

NEW YORK CITY BALLET



*A Look Behind
The Curtain*

Ballet requires a special technique. A few of the things that identify ballet as different from other dance forms are: the Five Positions of the feet, legs that turn out from the hip at a 90° angle, and dancing on point. Dancers first begin their training at the *barre* in daily ballet class. The *barre* is a pole attached to a mirrored wall that provides support and balance as each



dancer begins a series of exercises to train the muscles.

All ballet movements begin and end in one of the five basic positions. These positions form the alphabet of ballet steps. A choreographer puts steps together to make a dance the same way a writer puts words together to make a sentence. These positions and

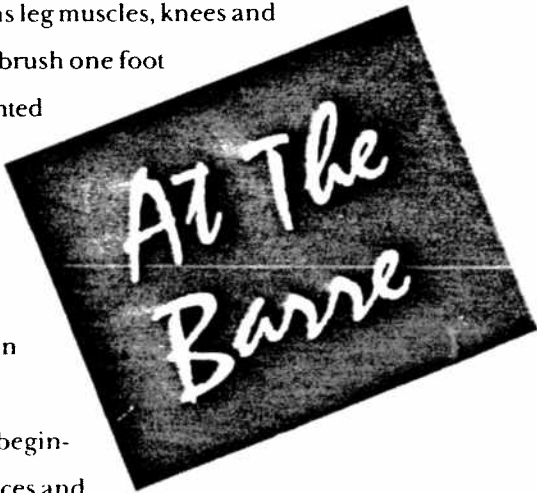
steps were first defined in France more than 300 years ago and have proved so useful that they have remained unchanged since that time.

Ballet “borrowed” turn-out from the sport of fencing. It helps a ballet dancer to move quickly in any direction by providing a broad base of balance and greater range of motion from the hip. Turn-out also makes legs look longer.

Dancing on point is another signature of ballet. Working at the *barre* reminds ballet dancers that the minute their heels leave the floor, ankles must be stretched, feet must arch and toes must point. This makes the leg and foot appear to be one straight, beautiful line. When a ballerina rises up on her toes to dance, she is speaking to us in the special language of ballet.

With heads held high, upper bodies lifted, and legs and feet turned out to the sides, dancers hold on to the *barre*. They bend their knees gently and straighten them. This is a *plié*. Doing *pliés* strengthens leg muscles, knees and ankles. With straight legs, they repeatedly brush one foot across the floor and stretch it into a fully pointed position called *tendu*. This is the way every ballet class begins. These basic exercises build into a series of faster and more complicated combinations that prepare dancers to perform away from the *barre* in any way that is required of them.

It is at the *barre* that every dancer—from beginning student to today’s performer—practices and perfects the basic elements of ballet technique ■



What makes a ballerina different from all other dancers is that she dances on the very tips of her toes. It was in the early 1800's that the first ballerinas began to dance on point. At first, they were only able to stand and pose briefly in their dancing slippers. Gradually, because of the

Toe Shoes

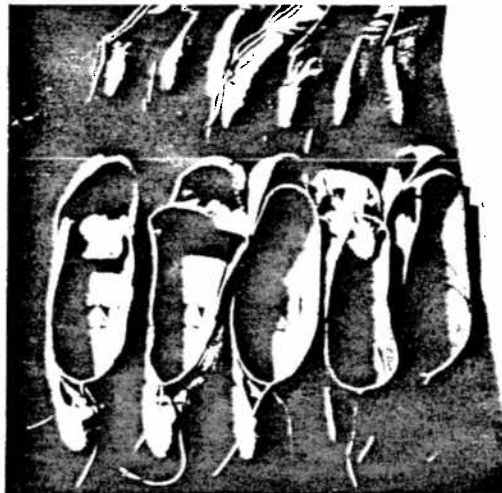
beauty and the excitement of this feat, audiences came to expect and demand that ballerinas would do more and more of their dancing in this special way.

Dancers began to find ways to make their shoes stronger. They began by darning the tips of their slippers. Today, toe shoes are built from layers of canvas and glue, then covered with satin. They have thin leather soles. Each shoe has a hard box that surrounds the ballerina's toes. The flat, hardened platform at the very tip is about the size of a silver dollar. Imagine balancing your entire weight on a silver dollar!

