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Neil Simon's Show of Shows

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Dance Theatre of Harlem is a powerful presence at the Kennedy Center—from its annual Opera House engagement, April 11–23, to its Community Residency programs for Washington-area students. *Mary Kerner* fills in the background with lesser-known DTH data.

Cover photograph by Carla Porch



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What do you get when you throw a bunch of hard-bitten, wisecracking gagmeisters into the writers' room of a hit TV show?

Neil Simon's *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, playing in the Eisenhower Theater through April 23.



JAMES WOLCOTT revisits the Golden Age of Television—or is it the Gilded Age?



*On the laugh track: Howard Hesseman as Max Prince (center) and the company of *Laughter on the 23rd Floor**

"The Golden Age of Television"—the phrase sounds so genteel. It conjures up a gauzy image of men and women in togas spouting verse in front of *papier-mâché* statues. And, to be sure, the Golden Age of Television did offer much in the way of drama, ranging from adaptations of classic American plays to gutsy original dramas by Paddy Chayefsky (*Marty*), Reginald Rose (*Twelve Angry Men*), Rod Serling, Horton Foote, and Gore Vidal. But the Golden Age of Television was also a stomping ground for sacred monsters—shameless crowdpleasers who didn't give a hoot about highfalutin art. Their legacy has lasted longest.

In the early days, television was a mixed salad of radio and theater. It hadn't yet found its own identity. The serious dramas of Chayefsky and company derived from Broadway, of course. Other shows leaped to the small screen directly from radio—"Fibber McGee and Molly," "The Goldbergs," "The Jack Benny Show," "Amos 'n' Andy," "The Life of Riley," even "Gunsmoke."

The variety programs revived the greasepaint glory of vaudeville. There used to be a joke: "Al Jolson made vaudeville what it is today—extinct." But in 1948, the William Morris Agency took out an ad in *Variety* to announce "Vaudeville is Back." Tacky extravaganzas, these "vaudeos" (as they were called) tried to turn the lowly TV set into a cornucopia of riches, the tiny screen overflowing with singers, dancers, jugglers, novelty acts, and trained animals. The shows were done live, in an atmosphere of

Neil Simon's *Show of Shows*

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joyful hysteria. Since the sponsor's name was on the show ("The Texaco Star Theater," "The Colgate Comedy Hour"), the anxiety level was even higher. The shows were nervous breakdowns waiting to happen. Some old pros, like Fred Allen, couldn't handle the hoopla. Others, like Milton Berle, hogged the limelight. By far the brainiest show of the bunch was "Your Show of Shows," starring Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca. If Caesar was a sacred monster, he was a minotaur—half man, half bull. (Milton Berle was all bull.)

A powerful man with jangly nerves, Caesar was as much a force of nature as a performer. It was said that he could kill a Buick with his bare hands. He once threatened to have a driver "reexperience birth" by pulling him headfirst out the window of his car. Considering the pressure Caesar was under from sponsors, network busybodies, and personal demons, it's no wonder his temper sometimes blew. With his workload, he must have felt like Atlas holding up the world. "Your Show of Shows" was a 90-minute live broadcast which ran for 160 episodes—that's 240 hours of material. Today, only "Saturday Night Live" attempts anything so ambitious (and it pads itself with pre-taped bits and short films).

The "Your Show of Shows" sketches that survive on kinescope and were collected in the theatrical film *Ten From Your Show of Shows* include a parody of *From Here to Eternity* (with Caesar playing "Montgomery Bugle"), a takeoff of "This is Your Life," and some priceless collaborations with Imogene Coca. But the legacy of "Your Show of Shows" is larger than what it put on the air. Caesar's larger-than-life backstage legend became the basis for such ballistic fusts as Carl Reiner's Alan Brady on "The Dick Van Dyke Show" (Reiner was a regular on "Your Show of Shows") and Joseph Bologna's bovine King Kaiser in *My Favorite Year*. Much of the Caesar lore has been handed down to show business by his equally legendary stable of writers, a bullpen crew that included Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Larry Gelbart, and, of course, Neil Simon. Simon's play *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, in the Kennedy Center's Eisenhower Theater this month, is an act of homage and appreciation to the show on which he served his comedy apprenticeship.

