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Jerome Robbins



Jean-Pierre Frohlich Stages *Fancy Free* for *Maestro*

Leonard Bernstein, one of the most important, influential composers and conductors in history, is the focus of *Maestro*, a film that opened in select theatres in November, prior to showing on Netflix, starting December 20, 2023. Bradley Cooper stars as Leonard Bernstein, with Carey Mulligan playing Bernstein's wife Felicia Montealegre. Mr. Cooper also co-wrote the screenplay with Josh Singer and directed the film.

Fancy Free, the ballet that on April 18, 1944, marked Jerome Robbins' debut as a choreographer at Ballet Theatre and Leonard Bernstein's debut as a ballet composer, is featured in a scene in *Maestro*. Jean-Pierre Frohlich, an advisory committee member of the Robbins Rights Trust who oversees New York City Ballet's productions of Jerome Robbins's repertory, staged sections of *Fancy Free* for the film. In October 2023, a phone conversation took place between Mr. Frohlich and the editor-in-chief of the Jerome Robbins newsletter regarding Frohlich's work on *Maestro*. Jean-Pierre Frohlich was in Paris at the time, in the process of staging an evening of Jerome Robbins works at the Paris Opera Ballet.

Gregory Victor You staged *Fancy Free* for *Maestro* on behalf of the Robbins Rights Trust, correct?

Jean-Pierre Frohlich Yes. They listed me as Ballet Master during the production period. I was the eyes of the Trust.

GV How much of *Fancy Free* did you stage for the film shoot?

J-PF The opening dance—although not all of it—and the rhumba solo, which Bradley Cooper dances a little bit of. And he can move. We rehearsed at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, and Bradley Cooper would come in and look at it and talk to the cinematographer about the camera angles. And then we filmed at a Broadway theatre. In the film, Leonard Bernstein's wife, Felicia, goes into a dream and imagines Lenny doing the rhumba. You see the sailor dancing the rhumba, then suddenly, the camera pans behind Felicia's head, and as it moves past her head you see Bradley onstage in *Fancy Free*, doing the rhumba and going toward the bar, to do all of the rhythmic tapping on the barstools. It looks really good.

GV Who were the dancers you worked with?

J-PF From New York City Ballet we cast Harrison Coll and Sebastian Villarini-Velez, and a dancer from San Francisco Ballet, Benjamin Freemantle.



Jerome Robbins in *Fancy Free*, 1944. Photo: New York Public Library Digital Collections.

GV I wonder if the success of *Maestro* will create a demand for *Fancy Free*?

J-PF Yes. Hopefully it will inspire people to want to see the ballet again.

GV Did you revisit any archival footage from the 1944 performance of *Fancy Free* in preparation for filming?

J-PF Not really, but I did try to capture the way they danced it then. If you look at the original, the dancers were kind of raw. They weren't as technically accomplished as ballet dancers are today. In those days you did both—you did ballet, and you did Broadway—and you were a showman. So, I tried to create a raw quality to it.

GV There's a real innocence to that archival footage of the original cast. And, considering they are silent films, there's also an uncanny musicality, even if it is at the expense of perfect technique.

J-PF Right. There was a kind of naivete, a kind of innocence.

GV When you first learned *Fancy Free*, who taught it to you?

J-PF It was Jerry who taught it to me.

GV How did that come about?

J-PF There was a Spring Gala at New York City Ballet and Misha [Baryshnikov] was part of the company at the time, and Mr. B and Jerry decided to include the three sailor solos as part of the performance. The rumba was Peter [Martins], the second solo was Misha, and they cast me as the first solo. I was in the corps de ballet at the time. And Jerry taught it to me.

GV Is that performance what led to a full restaging of the ballet?

J-PF Eventually, yes. After that, Misha went back to American Ballet Theatre, so when we restaged it at City Ballet, it was Peter, Bart Cook, and me. Then, when the younger cast came in—Christopher d'Amboise and Douglas Hay—I ended up joining that cast.

GV When you were filming, were you looking at it as a dance for film? Were you looking through the camera at all?

J-PF I would look through the camera. Bradley had certain ideas about how he wanted it to be filmed. He would sometimes ask my opinion, and then I might suggest something, or comment about a certain angle or something like that. I think he watched a lot of *Fancy Free* to get an idea of what he wanted. It wasn't so much about how the dancing looked, it was more about how Lenny was looking at the dance, and what was happening in that scene.

GV Jerry staged a very cinematic ballet. He choreographed the gestures and acting beats of the characters in a very specific manner, with an awareness of what the audience was seeing, and what they *should* be seeing, at every moment. After years of staging it in a proscenium setting, did you find that *Fancy Free* works especially well as a dance on film?

J-PF Absolutely, it does. It really resonates for the camera. It was filmed in black-and-white, by the way. It just pops out. Because of how Bradley filmed it, and because of the way they were dancing it, it really had that feeling of the 1940s.

GV So, what is it about *Fancy Free* that it has such staying power? The ballet has been in repertoires for 79 years now.

J-PF If you go to Fleet Week in New York City, and you look around, you'll see sailors in threes. *Fancy Free* is about youth, and it's about living life at that very moment—not getting ahead of yourself and not looking back on things. It's about the moment you're living in because you don't know what the future holds, especially when you're in the service. It also resonates because it's about relationships. It's about three sailors and about the girls they meet. It's about everyday life. The only thing that might look dated might be the costumes, but not because it's a time capsule. The colors just pop out, especially with the perspective of Oliver Smith's backdrop. The characters are a bit like cartoons, visually. It represents a time when life wasn't taken so seriously. These guys were in New York City for the first time, and they wanted to see all these things they've heard of. It's the same today, when people come to New York from out of town, they still look up at the tall buildings. And these sailors on 24-hour leave just might die in a week, who knows? But for now, they want to conquer New York.

GV Ah, optimism. Perhaps *Maestro* will win a few Oscars and it'll be time to brush up your *Dybbuk* notes for a sequel!

J-PF (laughing) You never know!



Bradley Cooper stars as Leonard Bernstein in *Maestro*. Photo: Netflix.

Jean-Pierre Frohlich was born in New York to French and Czechoslovakian parents and began his dance training at the School of American Ballet. As a child he danced the role of the Prince in George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* and in 1965, Balanchine created a role for him in his *Don Quixote*. In 1972, while a student at the School, he appeared in the premiere of Jerome Robbins' *Watermill*. Later that year he joined the New York City Ballet and in 1979 was promoted to Soloist. His Balanchine repertory included *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Puck), *Symphony in Three Movements*, *Agon*, and *Apollo*. He danced leading roles in Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering*, *Fancy Free*, *The Goldberg Variations*, *The Four Seasons*, and *Afternoon of a Faun*. Frohlich has been seen nationally on the "Live from Lincoln Center" broadcast of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the "Great Performances: Dance in America" broadcast of *Choreography by Jerome Robbins With The New York City Ballet*, and the 1987 ASCAP Celebration telecast, live from Wolf Trap.

Mr. Frohlich became a Repertory Director (ballet master) in 1990, assisting Mr. Robbins in staging many of his ballets, and now maintains and oversees his repertory at New York City Ballet. Also, Mr. Robbins appointed Mr. Frohlich to become a committee member for the Robbins Rights Trust, upon Robbins' death.

Mr. Frohlich has staged works for numerous companies including The Royal Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, and the Paris Opera Ballet, and is the recipient of three Isadora Duncan Dance Awards (1998, 2006, 2019).

In 2010 Mr. Frohlich was appointed Artistic Administrator of New York City Ballet's "MOVES" touring company. His *Varied Trio (in four)* had its New York premiere at Lincoln Center with the New York City Ballet in 2014 and is currently in the NYCB repertory. Mr. Frohlich has also choreographed and directed *HOME (revisited)*, a short dance narrative film. In 2015 Mr. Frohlich was awarded Officier des Arts et Lettres from the French Government's Ministry of Culture.



Robbins Rights Trust Repertory Director Jean-Pierre Frohlich on the set of "Fancy Free" during the filming of *Maestro*, 2023. Photo courtesy of Jean-Pierre Frohlich.

Luca Veggetti's *The Mourning Dove*

In 1966, the National Endowment for the Humanities gave Jerome Robbins a grant to establish an experimental theater group which became The American Theatre Laboratory. For two years in the workshop setting, Robbins and a small group of actors worked with various instructors, exploring music-theater techniques, including Noh drama. Robbins found clarification in the form, discovering room for expressiveness and shifts in character behind its masks of formality. During this time Jerome Robbins developed a project that used Noh theater techniques to explore the assassination of John F. Kennedy. That unfinished work was titled *The Mourning Dove*.

With his film *The Mourning Dove*, director and choreographer Luca Veggetti continues the work-in-progress begun by Robbins. *The Mourning Dove* was screened at The Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center's Bruno Walter Auditorium in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts in November 2023. The screening was followed by a conversation with Luca Veggetti and Saori Tsukada, moderated by Janet Wong.

***The Mourning Dove* (1966–67)**

by Jerome Robbins

Concept and direction: Luca Veggetti

Text: Jerome Robbins

Voice: Saori Tsukada

Music: Paolo Aralla

Cinematography: Stefano Croci

Space: Isamu Noguchi

Luca Veggetti describes the film: "*The Mourning Dove* is an unfinished playlet by Jerome Robbins in which he aligns the tragic death of John F. Kennedy—an event he felt could be perceived in time as of quasi-mythical nature—with the unique form of Noh, the Japanese theatrical tradition that Robbins regarded as a possible model for his own dramatic vision. The script and the spare poetry of his text mirror, in fact, the structure and patterns of a Noh play—an alignment that is to be intended as a way to express with extreme economy of means a subject of universal significance in words, dance, and music.

In a timeless setting that evokes the Kennedys' life on Cape Cod, a deserted beach where the debris of memory are washed ashore, Robbins achieves a ritualization of grief through the exchanges between the wandering figure of a woman/bird, a birdwatcher, and a chorus serving as a lyrical extension of the protagonist. By making use of Noh's conventions of recollection and re-enactment, and of its phantasmal and non-anthropocentric nature, he creates a suspended world of arresting images in a constant shift of narrative perspectives.

Though it is formally a film, this version is essentially an audio treatment of the play, or perhaps a hybrid between an audio-play and an imaginary work of dance theater, in which a single actress plays all the parts within a musical universe that aims at conjuring movement in our mind."

Image from *The Mourning Dove* of a space by Isamu Noguchi, concept and direction by Luca Veggetti. Photo by Stefano Croci.

An Interview with Director and Choreographer Luca Veggetti

What motivated you to work on *The Mourning Dove* in the first place?

The Mourning Dove brought together two long-standing sources of inspiration for me: the work and vision of Jerome Robbins, and Noh, the Japanese theatrical tradition I've been interested in and directly involved with for very many years.

What sort of research did you do for *The Mourning Dove*?

Given my reply to the previous question, not much more than what I've been studying and researching for many years. I had known the text of *The Mourning Dove* for many years, encountering it while studying Robbins' work at the ATL, a very inspiring vision for an experimental theater group.

Did Robbins work with a composer when he was developing the project?

According to what Amanda Vaill writes in her biography, Leonard Bernstein was to be the composer for *The Mourning Dove*. To what extent they discussed the project, I don't know, though, again, according to Amanda, Bernstein had made some sketches for it.

Did the music in your version, by Paolo Aralla, already exist, or was it composed for the project?

The music was composed for my version.

In his description, Robbins wrote that "there is no scenery." How have you dealt with that, with film being such a visual medium?

How I dealt with it, I suppose, becomes evident after viewing the film. The need for an "empty space" as one of the defining factors in engendering the viewer's imagination, was not only Robbins' own, but also one that became prominent in the vision of some of the theatrical masters in those years, such as Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski. I should add that Noh, as every Asian theatrical tradition, has no scenery, only costumes and a few props.

You credit Isamu Noguchi with providing the "space" in your film. What was the space, and how did you decide upon it?

The space in the film is a detail of a small circular sunken performing space/theater that Isamu Noguchi designed for a plaza that he and architect Kenzo Tange were commissioned to create in my hometown of Bologna. During my remote rehearsal process for *The Mourning Dove*, I was shooting a film in the same space, which is now in the digital collection of the Noguchi Museum in New York (www.noguchi.org/isamu-noguchi/digital-features/for-a-dance-never-choreographed/). The idea of using this theatrical space as a beautifully designed "stone beach" for *The Mourning Dove* emerged therefore during the shooting.

