





March 25 — June 28, 2008  
The New York Public Library for the Per-  
forming Arts

# New York Story: Jerome Robbins & His



“The things that make Robbins and his work tick are few—a hatred of racialism, a neurotic quest for himself, a love of New York and things New York, an understanding of jazz and jazz movement, a dry-martini sense of humour, a dislike of chi-chi, an honest-to-goodness love and understanding of his fellow men with all their foibles and their fears, their insecurity and their pain.”

Dance and Dancers, February 1959

No choreographer was so consummate a New Yorker as Jerome Robbins. Manhattan-born, New Jersey-raised, he set out to conquer the city as a teenager, and by 1948 he had become, in the words of *Esquire* magazine, the “hottest thing in show business.” He choreographed for Broadway and the ballet stage, and in both he made the city’s landscape and kinetic pulse a living presence. A good democrat, he celebrated the ordinary—sailors on shore leave during World War II in *Fancy Free* (1944) and *On the Town* (1944), teenaged victims of racism in *West Side Story* (1957), Old World families in *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964). He commemorated city landmarks—the Flatiron Building in *The Age of Anxiety* (1950), the Brooklyn Bridge in *Miss Liberty* (1949), the skyline in *New York Export: Opus Jazz* (1959)—while also memorializing less appetizing sights such as slums and half-razed neighborhoods, where lovers met on rusting fire escapes. He relished the city’s promise of unexpected romance and the exhilarating energy of its streets, its movement vernaculars and native gestures, its jazz and Latin rhythms, its corporeal accents of New Yorkese.

*New York Story: Jerome Robbins and His World* is the first exhibition to tell the choreographer’s story from the multitude of papers, graphic works, photographs, and videotapes that he bequeathed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Robbins seldom threw anything away; from his earliest years as a choreographer, he documented his work, keeping the notes that recorded his thinking about characters and costumes, insisting on receiving prints of photographs taken of his work, and in later years videotaping rehearsals as well as performances. Multitalented, he painted, sketched, and was a serious amateur photographer; he played the piano, made collages, and wrote extensively. He found the stimulus of collaboration both exciting and productive. The artworks dedicated to him, like the many objects by Robbins himself in *New York Story*, testify to his passionate commitment to the making of art.

## Early Life and Training

Born Jerome Wilson Rabinowitz in 1918, Robbins spent his childhood in Harlem and Weehawken, New Jersey, a quick ferry ride across the Hudson from Manhattan. Growing up, Robbins and his sister Sonia enjoyed music and dance lessons, summer camps, a trip to the old country to visit his father’s family in Poland.

“Art seemed like a tunnel to me,” Robbins later told an interviewer. “At the end of that tunnel I could see light where the world opened up, waiting for me.” By the early 1930s, Sonia had found her way to the modern dance world. Robbins, after a brief, unsuccessful stint at college studying chemistry, followed. Here he encountered the husband-and-wife team who exemplified the multiple aspects of dance-making in New York of the 1930s.

Gluck-Sandor and Felicia Sorel were concert artists who also worked on Broadway, choreographed union revues and shows for the Federal Dance Project, and staged original works and versions of modern ballet classics at their pocket-sized theater, the Dance Center. The training emphasized theatricality and stylized movement, dramatic gesture and a creative approach to dance. At the New Dance Group, where radical politics went hand-in-hand with affordable classes, Robbins studied modern dance with Charles Weidman and also, briefly, composition with Bessie Schönberg, indicating that he already felt the desire to choreograph. He appeared in Dance Center productions such as *El Amor Brujo*, the Yiddish Art Theatre’s *Brothers Ashkenazi* (Sandor had staged the dances), performances of the Federal Music and Federal Dance Projects, and a concert with Lisa Parnova, a ballet soloist and Dance



Center regular. By then, he had begun studying ballet with Ella Daganova, a former Pavlova dancer.

