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THE GEORGE BALANCHINE FOUNDATION

news

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 24, 2001

SUZANNE FARRELL TO TAPE VIDEO SERIES FOR THE GEORGE BALANCHINE FOUNDATION
Choreographer's "Last Muse" to Coach Excerpts from Two Stravinsky Ballets

New York City–Suzanne Farrell, a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet for nearly thirty years, will teach and coach excerpts from two of Balanchine's most unusual works: Movements for Piano and Orchestra and Monumentum pro Gesualdo, both with scores by Stravinsky. Taping for The George Balanchine's *Interpreters Archive* series will commence September 16, 2001, in the New York City Ballet studios at the Rose Building, Lincoln Center, New York.

Ms. Farrell will work with dancers from the Suzanne Farrell Ballet, which later in the month will open the 2001-2002 season at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Nancy Reynolds, the Foundation's Director of Research, will oversee the project; internationally known conductor and writer Robert Craft, a Stravinsky specialist, will interview Ms. Farrell.

The flavor of both ballets derives largely from their scores. Monumentum is based on three madrigals by the seventeenth-century Italian composer Don Carlo Gesualdo, known for his radical chromaticism. The ballet premiered in 1960 with Diana Adams and Conrad Ludlow and a corps of six couples. Ms. Farrell soon assumed the leading role.

Of the brief ballet, elegant and spare, the English music critic Andrew Porter

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wrote, "The choreography is of a divine clarity and precision: sometimes breathtakingly simple; sometimes as simple in actual sequence as Gesualdo's rising sequence of notes, but as intricately assembled in polyphony as the score itself, with close canons, imitations, and rhythmic displacements" (Financial Times).

The twelve-tone score for Movements has been called Stravinsky at his most "hermetic," and to the layman it may appear a series of disconnected sounds; indeed, New York City Ballet's former Music Director Gordon Boelzner referred to the music as "shattered."

Balanchine, who always took his cue from the music, did so more than ever for this ballet; he believed it was his most "in the music" work, while Stravinsky felt that Balanchine's choreography "clarified" his score. Movements was described in the London Times as "an essay in suspended motion. Its appeal is at once musical and spatial, and its dancers seem like a mobile caught in the breath of the music. The air is full of pauses."

The ballet was premiered in the 1963 with Suzanne Farrell and Jacques d'Amboise. Within a few years, it began to be regularly presented with Monumentum, with no intermission between the two and with both female leads danced by the same person. Said Ms. Reynolds, "Balanchine was obviously making a point by linking two such disparate ballets together and by having a single ballerina (who was very often Suzanne Farrell) dance both. I can think of no other instance where he did this. We are extremely pleased to record Ms. Farrell's ideas about these works. Mr. B. choreographed so many important roles for her in the latter part of his life that we know he admired and trusted her artistry to a rare degree."

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SUZANNE FARRELL joined the New York City Ballet in 1961 and was soon dancing leading parts. In addition to performing a large segment of the Balanchine repertory, in 1963—with Movements—she appeared in the first of a long series of brilliant roles Balanchine choreographed around her talents, a series that ended only with his death in 1983. After Movements came her created roles in Balanchine's Meditation, Don Quixote (sometimes dancing the lead opposite Balanchine himself), Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet, "Diamonds" in Jewels, Tzigane, Chaconne, Vienna Waltzes, Walpurgis Nacht, and the sublime Mozartiana, among others. Jerome Robbins and Maurice Béjart were among the other choreographers who composed works expressly for her. Suzanne Farrell gave more than two thousand performances with the New York City Ballet, retiring in 1989. Since that time, she has staged Balanchine ballets all over the world and has conducted a summer teaching program in association with the Kennedy Center, which is now in its ninth season. In 1999, she presented Suzanne Farrell Stages the Masters of 20th Century Ballet, for which she staged works by Balanchine, Robbins and Béjart. In 2000, the Suzanne Farrell Ballet came into being, an ongoing project of the Kennedy Center. In the same year, Ms. Farrell accepted a position as professor in the dance department of Florida State University at Tallahassee. Ms. Farrell's autobiography, Holding On To the Air, was published in 1990. In 1997, Suzanne Farrell: Elusive Muse , directed by Anne Belle and Deborah Dickson, was an Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary Film.

ROBERT CRAFT has conducted most of the world's major orchestras. He is the first American to have conducted Alban Berg's Wozzeck and Lulu, and he also led the world premieres of many of Stravinsky's later works, including Agon, Variations, and Requiem Canticles. Mr. Craft has recorded the music of Stravinsky in ten volumes for the MusicMasters label and has also been praised for his recordings of Baroque music–Monteverdi, Gesualdo, Schütz, Bach–and of contemporary music, especially the complete works of Webern and Schoenberg. He is a two-time winner of the prestigious Prix du Disque and was awarded the Edison Prize for his recordings of Varèse and

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Stravinsky. The author of several books, Mr. Craft is also the recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Special Award for Literature. His most recent book, Places: A Travel Companion for Music and Art Lovers, was published in 2000, and he is now working on his autobiography.

NANCY REYNOLDS has been The Balanchine Foundation's Director of Research since 1994. She initiated, and continues to direct, the *Interpreters Archive* video series, working with such legends of the dance as Maria Tallchief, Frederic Franklin, Alicia Alonso, Melissa Hayden, Todd Bolender, Allegra Kent, Patricia Wilde, and Dame Alicia Markova. She is now completing a comprehensive history of theatrical dance in the twentieth century for Yale University Press.

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