program, held a Fellowship in Creative Practice from University College Dublin, and served as External Examiner of the BA in Traditional Irish Music and Dance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, for three years. Since 2010, she has been an Assistant Professor of Irish Studies at Glucksman Ireland House, New York University.

The 2023 Jerome Robbins Dance Division Symposium

In January 2023, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center presented the 2023 Jerome Robbins Dance Division Symposium, a virtual day-long exploration that welcomed the seventh cohort of fellows. This year's fellows embarked on a six-month fellowship at the Library that highlighted the work of dance practitioners engaged with ecosystems and the biological interdependence of the natural world, and generated projects that contributed to addressing the global responsibility of climate change. In addition to supporting research utilizing the library's resources and archives, the library granted each fellow a \$10,000 stipend.

Juli Brandano

Inspired by the 1970s Land Art movement, Juli Brandano explored the concept of "Dance as Land Reclamation," as a way to think through how earthworks on ecologically devastated sites could rehabilitate the land. Brandano used her fellowship to research archives of choreographers Anna Halprin, Elaine Summers, and others who made outdoor dances contemporaneously to the Land Artists in more community-based ways.

Rosemary Candelario

As part of her goal to make dance practice able to serve community, social, and survival needs, Anna Halprin worked with and even collaborated with US-based butoh and butoh-related practitioners. Rosemary Candelario has been observing those artists who have been deeply influenced by Halprin and her work, such as Eiko & Koma, Body Weather Laboratory Los Angeles, Nature Moves, and inkBoat, and will augment these studies using Halprin's archive.

María de los Angeles Rodríguez Jiménez

In the Brazilian tradition of Candomblé, orixás are spiritual intermediaries within nature that connect, depend upon, and energize humankind and the divine – and the dance of the orixás is at the heart of this circle of energy. María de los Angeles Rodríguez Jiménez compiled an extensive archive of videos, photographs, interviews, writings, and interpretation of the various dances of Candomblé from Salvador da Bahia, Brazil.



Lindsey Jones

Studying herbalism at Arbor Vitae School of Traditional Herbalism has taught dance artist Lindsey Jones how the body can heal itself with the help of plants. Jones paired her learnings of traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurveda and other western practices with research into the work of dance artists like Eiko Otake, Jennifer Monson, and Deborah Hay. Inspired by the Welikia Map, a mapping project that pinpoints indigenous ecology of New York City before European colonization, Jones likewise used her fellowship to provide a framework for regaining connection with the land.

Richard Move

Adding to a 20-year span of creating site-specific dance performances that activate natural environments while calling attention to ecological issues, Richard Move has been developing *Herstory of the Universe*. With their fellowship, Move researched the thawing permafrost to add to their body of work, and placing research of like-minded choreographic artists alongside new scientific studies through an essay, accessible dance film, and workshop.

Rachna Nivas

After studying South Asian Studies and Molecular Environmental Biology, Rachna Nivas made a pivot to become a full-time dancer and educator. Nivas brought both of these fields of study together with a project that drew from the exclusive collections of Indian classical dance by illuminating masters of Indian such as Balasaraswati, Rukmini Devi, and Uday Shankar, among others. Nivas elevated the Eastern philosophies of how dance is consumed, perceived, and approached as a platform for social change.



(above, clockwise from top left) Juli Brandano, Lindsey Jones, Richard Move (photo © Patrick McMullan), Rosemary Candelario, Rachna Nivas, and María de los Angeles Rodríguez Jiménez. (top of page) Gabrielle Wills and Natasha Diamond-Walker in Richard Move's *Demolition Angels*, 2021. Photo by Slobodan Radjelović.

A Robbins Dance at a Pacific Northwest Ballet Gathering

by Miriam Landis

On January 29, 2023, Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB) piloted an open house honoring Holocaust Remembrance Day and presented the opening solo from Jerome Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering* as part of the event. Set to solo piano works by Frederic Chopin and dedicated in memory of lighting designer Jean Rosenthal, *Dances* was the first ballet that Robbins made for New York City Ballet upon his return to the company in 1969, following a 12-year absence during which he choreographed some of his best-known Broadway musicals. Seeing Jerome Robbins' choreography through this lens allowed us to consider an aspect of Robbins as an artist that isn't often examined: his Jewish heritage.