In 1938 Robbins began to spread his wings. That year he danced in his first Broadway show, *Great Lady*, where he first worked with George Balanchine and encountered a rising generation of American ballet talent, including Alicia Alonso, Annabelle Lyon and Nora Kaye, all of whom, like Robbins, later joined Ballet Theatre. In 1938, too, he spent his first summer at Camp Tamiment, a left-wing Pocono Mountain resort where the weekly musical revues were developed by Max Liebman, famed later as the producer of *Your Show of Shows*. For Robbins those summers were an invaluable preparation for a career in musical theater. The company included Danny Kaye, Sylvia Fine, and Imogene Coca, as well as a chorus of modern and ballet dancers. Robbins created his first original dances in Tamiment's freewheeling cabaret environment. Most struck a comic note; others made a social statement. His "Death of a Loyalist" (1939) alluded to the Spanish Civil War, "Strange Fruit" (with Anita Alvarez) (1939) to a lynching, and "Harlem Episode" (1940) to racism—themes that linked his work to the era's political left. Only weeks after he and Alvarez premiered "Strange Fruit," they reprised it on a program sponsored by the Dance Division of the Theatre Arts Committee (TAC). Here Robbins crossed paths for the first time with Edna Ocko, the political activist and dance critic who edited TAC Magazine, and a key figure in consolidating what the anti-Communist writer Walter K. Lewis later denounced as "the popular front between Broadway, Park Avenue and party headquarters." In 1953 Robbins would "name" Ocko in his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

## Early years as ballet dancer and choreographer

In 1940 Robbins joined the newly founded Ballet Theatre (today American Ballet Theatre), reveling



in what he later described as “the exchange of creative energies and stimulations” that characterized Ballet Theatre’s early years. The company was a choreographers’ haven, and with its eclectic, wide-ranging repertory an incomparable school for a neophyte with as haphazard a dance background as Robbins. In his eight years with Ballet Theatre, he found success as a dancer and as a choreographer. He was introduced to towering figures of early twentieth-century ballet and to the experimentalist tradition of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes. Michel Fokine, the grand old man of that tradition, staged his last original works for Ballet Theatre, along with revivals of his classic early ones. In 1942, not long before his death, he cast Robbins in Nijinsky’s role as Petrouchka, not a technically difficult role but one that demanded imagination and expressiveness.

Of all Ballet Theatre’s choreographers, Antony Tudor was the one Robbins regarded as his “artistic father.” He was at the height of his powers in the early 1940s, and his ballets, especially *Dark Elegies* (1937), the haunting, antiwar song cycle that had attracted Robbins to Ballet Theatre, and *Pillar of Fire* (1942), which opened a psychosexual vein that Robbins would later mine, left a deep impression on his young disciple. Tudor insisted upon dramatic verisimilitude and used material from his dancers’ private lives to elicit emotional truth – approaches that Robbins applied to his work not only as a dancer but also as a choreographer.

Although Robbins had been choreographing for several years, *Fancy Free* (1944) was his first ballet. He worked from a detailed scenario, relying, as he often did, on the written word to sketch out the action and clarify the motivation of his characters—in this case, three sailors on a last fling in New York before heading off to war. The ballet cemented collaborative relationships with the designer Oliver Smith and the composer Leonard Bernstein that would continue for more than twenty years and result in numerous works, including *West Side Story* (1957). It offered a new, sophisticated synthesis of jazz, ballet, modern, and social dance forms that would become a hallmark of his choreography on both Broadway and the concert stage. Finally, it established Robbins as a leader of the new American school, an artist engaged with his time and committed to a vision that was urban, sophisticated, and socially grounded.

Four years later Robbins left Ballet Theatre to join the New York City Ballet (NYCB), inaugurating a relationship with the company that would last until his death. He admired Balanchine enormously, and over the years came to know him intimately. The admiration was mutual. In 1949 Balanchine made him the company’s associate artistic director, with a flexible schedule that allowed him to pursue outside projects. The following year he revived *Prodigal Son* (1929) for him, giving Robbins the honor of being Fokine’s last Petrouchka and Balanchine’s first American Son. He also took Robbins the choreographer under his wing. “I always showed him everything I was doing,” Robbins later reminisced.

