

WE LOVE YOU, TOO.

“Love, love, love—that is the soul of genius.” Mozart said that, and on matters of genius he was probably a reliable source. But what happens when genius is the source of love?

Here are five dances about love from choreographers of genius which go far beyond superficial romance into dimensions of experience which touch us deeply.

FIVE DANCES ABOUT LOVE

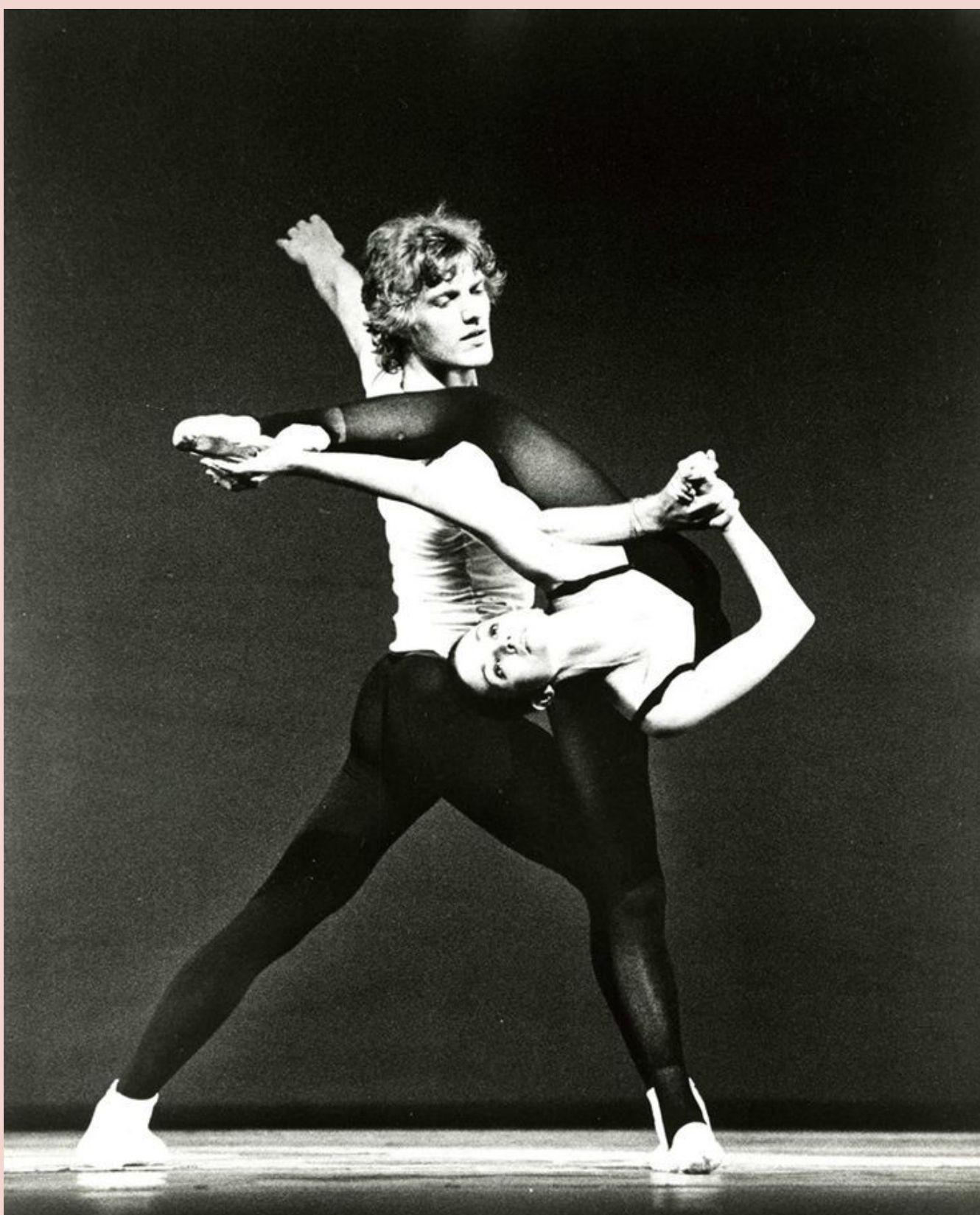
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1