I asked PNB artistic director Peter Boal to explain further why he chose the *Dances at a Gathering* excerpt for the program. Peter said, "Jerry held that solo close to his heart. He felt he must teach it to the next generation and not assign it to someone else. As the dancer entered the performance space, Jerry described a grown man returning to his childhood playground or an old dancer revisiting their first ballet studio. What made me think of it for this event was his description of a World War II vet returning to the beaches of Normandy decades after D-day and remembering places where comrades fell, and friends' lives were lost. I can't speak for Jerry, but it seemed to me that his Jewish faith was ever-present and unsettling."

Given the ongoing antisemitism in our community today, keeping these stories and lessons learned is essential. The Robbins solo, seen through this light, tied in with the other piece on the program, PNB staff and choreographer Eva Stone's *Shahar...According to Plan. Shahar...* was inspired by the story of Jacqueline Morgenstern, the choreographer's cousin and one of the children of Bullenhusser Damm, who tragically lost their lives in the Holocaust. *Shahar* is the Hebrew word for dawn. In using the word as a departure point, Eva's piece aimed to bring illumination and hope to one of the darkest times in human history and utilize dance to explore concepts of life, family, humor, and resilience.

Peter Boal staged the *Dances at a Gathering* solo in preparation for the open house, and PNB principal dancer Kyle Davis rehearsed the PNB Professional Division students who learned it. Kyle chose to show the piece twice, the first without introduction or context and the second after he explained the history and significance. This allowed both students to perform and the audience to re-experience the piece through a new lens.

Sitting in the audience with my husband and children, I was struck by the legacy of Robbins' work in real time. The feeling of respect and remembrance that Robbins must have brought into the studio when he first choreographed the

solo lived on right there in the room. Two teenage students were beginning to explore this piece in performance, and it had been passed down to them through two generations of exceptional dancers. It was profoundly moving to experience the ballet and Jewish communities engaging and using dance to share difficult stories. It allowed me to reflect on how Robbins felt choreographing this solo and how his Jewish identity may have informed his approach.

As a Pacific Northwest Ballet School faculty member, former Miami City Ballet dancer, and a School of American Ballet and Ballet West Conservatory student, I appreciate opportunities to share my love of ballet with the other groups to which I belong, communities that haven't always had an equal place at the table.

From my childhood growing up as the daughter of the only rabbi in the state of Utah, I've always known what it feels like to be an outsider. One of the places I felt my otherness in ballet was in the annual tradition of *The Nutcracker*, where a growing menorah was nowhere to be found. I was the only Jewish dancer in Miami City Ballet from 1996 to 2000. So, when Peter Boal said Jerome Robbins' Jewish faith may have been ever-present and unsettling for the choreographer, I felt a kinship.

After my ballet career, I spent a decade earning a degree from Stanford University and developing a career in the publishing world as an author, editor, and bookstore employee, gaining extensive experience leading discussions in the literary community. My four children attended preschool at the local Jewish Community Center and are current religious school students at our Seattle synagogue, Temple De Hirsch Sinai, in preparation for their B'nai Mitzvahs. They are also current students at the PNB school. These personal connections and the desire to repeat Eva Stone's piece in a relevant venue inspired us to try something new and innovative. PNB Associate Artistic Director Kiyon Ross and the I.D.E.A. committee embarked on a more significant effort to build relationships with local Jewish organizations. The result gave me a unique chance to use my background in and out of the dance world.

As part of the open house, I moderated a panel discussion featuring Eva Stone and leaders from local Jewish organizations, including Pamela Lavitt, Director of Arts + Ideas at Stroum Jewish Community Center, Rabbi Samuel Klein of Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle (a modern dancer for 20 years and also a choreographer), Dee Simon, CEO of the Holocaust Center for Humanity, Beverley Silver of the Holocaust Center's Speakers Bureau, and Rabbi Daniel Weiner of Temple de Hirsch Sinai.

PNB Professional Division student Garrett Wooten, who performed the solo from *Dances at a Gathering*, remarked, "I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn and perform this beautiful solo. It's an honor to carry on Robbins' legacy as a part of the next generation of dancers." Garrett's sentiment demonstrated how the *Dances at a Gathering* solo became an incredible learning opportunity in this context. Watching and dancing bridge gaps and transcends words. PNB's open house imparted learning from past generations, brought a wider community together, and pointed us to a better tomorrow. ■

Miriam Landis is a Pacific Northwest Ballet School and Creation Dance Studio faculty member in Seattle, Washington. She is the author of the forthcoming middle-grade novel *Lauren in the Limelight* and two young adult novels, *Girl in Motion* and *Breaking Pointe*. She has been a professional ballerina with Miami City Ballet, a student at the School of American Ballet, a LitCamp fellow, an assistant editor at Simon & Schuster, Hyperion, and the Amazon Books team, and a blogger and open book club host for the indie bookstore Island Books. She lives on an island near Seattle with her husband and four kids. You can learn more about her at www.miriamlandis.com.



