

# NEVADA *Ballet* THEATRE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Who Cares?* Choreography by George Balanchine, ©1970 The George Balanchine Trust

## NEVADA BALLET THEATRE PRESENTS AN *ALL-BALANCHINE PROGRAM* TO LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE LAS VEGAS PHILHARMONIC

***The February 6 - 7 program features Balanchine masterworks  
Serenade, Concerto Barocco and Who Cares?***

**LAS VEGAS, NV (Wednesday, January 21, 2009)** – Nevada Ballet Theatre is pleased to present an *All-Balanchine Program*, a full evening of works by George Balanchine, one of the 20th Century's foremost choreographers. This spectacular program will be presented on Friday, February 6 at 8 pm and Saturday, February 7 at 2 pm at UNLV's Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall, 4505 S. Maryland Parkway. Ticket prices range from \*\$25 - \$75, and can be ordered by calling (702) 895-ARTS (2787) or by visiting [www.nevadaballet.com](http://www.nevadaballet.com).

The company is proud to present two Las Vegas premieres: *Serenade*, (1934) set to Tchaikovsky's stunning score of "Serenade for Strings," is the first ballet Balanchine created in the United States. *Concerto Barocco*, (1941) set to Bach's "Double Violin Concerto in D Minor," is a work that reveals Balanchine's genius for creating a physical image of music through dance. Both pieces will be accompanied by live music as the company welcomes musicians from the Las Vegas Philharmonic, conducted by Associate Conductor, Richard McGee. The Company closes with the brilliant *Who Cares?*, (1970) Balanchine's tribute to Broadway, set to the music of beloved composer, George Gershwin.

"This program represents an historic moment in the cultural life of Las Vegas as we premiere two of Mr. Balanchine's greatest creations to live music from the Philharmonic," said Executive Director Beth Barbre. "It will challenge our dancers and inspire our audience to appreciate the highest potential of our art form."

All three ballets have been staged by Balanchine Trust Repetiteur, Sandra Jennings. A former New York City Ballet dancer, Jennings performed Balanchine's *Tarantella* at New York's City Center at the young age of 15. At the request of George Balanchine, she joined New York City Ballet in 1974 and for the next nine years, danced principal and soloist roles in works by Balanchine and Jerome Robbins.

*Serenade* is considered "a milestone in the history of dance." A signature work of New York City Ballet, it has rarely been out of their repertoire. Without a narrative, it contains four movements: "Sonatina," "Waltz," "Russian Dance" and "Elegy." This beautiful work originated from an evening ballet class where Balanchine taught his students the differences between class work and stage technique. Balanchine even incorporated spontaneous rehearsal "mishaps" into the work, such as a dancer falling or a student arriving late to class. Its first presentation was in 1934 by students at the School of American Ballet at an estate in White Plains, New York. Since then, it has been performed and admired worldwide.

Performed by dancers in blue costumes in front of a blue background, *Serenade* is an example of Balanchine's affinity for Tchaikovsky. In an interview, he was once quoted as saying: "In everything that I did to Tchaikovsky's music, I sensed his help"..."when I was working and saw that something was coming out of it, I felt that it was Tchaikovsky who had helped me."

Premiering in 1941, *Concerto Barocco* is a classical, but abstract ballet in three movements. Ten dancers – three soloists and eight corps de ballet - are uniquely used to represent the rhythms and emotions of Bach's magnificent score, showcasing the importance of music in Balanchine's creative process. Balanchine said of this work: "If the dance designer sees in the development of classical dancing a counterpart in the development of music and has studied them both, he will derive continual inspiration from great scores."

"Vivace," the first movement, showcases two soloists who personify violins, surrounded by a corps of female dancers. In "Largo Ma Non Tanto," the second movement, a soft, but strong pas de deux is danced between one of the lead female soloists from the first movement and her male partner. "Allegro," the third and final movement, presents the entire ensemble of dancers performing perfectly to the rhythmic vitality of the music with swift, light jumps and sharp, clean arm movements.

What began as an exercise by Balanchine for students of the School of American Ballet, became one of his most enduring works. After entering the repertoire of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Balanchine updated the original costumes, dressing the dancers in practice clothes, now regarded as Balanchine's "signature" costume for his contemporary works. In 1948, *Concerto Barocco* was one of three ballets that New York City Ballet presented for their first program.

