

# PROGRAM NOTES

## INTRODUCING BALANCHINE

“Dancing is music made visible.”  
— George Balanchine

GEORGE BALANCHINE IS KNOWN as the Father of American Ballet, but he began his ballet career in Russia. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, Balanchine was the son of a composer and studied music at the Petrograd (St. Petersburg) Conservatory. He studied ballet at the Imperial School of Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre and his first known choreographed work dates back to 1920, just before he migrated to America. He created experiential ballets for the Mikhailovsky Theatre in Petrograd and was one of the first ballet dancers to leave the Soviet Union to tour. In 1925, he joined Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. In 1929, Balanchine worked with the Royal Danish Ballet and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo before immigrating to New York in

1933. With the financial backing of wealthy Bostonian Lincoln Kirstein, Balanchine created the School of American Ballet in 1934, where he borrowed from his own experiences at Imperial Russia and sought to develop an American ballet aesthetic: neoclassical. He worked many of his choreographic ideas on the students in his school and some of his most famous works were developed during this time, including *Serenade*. In 1946, Kirstein created the Ballet Society, which Balanchine expanded in 1948 as New York City Ballet.

He is one of the most revered and influential choreographers of neoclassical ballet in the 20th century.

## SERENADE

Music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
Choreography by George Balanchine

One of Balanchine's most beloved works, *Serenade* was the first original work he created after his arrival in America. Balanchine's creation of *Serenade* in 1934 is an example of the neoclassical style and was his first American ballet. Neoclassical style incorporated the romanticism of ballet with modernity, and Balanchine's neoclassicism reflected the swift invention that almost seemed impromptu.

Balanchine's aesthetic captures the glamour and sophistication of European classicism—speed, craft, and agility combined with the dramatic, erotic and mysterious. This iconic ballet was a milestone in the history of dance when it premiered in 1935 and remains a signature piece of New York City Ballet.

Atlanta Ballet premiered *Serenade* in 1961.

## SUM STRAVINSKY

Music by Igor Stravinsky  
Choreography by Kiyon Ross

Kiyon Ross is a celebrated choreographer who has had an impressive career at Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB) as a company soloist and faculty member. Ross grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, where he first took tap lessons before falling in love with ballet. While at PNB he created *Sum Stravinsky*. Ross created *Sum Stravinsky* after being asked by Peter Boal, PNB's artistic director, to create a work for the Stravinsky festival in Seattle. PNB is one of the companies that continues Balanchine's legacy by carrying the Balanchine style and aesthetic in its repertoire and Ross's ballet adds to Balanchine's influence and aesthetic on the company. Ross came across the "Dumbarton Oaks" Concerto by Stravinsky and was inspired to choreograph

the composition. Ross describes it as three self-contained movements that have their "own kind of feel." The first movement is bright and bubbly, the second movement is flirtatious and sensuous, and the third movement is very driving with a great pulse for dancing. First presented by Atlanta Ballet in the 2018-2019 Season, Kiyon Ross's *Sum Stravinsky* "bubbles constantly with engaging movement" (*The Boston Globe*). This effervescent work uses overlapping groupings of dancers in vibrant colors to bring Stravinsky's famous "Dumbarton Oaks" Concerto to joyous, celebratory, three-dimensional life.

Atlanta Ballet premiered *Sum Stravinsky* in 2019.

## IN CREASES

Music by Philip Glass  
Choreography by Justin Peck

Justin Peck is a Tony Award-winning choreographer and former soloist with New York City Ballet (NYCB). He was born in Washington, D.C. and moved to New York to train in ballet at the School of American Ballet. In 2008, he choreographed his first ballet and has since created more than 25 works.

*In Creases*, Peck's first ballet work for the NYCB, premiered in 2012 during New York City Ballet's annual summer residency at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. The ballet is set to Philip Glass' "Four

Movements for Two Pianos" and is an abstract ballet with shifting patterns, geometric shapes, and puzzle-like formations focusing on manipulating the dancers' bodies into complex shapes and structures. *In Creases* established Justin Peck as a worthy heir to the neoclassical throne of his mentors at New York City Ballet, George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins.

This is Atlanta Ballet's premiere performance of *In Creases*.



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