Like Sid Caesar, Simon's Max Prince (no doubt named in honor of Max Leibman, the producer of "Your Show of Shows") packs quite a punch—he puts a hole in the wall with his fist in Act I. But the comedy in Simon's play is primarily verbal. As in "The Dick Van Dyke Show" and *My Favorite Year*, the writers' room in *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* is a glorified playpen—a place where words are tossed around like toys. In the writers' room, kibitzing is raised to an art form.

What *Laughter* makes clearer than other looks at '50s TV is that the pickled heart of the humor was Jewish. These characters make



Playwright
Neil Simon

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each other itchy. Their complaints have a lived-in effect, as if it were their clothes kvetching. The intonations, the verbal shrugs, the insults ("schmuck!"), the passive-aggressive rhythms of the ribbing, the bemused air of fatalism—each day at the office sounds like Jewish guy-talk etched into stone tablets. (There's one woman writer, but it's the men who set the locker-room tone.) Only the comfortable can afford to be bland, and history has never let the Jewish people get too comfortable. As Ira, who claims to come from a family of Talmudic scholars, asserts: "It's in the Encyclopedia Britannica, look it up. Catholics are not funny. Protestants are not funny. Methodists are not funny. Baptists are funny, but only under water."



Why, I oughtta. . . : Alan Blumenfeld and Howard Hesseman go ego-to-ego in Laughter on the 23rd Floor

Freudian cauldrons. The writers stoked the id, the star supplied the ego, and the network tried to function as superego, keeping a lid on the impulses of the first two.

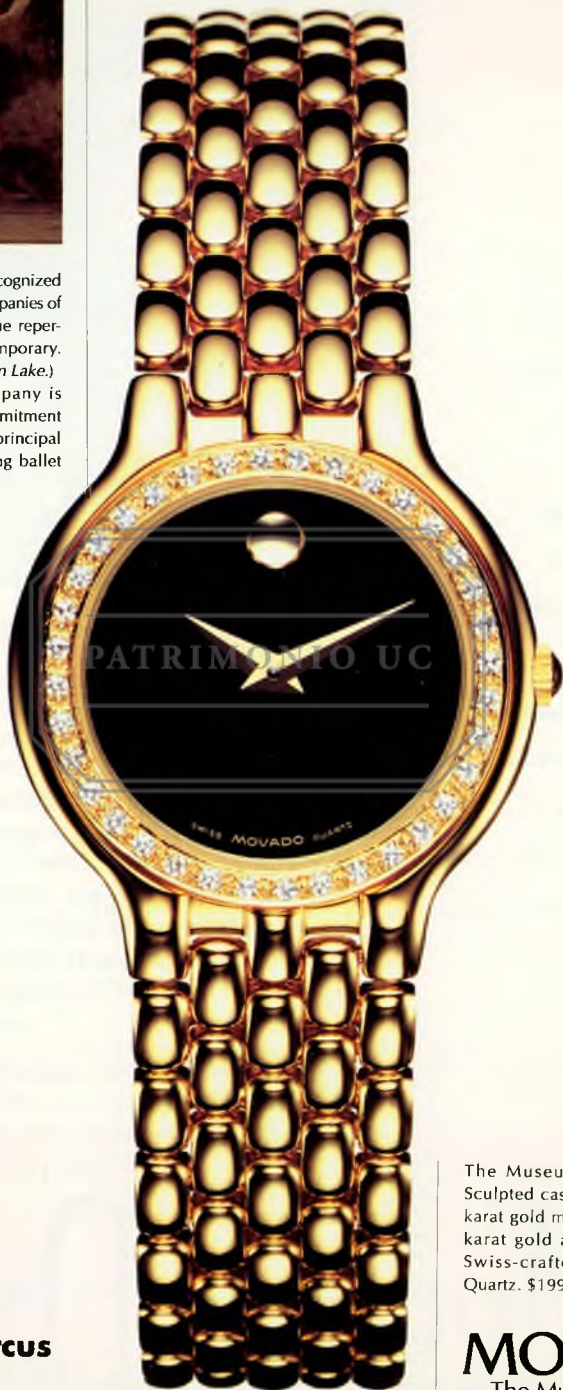
In time, the id prevailed—the energy of these wisecrackers couldn't be contained. One of the sadder ironies in show business is that as adept wits like Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, Larry Gelbart, and Neil Simon went on to Hollywood and Broadway success, Caesar himself, their god-of-the-volcano, lapsed into semi-forgottenhood. Although he starred in other variety shows with Coca and Reiner, the chemistry on "Your Show of Shows," celebrated in *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, was never re-created. Turning up on TV in the '60s, in cheesy sitcoms like "Love, American Style" and "That's Life," Caesar seemed a somewhat absent, isolated figure—a lighthouse without a beacon. His vital spark lives on in acts of homage like *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, as does the hectic, pioneer spirit of early television. Revisionist movies like the recent *Quiz Show* depict the rise of the TV antenna as the moment America sacrificed its innocence to the almighty dollar, a moral judgment that seems a mite stuffy. But *Laughter* shows that what we call "innocence" now was exuberance at the time. Pundits can mourn lost innocence, but the loss of exuberance is a greater minus in the culture. Innocence can be posed. Exuberance can't. It's what separates the happy talents from the hacks.