The sand on the beach is implicit in the paving stones on the ground. How long did you shoot in the space?

We shot for about six hours to get the time lapse you see in some sections of the film. We actually had to do it twice on two different days since a first take turned out to be unusable: too many birds flew over the space in the course of the six hours, and it was impossible to eliminate them (in the time lapse they become dots flashing on the screen).

Did your work on *Watermill* influence your work on *The Mourning Dove*?

As you know, the visions for both *Watermill* and *The Mourning Dove* stemmed from Robbins' experiments at the ATL. Having worked for so long on *Watermill*, certainly brought me a deeper understanding of the theater he was trying to achieve in those years.

How important is the mythic figure of JFK to *Mourning Dove*?

There is no mention of JFK in the body of the text, only in the dedication and in Robbins' written intentions for the play. I think that JFK and his tragic death can serve therefore as a powerful suggestion, but as a suggestion only, being that the play is really about memory and loss. I think that Robbins used the incident of Kennedy's death to construct a play of universal value, exploring the human condition through the convention of the world's oldest theatrical tradition.

What do you see as the next step in the development of *Mourning Dove*?

Naturally my wish is to stage *The Mourning Dove*. This film version, though it exists entirely in its own right, can in fact also be considered as a study for the stage version.

What is your ultimate vision for *Mourning Dove*? Does it include choreographing movement for it?

My vision for the staging of *The Mourning Dove*, given the form to which it refers, Noh, coincides to a large extent with what Robbins expressed in his intentions for the play: calling for an empty space and the use of economy, clarity, precision, ritual, and poetry. I envision an empty space, sculpted by light, on which an isolated playing area is marked by a square of sand.

The work calls for an actress-dancer playing against a small chorus/vocal ensemble (4–5 voices) and a single musician, sharing the stage. This universe exists within a dense web of relations in which every word, gesture, movement, and sound carries the significance of the text.

Naturally there are other possible configurations for this idea in terms of the size of the casting, down to the actress alone in the space, playing against her pre-recorded self as an off-stage entity. Though the one expressed above is probably the ideal.

Does the shadow's movement connote more than the passing of time?

There is no specific symbolism behind the shadow, though in a larger sense it mirrors the universal and cosmic nature of every Noh play, which Robbins clearly admires, the movement of the shadow being in fact nothing else but the effect of the earth's rotation.

What qualities in actress Saori Tsukada's voice made her the right choice for this film?

First, I would say her particular sensitivity to the subject and the text. The grain of Saori's voice seemed right to me on an intuitive level, also for its unique androgynous quality and her capacity to modulate it, which allowed for the different characters to be expressed naturally.

Did she deliver the text having already heard the soundtrack or having seen the imagery?

No, she did not, except for the very last section—the sort of final lamentation/aria—which we recorded last summer actually using the Robbins Foundation's office as a recording studio. For this final section, in fact, she "sang" with me conducting her while hearing the soundtrack. For the rest, the whole text was rehearsed and recorded at distance during the span of almost two years, having started at the very beginning of the pandemic and continued throughout the following periods of lockdown, with me being stuck in Italy and Saori in New York. It was a very long, very challenging, but also a very interesting process, through which we learned many things. We would basically have a rehearsal over Skype—with no screen, only audio—every week or every two weeks, experimenting with the style of delivery and the prosody. We would then record sections of it to get a sense. We might have recorded and re-recorded at least a dozen times in order to get to the final one. With the various recordings, my work with Paolo, the composer, started: trying to find a musical idiom and language that felt right for the work. To mimic the six century-old musical universe of Noh seemed from the start totally silly to Paolo and I, as much as it felt banal to use a more descriptive and naturalistic approach. We finally decided for a musical universe that in a certain hidden sense suggests the birth of Opera in the 16th century, with its "recitar cantando"—Noh being by our standard a sort of danced opera—while using as the sole instrument a very ancient one: an Iranian Tar. In other words, I needed to find a transposition, just as Robbins did in relation to the structure of a Noh play.

Most effective is your placement of Robbins' description—after the text is delivered, but with a significant period of audio and imagery yet to come. The ending becomes a personal, almost private, experience. How did you decide to structure the film in that way?

Ah, so happy you noticed it and described it this way! This dramaturgical device is actually borrowed from Noh. I inserted it into Robbins' textual structure since he wrote the text respecting the form and patterns of a Noh play quite precisely. In Noh it is called Ai-Kyogen and it is usually scrapped when Noh is performed abroad, being a purely textual/vocal part. The Ai-Kyogen comes at three-quarters of a play, just before the final and climactic dance, and after what has been until then a fairly abstract and stylized development, and in a chanted language that, by its style of delivery and archaic nature, is hard to understand even for Japanese. The Ai-Kyogen is an actor of a different type, he walks onto the stage and sits, then tells the audience, in a rather colloquial and naturalistic language, the storyline of the play and its antecedents. One is then led to consider what has been played until that moment with a new enriched sense, ready to experience the final section of the play with new eyes and ears.

Questions by **Gregory Victor**

Luca Veggetti, born in Bologna, is a choreographer and stage director. Turning his interests toward contemporary music and experimental forms, he has collaborated with some of today's most important ensembles and composers. His work has been produced and presented by leading theaters, companies, and museums around the world, including Works & Process at the Guggenheim, The Joyce Theater, The Miller Theater, The Drawing Center, The Martha Graham Dance Company, The Japan Society, BAM, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Noguchi Museum, Oriente Occidente Dance Festival, Mart, La Cité de la Musique in Paris, Suntory Hall and the Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo.



“It’s not just about the steps” An Interview with Lourdes Lopez, Artistic Director of Miami City Ballet

In September 2023, Charles Adelman, a member of the Board of Directors of Miami City Ballet [MCB], as well as a member of the committee for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, met with Lourdes Lopez, Artistic Director of Miami City Ballet. They discussed the company’s upcoming season, as well as Ms. Lopez’s determination to pass on to MCB dancers the insights she gained from George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins while she was a dancer at New York City Ballet. What follows are highlights of their conversation.

Charles Adelman Lourdes, we were just in company class and the dancers have been back for a month, and I must say they look wonderful. What are they currently working on, and working towards?

Lourdes Lopez Thank you so much for inviting me to do this interview, Charlie. You and I go way back so I feel very comfortable right now. With the dancers right now it’s all *In the Upper Room*. They started rehearsing this last week and after this week they still have two more weeks, so it’s a whole month of rehearsing Twyla Tharp’s *In the Upper Room*.

CA That sounds great. We’re all looking forward to it. When does the season begin?

LL The season begins October 20th, and it’s what always happens to me. On paper it, of course, always looks okay, but it’s when I start to visualize it that I get excited about it. We open with *Serenade*. The season is a tribute to Balanchine, upon the fortieth anniversary of his death. So, we open with *Serenade*, then we have *Sea Change*, a new work by Jamar Roberts, who is a native of Miami and has never done a work for Miami City Ballet, and then Twyla’s *In the Upper Room*. I think it’s a very cool program. It’s very broad. A broad whole spectrum is there.

CA I’d like to explore a little bit your experiences as Artistic Director of MCB. When you were a dancer, did you ever envision becoming an Artistic Director of a ballet company someday?

LL No. Never. It never crossed my mind. It was never a goal of mine. It was never a wish of mine. I wanted to be involved in the arts. I wanted to be involved with dance, but in what capacity or position I didn’t know — but never as Artistic Director. As you know, that came about when Robert Gottlieb was the search committee of one for Miami City Ballet and suggested my name.

CA Well, this week is the eleventh anniversary of the week you started as Artistic Director of MCB. I think everyone would like to know what you consider to be your primary responsibilities as Artistic Director, and how your perception of them has changed over the past eleven years.

LL I feel that I’ve got two responsibilities, and they sometimes change priorities. One responsibility is, obviously, the dancers. They are the heart and soul of the company and what we put out there on our stages. The other responsibility is the audience, because they are the ones who are in the theater. They’ve paid to see something, and what that something is, we have to deliver, and we have to deliver through the dancers that we have. Those are the two things that I kind of keep in mind. I have many other responsibilities, putting together programs that speak to both the dancers and the audience, keeping the Miami City Ballet fiscally sound, and making sure that the Miami City Ballet School is attracting and producing students both for Miami City Ballet, but also for the rest of the dance world. But it’s really grounded on those two views, dancers and audience. For the dancers, I ask myself who are the dancers that are coming in and that are out there on stage, what do they look like, how are they dancing, what is the culture around the organization and, really, how are they viewing their own responsibilities as artists. And then the audience — because we’re here for them. You know, Balanchine used to say, “We’re selling ice in the winter.” We are presenting something that we want them to come to, and whatever that something is has got to be at a very high level.

CA One of your primary responsibilities as Artistic Director is to design the performance seasons. What are your goals in designing the seasons? How do you balance the mission of presenting Balanchine and Robbins masterpieces with putting on recent work — especially emerging and new choreographers?

LL It’s a process that takes me a very, very long time. Months and months. I put something in place, then I go back to it, and I change it, and then I go back, and then I put it away, and then I go back to it, and I change it. Even, sometimes until



the bitter end, I take a ballet and I replace it. It's not something that I take lightly. Maybe it's something that I feel I don't do well, right, and therefore there's anxiety around it because it is something that I'm putting in place for the dancers, something that I'm putting in place for the audience, and also something that I'm putting in place that represents Miami City Ballet. I think that's why I'm so obsessive about programming. I approach it this way. There's always a full-length — there's always one work that is the cornerstone for the season. What is that? Is it *Jewels*? Is it *Don Quixote*? Is it *Swan Lake*? Is it *Giselle*? So, what is the cornerstone, and then make a decision of where the season goes from there. Then, the next things are the Balanchine, and the Robbins works, and the [Paul] Taylors as well, because they are the DNA of this company. They taught these dancers to dance and so, therefore, I don't want to remove them. I don't think I should. And so, what are the works I want to do? Are there some Balanchine and Robbins works that they haven't done? There was a real commitment that I made to increasing the Robbins rep at Miami City Ballet. So, what are the ones that I want to bring back for the first time? And then, looking at the dancers that I have and asking, "Can I do this with them? Do I have the dancers to do this?" And then, once I've placed those, then I start to fill it in with other choreographers — [Alexei] Ratmansky, [Justin] Peck, [Christopher] Wheeldon — that are known choreographers, and then, what are the young ones out there that are not known, and where do they fit in? And then there's one more thing, which is "Can our dancers dance that way?" It takes a while for a company to develop a style. Sometimes with the style of a specific choreographer — emerging or non-emerging — the company may not be ready for that specific style yet. It might be a year or two from now, or sometimes that's just not the way the company moves. That's what I keep in mind as well, so there's a lot that's going on in creating these programs. And it's also the size of the company. Sometimes I worry that if you have these smaller works, what happens to the corps? That's what's so great about doing a Balanchine or a Robbins. They use the corps. They use dancers. When the curtain comes down and if you're a corps dancer, you've danced. You've done something. As opposed to a ballet with only five or six people — as lovely as it may be — you're not using the company. I feel like I'm not keeping my responsibility of making them better dancers.

CA Interesting. I never really think that much about the importance of seeing a broad range of the dancers in the company on the stage. It's always more enriching. No question about it.

LL And they feel it. They know. There was a program last season — I forget what it was — where I couldn't figure it out — it was like a puzzle, and I couldn't figure



Miami City Ballet Artistic Director Lourdes Lopez. Photo: George Kamper.

top: Miami City Ballet dancers in Jerome Robbins' *Antique Epigraphs*. Photo: © Alexander Iziliaev.

out any other way of doing it—where the corps wasn't dancing. And it wasn't fun for them. I could sense it. They weren't doing what they were born to do. And I don't blame them.

CA How do you find the balance between having artistic control over the company and nurturing the company? Is there ever a conflict?

LL It's never a conflict because I think having artistic control *is* nurturing. I feel that at the time the Board hired me it was for a specific reason, which was to really take Miami City Ballet to its next level, its next phase. Ballet companies—any organization—should not stay stagnant. They should constantly be evolving, to be able to have a relationship with the communities that they serve. That community is constantly changing and, therefore, any artistic not-for-profit has to respond to that. That's what I feel my responsibility as an Artistic Director also is. So, it's not a conflict. I'm nurturing it. I'm bringing it up as I think I should, in respect to the dance community, but also Miami.