Under Balanchine’s powerful influence, Robbins largely stripped his ballets of narrative. In *The Guests* (1949) he dropped the original libretto about black and white department store workers in favor of a more abstract one about outsiders and insiders and a mixed pair of lovers—a theme that presaged *West Side Story*. In *The Cage* (1951), a tribe of man-eating Amazons in fright wigs destroyed a pair

of hapless men with a violence and misogyny that many found shocking. Far more than Balanchine in his work of the 1950s, Robbins emphasized the contemporary and everyday. In *The Pied Piper* (1951), Tanaquil Le Clercq chewed gum, while the onstage clarinetist or “piper” worked his “magic,” as critic Walter Terry wrote, leading the cast in a “jazzy, lyrical, frenzied” dance. He set nearly all his ballets to music by contemporary composers: Stravinsky (*The Cage*), Aaron Copland (*The Pied Piper*), Leonard Bernstein (*The Age of Anxiety*), Benjamin Britten (*Fanfare*), Marc Blitzstein (*The Guests*), and Harold Shapero (an unrealized project called *The Golem*). The “look” of Robbins’ ballets was equally contemporary, with scenery typically reduced to a minimum of carefully chosen elements and costuming that favored “accessorized” body suits or the simplest of tunics. Yet always his works revealed a refined sense of theatricality, exemplified by Jean Rosenthal’s silky, luminous setting for *Afternoon of a Faun* (1953), a Diaghilev classic reconceived by Robbins as an encounter of two dancers in a studio.

## Broadway

Fancy Free was Robbins’ ticket to Broadway, and within the year the curtain went up on his first musical, *On the Town*. Betty Comden and Adolph Green had joined the original trio of collaborators, giving the script and lyrics a New York wit. Directed by George Abbott, a master of timing and diviner of new talent, *On the Town* launched Robbins on the double career that he was to pursue until 1965. For more than twenty years he shuttled between the ballet stage and Broadway, creating dances that seemed to blur the line traditionally separating the two. Ballet had a long history on Broadway, but what differentiated Robbins, Agnes de Mille, and the other concert choreographers who flocked there in the 1940s from their predecessors (with the partial exception of George Balanchine) was that they created dances that could stand on their own, were expressive in their own right, featured ballet forms like the pas de deux, and were fully integrated into the plot. The new choreographers did away with tap lines and cookie-cutter chorines. They wanted individuals who could act as well as dance and were “real people” on stage.

Robbins had a magic touch, and even when a show fell short, critics praised his dances. He was a perfectionist and a “demon worker” (as ballerina Nora Kaye described him). He drove his dancers as well as his collaborators, expecting the most from them and refusing to settle for anything less. He was famous for doing his homework. For *Billion Dollar Baby* (1945) he spent days watching silent movies at the Museum of Modern Art. For *Fiddler on the Roof*, he observed dances at dozens of Orthodox weddings around New York City. When he undertook a project, he wrote notes to himself about the characters, mapping their behavior and analyzing the motivations behind it. By 1948 he had two shows running on Broadway simultaneously – *Look, Ma, I’m Dancin’!* (1948) and *High Button Shoes* (1947), which won the 1948 Tony Award for choreography. Feature writers vied for superlatives: *PM* called him a “Broadway wonder” and *Cue* the “number one boy of the Dance” and the “town’s most discussed dance director.” *Vogue’s* Gjon Mili photographed him stretched out on the floor surrounded by dancers from



Promotional photograph of Larry Kert and Carol Lawrence for *West Side Story*, 1957. Photograph by Friedman-Abeles, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

six of his ballets, all performed that season. Robbins had become a New York celebrity.

During the 1950s Robbins was at the very top of his form. He had first crack at shows and a long list of musical theater “greats” as collaborators—Irving Berlin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Sheldon Harnick, Jerry Bock, Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim, Arthur Laurents, Jo Mielziner, Raoul Pène du Bois, Irene Sharaff. Increasingly, he directed as well as choreographed, leaving his stamp on every

aspect of a production, and he was often called in to “doctor” shows, identifying and fixing problems without credit. Dividing his time between Broadway and the ballet stage, he found that “each fertilized the other,” as he told John Guare in 1988. “The work I did on King and I spilled over into my ballet ‘The Cage.’ Work on Look, Ma, I’m Dancin’! helped me make ‘The Concert.’” Dancers who followed him from show to show sometimes crossed these boundaries as well. If they could put up with his temper, which could be fierce, they were rewarded with loyalty and roles that furthered their development as artists. Classics of American musical theater, his Broadway works trace an arc of unparalleled achievement: *The King and I* (1951), *The Pajama Game* (1954), *Peter Pan* (1954), *Bells are Ringing* (1956), *West Side Story* (1957), *Gypsy* (1959), and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964).

