

***LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER***  
**May 5, 2004, 8:00 p.m. on PBS**  
**New York City Ballet**  
**Lincoln Center Celebrates Balanchine 100**

The year 2004 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of George Balanchine, the Russian-born choreographer who arguably exerted the greatest influence on American ballet in the 20th century. Commemorative exhibitions of Balanchine materials are on display in several locations, including the Dance Collection of the New York City Public Library; the Harvard Theatre Collection; and the Dance Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York. The Miami City Ballet (whose Artistic Director, Edward Villella, was a leading dancer in Balanchine's New York City Ballet) has been performing many of the works choreographed by Balanchine; and appropriately enough, the New York City Ballet itself has reached into its repository of Balanchine productions and has been performing them all season long. One such performance will take place at the New York State Theater on the evening of Wednesday, May 5. Also appropriately, nearly all the constituent members of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts will participate: more about that later. I'm happy to report that our cameras and microphones will be in place to bring the event into your homes as our next *Live From Lincoln Center* presentation.

George Balanchine learned the fundamentals of classical dance at the Imperial Theater School in St. Petersburg, and he attended the Conservatory in that city where he studied piano. His first important impact as a choreographer came in 1924 when, as a member of Diaghilev's Ballet Russes in Paris, he created a number of works for the company. In 1933 Lincoln Kirstein, heir to the Filene's department store fortune and a dance specialist, brought him to the United States. For the next 15 years, Balanchine worked in the Broadway theater creating the dances for such shows as *Babes in Arms* and *On Your Toes*, the first Rodgers and Hart musical. But during all that time Kirstein and Balanchine founded several companies: the School of American Ballet in 1934, which became the American Ballet the following year; in 1946 the group was renamed Ballet Society; and in 1948 it was reconstituted as the New York City Ballet. From then until his death in April, 1983 George Balanchine (Mr. B as all his colleagues and associates called him) was the powerhouse behind the emergence of ballet as one of the most powerful and popular of the performing arts in America. His production in New York nearly half-a-century ago of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* inspired ballet companies throughout the land to follow his lead, and since then productions of *The Nutcracker* have been a Christmas-time tradition in scores of cities throughout the country.

The May 5th celebration of the centennial of Balanchine's birth will have Sarah Jessica Parker as Mistress of Ceremonies and it will begin with *Fanfare for a New Theater*, composed by Igor Stravinsky for Kirstein and Balanchine to

celebrate the opening of the New York State Theater on April 23, 1964---40 years ago almost to the exact date of our program. The two trumpet players for whom the work is scored will be Neil Balm and Ray Mase, principal players of the New York City Ballet Orchestra. Tchaikovsky's *None But the Lonely Heart* is reputed to have been Balanchine's favorite song. It will be performed next, in an orchestration by Doug Riley, conducted by the New York Philharmonic's Associate Conductor, Roberto Minczuk, with soloists Carter Brey, the Philharmonic's Principal Cellist, and tenor Placido Domingo representing the Metropolitan Opera Company. Throughout the evening film clips will be shown that illuminate Balanchine's life and times.

The first of the Balanchine-choreographed works to be seen will be *Harlequinade* from the *Ballabile des Enfants*, an excerpt from *Les Millions d'Arlequin* to music by the 19th century ballet composer, Riccardo Drigo, first performed by the New York City Ballet in February 1965. As you have gathered from the title, student dancers are involved along with the dancers of the professional company. Fulfilling that requirement will be students from the School of American Ballet, and the conductor will be Richard Moredock of the New York City Ballet.

The music of Stravinsky always occupied a central position in Balanchine's musical thinking. In June 1972 the New York City Ballet unveiled Balanchine's choreography to Stravinsky's *Duo Concertant* for Violin and Piano. An excerpt from that work follows next, with violinist Cho-Liang Lin (representing the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center) and pianist Cameron Grant of the New York City Ballet Orchestra. Adhering to the duo concept, Balanchine set the music for two dancers; in that 1972 premiere the male role was danced by Peter Martins, the current Ballet-Master-in Chief of the Company.

Balanchine found choreographic inspiration in unlikely places. He set the next two items on the program to music by Brahms: Arnold Schoenberg's orchestration of the composer's G Minor Piano Quartet (we'll have the last movement, the Gypsy Rondo), and the *Liebeslieder* and *Neue Liebeslieder* Waltzes. The former was performed for the first time in April 1966; the latter, in November, 1960. In the Waltzes the two pianists will be stalwarts of the City Ballet, and the four singers will be stalwarts of the New York City Opera.

On the face of it Bach's Double Concerto for Two Violins would seem to be an unlikely source for choreography. But it was that very source that produced an early Balanchine classic, first performed at an open dress rehearsal in May 1941 at the Little Theatre of New York's Hunter College by the American Ballet Caravan. The actual formal premiere was given by the troupe at the end of June 1941 at the Teatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro. The Largo slow movement from the work will be performed, conducted by longtime New York City Ballet Maestro, Hugo Fiorato; the violinists, representing the Juilliard School, will be

the renowned Gil Shaham and his wife, Adele Anthony.

In February 1970 the New York City Ballet introduced *Who Cares?* , a work with music by George Gershwin as orchestrated by Hershy Kay. Another great dancer of the City Ballet's Balanchine years was in that premiere---Jacques d'Amboise. The excerpt that figures on our program features a prominent trumpet solo, which will be played by none other than Jazz @ Lincoln Center's Wynton Marsalis; it will be conducted by the City Ballet's Maurice Kaplow.

And rounding out the evening will be the First Suite of Dances from Richard Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier* , which Balanchine choreographed for the New York City Ballet in June 1977. Space limitations have forced me to neglect to mention the names of all the remarkable dancers of the New York City Ballet who will grace the stage of the New York State Theater on Wednesday evening, May 5. I assure you that a veritable feast of superb dancing awaits you: just be sure to check your local PBS station's schedule for the exact time and date of the telecast in your area.

See you then!