CA You mentioned the evolution of your role. Has your approach to your responsibilities remained fairly similar over that period, or has it changed over time?

LL I think that it *has* changed in a way. It's not that it's gotten easier or harder, but it's a different company than the one that I walked into. By that, I mean that it feels secure. It feels like it's a company that has understood its brand, that has understood its place in the community, and that has understood that it could actually dance anything. When I first came in, I would see them doing works by Balanchine and Twyla Tharp, but very little Robbins, and it was one of my goals that I would start to bring Jerry's repertoire into Miami City Ballet. I realized that these are three very different choreographers, and the dancers were able to kind of switch—and so it gave me a hint as to where I could take the company. By bringing in different repertory, by bringing in different works by different choreographers, because in the end that's really what feeds them, variety. That's what feeds these dancers, and it's really what feeds audiences as well.

CA From what I've seen, the dancers' responsiveness and ability comes from the top down, because under your leadership we've seen them do—within the last year and a half—Martha Graham, José Limon, and new works by emerging choreographers, and they have really shone in those roles.

LL Charlie, you know so much about dance, and you've seen so much, so it's great for me to hear this from you, because I do think you're right. I think the love and respect that the artistic staff has for these ballets and these works and how we rehearse them, does influence the dancers.

CA I've watched you lead class, and I've seen how the dancers respond when you quote Mr. Balanchine. They really hang on, not just your instructions, but on all of the additional information you're able to convey from your experience. How would you describe your communication style with the dancers?

LL I always like to think of it as an open door. First of all, I teach what I know—I think everybody does—so, the same stories that had an impact on me, from either Balanchine or Jerry, are stories that I want to tell them. Certainly, whatever information that I have about their ballets I want to pass down, because when you count however many of us there are who worked with those two geniuses in that company, who are now leading ballet organizations, there are very few of us. I feel a huge responsibility to deliver what I know from those two giants to our dancers.

CA What were some of the things that you learned in ballet class that have helped you?

LL I think the most valuable thing that I learned was that it's not going to happen right away, that there are some things that you're not going to be able to do right away, and that it is a process. It's like a delayed gratification, but that if you stick to it and you do this every day—not every other day, not every two days, but literally every day—and you choose something to work on, you do get better. You do improve. I think it's the desire to get to that next level that separates artists. I remember when I was dancing, I asked Balanchine, literally asked him, "When am I going to be dancing like your ballerinas?" I didn't ask for a ballet... I didn't ask for a role. I said, "I need to know when I'm going to be able to dance like the dancers that I see onstage—Kay [Mazzo], Merrill [Ashley], Suzanne [Farrell], and Patti [McBride]..." And he looked at me and he said, "Have you ever listened to Andrés Segovia?" The classical guitarist. I said, "No, I haven't," and he said, "Listen to him." He said, "You hear every, single, note. It's beautiful. Every note, you hear." And I said, "Okay, I will," and I'm thinking to myself, *That still hasn't answered my question, right?* And so, he said "So, how do you get there? Every day you go to class. Every day you do your tendus. Every day you do your jumps. Every day you do more, and more, and more. Every day, every day, every day..." And then he said, "And then, one day, you're going to wake up, and you're going to be there. And you're not going to know how you got there." And that's exactly what happened. You go in there every day. You're working, you're working, you're working, you're working. And then, you wake up one day, and you think to yourself, *I'm actually a principal dancer!* It's happened before you even know it.

CA You're from a generation of dancers who got to work directly with George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. Were you aware of the importance of this at the time?

LL No. And I often think of this. I often think of how very few of us are left who really had those two geniuses in the building. Those two geniuses who were very, very different. *Very* different—in how they spoke, in how they rehearsed, in how they coached, in their ballets, and in what they expected—really, almost yin and yang. I think it created a generation of dancers who were very pliable. We moved effortlessly between these two men. I think about this often.



Miami City Ballet dancers with choreographer Jamar Roberts rehearsing Roberts' *Sea Change*, 2023. Photo: © Alexander Iziliaev.

CA Having each of them up at the front of the room, what were some of the things that you learned from each of them, with their very different approaches, that you try to pass on to your dancers?

LL I think my approach now is a bit of a hybrid of both. With Mr. B, there were two Mr. Bs. There was one in the class that he taught. He was very specific, very technical. It was really about the technique. It was Andrés Segovia. It was, “I need to hear every note. I need to see every step.” And there was a way of doing it. There was a right way and a wrong way of doing it. But with Balanchine, when you got into the rehearsal or into a performance, all of that was shoved to the side. He wanted to see *you*. He wanted to see what you were going to do with it. He wasn’t obsessed with a specific step. Timing, yes. Musicality, yes. But it’s not what interested him. What interested him was the personality of the dancer in front of him, and what he or she was going to do with the role. Jerry, who I did take classes with when we were in China, was not necessarily a technician. It’s not about the fifth position, or the line of the leg, or how high the arabesque. With Jerry, it was two things. Number one, he gave you boundaries. He gave you parameters, so you had to find yourself within those parameters—you couldn’t step out of them—and you had to create a specific aura for every role that you did. In *Dances at a Gathering*, the “green girl” is different from the “blue girl,” and different from the “purple girl.” And that’s different from “The Novice” in *The Cage*, and *that’s* different from *Fancy Free*—whichever girl you choose. With every ballet of Jerry’s it was like theater—you had to create an aura about the role that you were taking on, within the parameters that he gave you. So, that was what was fascinating about both of them.

CA Can you communicate that feeling to your dancers?

LL I can and I do, but I take a little bit of both. My approach is a little bit of a hybrid, which is, “Yes, I’m interested in the musicality, and I’m interested in seeing who you are, but you’ve got to bring me into your performance. But it also depends on what they’re doing. Even in the Balanchine works, even in *Concerto Barocco*, for example, or *Allegro Brillante*, a dancer has to use their imagination to bring that audience in. It’s not just about the steps.

CA Can you describe the first time you worked with Jerome Robbins?

LL It was *Dybbuk*. I had literally just gotten into the company. Somebody was out and it was the finale of *Dybbuk*, and he sort of pointed at me and said, “You step in.” And I had been called to the ballet, to learn it—in the corps, in the back—but nothing specific. I hadn’t been taught it. And it was terrifying, because I was basically following two girls—one in front and one in back—just kind of following them. So, that was really the first time. And then the first time that I actually worked with him was when he brought back *Interplay*. It was wonderful because I still remember him talking to us, saying, “You have to think of yourself as schoolkids. You’re in a backyard, competing with each other. You have to look across and

you have to get mad because they’re getting better than you, and then you have to do it—it’s a competition—” There was a way that he would tell a story about even that. All of Jerry’s ballets are this way. They’re all characters that are feeling something or doing something. It’s always a situation. You know, he was a taskmaster, but it was really valuable. I remember after I did my very first Sugarplum Fairy, Jerry came up to me and he said, “You know, you’re dancing the way you think someone else wants you to dance,” and he sort of walked away. I stood there in my green tutu, and then I went to my dressing room, trying to figure out, *what did he mean by that?* But I knew what he meant. It was Lourdes dancing like I think someone else wants me to dance, as opposed to *how Lourdes wants to do Sugarplum*. But it takes you a while to get there.

CA You danced in the premiere of *Brandenburg*, Robbins’ final ballet, in 1997. In this work, he created a duet for you and Nikolaj Hübbe, that has been described as “mysterious.” What can you tell us about your experience in that piece?

LL *Brandenburg* was really a very bittersweet—I would say, for me, specifically—experience. Usually, you’d hear rumors about whether someone was creating a new ballet, but we had heard nothing. Then, all of a sudden, there is a very late rehearsal posted—I think, 5 to 6:30 in the practice room, which was a tiny little space at the, then, New York State Theater—for Nikolaj, myself, and Jerry. I forget who the pianist was. And it just said, “New Ballet.” This was a good year and a half before he did anything else on the ballet. We walked in and he started working on this pas de deux where he said, “I don’t want you guys to touch. I’m trying to figure out if I can create a pas de deux where you don’t touch.” Then, we worked on it for some time—a couple of weeks—and then, it stopped. I can’t remember if he finished it or not. I don’t think he finished it. Much later, it came back, and all of a sudden it was this new ballet called *Brandenburg*, and then there was going to be another pas de deux, and then a finale, and then more people, and then, all of a sudden, it had a life in it. So, he walked in—and I want to say that Victor [Castelli] was the Rehearsal Director, and Jean-Pierre [Frohlich]—and in these rehearsals he was trying to figure out, “Can I do this? Can I have two people in a pas de deux who never touch?” And eventually, we do, we *do* touch. It seemed that he was trying to create another *Afternoon of a Faun* with the pas de deux. A very mysterious relationship that doesn’t quite work because we both separate at the end. There’s a wonderful moment where my leg is wrapped around Nikolaj, and I remember Jerry asking, “How can you get out of that without letting go? Is there a way, if he bends back—” And I’m holding on for dear life as Nik bends back, and I said to Jerry, “The only way is if I *rond de jambe* this leg behind me, because I’m totally off”—and then he kept the step. I think he was trying to build that tension of two people who just can’t seem to connect at the level that they want to connect. And there were times when he said, “It has to be like *Giselle*. Like you don’t see him, but you feel him.” There were a lot of things going on in his head. And it *is*—it’s a very eerie, almost uncomfortable, pas de deux.



Miami City Ballet dancers in George Balanchine’s *The Nutcracker*®. © George Balanchine Trust. Photo: © Alexander Iziliev.

right: Miami City Ballet Artistic Director Lourdes Lopez rehearsing George Balanchine's *Serenade*. © The George Balanchine Trust. Photo: © Alexander Iziliaev.

facing page: Alexander Kaden, Ariel Rose, and Damian Zamorano in Jerome Robbins' *West Side Story Suite*. © The Robbins Rights Trust. Photo: © Alexander Iziliaev.



CA You danced in quite a number of Robbins ballets, including *Fancy Free*, *Moves*, *I'm Old Fashioned*, and *Dances at a Gathering*. You've also had MCB present these pieces, other than *Moves*. What can you share about your experience dancing those ballets, and how did that experience inform your presentation of them by MCB?

LL Each one was different, but the process, the approach that Jerry had, was always the same. For example, *Fancy Free*. I was in that first cast when he brought *Fancy Free* to New York City Ballet in 1980. I was the girl with the red purse. He called a rehearsal and we all walked in the studio—it was Peter [Martins] and Bart [Cook] and Jean-Pierre [Frohlich] and Judi [Fugate] and Delia [Peters] and I—and we sat down, and he started telling us about New York back in the 1940s, during World War II, and what life was like. The sailors out on the street and how joyful it was when the war was over. And we're sitting there. We walked into a rehearsal for *Fancy Free*, thinking we were going to learn steps, and we weren't learning any steps, we were sitting on the floor. He's sitting us down talking to us about what *Fancy Free* is about. And then he said, "All of you are characters. All of you are real people. And you have to come up with a name. You have jobs, you might or might not have families, you have friends, you have bars that you like to go to, you are people with personalities with likes and dislikes." The next day, we learn a little bit. The next day, Stephanie [Saland] and I, we walk back into rehearsal, and he is working with the three sailors, and he looks at me and asks, "Where are you coming from?" And I thought, *I'm late*, and I looked at the clock. And I thought to myself, *Am I late*, and I looked at the clock on the wall and realized I wasn't late and knew right away what he was asking me. He wasn't telling me I was late to rehearsal; he was asking the character. So, I turned around and I said, "I'm coming from work. I work at a bank. I'm going to the beauty salon to have my hair done." I came up with some story. And he had a little smile on his face because that's what he wanted. He wanted an understanding that once you walked into that ballet studio, you were the character.

CA *Dances at a Gathering* has always been one of my favorite ballets. What was it like dancing in that piece?

LL It's the kind of ballet where the curtain goes up, and you understand that you're in a great ballet. All choreographers have those kinds of works, and dancers feel it. You just understand that *Dances at a Gathering* is a masterpiece. No matter what role you do in it. It's very different. Very isolating, though not individually isolating. You just feel that you're alone in the theater, with no one else except the other dancers on stage with you, and that you're the only ones in the theater. There's no audience, no stagehands, not even musicians, just dancers and music. It's the oddest thing in the world and I think it's what he wanted. As a dancer you do get the feeling that you are alone in the theater, in your own world and it's wonderful. It's like no other ballet I've ever done. The rehearsals were very

intense because he was very into it. He was into the specifics of the steps—not technically, but that they were done *with* the music, not just *to* the music, and executed how he wanted them, and within the character, with the intent he desired. He was very specific about the group relating and looking at each other. *Really* looking at each other. It was a lot, and it was a wonderful experience.

