

# OPUS 19 / THE DREAMER

Music: Sergei Prokofiev (Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 19 (1915–1917))

Choreography: Jerome Robbins

Premiere: June 14, 1979; New York City Ballet (New York State Theater)

Jerome Robbins choreographed *Opus 19/The Dreamer* for Mikhail Baryshnikov in 1979, at the end of the year the famed Russian dancer was a member of New York City Ballet before becoming artistic director of American Ballet Theatre in 1980. The double title refers both to the ballet's music—Prokofiev's first violin concerto, composed on the eve of the October Revolution—and its moody protagonist. The score is haunting, dreamy, and ethereal. The dance recalls the atmosphere of earlier Robbins ballets, *Facsimile* (1946) and *Age of Anxiety* (1950), both with music by Leonard Bernstein, which explored the psychology of the human experience and whose companions walked a grey line between reality and imagination. Baryshnikov, who partnered ballerina Patricia McBride at the premiere, has suggested an autobiographical tone for Robbins' dreamer: "He's a bit of an outsider, a bit of a loner, a bit of a thinking man; there's a bit of action, a bit of unrealized romance, which is very much Jerry's life."

Peter Boal danced the role of the Dreamer and chose the ballet for his retirement performance at New York City Ballet in June 2005, partnering Wendy Whelan. He remembers,

Jerry and I worked for endless hours on *Opus*. The ballet was very dear to him and he entrusted it to very few after Misha. During rehearsals, he spoke of the ethnicity of the music and, in turn, the choreography, referring to Russian peasants and Slavic folk dances. The movements were at times grounded and tribal and alternately manic and meditative. I felt I always gave 100% in everything I danced, but for *Opus* Jerry wanted more—a level of physicality and commitment that was almost beyond human ability.

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