(left) Garrett Wooten rehearsing a solo from Jerome Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering* at Pacific Northwest Ballet. (right) Pacific Northwest Ballet Open House team: Eva Stone, Kyle Davis, Sarah-Gabrielle Ryan, Jenny Turner, Miriam Landis, Jackson Cooper, Lauren Kirchner, Tara Stepenberg, Will Moser, LiLi Pigott, Kiyon Ross, Naomi Glass, Ann Marie Caldwell, Kristen Ramer Liang, and Christine Mamer. Photos courtesy of Pacific Northwest Ballet.

(left to right) Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux, Paolo Bortoluzzi, Malika Sabirova, Violette Verdy, Muzofar Bourkhanov, Jerome Robbins, Antoinette Sibley, Anthony Dowell, Patricia McBride, Helgi Tomasson, and Carla Fracci in Spoleto, 1973.

Celebration

The Art of the Pas de Deux



In June 1973, Jerome Robbins choreographed *Celebration: The Art of the Pas de Deux* at the Festival of Two Worlds, in Spoleto, Italy. Calling it an “occasion piece,” Robbins created a ballet that featured some of the best dancers from around the world performing a series of pas de deux, framed by a prologue and an epilogue that he choreographed. The ten pas de deux were performed by five couples, each representing a different nation. For the Epilogue, couple succeeded couple until all were dancing simultaneously, though with different styles. The ballet was given four performances from June 29 through July 1, 1973.

Celebration: The Art of the Pas de Deux allowed Jerome Robbins to share his deep love of classical tradition and was a once-in-a-lifetime event: five couples in ten of the world’s most famous *pas de deux*, framed by a Robbins prologue and epilogue, and framed also by Rouben Ter-Arutunian’s elegant, rippling Chinese silk, all illuminated with harmony and tender care by Jennifer Tipton.

New York Times dance critic Clive Barnes summed it up, “What Mr. Robbins contributed, apart from a couple of duets and his inspiring presence, was the framework of the presentation, the sweetly effortless waltz introduction, and the wildly imaginative finale, concluding with all five couples onstage, literally in a celebration of the Pas de Deux.”

Premiere: June 29, 1973, Teatro Nuovo (The Festival of the Two Worlds), Spoleto, Italy

Scenery: Rouben Ter-Arutunian

Lighting: Jennifer Tipton

Costumes: Rouben Ter-Arutunian (also: Florence Klotz, Jean Guillerm, Anthony Dowell, Lila De Nobili, Rostislav Dobuzhinskii, William Pitkin, Robert O’Hearn, Vadim Ryndin, Barbara Karinska, Irene Sharaff)

Pianist: Jerry Zimmerman

Dancers: Patricia McBride and Helgi Tomasson (U.S.A.); Malika Sabirova and Muzofar Bourkhanov (U.S.S.R.); Antoinette Sibley and Anthony Dowell (England); Violette Verdy and Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux (France); Carla Fracci and Paolo Bortoluzzi (Italy); with Claudio Amarante, Ian Amos, Pino De Bella, Joseph Fontano, Bruno Fosco, Halldor Halgason, Tintino Nascimento, Gerard Puciato, Rodni Texas, Gian Carlo Tonani

Prologue

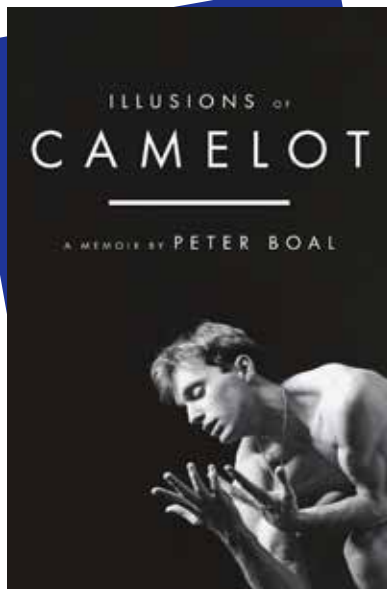
Music: Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (“Intrada” and “Waltz” from *Swan Lake*, Act I)
Choreography: Jerome Robbins