## Robbins and HUAC

In the early 1950s Robbins faced a crisis that led to the most controversial event of his career. Although the Dies Committee had begun investigating Communist influence in government-funded projects (including the Federal arts projects) in the late 1930s, the anti-Communist witch hunt did not reach the broadcast industries until after World War II. Initially, Robbins remained largely untouched by the growing hysteria and the expanding blacklist that caused thousands of people to lose their jobs in government, the public schools, movies, television, and radio. A Party member from 1943 to 1947, Robbins knew many Communists and Communist sympathizers and had lent his name to many causes and performances sponsored by organizations denounced in the late 1940s as Communist “fronts.” But even if Broadway producers ignored *Red Channels* and *Counterattack* (“The Newsletter of Facts to Combat Communism”) and refused to enforce the blacklist, Robbins’ growing celebrity made him vulnerable to political blackmail. So, too, did his bisexuality and professional ambition. Robbins ran afoul of the blacklist in 1950, when Ed Sullivan unexpectedly canceled his appearance on his popular TV variety show, *Toast of the Town*, and told him (according to Robbins’ FBI file) that “after the [Paul Draper] incident” – a reference to the tap dancer whose appearance on the show had raised a storm of conservative protest – Sullivan “had been instructed by the FORD MOTOR COMPANY [to] clear all performers on his show with the organization which publishes ‘COUNTERATTACK.’” During the next three years Robbins tried desperately to clear his name. A scurrilous attack on him appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* signed by Sullivan, and he was mentioned in *Counterattack*, along with some of his closest collaborators. Still his career continued to flourish.

In May 1953 Robbins testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee, as a “friendly” witness, meaning that in addition to admitting that he had been a member of the Communist Party, he also named other members. Why did he agree to “name names”? To be sure, several of those he identified as Communists, including the playwrights Edward and Jerome Chodorow, and the actors Madeline Lee, Elliott Sullivan, and Lloyd Gough, had been named long before in *Red Channels*. But Edna Ocko had maintained a low profile during the 1940s, and without Robbins’ testimony it seems highly unlikely (judging from



Patricia McBride and Edward Villella rehearsing Jerome Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering*, 1969. Photograph by Martha Swope, Jerome Robbins Photographs, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

her FBI file) that she would have come under FBI scrutiny. The fact is Robbins was in a quandary. The blacklist may not have been enforced on Broadway, but Robbins had set his sights on television, which did. He had been hired to direct *The Ford Fiftieth Anniversary Show*, a two-hour special featuring stars like Ethel Merman, Mary Martin, and Frank Sinatra that was scheduled to air live on both NBC and CBS less than six weeks after his testimony. If he refused to testify, what would the sponsor, the same Ford Motor Company that had insisted that Sullivan enforce the blacklist, do? It was a risk that Robbins would not take. His testimony drove a wedge between Robbins and many of his friends. Nora Kaye never really forgave him. His sister refused to speak to him. But because of the open political climate on Broadway, Robbins continued to work with many who condemned his decision to testify.

## Ballets: U.S.A.

In 1958 Robbins left New York City Ballet to form his own company, Ballets: U.S.A. It made its debut at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, whose goal, as expressed by its founder, the Italian-American composer Gian-Carlo Menotti, was "to introduce exciting new American talent to a truly international audience." Although the New York City Ballet had toured some of Robbins' works and he

had set *Fanfare* on the Royal Danish Ballet, his ballets were not widely known in Europe. *Ballets: U.S.A.* would change that. Undertaking three European tours between 1958 and 1961, with substantial funding from various U.S. government agencies, this “vibrantly youthful company” (in the words of one observer) created a sensation almost everywhere it went.