James Wolcott is television critic of The New Yorker.



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*The seventh work in the Kennedy Center Ballet Commissioning Project is called **Mystery of the Dancing Princesses**, and is based on a **Brothers Grimm** classic.*



GORDON METER

Choreographer Lynne Taylor-Corbett

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ROBERT JOHNSON talks to *Lynne Taylor-Corbett*, the choreographer who teamed with *Miami City Ballet* for this premiere.

Choreographer Lynne Taylor-Corbett has a freelance career making ballets for America's most prestigious dance companies. Her *Great Galloping Gottschalk*, for American Ballet Theatre, set a standard for light-hearted program closers. She has participated in both of New York City Ballet's Diamond Projects, and has numerous credits in regional ballet. A former dancer on Broadway and with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, she has also choreographed for Broadway, Off-Broadway,

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The Kennedy Center Ballet Commissioning Project is made possible through the generosity of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and The Brown Foundation, Inc., Houston.

Mystery Dates



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ANTONIO VIVALDI *Il quattro stagione*
("The Four Seasons") for Violin, Strings,
and Continuo, Op. 8, Nos. 1-4

I. Spring (E major)

Allegro

Largo

Allegro

II. Summer (G minor)

Allegro non molto

Adagio

Presto

I-Chun Hsieh, *Concertmaster*

III. Autumn (F major)

Allegro

Adagio molto

Allegro

IV. Winter (F minor)

Allegro non molto

Largo

Allegro

Kathy Kim, *Concertmaster*

Intermission

LEONARDO BALADA *Morning Music (Amanecer)*
for flute and orchestra
Matthew Thorpe, *Concertmaster*

EDGAR VARÈSE *Amériques*
Andrea Campos, *Concertmaster*

The Carnegie Mellon Department of Music expresses deep appreciation to the Carnegie Mellon Alumni Association, especially Peter Rapp of the D.C. Clan and Paula DiGioia, for assisting in the presentation of this concert.

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Texaco in partnership with IBM Corporation.

Notes on the Program

Il quattro stagione ("The Four Seasons")

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) began his musical studies on the violin with his father, Giovanni Battista Vivaldi, and in theory with Giovanni Legrenzi. He became a priest, taking Holy Orders in 1703. His red hair earned him the nickname "the Red Priest." In 1703 he also began teaching violin at the Ospedale della Pietà, and from 1718-1720 he was music director at the court of Prince Philip, landgrave of Hesse Darmstadt at Mantua. His collection of 12 violin concertos (published in 1725) was dedicated to Emperor Charles VI, who then invited Vivaldi to come to his court in Venice. Vivaldi remained in Venice until the end of his life.