CA I think it was that piece that made me think of Chopin's music in a completely different way. Then, to go from there to *In the Night* and *Other Dances* created a whole different world for me.

LL I would always think about what it was about Chopin that spoke to Jerry. I wonder whether growing up at Ballet Theatre and always hearing *Les Sylphides* might have done something, because there's something about Chopin's music that Jerry just *really* understood. It was in him.

CA He illustrated that music. Very intensely.

LL Yes. Exactly.

CA When Miami City Ballet performed Robbins' *Circus Polka* as part of the company's Jerome Robbins Celebration in 2018, you performed the role of The Ringmaster. It was a wonderful surprise. It was a role that Robbins created for himself, and it was also the first time a woman had ever danced the role. Did any remembered qualities of Robbins inform your performance in that piece?

LL No, I never saw him do it at all. I only saw pictures of it. But I must say, it's everything he's about. It's about that comedic timing, it's about not overdoing it, keeping it real. You're the Ringmaster. You're bringing people in. And these are really your little elephants. Your tigers. You have to really be intentional about it, so you want to be stern, but not too stern. Everything is also about that big smile of Jerry's that he had when he would go onstage. That was in my head, but I never saw him do it.

CA In this past season, the company performed Robbins' *West Side Story Suite*, *Afternoon of a Faun*, and *Antique Epigraphs*. *West Side Story Suite* for the second time. What prompted you to bring each of these ballets into the company's repertoire?

LL *West Side* for two reasons. One is because I saw what it did at New York City Ballet, just in terms of how exciting it was for those dancers—I was supposed to be in it, but I wasn't—how exciting it was for the dancers to learn and experience musical theater.

CA You're speaking about when it premiered in 1995—

LL Yes. At New York City Ballet. It was just so exciting as a ballet dancer to be in a musical theater production. And I think that's what Jerry intended. It's different, but you learn a lot. I understood that and I wanted to bring it to these dancers



here. But, also, for Miami City Ballet it kind of makes sense because we are, sort of, that half Hispanic and half American. We are that company that has so many of both. The scary thing was whether there were any singers within Miami City Ballet, but we found that, yes, we had some singers. And it's an audience hit. You put *West Side Story*—and it's a little bit like *Swan Lake*—it's a name, a title, that people understand and recognize and want to see.

CA That's one of the things I was interested in. New York City loves the piece for different reasons because it *is* New York. But it seems like such a natural, given the Miami milieu. Was it your experience that it spoke to the Miami community?

LL Oh, Miami loved it. Actually, we've done it now three times. They've loved it. Every time. And I don't think it's just Miami. It has a great storyline, it has great music, and great choreography. It's just this perfect trifecta.

CA You briefly mentioned a tour that you were engaged in with Jerry. In 1981 he chose a group of New York City Ballet dancers to become the Jerome Robbins Chamber Dance Company, which traveled to China as part of a State Department cultural agreement. You were in the group, and you performed in Beijing, Shanghai, and Canton. What can you tell us about that experience?

LL It was the hardest four weeks of my life, because it was right after the doors opened in China. It was just, for everybody, a really, really difficult trip. Difficult circumstances, difficult stages, difficult everything. As you can imagine. You're going into a country that has not seen the Western world in years. But I think back on it now—I think we all think back on it now—as probably one of the most exciting tours ever done. I mean ever done. You really understood the cultural differences. For example, one of them is that as performers we applaud the audience for coming to see us. Not the other way around.

CA Speaking of the audience, it's pretty clear that they had never seen anything like this before. Ever.

LL Ever.

CA Do you recall what their reaction was?

LL It was hard to tell because the whole idea is that they're not applauding. You're thanking them for coming to see you. It was interesting. I think we did *Faun*, and excerpts from *Dances at a Gathering*, and some of Mr. B's—we might have done *Tarantella* and *Tschaikovsky Pas de Deux*—and I forget what else, maybe the pas de deux from *In G Major*. Each of those ballets had a synopsis in the program that was written by someone—like a story—because they had never seen abstract or neoclassical ballet. So, they wanted to make sure that the audience related to what they were seeing. I remember we met with the State Department. They came and spoke to us at the State Theater about how to conduct ourselves. What to do, what not to do. It was an extraordinary trip, but very hard.

CA Would you ever consider taking a group of Miami City Ballet dancers abroad, such as to Latin America?

LL There was an interview that I did when I first arrived in Miami eleven years ago that talked about wanting to take Miami City Ballet to Latin America on a tour because I just think that number one, we're the gateway. If you're in Latin America, Miami is the gateway to the United States. Our relationship there, because of that for so many years—they really know us. They know who Miami City Ballet is, and they know our dancers. It hasn't quite happened yet, but hopefully soon.

CA We should try to develop a plan for how one makes something like that happen.

LL Can you imagine how impactful this would be for the region?

CA What is your vision for MCB?

LL I can't say that I have a specific 'vision' for MCB. As I mentioned earlier, my goals and responsibilities are about providing the best works for our dancers and audiences from the various choreographers and artists that are out there. I have an interest in putting the highest quality of dance on our stages because only then, will dancers evolve as artists and audiences be moved, hopefully. This means looking at older repertoire to dance and bringing young and emerging new artists who are moving the art form forward in important ways.

Lourdes Lopez became Artistic Director of Miami City Ballet in 2012, bringing with her a nearly 40-year career in dance, television, teaching, and arts management. She is a member of the Ford Foundation's Board of Trustees, marking the first time an artist was elected to serve on its board and is presently serving her second term on that board. She is a recipient of the prestigious Jerome Robbins Award for her years in dance and has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts. She has received numerous Hispanic heritage awards, including the Casita Maria Gold Medal of Honor, the American Immigration Law Foundation, and Ballet Hispanico's prestigious, *Toda una Vida Lifetime Achievement Award*. Ms. Lopez co-founded The Cuban Artists Fund and in 2016 was invited to join President Obama's historic trip to Cuba as a member of the cultural delegation to assist in the development of future artistic collaborations between the United States and Cuba.

Ms. Lopez has become one of the ballet world's most prominent and accomplished contributors. *Dance Magazine* named her a 2018 recipient of its prestigious Dance Magazine Awards, choosing Lopez for her "...admirable stewardship of Miami City Ballet, while also embracing the local culture and community of Miami," and as "...an exemplary leader, someone whom dancers look up to and are inspired by."

Charles Adelman is a retired attorney living in New York City. He is a member of the board of trustees of Miami City Ballet and the Joyce Theater Foundation, as well as a member of the Committee for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. He was chairman of the board of Morphoses, of which Lourdes Lopez was Director. He and his wife, Deborah, are long-time ballet-goers and had the pleasure of watching Ms. Lopez dance in many Balanchine and Robbins roles.







Peter Pan Flies Again... On Tour

***Peter Pan* has been delighting audiences of all ages for close to 70 years. It is now embarking on a national tour, with a new version of the book by celebrated playwright Larissa FastHorse, based on the original adaptation by Jerome Robbins, from the play by Sir James M. Barrie. Directed by Lonny Price and choreographed by Lorin Latarro, the new production will address its depiction of Native Americans, while continuing to thrill audiences with the classic tale and songs that have been beloved for generations.**

The musical features music by Morris “Moose” Charlap, lyrics by Carolyn Leigh, additional lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, and additional music by Jule Styne. The score includes iconic and timeless songs, among them, “I’m Flying,” “I Gotta Crow,” “I Won’t Grow Up,” and “Neverland.”

“I am thrilled to be part of bringing *Peter Pan* to life for a new generation,” said Larissa FastHorse. “If you loved this musical before, you will still see the show that enchanted you, while discovering a *Peter Pan* that everyone can enjoy, without harm, for many years to come.”

Director Lonny Price adds, “*Peter Pan* is one of the great treasures of the American Musical Theatre. The show nurtures and inspires the imagination of its audience and reminds us to keep alive the child within us all.”

Sixteen-year-old Nolan Almeida will play the iconic role of Peter Pan. Joining him will be Cody Garcia as Captain Hook; Hawa Kamara plays Wendy and Raye Zaragoza is Tiger Lily. Joining them will be Shefali Deshpande as Mrs. Darling, Kurt Perry as Smee, William Foon and Micah Turner Lee alternate as John, Reed Epley and Jayden Guarneri alternate as Michael. The ensemble includes Charles Antenen, Jonah Barricklo, Eric Allen Boyd, Christina Hélène Braa, Brandon Gille, Ryan Perry Marks, Michael Marrero, Kenny Ramos, Hannah Schmidt, Kiara Williams. The swings are Tony Collins, Bailey Frankenberg, Leo Gallegos and Cheyenne Omani.

Introducing the production’s cast, director Lonny Price said, “Nolan Almeida as Peter Pan embodies all the beautiful contradictions of Peter. He’s an extraordinarily gifted young actor, a wonderful singer and nothing short of magical. Cody Garcia as Captain Hook is utterly modern, surprising and one of the most engaging actors I’ve ever worked with. I also want to celebrate Hawa Kamara, making her professional debut as Wendy! A wildly charismatic young actress, who’s as talented as she is beautiful. And rounding out this sensational group is Raye Zaragoza as Tiger Lily—a brilliant multi-faceted recording artist and actress. This company is simply going to blow people away and I cannot wait for audiences across the country to fall in love with each of them.”

Orin Wolf, who is producing the tour, was the first recipient of The T Fellowship—a collaboration between theatre professionals and Columbia University created to “encourage, support and develop a new generation of creative theatrical producers.” The T Fellowship—originally named in honor of T. Edward Hambleton and later renamed The Prince Fellowship in honor of Harold Prince—was co-founded by Geraldine Stutz, Harold Prince, and Ed Wilson. Mr. Wolf was also a Geraldine Stutz Fellow in 2007.

Just keep an open mind, and then suddenly you’ll find...

Playwright Larissa FastHorse Adapts *Peter Pan* for Our Time

While *Peter Pan*’s adventures represent a fantastic, imaginative world for many, for others J.M. Barrie’s stories are seen as promoting racist stereotypes. The most prominent is the character of Tiger Lily, the fictional Native American princess of Neverland. Using words like “savages” and “redskins” to describe Tiger Lily and her tribe, Barrie also invented a mock Native American language to give voice to the characters. Most significantly, in Barrie’s novel *Peter and Wendy*, is this passage, referring to Peter Pan: “The great white father,” he would say to them in a very lordly manner, as they grovelled at his feet, “is glad to see the Piccaninny warriors protecting his wigwam from the pirates.” Allegedly, *The Great White Father* was a name that Barrie had originally considered for the play. While Barrie’s depiction of Tiger Lily and her community is problematic, it reflected the age in which the work was created. These being different times, with a new adaptation, *Peter Pan* continues as an adventure for the audiences of today and tomorrow.

Here are playwright Larissa FastHorse’s responses to some questions about the new adaptation.

What inspired you to create a new adaptation of *Peter Pan*?

Honestly, I was approached by the producer after most of the team had been assembled. I have said before that as a Native American woman, I had no interest in *Peter Pan* and immediately said “no.” My agent asked me to read the version they wanted adapted—the Jerome Robbins version—before turning it down. I had never read it, so that seemed fair. I read it over the weekend and by Monday I had to say “yes.” There is so much laughter and magic in it. There is so much good complication and relevance. And the music is timeless. I saw that we didn’t need to reinvent this show, we simply needed to make sure it no longer caused harm. Of course, I was naive. The first task I had was to take a nearly three-hour, two intermission show and distill it down to two hours with one intermission, while still feeling like the original story. I think I managed it, but that alone was a massive job. However, the heart of the show is still there, and I think stronger, now that it’s supported by many characters who are full and interesting and want things.

Does the song “Ugg-A-Wugg” remain in this version of the show? And if it has been revised, how so?

The truth is, that song has caused a lot of harm to young people over the years. The last thing any of us want to do with this show is cause harm to a child. And, the truth is, with the restructure of the show we needed a new act break anyway. Like several of the beloved songs of this version, the lyrics of “Ugg-A-Wugg” were written by Adolph Green and Betty Comden. Amanda Green, Adolph’s daughter, and I worked together on lyrics for a replacement song. She and the team found music from the Comden/Green/Styne library that fit the moment as a fantastic new act break, with dancing and fun for everyone. Amanda has been very clear that her father would have done the same thing with that song today. We are excited for people to hear it.