*Who Cares?*, a ballet that consists of a series of dances set to the music of George Gershwin, premiered in 1970 at New York's City Center. At the request of Balanchine, Gershwin began to collaborate with him in 1937 for Samuel Goldwyn's "Follies," but unfortunately, he passed away before the music for the film was completed.

Thirty-three years later, Balanchine choreographed *Who Cares?* to 16 songs Gershwin composed between 1924 and 1931, including "Strike Up the Band," "The Man I Love," "Build a Stairway to Paradise," "Embraceable You," "Fascinatin' Rhythm," "Who Cares?," "My One and Only," "Liza," and "I Got Rhythm," among others. The title of *Who Cares?* came from an old song that George and Ira Gershwin wrote in 1931 for the musical, "Of Thee I Sing."

With orchestration by Hershy Kay, Balanchine used Gershwin's songs to blend classical ballet with "show" dancing, giving the audience a ballet's perspective of musical comedy dancing of the 1920's. *Who Cares?* is largely seen as Balanchine's tribute to America, with its patriotic nuances and energetic and exuberant choreography. In addition, Balanchine's love of Manhattan is also incorporated into this lively and popular work, with some pieces reminiscent of a stylish night on the town.

*The performance of Serenade, Concerto Barocco and Who Cares? are all Balanchine® Ballets presented by arrangement with The George Balanchine Trust and have been produced in accordance with the Balanchine Style® and Balanchine Technique® Service standards established and provided by the Trust. All choreography by George Balanchine, Staged by Sandra Jennings.*

#### **\*SPECIALLY PRICED BALCONY SEATS AVAILABLE!**

Nevada Ballet Theatre is offering special \$25 Balcony Seats for an *All-Balanchine Program*. Call the UNLV Box Office at (702) 895-ARTS (2787) for more information.

#### **MEDIA**

**For interview opportunities with Balanchine Repetiteur Sandra Jennings, please contact Jenn Kratochwill at [jkratochwill@nevadaballet.com](mailto:jkratochwill@nevadaballet.com). Additional photos are available upon request.**

#### **SPECIAL EVENT: DINNER & THE BALLET**

Mix and mingle with an exclusive VIP circle of patrons. In celebration of Nevada Ballet Theatre's *All-Balanchine Program*, the company will host a special pre-performance dinner on Friday, February 6 at Envy - The Steakhouse at 5:30 pm. Tickets are \$100 additional per person. For reservations, please call Jessica Erali at (702) 243-2623 ext. 222 or email [jerali@nevadaballet.com](mailto:jerali@nevadaballet.com).

#### **SINGLE TICKETS – AMERICAN MASTERS & NEW WORKS '09**

Single Tickets for *American Masters* and *New Works '09* are on sale and can ordered online at [www.nevadaballet.com](http://www.nevadaballet.com) or by calling the UNLV Performing Arts Center box office at (702) 895-ARTS (2787). For more information on Nevada

Ballet Theatre, its programs, or for 2008-2009 production-specific information, call Nevada Ballet Theatre's Marketing department at (702) 243-2623 or email [info@nevadaballet.com](mailto:info@nevadaballet.com).

### **GROUP SALES**

Corporations and organizations are encouraged to bring their staff and employees to a performance of *All-Balanchine Program* as a unique gift or to sponsor underserved youth groups. Groups of 15 or more will enjoy fantastic savings and personal service. To book your group, contact Marketing Manager Julie Hord at (702) 243-2623 ext. 234 or email [jhord@nevadaballet.com](mailto:jhord@nevadaballet.com).

### **ABOUT NEVADA BALLET THEATRE**

Under the direction of Artistic Director James Canfield, Nevada Ballet Theatre, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the largest professional ballet company and dance academy in the state. Committed to the highest artistic standards, dancers for the 31 member company have been recruited from around the world and include artists with international performing experience. This classically-based company is at home in an eclectic repertory, moving easily from the classics to the high-energy contemporary ballets. The mission of Nevada Ballet Theatre is to educate and inspire regional, statewide and national audiences and vitally impact community life through professional company productions, dance training and education and outreach. Beginning in 2011, Nevada Ballet Theatre will be a resident company in the new world-class Smith Center for the Performing Arts.