In Venice there were four *ospedali*, charitable institutions for orphaned, abandoned, or poor girls. Vivaldi was closely associated with the most famous of them, the Ospedale della Pietà. It was founded in 1346, and occupied, in Vivaldi's time, a building that faced the island of S. Giorgio Maggiore across the Canale de S. Marco. This institution, like the other *ospedali*, was supported by the state of Venice.

The girls were divided into two groups: the ones who received general education and the *figlie di coro*, who received musical education in a conservatory-type setting. The music school consisted of a choir of 18 singers, a string orchestra, two organists, vocal soloists, and a director for each of these groups. The performers were often reinforced with wind and percussion instruments. The studies of singing, theory, and instrumental playing were organized so that the most prepared students would teach the younger ones.

These groups could be compared with the best virtuosos of their time in the opinion of

connoisseurs. The orchestra of the Pietà was considered even more perfect than famous orchestras such as the Paris Opera, according to Charles de Brosses (1709-77), the classical French scholar.

Jean Jacques Rousseau gives us a description in his Confessions: "Music of a kind that is very superior in my opinion to that of the operas and that has not its equal throughout Italy or perhaps the world is that of the 'scuole.' Every Sunday at the church of each of these four *scuole* during vespers, motets for a large chorus with a large orchestra, which was prepared and directed by the greatest masters in Italy, are performed in barred-off galleries solely by girls, of whom the oldest is not twenty years old."

Vivaldi was associated with the Ospedale della Pietà during most of his life as a composer, teacher, and performer. *The Four Seasons* belongs to a series of 12 concertos published in Amsterdam by Le Cène. The complete series is called *Il Cimento dell'Armonia e dell'Invention*, Op. 8 ("The contest between harmony and invention"); that is, the contest between the scientific and imaginative sides of music.

The Four Seasons has become the best known of Vivaldi concerto collections. To explain and justify the most extraordinary inventions Vivaldi added a sonnet to each season as a programmatic guide (*Soneto dimostrativo*). An elaborate system of letters printed over the musical text, together with extracts of the sonnets, help us to follow the descriptions of each season. (The parts also contain some details not included in the sonnets, such as the barking of a dog in the slow movement of the first concerto.)

According to the original desire of Vivaldi, we include the four original sonnets and an English prose translation by Rolando Bozzolla and Riccardo Schulz:

Primavera

*Giunt' e la Primavera e festosetti
La salutan gl'Augei con lieto canto,
E i fonti allo spirar de Zeffiretti
Con dolce mormorio scorrono istanto:*

*Vengon' coprendo l'aer di nero amanto
E Lampi, e tuoni ad annuntiarla eletti
Indi tacendo questi, gl'Augelletti,
Tornan' de nuovo al lor canoro incanto:*

*E quindi sul fiorito ameno prato
Al caro mormorio di fronde e piante
Dorme'l Caprar col fido can a lato*

*Di pastoral Zampogna al suon festante
Danzan Ninfe e Paster nel tetto amato
Di primavera all'apparir brillante*

Spring

Spring has arrived, and festively,
With their singing, the birds salute her.
And the brooks sweetly murmur,
Caressed by the breath of the Zephyr.

With lightning and thunder
To announce it, a black cloud covers the sky.
When they are silenced, the little birds begin
once again to sing.

And there on the flowering meadow,
To the sweet sounds of the branches and leaves,
The shepherd sleeps, his dog at the guard.

With the playful sound of the shepherd's pipes,
Dancing nymphs and shepherds are in love
With the brilliant showing of spring.

L'estade

*Sotto sura staggion dal sole accesa
Langue l'huom, langue 'l gregge, ed arde il Pino.
Scioglie, il cucco la Voce, e tosto intesa
Canta la Tortorella e'l gardelino.*

*Aeffiro dolce spira, ma contesa
Muove Borea improvviso al suo vicino,
E piange il Pastorel, perche sospesa
Teme fiera borasca, e'l suo destino,*

*Toglie alle membra lasse il suo riposo
Il timore de' Lampi, e tuoni fieri
E de mosche, e mossoni il stuol furioso!*

*Ah che pur troppo i suio timor son veri
Tuona e fulmina il Ciel e grandinoso
Tronca il capo alle spicche e a' grani alteri*