Just as we have to break in new shoes to make them fit comfortably, ballerinas have to break in their toe shoes to make them fit just right. Toe shoes are very stiff when they are new. Each dancer has her own way of getting her shoes ready to wear. A dancer may hammer the box to mold it to her foot. Or she may close a door on her shoe over and over to shape it. She cuts the satin off the very tip so that she doesn't slip on the stage. A ballerina always sews on the elastics and ribbons that keep the shoes from flying off her feet when she dances.

The toe shoe has a very short life. In performance, the hot stage lights and the pressure from jumping, spinning, and balancing causes toe shoes to soften and flatten. A pair of shoes can be worn out in a single performance. At New York City Ballet, the Company's 54 ballerinas use 12,000 pairs of shoes a year!

It takes years of practice and training at the *barre* to strengthen legs and feet to dance in this way. Shoes alone are not enough. It is the very special combination of training, strength and shoe that allows the ballerina to thrill us as she does ■



When we think of a ballerina we usually picture a lovely woman with a sparkling crown on her head wearing a beautiful costume of satin and jewels. The costume's skirt is short, full and flares outward. This is a tutu. The tutus that we know today have been worn by ballerinas for more than a hundred years. In the earliest days of ballet, when ballet



was danced by members of the royal courts of Europe, dancers wore variations on the formal clothing of their day. As ballerinas were able to perform more interesting and difficult footwork, skirts became lighter and shorter so the audience could see their legs and feet.

However, the tutu is only one kind of ballet costume. There are many different types of costumes for both the ballerina and the danseur, the male ballet dancer. There are tights and leotards,

long romantic dresses, jackets and peasant shirts, to name just a few.

Costumes often describe the character a dancer is portraying—a prince or princess, a sailor or a beautiful white

swan. Costumes add a feeling or mood to the dance by their color or design.

A costume can give you a sense of the time and place of a ballet. Are the dancers wearing colorful Chinese pajamas, elegant ballgowns with long white gloves, or bright military uniforms?

After talking to the choreographer, it is the job of the costume designer to draw sketches, choose fabrics and create all of the costumes for the ballet. The Costume Shop will buy material, dye it, sew it and decorate it. The designer must always remember that the dancers need to move freely and easily in their costumes. Dancers try on their costumes before they perform in them to be sure that they fit securely. Since many different dancers often perform the same role, costumes have rows of snaps and hooks so that they can be easily adjusted for each dancer.

Costumes add to the spectacle of a ballet. But most importantly they must help us see the choreography and the dancers' movements ■

Costumes

THE TUTU

A tutu [TOO-too] is the costume worn by a ballerina. The word tutu may be derived from a French slang term for a baby's bottom or from tulle, a fabric often used for tutus. There are generally two kinds of tutus: Romantic and Classical.

The prototype of the Romantic tutu was first worn by Marie Taglioni in *La Sylphide* [1832]. This dress has a soft, slightly transparent bell-shaped skirt [made from layers of white or pale colored material] that ends below the calves. The plain, close-fitting bodice is sleeveless or has very small sleeves. The headdress is usually a simple wreath of flowers.

The classical tutu, introduced in the late 19th century, allowed ballerinas to show off their legs, dazzling footwork and brilliant technique. This tutu is generally sleeveless and has a fitted, often boned, bodice. Its ruffled underpants are attached to the skirt. Unlike the Romantic tutu, the skirt of the classical tutu is short and circular. Because of its many layers of mesh, net, or tarlatan [a thin stiffened muslin], the classical tutu flares out from the body. It is often decorated with sequins, beads or paste jewels, and since tutus are hand finished and decorated, they can be very expensive. Each one can cost between \$3000 and \$5000. The headpieces worn with a classical tutu may include small crowns, tiaras, or elaborately jeweled headdresses.