What can you share about Tiger Lily and the tribe in this new adaptation?

One of the most complicated parts of *Peter Pan* and the tribe is that it has historically forced actors to play in redface. To eliminate that, I made Tiger Lily and her people each the last member of an extinct people. Because Neverland is a place where you never grow old, each of these people came to Neverland to preserve their culture. There are extinct peoples everywhere around the globe, so each actor represents an extinct culture based on their actual racial background. It means a little more research to make each Indigenous character reflect the individual actor, but it feels worth it to make sure that no one feels like they are being forced to play something they aren’t or are being represented wrongly. Storywise, I added reasons for Peter and Tiger Lily’s feud, rather than just assuming that the tribe are scary people to fight. Of course, the reasons all come down to Hook and the pirates being dastardly.

Will your version be the one that is licensed for future performances of *Peter Pan*?

We hope so, but I believe that decision is based on a lot of rights holders.

What has been your favorite moment working on this?

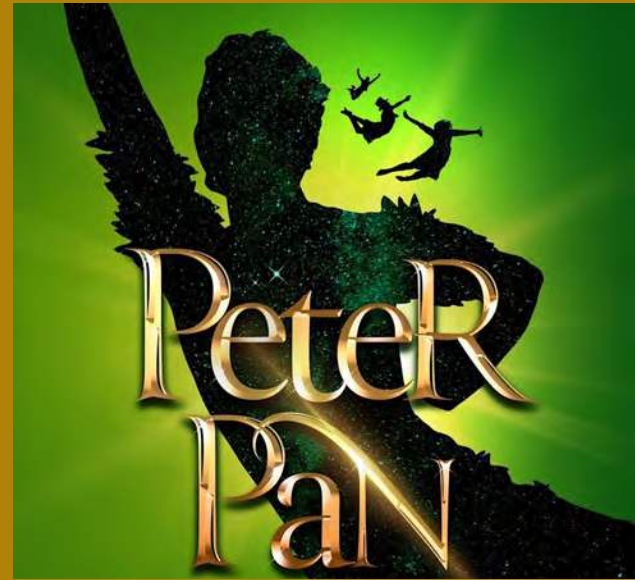
I was sitting with Amanda Green the first time she heard our incredibly talented teenage Peter, Nolan Almeida, sing “Neverland”. When he finished, she looked at me with tears in her eyes and said that she never understood the song like that before, and that her dad would have been so proud. It doesn’t get better than that for someone adapting a beloved classic.

What else are you working on now, or in the near future?

I’m fortunate to be doing a lot of projects right now. I have a new commission with the Public Theater and I hope that my canceled production of *Fake It Until You Make It* (Mark Taper Forum) will be produced in a few places next year. I’m also working on several film and TV projects. I was asked to think on a few Broadway ideas, but I’m taking my time to be sure it’s the perfect project for me to devote the next several years of my life to. I also continue to work in Native communities on theater projects that represent and uplift their stories and dreams.



“I look at *Peter Pan* as a pungent, cute, and sad observation of the changes a child goes through when they realize there is an adult world about them and that someday they will have to take up adult responsibilities. It is the story of someone at this stage, happy and carefree, who wants to hang on to childhood. It is about growing up. Some people have trouble growing up, you know, and some never grow up at all.” — Jerome Robbins, 1954



Peter Pan on Tour

Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, Saint Paul, Minnesota
December 5–31, 2023

The Hippodrome Theatre, Baltimore, Maryland
February 20–25, 2024

Durham Performing Arts Center, Durham, North Carolina
February 27 – March 3, 2024

Belk Theatre, Charlotte, North Carolina
March 5–10, 2024

Aronoff Center for the Performing Arts, Cincinnati, Ohio
March 12–24, 2024

James M. Nederlander Theatre, Chicago, Illinois
March 26 – April 7, 2024

National Theatre, Washington, D.C.
April 9–21, 2024

Peace Center for the Performing Arts, Greenville, South Carolina
April 23–28, 2024

Straz Center for the Performing Arts, Tampa, Florida
April 30 – May 5, 2024

Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Miami, Florida
May 7–12, 2024

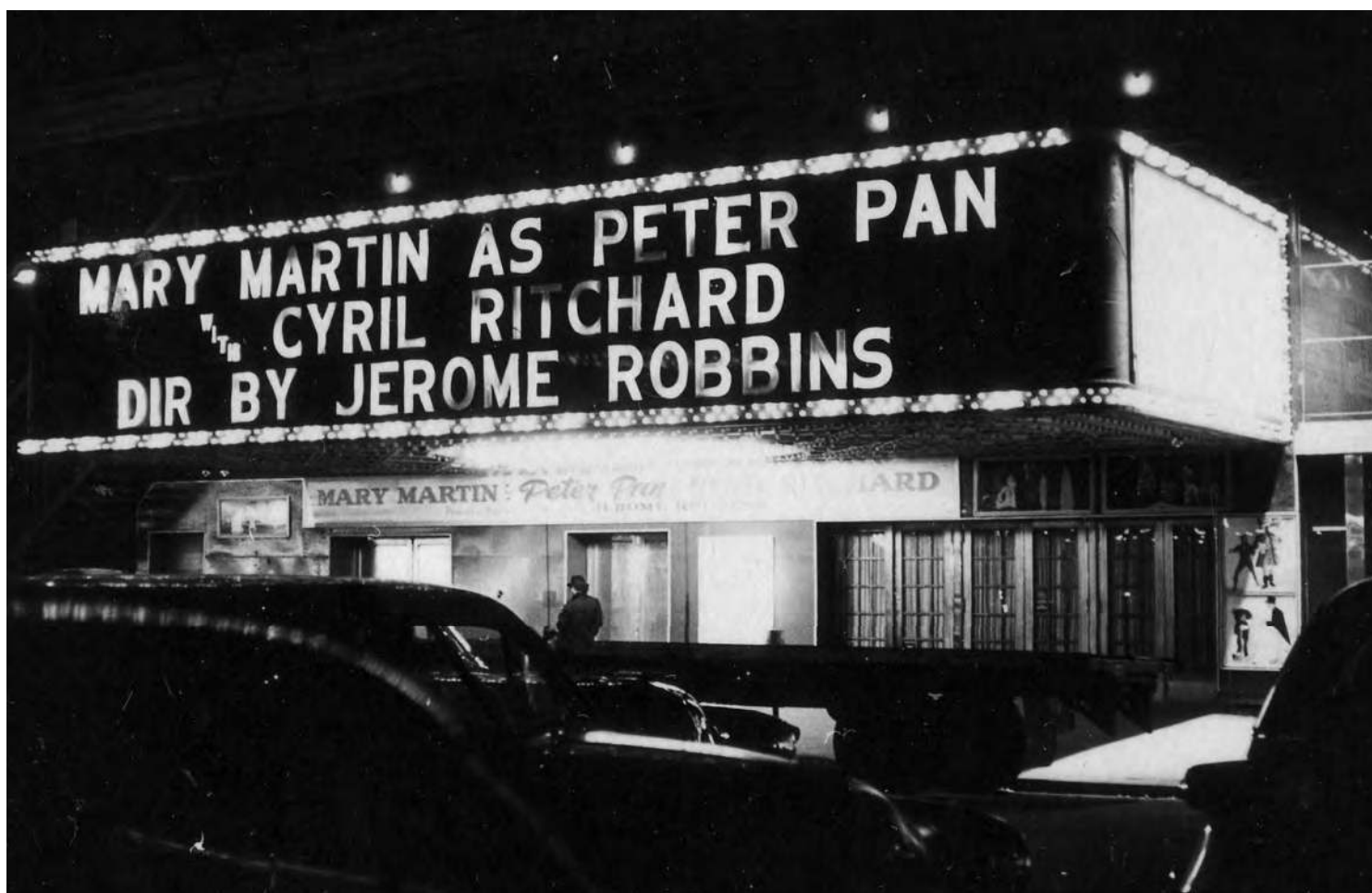
Walt Disney Theatre, Orlando, Florida
May 14–19, 2024

Showcenter Complex, Monterrey, Mexico
June 3–8, 2024

The tour continues after these dates.
To view the tour’s itinerary, please visit PeterPanonTour.com

facing page: Cast members of the current *Peter Pan* tour (L–R): Raye Zaragoza (Tiger Lily), Hawa Kamara (Wendy), Nolan Almeida (Peter Pan), and Cody Garcia (Captain Hook). Photo: Jeremy Daniel.

above left: Nolan Almeida rehearses with Cody Garcia. Photo: Jeremy Daniel.



On Till Morning — the Creation of *Peter Pan*

On February 23, 1982, a symposium on *Peter Pan* was held at Marymount Manhattan Theatre. The following is an excerpt of that discussion which originally appeared in the June 1982 issue of *The Journal* [a publication of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation]. Speakers include: assistant director Mary Hunter Wolf, choreographer and director Jerome Robbins, lyricist Carolyn Leigh, composer Jule Styne, lyricist Adolph Green, and lyricist Betty Comden.

Mary Hunter Wolf All of us on the panel were most intimately involved in what has become a kind of theatrical legend — the production of *Peter Pan* with Mary Martin. My role was associate director, working very closely with Jerry. In spite of all the legends and the complex things that went into making it, in terms of musicals and the theatre, this was a show in trouble out of town. A lot of the things that happened were interactions among very talented people and some very talented producers who, unhappily, are no longer part of this scene: Richard Halliday (Mary Martin's husband), Leland Hayward, and Edwin Lester (who was a director of the San Francisco Civic Opera). *Peter Pan* really got its original underwriting in connection with that fine organization on the West Coast. Earlier this afternoon I asked Jerry if he would try to check up on some of the facts about putting up the money and getting the rights to do the production in the first place.

Jerome Robbins Unfortunately, the people who should be answering that question are not with us, namely the producers. The rights were secured by the Barrie estate, which had left them with a London hospital for crippled children. The hospital still owns those rights. My first knowledge of it was when Mary Martin, with whom I had worked before, called me and asked if I was interested in directing a musical version of *Peter Pan*. I was very interested because this was the first time that I was responsible for both the choreography and the direction of a show. I read all I could read — the plays, the books, etc., and began to think about how I would like to see it on the stage. Mary, Dick and Leland had already suggested that we use the two talented songwriters Carolyn Leigh and Mark Charlap. They came up to my apartment and played some of their music for me, and some of the ideas they had were quite wonderful. Then we went into production out on the coast. But we did do some casting here, and Peter Larkin, the set designer, worked with me here also.

Carolyn Leigh I remember playing some things in my stocking feet for Mr. Robbins. It was my very, very first venture. I had only been to see a musical once in my life prior to that. I was frightened out of my wits. Moose [Mark Charlap] had no idea of what was happening either, although I think that he was braver than I was. I remember singing a line to Jerry, "If I can lead a life of crime, and still be home by dinnertime," and we got that nod of approval from him. Mary Martin had asked us to do the show. We had no idea what we were doing; we were only praying to get through it alive, and I didn't quite know what my function was. I wrote lyrics quite blindly, quite desperately.

Hunter Wolf Jerry, can you talk about the book, and your working on making that play into a musical?

Robbins Of all the shows I've done, somehow or other *Peter Pan* is very distant to me. I try to stir up all the memories of it, but all my material is in storage. I know I got fascinated by the end of one of those books, which was not in the play, when Peter comes back and Wendy's grown up. I thought, well, that's going to be a wonderful thing, to make a circle of the play, in that he flies off again with the new Wendy. I tried to think a bit of the world as children saw it, especially Never-Never Land, and I thought, oh, that's wonderful because the Indians could be other children. Their opponents are the pirates, where Captain Hook equals Papa, in a way. I found that the first act was rather surreal. The realistic home was almost like theatre of the absurd, it was so strange. It had a dog who was a nurse; there was something flying around that had lost its shadow. There was all sorts of very odd behavior going on. It was a Victorian play, but nevertheless, there it was. To try to figure the ambiance of the play was harder than anything else — not hard to do but fascinating to do; and to start to lay out what could be musicalized, who were singing characters, who were not, who were dancers, etc., etc., down the line. A lot of this had to be done through ideas with the scene designer and Carolyn and Moose.