L'Autunno

*Celebra il Vilanel con balli e Canti
Del felice raccolto il bel piacere
E del liquor de Bacco accesi tanti
Finiscono col sonno il lor godere*

*Fa ch' ogn' uno tralasci e balli e canti
L'aria che temperata da piacere,
E la staggion ch' invita tanti e tanti
D'un dolcissimo sonno al bel godere.*

*I cacciator alla nov' alba a caccia
Con corni, schioppi, e canni escono fuore
Fugge la belus, e seguono la traccia,*

*Gia sbiogottita, e lassa al gran rumore
De' schioppi e canni ferita minaccia
Languida di fuggir, ma oppressa muore.*

L'Inverno

*Aggiacciato tremar tra nevi argenti
Al severo spirar d'orrido Vento,
Correr battendo i piedi ogni momento,
E pel soverchio gel batter i denti*

*Passar al foco i di quieti e contenti
Mentre la pioggia [sic] fuor bagna ben cento
Caminar sopra 'l giaccio, e a passo lento
Per timor di cader gersene intenti,*

*Gir forte sdruzziolar, cader a terra
Di nuovo ir sopra 'l giaccio e correr forte
Sin ch' il giaccio si rompe, e si disserra*

*Sentir uscir dalle ferrate porte
Sirocco borea, e tutti i Venti in guerra
Quest' e verno, ma tal, che gioja apporta.*

Summer

During the difficult season of the burning sun
Rests a man, rest his herds, while the trees are
scorched.
The cuckoo can be heard, blending its voice
With the turtle-dove and the finch.

The gentle wind rustles, but suddenly
The North Wind begins to stir, and
Crying, the shepherd fears
The effects of the fierce storm.

No rest for his weary limbs
At the fear of the lightning and fierce thunder,
And the insects in furious swarms.

Alas, his worst fears come true;
Thunder and lightning split the sky,
And hailstones slice the tops of the corn-spikes
and the proud wheat.

Autumn

With dance and song the peasants
Celebrate a good harvest;
And with generous swigs of Bacchus's liqueur,
Their joy ends in slumber.

Leave aside the singing and dancing
To enjoy the temperate air.
This is the season that invites one and all
To a restful sweet sleep.

At dawn the hunters go hunting;
With horns, guns, and dogs they go forth.
The animals flee; hunters follow their tracks.

Already weary, and frightened by the commotion
Of the guns and wounded dogs,
They languish in fear; then, cowering, they die.

Winter

Frozen and trembling between the frozen snow
And the cold wind,
Running and stomping the feet to keep moving
every instant,
The teeth chatter from the bitter cold.

Moving to the fire and quiet contentment,
While the rain outside drenches everything.
Walking over the ice—slowly—
For fear of a bad fall.

Moving quickly—a fall to the ground.
Up once again, to run quickly
Until the ice breaks and melts away;

We hear the fierce sirocco borea and
All the winds in battle, through closed doors.
Winter: but still a joyful herald.

Morning Music (Amanecer) (1994) for flute and orchestra

LEONARDO BALADA
(dedicated to Julius Baker)

The premiere of this piece was given on March 12, 1995, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by the Carnegie Mellon Philharmonic and Julius Baker. This is a slow meditative work in which the orchestra acts as the underlying shadow of the solo flute, imitating its gestures. This occurs indirectly in a clustered and texturally thick manner, generally with the strings.

After a brief introduction the flute presents a melody that will be exploited throughout the work in a simple repetitious way, although it will get shorter and shorter as the composition unfolds. Only two notes of the original melody are left at the end in an unresolved trill of the soloist.

Amériques

EDGAR VARÈSE

Edgar Varèse (1883-1965) appears more and more as a giant among twentieth-century composers who have had a forward-looking influence on the music of our time.