Many of the most beautiful tutus in the repertory of the New York City Ballet were designed by Barbara Karinska [1896-1983]. Known simply as Karinska throughout the worlds of dance, theater, opera, and film, she was one of the 20th century's master costumers. She first worked with George Balanchine in Europe in the early 1930's and when she arrived in New York in 1939, she and the great choreographer began a 43-year-American collaboration, which would include 48 ballets.

Karinska was known for creating luxurious and glamorous costumes made of only the finest materials. Her exquisitely detailed tutus incorporated gold edging, brocaded flowers, hand embroidery, elaborate beading and jewels; sometimes these details could only be seen by the dancers, because she wanted them to feel special and beautiful when they wore her creations. The costume's underskirts were often multi-layered and multicolored. For Balanchine's ballerinas she designed the so-called "powder puff" tutu—a classical tutu that enhanced a dancer's proportions and gave her a long, uninterrupted body line that fully revealed the leg. Karinska's costumes were noted for their craftsmanship. For example, in designing men's tunics, she would include underarm gussets that permitted the danseur to raise his arms without disturbing the drape of the costume.

Among the outstanding Karinska costumes are those for *La Valse*, *Divertimento No. 15*, *Chaconne*, *Jewels*, *Vienna Waltzes*, *Western Symphony*, *Bugaku*, *Liebeslieder Walzer*, and *The Nutcracker*. For the black and white ballets that have become New York City Ballet's signature pieces, she provided the unadorned practice tunics, tights and leotards.

Trudy Garfunkel 5/1/01



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Ballet Slippers

Pointe shoes are the universal symbol of the ballerina, the source of much of the magic that is ballet. Not only do they give the ballerina's leg an elongated, graceful line, they also enable her to dance with gravity-defying lightness and daring speed. But dancers must train for many years before their feet, ankles, and legs are strong enough to dance on pointe.

Ballet shoes have changed enormously since the 1830's, when Marie Taglioni darned the tips of her flimsy slippers [made from woven strips of silk ribbon] and padded them with cotton wool, so she could balance on her toes for a few seconds. The blocked toe came into existence about 1860, and the stiffened pointe shoes of today became popular at the turn of the 20th century.

Traditionally, pointe shoes are made almost entirely by hand, and today they are made almost exactly the way they were a hundred years ago. There is no right or left foot. The cobbler first cuts and sews the canvas- or cotton-backed satin uppers that form the pliable shank supporting the instep. The slippers, turned inside out, are then shaped around a last, a plastic or wooden mold of the foot. The next step is the most important—making the block, the square box that surrounds and supports the dancer's toes and helps her to balance on pointe. The block is made of papier-mâché-like layers of fabric, paper, and strong glue or paste. Each shoe company uses its own special adhesives; they also have their own way of constructing the block, and they guard these procedures like state secrets. To make the shoe flexible, the material behind the toe is pleated and stitched down, then sewn to the thin leather outer sole. The shoe is now turned right side out. These turned shoes are sent on to another cobbler, who shapes the inside and outside of the shoe with his hands and pounds it with a smooth-edged hammer. Then he glues in an inner lining, sews in the drawstring, cuts crisscross lines on the soles for traction, and stamps on the maker's symbol. The shoes are then set on racks to dry for several days or are dried in large ovens overnight. Shoes that have not been allowed enough time to dry can collapse when worn.

Professional ballerinas may spend years trying to find the perfect shoe and the perfect shoemaker. Because pointe shoes have to fit like a second skin, ballerinas have their shoes made to order.

After she receives her pointe shoes from the manufacturer, a ballerina still has work to do before she can use her slippers. Dancers are superstitious about the tedious task of sewing on the ankle ribbons and elastics that keep the shoes on securely and will not let anyone do it for them. Some prepare all the shoes they will need for a week; others work on their slippers only before each performance. They snip away material from the very tip of the toes. This area, on which the ballerina balances, is about the size of a half-dollar.