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### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **Don't Miss our Next Performance:**

#### **AMERICAN MASTERS**

#### ***With Guest Artists from New York City Ballet***

Friday, April 10 at 8 pm & Saturday, April 11 at 2 pm

#### **Repertoire:**

*Lambarena* by Val Caniparoli (Bach)

*Neon Glass Pas de Deux* (Philip Glass) & *Up* (Versions of Richard Rogers' "Blue Moon") by James Canfield

*Liturgy* (Arvo Pärt) & *After the Rain* (Arvo Pärt) by Christopher Wheeldon

#### **Venue:**

UNLV Performing Arts Center, Artemus W. Ham Hall

Tickets: \$25 - \$75 – Call the UNLV Box office at: 895-ARTS (2787).

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Influential. High-energy. Rapturously romantic Ballets from contemporary choreographers, including two Las Vegas Premieres, are featured in this extraordinary program. You will be treated to the local debut of James Canfield's Neon Glass Pas de Deux along with other firsts. In addition, Nevada Ballet Theatre reprises its production of Val Caniparoli's *Lambarena*, a fusion of classical ballet and African song and movement, with the music of Bach as the driving force. Top it off with guest dancers from New York City Ballet...and it's a perfect date!

### **CHOREOGRAPHER/REPETITEUR BIOS**

#### **George Balanchine, (1904 – 1983)**

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, George Balanchine is regarded as the foremost contemporary choreographer in the world of ballet. He came to the United States in late 1933, at the age of 29, accepting the invitation of the young American arts patron Lincoln Kirstein, whose great passions included the dream of creating a ballet company in America. The School of American Ballet, founded in 1934, was the first product of the Balanchine-Kirstein collaboration until October 11, 1948 when the New York City Ballet was born. Balanchine served as its ballet master and principal choreographer from 1948 until his death in 1983. A major artistic figure of the twentieth century, Balanchine revolutionized the look of classical ballet. Taking classicism as his base, he heightened, quickened, expanded, streamlined, and even inverted the fundamentals of the 400-year-old language of academic dance. Although at first his style seemed particularly suited to the energy and speed of American dancers, especially those he trained, his ballets are now performed by all the major classical ballet companies throughout the world.

### **Sandra Jennings, George Balanchine Trust Repetiteur**

Sandra Jennings was born in Boston and began her dance training with June Paxman of the Washington Ballet and later with E. Virginia Williams at Boston Ballet. Jennings also studied with teachers such as Harriet Hoctor, Shanna Bereska, and Margaret Gill. At the age of 13, she received a Ford Foundation scholarship to the School of American Ballet in New York. During her three years at the School of American Ballet, Jennings studied with teachers that included Diana Adams, Alexandra Danilova, Felia Dubrovskaya, Suki Schorer, and Stanley Williams, performing lead roles in ballets such as *Paquita*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, and new ballets by choreographer Richard Tanner. At the age of 15, Jennings performed George Balanchine's *Tarantella* at New York's City Center. In spring 1974, Jennings was asked by Balanchine to join New York City Ballet where she worked with him for the next nine years. During her tenure, she danced an enormous repertoire that included principal and soloist roles in many Balanchine and Jerome Robbins ballets. In addition, Jennings danced works by John Taras, Jacques d'Amboise, Sir Fredrick Ashton, and Peter Martins. She also performed in concerts with Jean Pierre Bonnefoux, Patricia McBride, Melissa Hayden, Helgi Tomasson, Violette Verdy, and Edward Villella. Additionally, she performed on television in *Dance in America*, *Live from Lincoln Center*, *Live from Studio 8H*, and Canadian Broadcast. In 1985, Jennings began teaching for Robert Denvers and was the assistant to Jean Pierre Bonnefoux at Chautauqua Institute, where she began staging Balanchine ballets. Jennings became a repetiteur for the George Balanchine Trust, staging over 30 works for different companies all over the world. Jennings has taught at schools and companies in the United States and abroad, and has taught at San Francisco Ballet School's Summer Session since 2000. She also worked for Pennsylvania Ballet both as a company teacher and ballet mistress for nine years, and has been a company teacher and ballet mistress for San Francisco Ballet since summer 2002. Jennings is most proud of her children, son Alex Hurt and Maggie Bird.