Leigh Moose has been gone for a few years and doesn't enjoy the fruits of our labors. He was a very, very talented young man, kind of the spirit of Peter Pan himself, always bouncy, always young, always ready to do something.

Hunter Wolf Something which frequently happens in shows happened on *Peter Pan* — there was a change in the middle of the production in regard to the music and the kind of help we needed for the design of the show. But what I remember



above: Jerome Robbins dressed as Captain Hook from *Peter Pan*, 1954. Costume by Motley. Photo by Talbot, from the collection of Jerome Robbins.

facing page: Marquee of the Winter Garden Theatre, 1954. Photo taken by Jerome Robbins, from the collection of Jerome Robbins.

so well is that at no point was there any question that there were great songs done by Mark Charlap and Carolyn Leigh that set in the public imagination the character for Mary as Peter, songs that were right for her voice, and also gave a springboard for the whole play. It's valuable to think about that because there was a consensus among all the people who worked on the play that that was the case. And when all the people remember *Peter Pan*, three of their songs in particular are what stick in kids' and adults' imaginations. That's an important bridge to the next phase of the production — there were so many phases. Jule Styne, Adolph Green and Betty Comden did come in at a certain point, and I think it would be interesting to hear their perceptions.

Jule Styne Evidently everything wasn't to Mr. Robbins's and the producers' and the star's liking, and we went to see the show. I hate to replace anybody, and I don't like to be replaced. Carolyn spoke of Moose Charlap, he was a wonderful talent and a dreamy kind of fellow. I liked him personally very much. We had lunch together and I said, "I'm doing this without Betty and Adolph, but we were brought up here to look at the show and possibly write some songs; but I'll tell you something. There are some things that you should do." Of course, I can understand their rebellion against it because I'd have the very same feelings. And they said they didn't want to be told. I guess the next step was for Betty and Adolph and I to sit down and consult with Robbins to see what he wanted. The first thing that I saw it needed was this. Here we have two stars, and they didn't sing a duet. The two opposites in the show, Captain Hook and Peter Pan, never sang together in the entire show. And that was important not only for the play, but for the entertainment. The audience expected it, and in the theatre, when the audience expects something, I think you have to give that consideration and deliver it. Not if it's wrong, but in this case it was right. Another thing I looked for was a song by Mary Martin. I felt she didn't have enough fun. Yet, "Crow" was wonderful for her, and "I Won't Grow Up" as well, and "I'm Flying" — a smash. But I felt she should have more fun. Before I wrote songs, I was a vocal coach at a studio in Hollywood, whatever that means. Anyhow, I remember coaching Mary in a movie, and she was a soprano then. A girl from Texas who had a soprano voice. I remember she sang in coloratura fashion. And I said, "Wouldn't it be funny to use that voice in this show?" I mentioned it to Betty and Adolph, and they quickly found where they could use it — you know, "Are you a vegetable, mineral..." and we made the duet there.

Hunter Wolf Jerry, I wish you would help elaborate on the problems of a director who really has a concept for a show but is groping for the right people who will help him put it together.

Robbins You depend totally on your collaborators. A show is only as good as what the talents will produce, no matter what your ideas are. You can come up with some wonderful ideas, and if your collaborators cannot achieve them, they do you no good. When I was reading the play, I could see that every so often Hook would get an idea to poison this person, or kill that one, or steal the children, and I thought it would be wonderful to musicalize that. That gave me the idea of him being supported by three or four pirate musicians, who then would play the music and he would hatch these plots. And this became a theme for the show.

Leigh Jerry, do you remember the costume parade?

Robbins All costume parades are the same. But that's collaboration again. You have to have your costume designer (in this case, Motley), who starts off with some idea you've got. You work with them, to try to get the image — it's almost like focusing a camera — to get that image as clear as the one you have in your mind. I was very touched by the things these songwriters said earlier because it became quite apparent to me as they talked, what the experience of *Peter Pan* was. All the working experience that Adolph and Betty and Jule had done already in the theatre came into the fore — "We need this kind of song for this; that's the kind of voice; we have to have a theme song here." They were going from their experience, which was right in front of them. Also, the show was in trouble. It was in pretty serious trouble, which is the story of every show out of town. And when they say, "Jerry called me," it wasn't only Jerry who called them. The show had producers on it who sometimes agreed and sometimes did not agree: Ed Lester, whose stake in it was the Civic Light Opera, and what could be done there, and how; Richard Halliday, who was Mary Martin's husband, and the father of one of the people in the cast; and Leland Hayward, who had no ties with anyone, except his friendships with various people. They had very strong ideas about the show, too. The director becomes a funnel for those ideas. He has to go with them or not go with them, but finally get it together so it's going to move on. Jule talks about the ballet music, at the opening of the second act. Well, that ballet music came about because the scenery hadn't changed at the act break. And another piece of dance came in because Mr. Halliday called me and said, "Wouldn't it be lovely if Heller, my daughter, had this thing to do over here." And another act division happens because you can't change the costumes in time and have to have an act division there. All this is just part of the out-of-town work.

Comden We felt very strongly when we came into it that Jerry had a strong concept of the show. We've known him for quite a long time, and he's always been fascinated by children, and children's games, their imaginations, and the marvelous combination of the innocent and the wicked in them. He projected that into this story, which is a children's story, yet certainly was made into a show that is enjoyed as much by grown-ups, even when they don't bring their kids. He did that by sticking to a certain basic feeling about the original material and adding other elements, being aware that it also had to succeed commercially. He clung to something that has made it an enormously successful show with all kinds of audiences. That's really his accomplishment.

Styne Tiger Lily, for instance, was completely his kind of thing. Sondra Lee looked like a tiny Jerry, as I recall. It was an absolutely delightful concept — naughty kids, kids playing hooky — a wonderful feeling. There are many productions of *Peter Pan*. It's played all over the world, in every country. We did our first one in '54, and now in '82 one just closed in Los Angeles with the most fantastic grosses, and fantastic audiences. And that is the *Peter Pan* with our score. That's the one they remember. First there was Mary Martin, which subsequently was done six times on NBC. Then Disney took it over and did it with Cathy Rigby. Everything was pre-recorded — their singing, their speech, everything — and it was performed in arenas like Madison Square Garden. And then there was this recent production with Sandy Duncan.

Robbins I recall that we did a certain amount of cutting, too. There were many scenes in San Francisco that we chopped completely, and scenes that were condensed.

Leigh We had a narrator who was cut, too.

Comden Jerry, do you remember trying, as you often do when you work on making a three-act play into a musical, to put it in a two-act form? When you first approached it, did it ever occur to you that perhaps it could be done with one intermission?

Robbins In talking with the set designer about the things that it required, I saw it couldn't be done — or at least we felt it couldn't. How did we play it finally?

Comden Three acts. It does lend itself perfectly to the three-act form.

Leigh You decided that after the flying, you had to make room for the new ambience, the new sets. And you couldn't have cut it to two acts at that spot because it would have been a very unwieldy thing.

Robbins Still, it was a play with problems, in that it gets muddled—not mushy, but a little vague.

Styne Too arbitrary, as it gets toward the end.

Comden Act two is difficult. But the last scene, with the new Wendy, is very moving, when you see the grown-up Wendy standing beside her child. The feeling of, “No, you can't come, you're too old, you don't understand us anymore,” is a very moving one, and that's an enormous contribution to what Peter Pan is.

Robbins I don't remember. Did we finally have an adult Wendy? We didn't have the same Wendy play herself grown up.

Comden We had another Wendy playing the grown-up, and we used the same little girl to play young Wendy and Jane.

Robbins I'm surprised that it's referred to as such a classic. The one that's currently playing is the script and music that I helped to develop, but it is not my choreography, my casting, and there are no little children. Someone just took the scheme and did it their way.

Hunter Wolf Well, that happens, but I think the point is that somehow the original still comes through, in some strange way, because it was so powerful, and very imaginative.

Robbins My advice to any directors and choreographers who want to do a show, is: get possessed by it, or else don't do it. You really have to be absolutely possessed by it, so you know what you want to do and you can see it in a certain way. Then it will come out that way. Of course. A lot of that has to do with the material you have to work with. I've been very fortunate with the shows that I've done. They inspired me, so that I was able to go on. But if you don't have that feeling, be careful, because otherwise your decisions get nebulous.

Styne If you're a composer you can learn more from Robbins than you can from any school, any book. One show with him and you get ten years' worth of experience. I must tell you about his knowledge of music. In the case of *Funny Girl*, he was brought in as a director to finish up the show. And he said (when Nick seduces Fanny), “The man can't sing that song alone. It doesn't register. Can you write something that will express her thoughts as a countermelody to what's going on?” And with that, in one breath, he said, “I'll tell you what you ought to use for the countermelody.” And all that became “You are Woman, I am Man,” and musically it worked out fine. He shows you all the way. He leads you right—musically, lyrically, book-wise, scenically. He's one of a kind.

Leigh Jerry once said, “Don't use gratuitously ethnic things, passing fads, slang. Ten years from now in Dubuque they won't know what you're talking about. I never forgot that. And I never forgot Jule telling me, “Remember that the ear follows the eye.” I thought about that for a while, and suddenly I realized what he was talking about. If they're doing a cross, or moving a lot, or God forbid, doing a pirouette on some key line in the lyric, that's a no-no. So, I gained a lot from these people. Betty and Adolph don't know that I studied their work, because I didn't know how to write funny things.

Comden I think the “Tarantella” is funny, and the “Tango.”

Leigh Not funny in themselves. The truth of the matter is that “To cook a cake quite large” and all that depended on direction and performance (by the brilliant Cyril Ritchard). There's not a funny word in it. It's almost straight out of Barrie. None of the things were intrinsically funny; they didn't come out of any invention in my mind. All I did was rhyme.

From the audience: Whose idea was it to make Tinkerbell a light? Or was that in the original?

Robbins I think that's traditional. Disney, in his cartoon, had a little elf-lady flying around, being cute. But I think the light is traditional. We had a lot of trouble with her, and once we had to have an understudy because the beam didn't work. All these discussions are like post-theory, and we're talking about theory. There is no way to communicate to you the five hundred details that have to be taken care of, day to day, moment to moment, to help make or break a show. I used to say that the life of a show was going to depend on whether the drummer's brother-in-law got out of jail that night, because otherwise he wouldn't be there to play that cue you need to make the number work. It goes on and on.

Leigh Also, in *Peter Pan* there is a traditional problem when Peter comes forward and says, “Do you believe in fairies?” and asks that the audience clap their hands to show their belief. If the show hasn't worked up to that point, they will

not believe. It's a very serious thing to put a challenge like that in a play, knowing that every night the response is going to be different unless you have it locked in.

Robbins You lose a lot of things too. There was a line of Peter's that I loved. I think it was near the end, in Neverland. He's stuck on a rock and the tide is rising, and he says something like, “To die must be an enormous adventure.” It's an astonishing line, and it thrilled me when I read it the first time. I thought, “Oh boy, what is that saying there?” but we couldn't solve the scenic problem, we couldn't have a flood, we couldn't have the rock. Then we tried to put it someplace else, and it didn't work. It isn't just the things that you fix, it's also the things you never get that you regret.

From the audience: I'd like to ask Jerry how much preparation he did on the dances. What kind of research did you do?

Robbins I'll have to try to remember that. I know that new dancers came in, because we had new songs—“Ugg-A-Wugg,” the polka, and “Wendy.” I don't think I did too much preparation. There wasn't much dancing in the show, because I knew I was going to use kids, the Pirates were mostly singers, and I tried to scale it down to what they were all capable of doing. So I didn't have to do the kind of research like I did on *West Side Story*. I knew I was going to use three animals—the kangaroo, the crocodile, and the ostrich—and the trees danced. As an aside, just for would-be playwrights and screenwriters, the ostrich was Joan Tewksbury, who wrote the screenplay for *Nashville*. I can't even remember how many weeks of rehearsal we had for the whole show. Five weeks? I'm sure it was not an excessive amount of time.

From the audience: Were any of you ever in a show that didn't have problems?

Styne I was, but it failed.

Hunter Wolf If everybody loves everybody, and everything is going absolutely superbly, you get a sinking feeling of “Oh, we're really in a clinker.”

Comden I heard that *South Pacific* was one show that went swimmingly from start to finish.