Varèse spent his early childhood in Burgundy, where he began his work in composition. He moved to Turin in 1892 with his parents and began formally studying composition with Giovanni Bolzoni. He went to Paris in 1903 and in 1904 entered the Schola Cantorum, where his major teachers were Vincent d'Indy, Albert Roussel, and Charles Bordes, and in 1906 he attended Widor's classes at the Paris Conservatory. While in Paris Varèse became associated with the musicians and artists of the avant-garde, and as such paved the way for his move to Berlin, which was, at the time, the center of new music that offered great opportunities.

Varèse was influenced by many (including Richard Strauss, who took an interest in the young composer's work), but most profound among them was his friendship with Busoni, whose views were a great influence on his writing. He composed industriously, but most of his large orchestral works from that time were mysteriously lost. Varèse became discouraged with the hostile reception he received from Berlin critics, but was encouraged in a letter from Debussy, whom he had met while in Paris.

The search for new musical resources began as early as 1913. Varèse soon returned to Paris to work on related problems with the Italian musical futurist Luigi Russolo, even though he disagreed with the attempt to find a way to new music through instrumental noises.

After he was discharged from the French army at the outbreak of World War I (from a

chronic lung ailment) he moved to New York. He took a job as a piano salesman (which he hated) and a small role in a 1918 John Barrymore silent film to supplement his earnings, which came from minimal royalties from his published works and a monthly allowance from the wealthy artist Gertrude Vanderbilt. He also had the opportunity to appear as a conductor, for as the entrance of the United States into WWI grew closer, there came a great demand for French conductors to replace the German conductors who had had a monopoly on American orchestras. He conducted in New York and Cincinnati, and in New York in 1919 he formed an orchestra to perform new and unusual music. With Carlos Salzedo in 1922 he organized the International Composers' Guild, which gave its first concert on December 17, 1922. He also founded the Pan American Society, dedicated to the promotion of music of the Americas.

Based on studies with acoustician Harvey Fletcher and Russian electrical engineer Leo Theremin, he formulated the concept of "organized sound," in which the sonorous elements themselves determined the progress of composition. This progress did away with conventional thematic development yet formed the cohesive basis for musical ideas that made his music all the more solid. Consonances and dissonances ceased to be of importance, and he became more aware of the relation between music and the fields of mathematics and physics.

Varèse was never part of the mainstream. In the times of Schönberg, Webern, Berg, Stravinsky, and Bartók, he was proposing and accomplishing a totally new basic concept in music. He referred to his music as being "spatial," "sound set free," and "organized." He thought of the entire composition as a "melodic totality" that flows "as a river flows." Being in a continual process of interaction and variation of different layers of sound, he referred to form as related to "crystallization," as "the result of a process," instead of "a mold to be filled."

His music was finally recognized as a major stimulus of modern art, and his name became joined with the names of Stravinsky, Ives, and Schönberg, among others, as the great masters of twentieth-century music. On the centenary of his birth in 1983, festivals of his music were held all over the world.

Amériques (1918-1922) was the first work completed in New York. The composer stressed that the title was not to be taken as "purely geographic but as symbolic of discoveries—new worlds on earth, in the sky or in the minds of men."

The piece begins with a quiet alto flute solo, interrupted by many loud orchestral outbursts. This dialogue forms the basis of the remainder of the work, presenting material in layers,

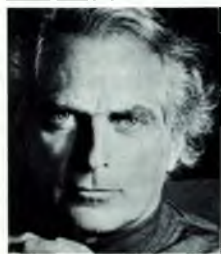
rather than building toward large climaxes, creating prolonged waves of musical motion that continue to the final section. Varèse finally brings everything together in this final section, creating one of the most expansive and impressive passages in orchestral repertoire.

Varèse makes interesting use of the very large (a total of at least 11 players) percussion section in this piece. He breaks away from the use of percussion to emphasize and punctuate

the other orchestral instruments and gives the percussion its own line, apart from the rest of the score. The section is featured prominently, with other sections and on its own, giving the piece a distinct flavor and influence.

The piece is scored for five of each woodwind instrument, eight horns, six trumpets, five trombones, two tubas, two harps, two sets of timpani, a very large percussion section, and a full string section.