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GEORGE BALANCHINE 1904-1983

George Balanchine, regarded as the foremost contemporary choreographer in the world of ballet, came to the United States in late 1933 following an early career throughout Europe. The son of a composer, Balanchine early in life gained a knowledge of music that far exceeds that of most of his fellow choreographers. He began studying the piano at the age of five and following his graduation in 1921, from the Imperial Ballet School (the St. Petersburg academy where he had started his dance studies at the age of nine), he enrolled in the state's Conservatory of Music, where he studied piano and musical theory, including composition, harmony and counterpoint, for three years. Such extensive musical training made it possible for Balanchine as a choreographer to communicate with a composer of such stature as Igor Stravinsky; the training also gave Balanchine the ability to reduce orchestral scores on the piano, an invaluable aid in translating music into dance.

Balanchine made his own dancing debut at the age of ten as a cupid in the Maryinsky Theatre Ballet Company production of *THE SLEEPING BEAUTY*. He joined the company as a member of the *corps de ballet* at 17 and staged one work for them, called *ENIGMAS*. Most of his energies during this period, however, were concentrated on choreographic experiments outside the company.

In the summer of 1924, Balanchine was one of four dancers who left the newly formed Soviet Union for a tour of Western Europe. The others were Tamara Geva, Alexandra Danilova and Nicholas Efimov, all of whom later became well known dancers in Europe and the United States. All four dancers were invited by impresario Sergei Diaghilev to audition for his *Ballets Russes* in Paris and were accepted into the company.

Diaghilev also had his eye on Balanchine as a choreographer as well, and after watching him stage a new version of the company's Stravinsky ballet, *LE CHANT DE ROSSIGNOL*, Diaghilev hired him as ballet master to replace Bronislava Nijinska. Shortly after this, Balanchine suffered a knee injury which limited his dancing and correspondingly bolstered his commitment to full-time choreography. Balanchine served as ballet master with *Ballets Russes* until the company was dissolved following Diaghilev's death in 1929. After that, he spent the next few years on a variety of projects which took him all over Europe: choreographing for the Royal Danish Ballet; making a movie with former Diaghilev ballerina Lydia Lopokova (then the wife of British economist John Maynard Keynes) in England; staging dance extravaganzas for Britain's popular Cochran Musical Theater Revues; and working with DeBasil's *Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo* (where he discovered young Tamara Toumanova).

Returning to Paris, Balanchine formed his own company, *Les Ballets 1933*, collaborating with such leading artistic figures as Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill (*THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS*), artist Pavel Tchelitchew, and composers Darius Milhaud and Henri Sauguet. During this period a meeting occurred which was to change the history of Twentieth Century dance.

Boston-born dance connoisseur Lincoln Kirstein harbored a dream: He wanted to establish an American school of ballet that would equal -- even rival -- the established European schools, and he wanted to establish an American ballet company. Through Romola Nijinsky,

Hofmannsthal once said to Strauss: "Ballet is perhaps the only form of art which permits real, intimate collaboration between two people gifted with visual imagination."

In the spring of 1975, the Entertainment Hall of Fame in Hollywood inducted Balanchine as a member in a nationally televised Special, hosted by Gene Kelly. The first choreographer so honored, he joins the ranks of such show business luminaries as Fred Astaire, Walt Disney and Bob Hope. That same year Balanchine staged a second New York City Ballet festival, the three-week *Homage a Ravel*. This celebration produced 16 new works and brought into the repertory such ballets as TZIGANE, LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN and SONATINE.

In the six years between 1976 and 1982 Balanchine introduced more than a dozen works into the New York City Ballet's repertory and directed two major festivals, the Tschaikovsky Festival in 1981, and the Stravinsky Centennial Celebration the following year. First came the lavish VIENNA WALTZES in 1976, followed by his offbeat bicentennial tribute to the dance traditions of Great Britain -- UNION JACK, BALLO DELLA REGINA and KAMMERMUSIK NO. 2 were choreographed in 1978, followed by BALLADE and ROBERT SCHUMANN'S "DAVIDSBUNDLERTANZE." That same year Balanchine staged WALPURGISNACHT BALLETT (originally created for the Paris Opera Ballet) and LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME (choreographed for Patricia McBride and Rudolf Nureyev as part of a special joint New York City Ballet/New York City Opera performance) for the Company. He contributed four pieces each to the Tschaikovsky Festival and the Stravinsky Centennial Celebration: MOZARTIANA, HUNGARIAN GYPSY AIRS, "The Garland Dance" from SLEEPING BEAUTY and the ADAGIO LAMENTOSO (from the SYMPHONIE PATHETIQUE) for the former and TANGO, ELEGIE, PERSEPHONE and a new version of VARIATIONS for the latter. A total of 23 new works were produced for the two festivals, of which Balanchine's contributions constituted nearly a third.