The repertory mixed old and new works—classics in the making like *Afternoon of a Faun* and *The Concert* (with new scenery by Saul Steinberg) and “propaganda” ballets like *N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz*, “deliberately designed,” as critic John Martin wrote, “to be expository of American trends to a foreign audience.” The ensemble was superb. Many of the dancers came from Broadway, a few from the New York City Ballet, some from television, but all were technically versatile, welded into a group totally at one with the choreographer’s vision. “Racially, we’re American—every sort of heritage is represented,” Robbins told an English interviewer in 1959. With backdrops by Ben Shahn, Robert Prince’s jazzy soundscape, and a cast that included the African-American John Jones and the Korean-American Patricia Dunn, *N.Y. Export* depicted not the America of Hollywood but an America of gritty urban rooftops, youthful alienation, and ethnic diversity. Dance critic Anna Kisselgoff, who saw the company as a student at the 1959 Dubrovnik Festival, had vivid memories of the “frenzied” Yugoslav reception. “Robbins’ dancers, very American, and seen in relief against the night sky, seemed to have dropped in from another planet.”

Despite funding from the State Department and several appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, *Ballets: U.S.A.* folded. Robbins was keenly disappointed. In the years that followed, he seemed uncertain of his direction. He staged a number of dramatic plays—a memorable production of Arthur Kopit’s *Oh, Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma’s Hung You In the Closet and I’m Feelin’ So Sad* (1962), Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1963), an experience that Robbins remembered with horror, and Maria Fornes’ *The Office*, which closed during previews. In 1964, when Lucia Chase approached him about giving his repertory to Ballet Theatre, he responded by outlining his ideas for a reorganized company: “. . . 15 to 20 of Martha’s dancers, 10 to 15 of BUSA’s and the remainder to be Ballet Theatre’s, a company of about 50 to 60 people...joined together on a permanent basis so that there’s a true exchange of creative energies and stimulations. This combination of choreographers and styles would certainly foster dancers and young American choreographers besides filling an urgent need and place.” Although Chase failed to revamp Ballet Theatre along these lines, she did persuade him to choreograph *Les Noces* (1965). Now, with Oliver Smith and Leonard Bernstein joined by costume designer Patricia Zipprodt, Robbins set about choreographing this formidably difficult work, which brought a definitive close to the era of his ballet life that had begun when he auditioned for Ballet Theatre in 1940. In an article published before the ballet’s premiere, Robbins expressed his gratitude to Chase “for the comfort of her company out on a very high limb.” Stravinsky’s musical challenges alone were awesome: four grand pianos, a choral group of thirty-two, four solo singers, and six percussionists. “The dancers must count continuously, unerringly and with unceasing concentration,” he explained. “For once the music starts, nothing can stop it. You push a button and this terrifying

machine begins to scream, launches into lamentations and incessant chattering, shocking you with unexpected outbursts and hypnotic murmurings.”

## Fiddler on the Roof

Fiddler on the Roof, which opened on Broadway six months before the premiere of *Les Noces*, was Robbins’ last original Broadway show. Like so many of Robbins’ works, Fiddler struck a deep cultural chord. “I saw ‘Fiddler’ as a celebration of my father’s life and background—a thank-you note for my Jewish heritage,” he told an interviewer. The show evoked the lost world of the shtetl, a past that Robbins shared with many in the audience and behind the scenes as well. If *West Side Story* expressed cultural anxieties about rising crime and urban change, Fiddler celebrated a tightly knit shtetl community, even as once vibrant Jewish-American communities were dissolving because of assimilation and upward mobility. Fiddler touched the hearts of its large Jewish-American audiences. His father wept at the premiere.