The Pas de Deux

1. “Bagatelle”
Music: Ludwig van Beethoven (from “Bagatelles for the Piano, Keyboard Works, Op. 4”)
Choreography: Jerome Robbins
2. “Grand Pas Classique”
Music: Daniel-François Auber (“Grand Pas Classique”)
Choreography: Victor Gsovsky
3. “Thaïs”
Music: Jules Massenet (“Meditation” from *Thaïs*, Act II)
Choreography: Frederick Ashton
4. “The Sleeping Beauty”
Music: Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (“Pas de Deux” from *The Sleeping Beauty*, Act III)
Choreography: Frederick Ashton after Marius Petipa
5. “Coppélia”
Music: Léo Delibes (“Pas de Deux” from *Coppélia*, Act III)
Choreography: Enrique Martinez
6. “La Sylphide”
Music: Hermann Lowenskjold (“Pas de Deux” from Act II), arranged by John Lanchbery
Choreography: Erik Bruhn, after August Bournonville
7. “Le Corsaire”
Music: Adolphe Adam (“Pas de Deux” from *Le Corsaire*)
Choreography: Galina Ulanova after Marius Petipa
8. “Don Quixote”
Music: Ludwig Minkus (“Grand Pas de Deux” from *Don Quixote*)
Choreography: Alexander Gorsky
9. “Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux”
Music: Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (“Pas de Deux” from *Swan Lake*, Act III)
Choreography: George Balanchine
10. “Afternoon of a Faun”
Music: Claude Debussy (“Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune”)
Choreography: Jerome Robbins

Epilogue

Music: Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (“Pas de Deux” from *Swan Lake*, Act II)
Choreography: Jerome Robbins (after Lev Ivanov)



Illusions of Camelot by Peter Boal

From the artistic director of the Pacific Northwest Ballet and former principal dancer for the New York City Ballet comes a memoir (published by Beaufort Books) about one artist's journey from boyhood to ballet. As a young boy finding his way from Bedford to the heart of New York City, Peter soon turns to ballet. Ultimately his passion becomes a beacon, leading him to work at the New York City Ballet as a teenager, living on his own while discovering the pitfalls and pleasures Manhattan has to offer. Peter's journey takes us to the start of a storied career as a dancer with the New York City Ballet and leaves us with insights into the unique path of an individual shaped by environment, circumstance, and family.

Peter Boal is the artistic director of Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle where he also serves as director of the PNB School. Prior to relocating to the Pacific Northwest, Peter was a Principal dancer with New York City Ballet and a faculty member for School of American Ballet. *Illusions of Camelot* is his first book.



Ballet student Peter Boal onstage with members of New York City Ballet in Jerome Robbins' *Mother Goose*, 1978. Photo by Martha Swope, courtesy of Beaufort Books.

News from The Jerome Robbins Foundation

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newsletter@jeromerobbins.org

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Select Upcoming Performances of Jerome Robbins Works

WEST SIDE STORY

(international tour directed by Lonny Price)

Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, Dublin, Ireland
June 12–24, 2023

Tokyu Theatre Orb, Tokyo, Japan
July 5–23, 2023

Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, France
October 20 – December 31, 2023

Deutsches Theater, Munich, Germany
January 4–14, 2024

Musical Theater, Basel
January 30 – February 4, 2024

WEST SIDE STORY

(directed by Francesca Zambello)

Lyric Opera of Chicago
June 2–25, 2023

NYCB ON AND OFF STAGE

(incl. excerpts from *Fancy Free / Firebird*)

New York City Ballet
Saratoga Performing Arts Center
July 18, 2023

FANCY FREE / FIREBIRD

New York City Ballet
Saratoga Performing Arts Center
July 21 & 22, 2023

IN THE NIGHT

Stars of American Ballet
Casa de Musica, Porto, Portugal
August 1, 2023

WEST SIDE STORY

(film directed by Steven Spielberg with live orchestra)

New York Philharmonic
David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City
September 12, 13, 14, 17, 2023

GLASS PIECES

Ballet Zurich
Zurich Opera House, Zurich, Switzerland
October 6, 8, 15, 20, 22, 27, 29 &
December 5, 8, 9, 2023

EN SOL (IN G MAJOR) / IN THE NIGHT / THE CONCERT

Paris Opera Ballet
Palais Garnier, Paris, France
October 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31 &
November 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 2023

FANCY FREE

New Jersey Ballet
Newark, New Jersey
November 2023

Cancellations or postponements are always possible.