During these years Balanchine was the recipient of much official recognition for his contributions to the arts in the twentieth century. In 1978 he was one of five recipients -- with Marian Anderson, Fred Astaire, Richard Rodgers and Arthur Rubenstein -- of the first Kennedy Center Honors, presented by President Carter at the White House. The citation read in part, "Each has raised the artistic standards to which successors must aspire, but more importantly each, by talent has raised our hearts." He was also presented by Queen Margrethe II of Denmark with a Knighthood of the Order of Dannebrog, First Class. In 1980 Balanchine was honored by the National Society of Arts and Letters with their Gold Medal of Merit, the Austrian government with its Austrian Cross of Honor for Science and Letters, First Class, and by the New York Chapter of the American Heart Association with their "Heart of New York" award. These joined such earlier commendations as the French Legion of Honor, French Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters decoration and National Institute of Arts and Letters award for Distinguished Service to the Arts. In 1983 Balanchine was granted the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor that can be conferred upon a civilian in the United States and the last honor he would receive in his lifetime. President Ronald Reagan praised Balanchine's genius, saying he had "inspired millions with his stage choreography...and amazed a diverse population through his talents." Soon after, on April 30, 1983, George Balanchine died at the age of 79.

Clement Crisp, one of the many writers who eulogized Balanchine summed up his contribution to the world of ballet:

"It is hard to think of the ballet world without the colossal presence of George Balanchine... Now he is gone and, as Lincoln Kirstein said in his brief and infinitely apt curtain speech, "Mr. B. is with Mozart and Tschaikovsky and Stravinsky." But we have not lost Balanchine -- not the essential Balanchine, who lives in the great catalogue of masterpieces that have so shaped and refined our understanding of ballet and given it -- and us -- thrilling life. And we are not without the other essential fact of his work: his school and the training system that has tuned American bodies as the ideal classic medium for his ideal classic vision. We can never be without Balanchine. He is so central to the *danse d'ecole* in our century, so surely its guiding force, that grief becomes mere self-indulgence. Gratitude and joy must be our feeling for what he gave us, and determination that his work and ideals be honored and preserved, and used to illuminate the future for ballet."

Under the direction of Ballet Master in Chief Peter Martins, the New York City Ballet and the School of American Ballet remain dedicated to the preservation of Balanchine's ideals.



JEROME ROBBINS (1918-1998)

Jerome Robbins received world renown as a choreographer of ballets created for the New York City Ballet, Ballets U.S.A., American Ballet Theatre and other international companies. He received equal kudos for his work in commercial theater -- Broadway. He was a director of musicals, plays, movies and television programs. This dual interest produced a staggering number of ballets and stagings of musical plays, notable for their diversity, brilliance, lyric beauty and humor. His work is characterized by the intensity and compactness of its expression, its wide variety of mood, whether it be rhapsodic, introspective, poignant or hilarious. He had the ability to make the most complex movement appear effortless, and totally reflective of the musical score, as if it were created spontaneously for that exact period of time.

No choreographer has so epitomized the American scene, or been so profligate in his expenditure of his creative energy. He contributed a great body of superb work to our dance culture, represented all over the world, and in the continuous performances of musicals during the last thirty-five years.