## American Theatre Lab

In 1961 the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson had written that Robbins’ “dream” is “to have a theatre of his own with a company of about twenty, all of them able to sing, dance, act like the cast of *West Side Story*, and put on a repertory of all sorts of things—ballets, revues, a French farce, a Noh play, Ionesco.” Five years later Robbins came close to realizing this dream, when the National Endowment for the Arts awarded him \$300,000 to establish the American Theatre Lab, a “theater laboratory for projects which do not fit into present theater forms, be they in our commercial theater or the separated realms of pure opera, ballet and concert.” He wanted to be left alone, away from the spotlight, away from the press, free to “work a year or two and see what I can come up with.” He auditioned scores of dancers, singers, and actors, hired Anna Sokolow to give the morning dance class, and surrounded himself with trusted collaborators, including Robert Wilson, Stephen Sondheim, John Guare, and Leonard Bernstein. The first phase of the project dealt with experiments and exercises mainly involving movement, the second with trying out ideas for potential productions. The one project that almost went into production was *The Exception and the Rule*, Brecht’s play reimagined as a kind of “antic vaudeville [with] great pertinence for our time and for the country.” Guare had the inspired idea to set it in a television studio during a marathon against racism. A producer was found, money raised, and Zero Mostel signed for the lead. But Robbins began to get cold feet, and the production was put on hold. It was only a matter of time before American Theatre Lab shut down.

## New York City Ballet

In 1968 *Afternoon of Faun* and *The Cage* reappeared in the NYCB repertory. The following year Robbins returned to create his first work for NYCB in thirteen years – *Dances at a Gathering* (1969). The ballet opened an immensely fruitful period for Robbins, although it revealed a marked aesthetic shift from its

predecessor. For the most part his new ballets minimized theatricality and the need for a multitude of collaborators. The inspiration for *Dances* was Chopin's music, with its memories of his sister's Duncan dances, Fokine's *Les Sylphides*, and his own ballet *The Concert*. *Dances* began as a pas de deux and kept growing. ("More, more," Balanchine told him, after he looked at it.) Robbins dressed the ten dancers in simple, unassuming costumes that distantly recalled the simplified folk dress of Tudor's *Dark Elegies*. The choreography melded classical and folk dance movement, and used gesture, refined to the point of naturalness, to evoke a world of feeling rather than convey explicit narrative meaning. Critic Edwin Denby's assessment was that "the music and dance seem to be inventing each other." Of the plotless works that followed, *The Goldberg Variations* (1971), set to Bach's eighty-minute work for solo piano, was certainly the most daunting. After *Dances*, Robbins said, he wanted to get away from Romantic music, and in Bach he found a structure that was both grand and very architectural. The "challenge," he told an interviewer, "is that it's thirty variations all in the same key and formally all alike. Yet the possibilities of interpretation are endlessly rich."

In *The Dybbuk* (1974), the new plotless orientation proved a drawback. Since the 1940s Robbins and Leonard Bernstein had harbored the idea of a work based on N. Ansky's Yiddish play; according to Robbins it was to be his "first long work" and a "real production." By the 1970s, when Bernstein finally got around to composing the score and Robbins to choreographing it, the narrative and most of the production had vanished. The play, Robbins told an interviewer, was only "a point of departure, a springboard for a series of related dances which come from the magical religious ambience of the story. The dances are about rituals and hallucinations which derive from the obsession of the characters—the Hassidic and mystic qualities that Ansky was writing about." The ballet received mixed reviews, and over the years Robbins made several efforts to salvage it. But no matter how much he trimmed and tinkered, nothing seemed to breathe vitality into these abstract cousins of *Fiddler's* flesh-and-blood Jewish folk.

The one ballet that revealed Robbins' continuing engagement with the performance avant-garde was *Watermill* (1972), and it earned even harsher reviews. Set to a score by the Japanese-American composer Teiji Ito, it grew out of ideas and exercises that Robbins had first explored at the American Theatre Lab, including the use of slow motion (evident in his friend Robert Wilson's productions as well) and techniques associated with Noh. Robbins told Balanchine that his new ballet was very different from what he had been doing. "It's going to be a search into another place. George said that it's a ballet about there being no time. And that was when he made a remark to me about choreographers—that we dare to get our fingertips into the land where there are no names for anything."