Robbins *West Side Story* had very few changes in it when we opened. It was Steve Sundheim's first show, and when we were coming back from Philadelphia to New York he said, “What's all this about 'out-of-town' being trouble?” I said, “Knock wood and speak to God, because otherwise he's going to visit it upon you in the next one.” *West Side Story* took about four years to get produced, because nobody would produce it, and every time it got turned down, we went back at it again. We kept saying, “Well, what's that objection? Is it valid? If so, let's re-examine it.” And we kept doing that. I also had eight weeks of rehearsal, which was unheard of at that time, so a lot of things could be solved. There was something, too, about the original plot, *Romeo and Juliet*, that helped us a lot. And we had just thrashed out the problems so much.

Styne Another word of advice: Don't trust run-throughs. The “gypsy run-through,” which can be very encouraging, can also be very misleading. Unfortunately, sometimes a show works best without scenery, costumes, or lights, when the imagination of the people watching supplies everything. And as soon as you start to identify it with a costume and a locale, with lights and orchestration, another thing happens, and you have to be prepared for that. Time after time, a show that seemed perfectly fine has the uglies come out as soon as you open it.

Hunter Wolf One thing I would like to say before we conclude is something about Mary Martin. The very important aspect of that production of Peter Pan was her presence, her absolute belief in the show, and her insistence that she was going to do it. I remember very well indeed when a New York delegation made up of her very dear friends, each of whom had a special project that he or she wanted Mary to do, came out to visit the show in San Francisco. She and Richard suffered their presence, while each of that group, one after the other, said, “This is terrible. It'll ruin your career. What are you doing in this?” It was one of the most extraordinary and devastating experiences that could happen to a person who is responsible, as a star must be, to the success and final result of the show. Mary and Richard smiled sweetly, took those people out to dinner, got them plastered, and put them back on the train. And that was that. There was never any question but that she was going to do the show and eventually bring it to New York.

Robbins Even for the show that is now playing, the wrinkles were worked out on Mary, and there were a lot of them. That flying is not easy. I tried it myself. It's quite dangerous, especially the flying ballet, where they go off to Neverland behind the scrim.

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“Bringing up the rear, the place of greatest danger, comes Tiger Lily, proudly erect, a princess in her own right... There is not a brave who would not have the wayward thing to wife, but she staves off the altar with a hatchet. Observe how they pass over fallen twigs without making the slightest noise...”
—from *Peter and Wendy* by J.M. Barrie (1911)

A note from Sondra Lee, the original Tiger Lily

IT STARTS LIKE THIS!

In 1954, I was hired to be part of Jerry's next project, *Peter Pan*. The show was going to feature one of the biggest musical stars—Mary Martin—and for the first time, Jerry's credit would read, “Entire Production Directed and Choreographed by Jerome Robbins.”

I knew I was hired, but as what? That was the question!

We were to rehearse in Los Angeles. I had never been anywhere much, so it was exciting to go to Hollywood, California, where movies were made, and the Hollywood stars were. Wow! After being in the Broadway musical *High Button Shoes*, it was a thrill to work with Jerry again.

Some time passed, as we settled into rehearsal, and I was informed that maybe I was to be one of the little “lost boys.” But I wasn't a boy! No matter—I was just happy to work with Jerry again.

So, who was I to play? J.M. Barrie wrote about Wendy's dream. As in dreams, we often become more than one character, and we appear in different roles of ourselves. Tiger Lily could have been the Maid in Wendy's dream, but the Maid was to be played by Mary Martin's daughter! I was confused and quiet for a bit. Then, there were the Pirates! So, Peter had to have help from the wild Indians! That is where, I believe the wheels of invention began, and a few new co-writers, and composers, and changes were added.

There was a song where the Indians sang, titled “Beware!” (“Beware we come get you!”) For some time, the Indians were not the good guys! Then, that song was cut! We rehearsed more versions of the Indian dance... so many more versions! Jerry was not pleased. More versions of the book were then added. And changes... The more I took Tiger Lily and her fellow Indians seriously, and the more I paid attention to the script, Tiger Lily, for me, began to emerge!

Jerry let me go there! “Peter Pan is the Sun and the Moon and the Stars!” Tiger Lily was saved by Peter from the pirates! (Now, Tiger Lily loved Peter Pan!) And so, Tiger Lily had to save Peter from Captain Hook as well, and from his pirates. That was the answer!

Jerry understood this, as the director. Believe, like children do: the joy of winning, determination, heroes, the joy of purpose, being recognized for good deeds. Believe, as children do! It was exhausting and exhilarating to sustain—how to dance seriously and not let it show! That, and a zillion changes, were exhausting! Then, another song was added—“Ugg-A-Wugg!” It was a song of love and friendship, honoring Peter and Tiger Lily. We shared a peace pipe, and then Hook was defeated! (PS: Paul Taylor was a pirate then, before he was the great star dancer and choreographer Paul Taylor).

Next, the costumes were added, like the blue jeans and sneakers. These were familiar, as we wore them in rehearsal, but they were also Tiger Lily's colors. Our sneakers were orange! I was given the honor of choosing and designing my feather headdress! A symbol of power and authority!

Xsxsxs, Sondra Lee

PS: I am sending you a copy of a photo from one of my ex-acting students—who came to me, at her very young daughter's request—to meet the “real” Tiger Lily. Both of us were very serious!

top: Margot Wood (daughter of Giulia Wood and Kenneth Winston Wood, and granddaughter of Charles Osgood) and Sondra Lee, 2023. Photo courtesy of Sondra Lee.

left: Margot Wood, age 8, performs Jerome Robbins' choreography for the number “Indians,” along with Sondra Lee (on the screen) as Tiger Lily.





Paul Taylor
and Dance Company

Y.M.-Y.W.H.A.
October 20, 1957

L. H.

top: Doris Humphrey teaching, 1949.
Photo: Courtesy of 92NY Archives.

above: Israeli dances, unknown date.
Photo: Herbert S. Sonnenfeld, courtesy
of 92NY Archives.

right: Louis Horst's review of "Paul Taylor
and Dance Company," which appeared in
Dance Observer (November 1957, p. 139).

On Saturday, November 20, 1937, after having taken only four beginning ballet classes, 19-year-old Jerome Robbins performed with ballerina Lisa Parnova at the Kaufmann Auditorium of the 92nd Street YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association). Robbins was listed in the program as Gerald Robbins and appeared courtesy of the Dance Center. In his review of the single performance, *Dance Magazine* writer Anatole Chujoy wrote, "Gerald Robbins' partnering hinders rather than helps in the performance."

Since the 1930s, the 92nd Street Y (92NY) has welcomed and supported the leading lights of American contemporary dance—providing a space for the choreographers and performers who shaped modern dance to develop and showcase their work when other doors were closed. Soon, the landmark institution will celebrate its 150th anniversary with an exhibition—*A History of Dance at The 92nd Street Y, New York*—in the Weill Art Gallery at 1395 Lexington Avenue (between East 91st and East 92nd streets) in New York City. The exhibition will be on view from March 12 to October 31, 2024.

A manifesto of the unsung, the exhibition will bear witness to 92NY's historical importance as a sanctuary space in which dance history is made. Immigrant, BIPOC, and Jewish dance artists from 1874, when 92NY first opened its doors, to 2024 have made 92NY home. In its early years, 92NY was one of the only places that offered open access to dance studios, classes, lectures, and performances for people of all racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds. Multi-racial casts, dance classes, and audiences bore witness to the open-door policy of 92NY, never to shut out a single person. The exhibition will testify to 92NY as a key site in dance and social justice. Photographs, performance programs, artwork, digital media, rare film footage, and other previously unseen ephemera will render visible 92NY's crucial place as a preeminent cultural institution located in the heart of New York City.

Harkness Dance Center 2023/24

Through May 2024, the 92nd Street Y presents the Harkness Dance Center's 2023/24 season, with an extraordinary line-up celebrating its 150th anniversary and trailblazing place in modern dance history. The story of this season is built around 92NY's anniversary theme "Inspired by the past, transforming for the future." During the season, 92NY will host iconic companies creating new works inspired by past 92NY moments, contemporary artists building on their 92NY connections for their future artistic growth, and artists of all vintages pointing the way to the future of the art form.

The stage where Martha Graham got her start and audiences first saw Paul Taylor's *Seven New Dances* and Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* welcomes the companies founded by those pioneers back, along with Ballet Hispánico, Limón Dance Company, and The Bang Group. The season also includes previews of new dances co-commissioned with the Martha Graham Dance Company and the José Limón Foundation that build on key moments in the development of modern dance at 92NY with the full works to be presented as part of the 2024/25 season.

This season celebrates 92NY's historical connections to modern dance, including:

- Jose Limón, whose *The Moor's Pavane* premiered at 92NY in 1949, part of a history at 92NY dating back to the '30s, which includes performances with such contemporaries as Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Martha Graham, in 1948.
- Paul Taylor, whose 1957 premiere of *Seven New Dances* at 92NY posed provocative and radical questions about what modern dance was and could become. It also inspired one of the most famous published reviews in dance history—four inches of blank space—that catapulted the young Taylor toward fame and infamy for his avant-garde take on human movement.
- Alvin Ailey, whose *Revelations* has become a cultural treasure since its 1960 premiere at 92NY.

92NY will also mark its longstanding relationship with Ballet Hispánico, the first of four previous 92NY performances by which was in 1983, consistent with 92NY's historic commitment to presenting varied dance genres on its stages. Choreographer Talley Beatty—whose *Recuerdo de Campo Amor* the company re-stages this season—was a 92NY Artist in Residence. The Artists in Residence program dates back to the 1970s and has also included such notable choreographers as Pam Tanowitz and Netta Yerushalmy. Also, former 92NY Artist in Residence David Parker of The Bang Group busts out of genre and gender molds to bring his annual holiday performance *Nut/Cracked* to 92NY for the first time.

"In this anniversary year we have had many opportunities to reflect on the important contributions to New York City's culture that have been made at 92NY over the decades," said Seth Pinsky, Chief Executive Officer of 92NY. "Consistent with this, it gives us great pride to be known as 'the cradle of modern dance' and to have provided a home to groundbreaking choreographers, including many not welcome in times past at other institutions. We are so happy that many of their companies will return this season."

Remaining 2023/24 Performances

THE BANG GROUP: *NUT/CRACKED*

in person: Saturday, December 16, 2023, 2 pm and 7 pm
online: Sunday, December 17, noon – Wednesday, December 19, 2023

The Bang Group's *Nut/Cracked* provides a destination for those seeking shelter from the usual holiday dance fare. Choreographer David Parker, has gleefully cracked the old chestnut open, roasted it with tap riffs, vaudeville turns, ballet steps, disco, contemporary dance, toe-tapping and rebuilt it into a seasonal fixture for 21st century New York City—a tonic for cheerful grinchers and latter-day snow angels. With genre-nonconforming glee, Parker and The Bang Group purge the show of the saccharine and shake loose its tinsel. In fact, the only traditional thread is Tchaikovsky's music but that too takes a turn off center as portions of the original score are juxtaposed with arrangements by Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller and Fred Waring and The Pennsylvanians.

Bearing the mantle of the 92nd Street Y's historic embrace of the passionately non-traditional, *Nut/Cracked* is as ardent and virtuosic as it is disruptive. Its rhythmic component is vigorous with a stomp-off on bubble wrap, tap dances on pointe, barefoot hoofing, and a "Waltz of the Snowflakes" featuring precision body slams in 3/4 time. Yet the show retains a sense of beauty even in the ridiculous and has an absurd romanticism that soars far beyond satire. Once liberated from both its narrative tethers and its conventional trappings, *Nut/Cracked* shows us innocence regained.

BALLET HISPÁNICO

in person: Wednesday, February 21, 2024, 7:30 pm

Celebrate the 150th-anniversary season of the 92nd Street Y, New York with a night of historic and new works from Ballet Hispánico. Witness the vibrancy and diversity of Latinx culture as one of our nation's Cultural Treasures takes the stage! Ballet Hispánico pays homage to the catalyst that is 92NY for modern dance choreographers with classic pieces like a re-staging of Talley Beatty's electrifying *Recuerdo de Campo Amor*, the flamenco-immersed *Linea Recta* by Annabelle Lopez Ocha, and the Latin social dance extravaganza *Club Havana* by Pedro Ruiz. Talley Beatty, a historical figure in the Black dance canon, was instrumental in the development of Ballet Hispánico's rich repertory in the 1970s and was an artist in residence at 92NY. This performance promises to transport you on an extraordinary journey through time and culture. Don't miss this unique collaboration between two iconic institutions, Ballet Hispánico and the 92nd Street Y, New York, as we join forces to create an unforgettable evening of culture, passion, and the celebration of dance.