His career as a gifted ballet dancer developed with Ballet Theatre where he danced with special distinction the role of Petrouchka, and character roles in the works of Fokine, Tudor, Massine, Lichine and de Mille, and of course his first choreographic sensation: FANCY FREE (1944). This ballet, followed by INTERPLAY (1945) and FACSIMILE (1946), was performed by Ballet Theatre, after which he embarked on a prolific and enormously successful career as a choreographer and later as a director of Broadway musicals and plays. His first musical, "On the Town," (1945), was followed by "Billion Dollar Baby" (1946), "High Button Shoes" (1947), "Look, Ma, I'm Dancing" (which he co-directed with George Abbott in 1948, "Miss Liberty" (1949), "Call Me Madame" (1950), and the ballet "Small House of Uncle Thomas" in "The King and I" (1951). His work continued with "Two's Company" (1952), "Pajama Game" (again co-directed with Mr. Abbott in 1954), and "Peter Pan" (1954), which he directed and choreographed. In the same year, he also directed the opera "The Tender Land" by Aaron Copland. Two years after that, he directed and choreographed "Bells are Ringing" (1956), followed by the historic, operatic and balletic "West Side Story" (1957). He then performed the same tasks for "Gypsy" (1959) and "Fiddler on the Roof" (1964). He was simultaneously creating ballets for the New York City Ballet, which he joined in 1949 as Associate Artistic Director with George Balanchine. Among his outstanding works were THE GUESTS (1949), AGE OF ANXIETY (1951), THE CAGE (1951), THE PIED PIPER (1951), AFTERNOON OF A FAUN (1953), FANFARE (1953) and THE CONCERT (1956), the latter the most hilarious of all ballets. For his own company, Ballets U.S.A. (1958 - 1962), he created N.Y. EXPORT: OPUS JAZZ (1958), MOVES (1959) and EVENTS (1961). The company performed to acclaim in the United States and Europe. He directed the Ford 50th Anniversary Show with Mary Martin and Ethel Merman for television in 1953, followed by a 1955 telecast of "Peter Pan" for which he received an Emmy Award. He co-directed and choreographed the movie "West Side Story" (1960), for which he received two Academy Awards. Off-Broadway, he directed the play by Arthur Kopit, "Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad" (1962). The following year, he directed and co-produced Brecht's "Mother Courage and Her Children." For American Ballet Theatre's Twenty-Fifth Anniversary (1965), he staged Stravinsky's dance cantata, LES NOCES, a work of shattering and immense impact.

After the triumph of "Fiddler on the Roof," Mr. Robbins dedicated his energies to creating ballets for the New York City Ballet. In 1988 he took a leave of absence to stage "Jerome Robbins' Broadway," which opened in 1989 to resounding critical and popular acclaim, and in 1990 he resigned from the position of Ballet Master in Chief -- which he shared with Peter Martins -- to pursue other projects. A partial list of his fifty-four creations includes: DANCES AT A GATHERING (1969); THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS (1971); WATERMILL (1972); REQUIEM CANTICLES (1972); THE DYBBUK VARIATIONS (1974); IN G MAJOR (1975); MOTHER GOOSE (1975); THE FOUR SEASONS (1979); OPUS 19: THE DREAMER (1979); PIANO PIECES (1981); GERSHWIN CONCERTO (1982); GLASS PIECES (1983); I'M OLD FASHIONED (1983); ANTIQUE EPIGRAPHS (1984); BRAHMS/HANDEL (with Twyla Tharp in 1984); IN MEMORY OF... (1985); QUIET CITY (1986); PICCOLO BALLETTTO (1986); IVES, SONGS (1988); 2 & 3 PART INVENTIONS (1994), and WEST SIDE STORY SUITE (1995). The Jerome Robbins Chamber Dance Company completed an acclaimed tour of the People's Republic of China, sponsored in 1981 by the U.S. Communications Agency.

During this extraordinary, prolific career, Mr. Robbins served on the National Council on the Arts from 1974 to 1980, and the New York State Council on the Arts/Dance Panel from 1973 to 1988. He established and partially endowed the Jerome Robbins Film Archive of the Dance Collection of the New York City Public Library at Lincoln Center. His numerous awards and academic honors included the Handel Medallion of the City of New York (1976), the Kennedy Center Honors (1981), three Honorary Doctorates, an honorary membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1985) and in 1988 he was awarded the National Medal of the Arts.

Mr. Robbins died at the height of his creative powers. Most importantly, he brought joy, emotional involvement and humorous pleasure to millions of people, not only in the United States, but throughout the entire world. His work will continue to exist and delight us.