

The Incredible Culmination of the Cleveland Ballet Season! World Premiere!



Cleveland Ballet Orchestra makes its live debut with the Cleveland Ballet production of *Serenade* by George Balanchine and *Symphony of Life*

Friday, April 21 at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 22 at 7:00 p.m.

Presenting Sponsor Charles Abookire

In Loving Memory of His Wife

Sandra Hanna Abookire

Serenade

Choreography by George Balanchine

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With the permission of and in cooperation with The George Balanchine Trust, Cleveland Ballet was, for the first time, awarded the rights to perform one of the most celebrated ballets in the history of dance, George Balanchine's *Serenade* to music by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, "in accordance with George Balanchine's standards of style and technique."

Readers need to be made aware of what The George Balanchine Trust is and why it grants permission to stage Balanchine's ballets.

Lincoln Kerstein, a well-known American philanthropist, a wealthy and enlightened young man, in 1933 invited George Balanchine to move from Europe to the United States to establish a ballet troupe. Together they founded the School of American Ballet.

Balanchine died in 1983 having left a will that granted the rights to all 425 ballets he created to his five wives and beloved ballerinas. Revivals of Balanchine's productions were to be managed by the Guardians of the Balanchine style of the special Balanchine Foundation, who would ensure the purity of the reproduction of the ballets without any distortion.

The famous Deborah Wingert has been commissioned by the Balanchine Foundation as the "Guardian" choreographer for Cleveland Ballet's staging of *Serenade*. She danced with the New York City Ballet for 13 years and is now part of a small "consecrated" group, selected by The George Balanchine Trust to spread Balanchine's choreography around the world. We will offer our interview with Deborah Wingert to our readers in the next issue of Prospect.

Obtaining permission to stage a Balanchine ballet is a very difficult task. In order to perform Balanchine ballets, the dancers of the ballet troupe must exhibit perfect technique and artistry - this is the requirement of the Balanchine Foundation. If the level of the dancers meets the high requirements of the Foundation, the troupe is granted the right to stage a production. The leading parts in such productions are available only to very powerful dancers who have managed to master the nuances of Balanchine's choreography.

Serenade was Balanchine's first American production. It's stage premiere, which became the official birthdate of the ballet, took place on March 1, 1935 in New York, on the stage of the Adelphi Theater.

In its current form, *Serenade* consists of four parts: Sonatina, Waltz, Russian Dance and Elegy.

Here is some lore about the history of the production.

At the start of his work on *Serenade*, Balanchine had 17 ballerinas. For this cast, he staged the first fragment - Sonatina, using a ballet class session as a model. Only seven people came to the next rehearsal. Balanchine said "Oh, well," and choreographed the next dance for a cast of seven. One of the young ladies had a date, and she left right in the middle of rehearsal. Balanchine calmly inserted this into the choreography. On another day, one ballerina fell at rehearsal while another one arrived late, ran into the classroom and rushed about, not knowing where to stand. Balanchine used this in *Serenade* as well!

His impressions gathered in museums, he applied in ballet as well. For example, the movement when the dancers put a hand to their head, as if it hurts, he borrowed from the Louvre sculpture of the great Italian Antonio Canova, and called it "aspirin."

There is also a story about the birth of the famous corps de ballet pas, when all the dancers raise their hands with open palms. It was 1933 and Balanchine had just arrived from Europe. At the very first rehearsal he said: "There is a terrible little man in Germany. He wears a mustache and raises his hand like this." It was about Hitler and the Fascist salute. This was how Balanchine took the bad and transformed it into the good.

The choreographer himself believed that a plot is completely unimportant in ballet; only the music and the movement itself are important: "Discard the plot and do without scenery and magnificent costumes. The dancer's body is his main instrument, it must be visible. Changes in lighting should replace the scenery...Consequently, the dance expresses everything with the help of music alone."

"The only plot of *Serenade* is the music of the serenade; it is, if you like, a dance under the moonlight." - this is how George Balanchine described his *Serenade* to the music of Tchaikovsky, having tired of the reporters' questions looking for some hidden meaning behind the outward simplicity of the performance.

The second piece to be presented by Cleveland Ballet will be *Symphony of Life*, choreographed to the music of the world-famous Israeli composer Anna Segal.

This is the first ever musical score written specifically for Cleveland Ballet.

One of the most gifted Russian choreographers, Ilya Zhivoi, was commissioned to apply his artistic interpretation of this amazing music.

Ilya Zhivoi is the holder of the "Hope of Russia" award, winner of the "Golden Soffit" award and a "Golden Mask" nominee. He graduated from the A.L. Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet in 2008 and was accepted into the troupe of the Mariinsky Theatre. In 2015, he completed the Master's program of the Academy of Russian Ballet with a degree in the Art of the Choreographer. He has been a choreographer and director since 2013. His productions had great success in England, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Croatia and Japan. The exquisite weave of his choreographic handwriting is complex, but at the same time easy to comprehend.

Another surprise offered by Cleveland Ballet - the entire musical accompaniment of the performance will, for the first time, be performed live by the new Cleveland Ballet Orchestra. 24 musicians will comprise this powerful live orchestra. Maestro Caleb Young, who will make his Playhouse Square debut, will conduct the performance and the world-famous violinist Alexandra Preucil will act as the musical advisor.

With the debut of Cleveland Ballet Orchestra, the *Symphony of Life* will become one of the most interesting productions of Cleveland Ballet.

The eighth season will end on the highest note.

We congratulate the founders and directors of Cleveland Ballet, Artistic Director Gladisa Guadalupe and President Dr. Michael Krasnyansky on these new achievements.

Bakhtiar Bakhtiarov

Translated by Michael Moskowitz