One of the pleasures of returning to NYCB, Robbins often said, was his relationship to the dancers. In *Dances at a Gathering*, he assembled a group of privileged interpreters, who reappeared in most of his ballets. Some were at the height of their artistic powers. Others were relative newcomers to the company, and in casting them, he helped mold their artistic personalities. He had a keen eye for young talent and over the years took a personal interest in many dancers. In the mid- and late 1970s he took particular joy in working with the most celebrated

duos of American dance. For Suzanne Farrell and Peter Martins, he created *In G Major* (1975), and for Natalia Makarova and Mikhail Baryshnikov, *Other Dances* (1976), first performed at a gala fundraiser for the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. In 1978, at Robbins' urging, Baryshnikov joined NYCB; Robbins choreographed roles for him in *Four Seasons* (1979), a romp to ballet music by Verdi, and *Opus 19/The Dreamer* (1979), roles that showcased Baryshnikov's "superhuman" technique and "sensitivity."

Balanchine died in 1983 after a lengthy illness. Robbins contributed several new ballets to the repertory during this unsettled period, and with Peter Martins shared the company's artistic direction. *Glass Pieces* (1983), to music by Philip Glass, and *Brahms/Handel* (1984), which Robbins choreographed with Twyla Tharp ("a wonderful, hard, fierce, exciting experience"), were his last works with a sense of contemporary engagement. Although he continued to choreograph until the end of his life, nearly all the works that now flowed from his imagination were acts of memory that revisited the past and reflected on it. Thus, with Morton Gould, who had composed his ballet *Interplay* in 1945, he staged *I'm Old Fashioned* (*The Astaire Variations*) (1983). The following year he reconceived his 1952 *Ballade* as *Antique Epigraphs* (1984), and the year after that choreographed *In Memory of...* (1985), to Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto*, a work that indirectly memorialized Balanchine. *Ives Songs* (1988) conjured memories of Antony Tudor, who had died



Peter Martins in Jerome Robbins' *In G Major*. Photograph by Costas.

## Public Programs:

Saturday, March 29, 3:00 p.m.

New York Story: Jerome Robbins and His World  
Lecture by Lynn Garafola

Tuesday, June 3, 6:00 p.m.

A Tribute to Floria Lasky (1923-2007)

Remarks by Dr. Paul LeClerc, President, The New York Public Library, and Jacqueline Z. Davis, Executive Director, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, followed by a screening of *An Interview with Floria Lasky*. The specialist in entertainment law and friend and lawyer to Jerome Robbins is interviewed by Liz Smith. Videotaped on February 11, 2003, by The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Theatre on Film and Tape Archive, with the financial assistance of the League of Professional Theatre Women.

Thursday, June 5, 6:00 p.m.

Christine Conrad and Daniel Stern in Conversation

Ms. Conrad is the author of *Jerome Robbins: That Broadway Man*

Mr. Stern was a longtime friend of Robbins. He is a Trustee of the Jerome Robbins Trust and a Director of the Jerome Robbins Foundation.

Monday, June 16, 6:00 p.m.

Lecture by Amanda Vaill

Ms. Vaill is the author of *Somewhere: The Life of Jerome Robbins*

Admission to these programs is free and first come, first served. Programs take place in the Bruno Walter Auditorium, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Please call (212) 642-0142 for information about the Library's



Jared Angle and Rebecca Krohn in *Jerome Robbins' Moves*, 2007. Photograph by Costas.

New York Story: Jerome Robbins & His World is a project of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts: Jacqueline Z. Davis, Barbara G. and Lawrence A. Fleischman Executive Director; Barbara Cohen-Stratyner, Judy R. and Alfred A. Rosenberg Curator of Exhibitions. The exhibition was curated by Lynn Garafola. It was designed and installed by The Performing Arts Museum staff: Donald J. Vlack, Designer; Robert J. McGlynn, Graphics Designer; and René Ronda and Herbert Ruiz, Installers. Conservator: Grace Owen; manager of audio-video services: Michael Diekmann; manager of public programs: Alan Pally. Assistants to the curator: Lara Friedrich and Megan Wacha. We are grateful to the many members of the Library staff for their assistance and support for this project.

Artifacts are from the Billy Rose Theatre Division, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, Music Division, Rodgers & Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound, and Theatre on Film and Tape Archive of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and research divisions of the Humanities and Social Sciences Library, The New York Public Library.

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Cover image: Jerome Robbins taking a curtain call after Four Chamber Works at the New York State Theater. Photograph by Costas.