(L-R): Jeffrey Kazin, David Parker, and Amber Sloan in The Bang Group's *Nut/Cracked*.
Photo: Yi Chun Wu.

150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: AILEY II, LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY, MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY, AND GUEST CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

in person: Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 7:30 pm

A landmark 150th anniversary performance welcoming the companies whose founders made these halls their home — Ailey II, Martha Graham Dance Company, José Limón Dance Company — paired with three exciting contemporary artists to be announced for a one-night-only celebration of the legendary choreographers and performers who shaped modern dance. Inspired by the past, transforming for the future, join us for this once-in-a-lifetime, only-at-92NY event.

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY

in person: Monday, May 13, 2024, 8 pm
online: Tuesday, May 14, 2024, noon – Friday, May 17, 2024

In 92NY's 150th anniversary year, the Paul Taylor Dance Company returns to the stage where their groundbreaking *Seven New Dances* premiered. A reimagining of this history-making work, hailed by many as the underpinning for the later creation of Taylor's 1975 masterpiece, *Esplanade*, is performed here by a cast of special guests. That celebration of the past is followed by an eye on the future with an exclusive preview of Resident Choreographer Lauren Lovette's newest creation. This once-in-a-lifetime experience will close with *Esplanade*, which, for the first time, finds its way home to 92NY.

Paul Taylor and 92NY's history dates back to 1957. That year, 92NY—an organization that has always supported and celebrated the culture of New York City—created a space for young choreographer Paul Taylor to present his first full evening of choreography at its Kaufman Concert Hall. That performance saw the premiere of *Seven New Dances*, which posed provocative and radical questions about what modern dance was and could become. It also inspired one of the most famous published reviews in dance history—four inches of blank space—that catapulted the young Taylor toward fame and infamy for his avant-garde take on human movement. 92NY continues to extend and reframe its cultural leadership of our city and commemorates this lasting impact with the return of Paul Taylor Dance Company to the stage where it all began with an evening bringing together the past, present, and future of modern dance.

Tickets are available at: [92NY.org/dance](https://92ny.org/dance).

In Development

The Robbins Repertory Resource

by Tanisha Jones

Jerome Robbins created over 70 ballets in the span of six prolific decades with many of these works being staged by dance companies all over the world. Since Robbins' passing in 1998, these ballets live on for audiences to enjoy through the vital work of répétiteurs, coaches, and ballet directors steeped in the works and skilled in teaching it to newer generations of dancers. Additionally, scholars, historians, and researchers are able to visit physical archives to delve into the creative process of Robbins and his artistic collaborators. Jerome Robbins' physical archival assets are preserved, cataloged, and made accessible at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts located at Lincoln Center. The preservation of these important materials detailing his artistic works is essential to their longevity and will enable succeeding generations to comprehensively study the essential elements that make up each work and stage these works for future audiences or influence the creation of new works. However, to effectively complement the critical discovery and learning experience that brick-and-mortar archives provide, there is a commitment to create broader accessible resources that will offer users the ability to access essential archival documents from beyond the walls of the archives. In response to this commitment and in keeping with the mission of sustaining the legacy of Jerome Robbins, The Robbins Rights Trust has embarked on an ambitious project to create a free online resource, the Robbins Repertory Resource (RRR), that will enable persons interested in studying and restaging a Robbins ballet, or developing new works based on the works of Robbins to have the applicable archival resources electronically accessible online through a permission required process for review and examination.

The birth of the RRR dates back nearly two decades. In these developmental years, The Robbins Rights Trust benefitted from learning about and reviewing the work of dance community peers pursuing projects with similar goals to the RRR. The Trust's early project era meeting with Jesse Huot, Executive Director of Tharp Productions, to discuss the essential work of preserving, cataloging, and providing online access to select assets and data documenting the choreographic works of Ms. Tharp, proved most helpful. Another invaluable point of reference is the Merce Cunningham Dance Capsules—an online resource created and launched by the Cunningham Dance Foundation prior to its closing in June 2012. In the vein of what the Dance Capsules accomplish technologically and intellectually in providing users researching and reconstructing the major works of Merce Cunningham, the RRR has comparable objectives for each Robbins ballet that will be represented in the tool. Users will gain access to digitized archival elements such as choreographic notes, costume designs, historical magazine and news clippings, lighting plots, moving images of full-length performances and rehearsals, music scores, production notes, programs, scenic designs, sound recordings of oral history or interview excerpts, and other relevant ephemeral materials. Although the seeds of the project had been planted some time ago, the project fully commenced in January 2023 with an initial goal of reviewing pertinent materials for each ballet to be featured in the RRR and then compiling and creating lists of these archival assets. Materials are being thoroughly researched and vetted by me in my role as RRR's Project Manager with the purpose of selecting items deemed to best represent each work. These selected materials are then reviewed in consultation with The Robbins Rights Trust's Executive Director, Christopher Pennington, and the Trust's Advisory Committee to determine which assets will ultimately be placed in the RRR.

The RRR is a multi-year effort with key next steps to fulfill that include reviewing materials to pinpoint which items can be made broadly accessible on the online site without requiring permission to access; addressing the copyright clearances of RRR-slated assets and establishing a permission required protocol for users to access assets that remain rights restricted; digitizing chosen materials still in analog form; identifying an open-source content management system (CMS) to design and implement the front-end (searching and access functionalities) and back-end (cataloging and asset management functionalities) of the RRR; and conducting user testing to gauge the user experience to strive to create an optimally performing tool.

Additionally, there are several dance artists, companies, and organizations that have created or are developing in-house and online archival management and/or access sites and tools that serve as helpful models for this project. These include ChromaDiverse's CD Digital Vault™ developed by Dance Theatre of Harlem alum, curator, and archivist Judy Tyrus with project partners Eric Waldman and Paul Novosel, David Gordon Archiveography, Eiko + Koma, Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive, Mark Morris Dance Group Digital Archives, and Trisha Brown Dance Company Audiovisual Database. Highlighting these resources is tied to a crucial phase in the development of the RRR, which is engaging in information gathering. This involves meeting with trusted colleagues in the dance archiving community who have either completed, are in the process of creating, or are contemplating creating online archival sites for access and research to discuss: what factors have driven them to create their online resources, what are (or were) their desired outcomes, who are their intended users, what expected and unexpected challenges did they face (or are facing) in building out their tools, what funding and staffing were required to complete the projects, what proved to be (or is proving to be) a realistic timeline for project completion, what copyright challenges did they encounter in making archival assets accessible online and were they able to successfully resolve them, and how are they addressing the sustainability of their sites overall, along with other considerations. So far, I am grateful for the conversations I've had with Mr. Huot of Tharp Productions, and Stephanie Neel, Archivist and Justin Han, Processing Archivist for Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG). While in discussion with Ms. Neel and Mr. Han at MMDG, they had this to say about their work:

The Mark Morris Dance Group Digital Archive, built on the content management system CollectiveAccess, launched to the public in early 2020. Since then, external researchers and internal collaborators alike have sought out relevant material using the database. Documentary filmmakers and doctoral students have reached out in search of footage and primary documents, while staff and dancers have used the archive to identify sources for the restaging of repertory pieces. Our archive's materials trace the evolution of these works over time, and present us with the opportunity to better contextualize the Dance Group within modern dance history as a whole.

I look forward to further conversations and obtaining feedback and perspective from others in the field.

The Robbins Rights Trust is enthusiastic to see the RRR take further shape. In the next project year, we endeavor to more finely define the project's trajectory and milestones and pursue mapping out all facets of the RRR's design.

Tanisha Jones is an independent archivist and project manager with a specialization in dance and audio and moving image archiving. She has served as a freelance producer for the Criterion Collection and is currently an independent project manager for the Robbins Rights Trust. From 2007 to 2022, Tanisha worked for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

The Trust would like to acknowledge **Travis Ferguson** who worked on the RRR in its nascent years conducting essential research. We thank him for his important contribution to this project.

facing page: Example of Robbins archival asset potentially slated for RRR inclusion: Working rehearsal notes of Thomas Skelton's lighting design for *Dances at a Gathering* with Jerome Robbins's edits in pencil, dated May 7, 1969.

Call for Jerome Robbins Ballet Rehearsal Footage

In fulfilling the mission of acquiring, preserving, and providing access to vitally important archival Robbins documentation, and in association with the RRR project, The Robbins Rights Trust is seeking moving image recordings of Jerome Robbins ballet rehearsal footage. The objective is to bring to light unique and unknown footage of Robbins directing dancers in ballet rehearsals for educational, training, and research purposes only that will richly add to the existing collection. For more information, please email the RRR at info@jeromerobbins.org.

~~Wed~~ MAY 7th 1969 rehearsal - 5042

①

Working Rehearsal 7/7 May 1969
Dances at a Gathering

Boy's Solo Mazurka:

issuing belt (EV), slightly change spotlight after (EV)

people to come in on applause after applause break

Wind Waltz

light cue late - should start on applause; follow spots brighter, try John's shirt tucked in:-

Adage Mazurka

Tony remove neck scarf

5 Mazurkas

follow spot brighter

split light cue between 2nd + 3rd Mazurkas

cue down Tony's lights: - Mazurka poses problem - find out: Tony + Sally too far
orig^{finish} - Job + Patty too far to stage right at finish

E waistline for patty:-

2/3 Waltz

Steps right before reprise of first step:-

John's belt should be dark color:- watch that musically (allora around John's neck on shoulders):-

Exit rehearsal!

3 Girls

Sally's dress + Patty's dress too long:-

Tony wait for applause a little longer before ending

2 Boys

try rolling up Tony's sleeves:- placement for 2 boys



News from The Jerome Robbins Foundation

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newsletter@jeromerobbins.org

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Disclaimer The views and opinions expressed in the articles in this newsletter are strictly those of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect the position of The Jerome Robbins Foundation, nor The Robbins Rights Trust.

above: Gillian Murphy and Aran Bell in Jerome Robbins' *Other Dances* at the BAAND Together Dance Festival at Lincoln Center, 2023. Photo: Marc Santos.

cover: Leonard Bernstein and Jerome Robbins taking a bow together at the premiere of the New York City Ballet production of *Dybbuk*, 1974. Photograph by Martha Swope © The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Select Upcoming Performances of Jerome Robbins Works

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Papermill Playhouse, Millburn, New Jersey
December 6, 2023 – January 7, 2024

WEST SIDE STORY (international tour)

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

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

LAC Lugano Arte e Cultura, Lugano, Switzerland
January 23–28, 2024

Musical Theater Basel, Basel, Switzerland
January 30 – February 4, 2024

Opéra National de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France
February 9–18, 2024

Zenith Nantes Metropole, Nantes, France
March 5–11, 2024

GLASS PIECES

Ballet Zurich, Zurich Opera House, Zurich, Switzerland
January 1, 2, 2024

FANCY FREE / IN THE NIGHT / THE FOUR SEASONS
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
January 23, 24, 26, 27(m), 30, February 3(m), 2024

THE CONCERT (OR, THE PERILS OF EVERYBODY)
Nevada Ballet Theatre, Reynolds Hall, Las Vegas, Nevada
January 27, 28, 2024

FIREBIRD (Balanchine/Robbins)
Miami City Ballet

Kravis Center, West Palm Beach, Florida
February 3, 3(m), 4(m) 2024

Arsht Center, Miami, Florida
February 9, 10, 11(m) 2024

Broward Center, Fort Lauderdale, Florida
February 17, 18(m) 2024

THE CONCERT (OR, THE PERILS OF EVERYBODY)
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
February 9, 10(m), 10, 18, 22, 29, 2024

OPUS 19 / THE DREAMER
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
February 15, 23, 24(m), 25, 27, 28, 2024

DANCES AT A GATHERING
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
April 26, 27(m), 27, 28, May 1, 12, 2024

FANCY FREE
New Jersey Ballet, New Brunswick Performing Arts Center
April 27, 2024

INTERPLAY / OTHER DANCES
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
May 8, 9, 11, 18(m), 26, 2024

FANCY FREE
Oklahoma City Ballet, Civic Center Music Hall, Oklahoma City
May 10–12, 2024

GLASS PIECES
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
May 14, 18, 19 (sensory-friendly performance), 22, 25(m), 2024

Cancellations or postponements are always possible.