STRAVINSKY VIOLIN CONCERTO: ARIA II

MUSIC BY IGOR STRAVINSKY
CHOREOGRAPHY BY GEORGE BALANCHINE

Though Balanchine was the master of the plotless ballet, the male-female relationships he evokes are some of the most poignant experiences to be found on a ballet stage. What was he channeling here? Whether or not it was part of his inspiration, it's hard not to see a parallel with a real life story: a friend of Stravinsky once observed the composer weeping during a performance of his Concerto. As Charles Joseph relates in his book *Stravinsky and Balanchine*, “When she asked [Stravinsky] about this uncharacteristically effusive reaction, he confessed that he had written the aria for his long-suffering wife, Catherine. It was, he said, ‘the only way I could think of to apologize’—a reference to his by then decade-old, not-so-secret extramarital affair with Vera Sudeikina.”



2

ONE FOR MY BABY

MUSIC BY HAROLD ARLEN AND JOHNNY MERCER
CHOREOGRAPHY BY FRED ASTAIRE

Love has many facets, and Astaire wasn't only great at showing us what it felt like to fall in love (though, he was really, really good at that). In one of his most affecting, but lesser known pictures, *The Sky's The Limit*, he plays a pilot on leave during WWII. In this scene he captures (astonishingly) in a tap dance, the complex emotions of a man who has fallen in love, and must return to the uncertainty of war.



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: DIVERTISSEMENT

MUSIC BY FELIX MENDELSSOHN
CHOREOGRAPHY BY GEORGE BALANCHINE

Most of Balanchine's ballets are "storyless," but he once clarified in an interview that it wasn't stories he didn't like, but "bad stories." Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems to have passed muster, and the choreographer adapted the play with arguably as much deftness and invention as Shakespeare displayed in writing it. He effortlessly handles the contorted plot in Act 1 while finding ample space to create nuanced relationships between the protagonists and elicit our compassion for them. Act II is reserved mostly for this pas de deux for two dancers who never actually appear in Shakespeare's play, but who seem to represent consummated love itself.



I'M OLD FASHIONED

MUSIC BY JEROME KEM AND JOHNNY MERCER
CHOREOGRAPHY BY GEORGE BALANCHINE

Maybe I'm old fashioned, but for the cinematic experience of watching two people fall in love, this is hard to beat. It doesn't feel so much that you are watching two characters, Bob Davis and María Acuña, fall in love, but seeing Fred Astaire and Rita Hayworth share a moment of perfect grace, or perhaps even more: a pinnacle of human existence. That might seem like an overstatement, but Rita Hayworth herself said, "I guess the only jewels of my life were the pictures I made with Fred Astaire," and Astaire called her his best partner.



CONCERTO BAROCCO: LARGO MA NON TANTO

MUSIC BY J.S. BACH
CHOREOGRAPHY BY GEORGE BALANCHINE

This may seem an odd choice, as the man and woman don't seem engaged in a romantic relationship. Rather, he is presenting her, supporting and displaying her through a series of gorgeous maneuvers. Here, perhaps, we are not seeing love represented, but an artifact of love itself: the choreographer George Balanchine's deeply inspired love of woman (in general, and very often in the specific) and of ballet. You can't create dance like this without the muse stealing your very soul.



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Kay Mazzo and Peter Martins (NYCB)
Stravinsky Violin Concerto
Choreography by George Balanchine
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Fred Astaire
One For My Baby, from *The Sky's The Limit*

Jacques D'Amboise and Allegra Kent (NYCB)
A Midsummer Night's Dream
Choreography by George Balanchine
© The George Balanchine Trust

Fred Astaire and Rita Hayworth
I'm Old Fashioned, from *You Were Never Lovelier*

Concerto Barocco
Choreography by George Balanchine
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