Meet the Artists



Juan Pablo Izquierdo was born in Santiago, Chile. After graduating in composition from the University of Chile, he became a pupil of the renowned German conductor Hermann Scherchen, with whom he studied for three years in Swit-

zerland. He initiated his career conducting the National and Philharmonic orchestras in Santiago. In 1966 he won the first prize in the Dimitri Mitropoulos International Competition for Conductors in New York and was named assistant conductor to Leonard Bernstein with the New York Philharmonic. From 1974 to 1985 he was music director of the Testimonium Israel Festival in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, conducting world-premiere performances of major contemporary composers such as Iannis Xenakis, Mauricio Kagel, Gilbert Amy, Tomas Marco, Emmanuel Nunes, Leon Schidlowsky, and Samuel Adler, among others. He has been awarded the National Critics Award in Santiago and in 1976 the National Music Prize by the Israel Ministry of Culture. He was music director of the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon and music director of the Santiago Philharmonic Orchestra, which he reorganized and conducted until 1986. In 1990 he inaugurated the Claudio Arrau Symphony Orchestra in Santiago with an opening attendance of 15,000. Instrumental in forming the new orchestra, he is now its music director. Mr. Izquierdo has been professor-in-residence at Indiana University in Bloomington and is currently director of orchestral studies at Carnegie Mellon University

in Pittsburgh. There he has formed and directs an "Institute" that aims to develop musical thinking and performance as a unit. This Institute will be dedicated to the memory of Dr. Hermann Scherchen and will be officially inaugurated next season. Among the subjects that have been studied and performed in the past three years are J.S. Bach, Mass in B minor; Arnold Schönberg, Chamber Symphony Op. 9; Edgar Varese, *Amérique*; "A John Cage Event"; and currently, "The Art of the Fugue" by J.S. Bach and its projections in the music of today." His international career includes conducting orchestras such as the radio orchestras of Bavaria, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Berlin, and Leipzig; Vienna Symphony; Dresden Philharmonic; New Philharmonic; National Orchestra and Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris; the Jerusalem Symphony and Israel Chamber Orchestras; Radio TV and National Symphony of Spain; and Radio Philharmonic of Holland, among others. He has conducted in such world-famous music festivals as the Berlin Festival, at the Berlin Philharmonie; Holland Festival, at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam; Frankfurt Festival, at the Alte Oper; Paris Automne Festival at Radio France; Vienna Festival, at the Musikverein; Testimonium Israel Festival in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem; and Strasbourg Festival, among others. Mr. Izquierdo's upcoming appearances abroad include, among other standard repertoire programs, Bach's *Art of the Fugue* in his own version for orchestra (Santiago), Gustav Mahler's *Song of the Earth*, in transcription by Arnold Schönberg (Tel Aviv), and a festival dedicated to the works of Iannis Xenakis (to be held in Pittsburgh and New York's Carnegie Hall next season with the Carnegie Mellon Philharmonic) in celebration of the composer's seventy-fifth birthday.

(continued on page 29A)



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high-definition TV, movies, cabaret, you name it. Taylor-Corbett's art reaches from the abstract ballet *Chiaroscuro*, in which a pensive male soloist encounters a succession of mysterious individuals who twine around him, snaring him in a web of emotional relationships, to the slapstick cabaret act *Dangerous Duets*, in which two singers cavort through the recent history of American popular song.

As Miami City Ballet steps into the national spotlight with its Kennedy Center debut, Taylor-Corbett talks to *Stagebill* about her art and about *Mystery of the Dancing Princesses*, the seventh and final work in the Kennedy Center Ballet Commissioning Project, which has bestowed new dances by acclaimed choreographers

on some of America's finest regional ballet companies. *Mystery of the Dancing Princesses* concerns a king who tries, without much success, to keep track of his daughters. Each night he leaves a new pair of shoes by each daughter's bed; each morning the shoes are in tatters. "It's about the mystery of where the princesses go during the night," Taylor-Corbett says, "but it's also about the king's relationship to them as women, keeping them in a perpetual adolescence."

STAGEBILL: You mean he keeps them locked up?

LYNNE TAYLOR-CORBETT: Yes, you hear the clanking of the keys. And then he sends young men after them to find out the mystery. They follow the princesses to this dark ballroom. And the duets that I've done are a lot of fun. The most fun, I think, is finding aspects of human behavior which are of current interest. One of the princesses has an eating disorder. There's a very pompous prince who just cannot keep his eye on one only. But I didn't trash the men too badly.

STAGEBILL: You've changed the story substantially.

TAYLOR-CORBETT: I cut the number of princesses down to five, because 12 is very many stories to follow. I have five sisters, and I sometimes wonder if the number five didn't arise subconsciously. Anyway, I grew up with women, and I have a lot of feeling for this piece. It's also been a real challenge for me.

STAGEBILL: What was the most challenging aspect?

TAYLOR-CORBETT: Trying to show contemporary behavior with ballet vocabulary. It's an interesting mix of the new and the old. And I wanted to see in what sort of shorthand I could tell a complex story. Donald York, the composer, went with me to Miami three times. We



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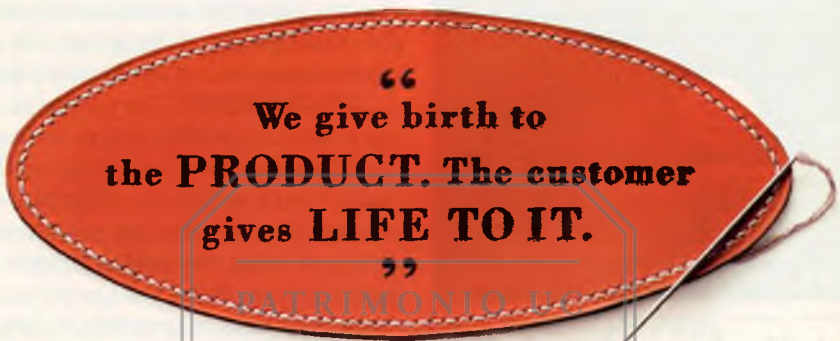
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worked on the behavior of the people, and then tried to make a formula so he could write the music and I could do the steps.

STAGEBILL: *What is the overall message of the ballet?*

TAYLOR-CORBETT: It's that love has the power of cracking open even the darkest place. But that doesn't necessarily mean that everybody is going to be OK.

STAGEBILL: *You have said that you were inspired by the Anne Sexton poem based on the fairy tale, and her poem seems to be about the sexual freedom of the women. Do the princesses have control over their own lives?*

TAYLOR-CORBETT: They remain individuals. That's what was fun for me—not to blanket them. It was very hard to end it. I had a terrible time. I don't believe in *Firebird*, where they get married and that must mean everybody's going to be happy forever. But I don't want to say that happiness is not possible. So, letting each have her own ending fulfilled my need the best.

STAGEBILL: *Since Miami City Ballet's artistic director, Edward Villella, was a protégé of George Balanchine, most of the company's repertoire is abstract. Why did you decide to make a narrative ballet?*

TAYLOR-CORBETT: Because I felt they needed it. There's never been a story ballet done on that company. And it's been exciting to get the dancers to think about themselves as characters, and to begin to speak up and have ideas. At this point I think my career is going very much in the direction of storytelling. There's just so much that needs to be said. And I feel it may be that we're not addressing the issues—not landing where our audience is. I think that we need to look around us and report on where we are. And this piece right now is very much where I

MYSTERY DATES

am—in terms of the old and the new, and seeing the irony of behavior.

STAGEBILL: *How did you become a choreographer?*

TAYLOR-CORBETT: When I had gotten over not being a ballet dancer, I began to study acting and singing, and did quite a few Broadway shows as I tried to get a little company together. We made the Theater Dance Collection, and I did that for about seven years. And then I began to free-lance. I never could have supported myself on ballet, so I learned how to be a theatrical choreographer. I think that it's wise to be able to move back and forth among the different opportunities that exist, and not just say, I'm only going to do ballet.

STAGEBILL: *Is there a common thread or a stylistic signature that unites your work?*

TAYLOR-CORBETT: I don't know, because I've never considered myself avant-garde—with a breakthrough dance vocabulary, like Twyla Tharp or Paul Taylor or those artists who create a style of moving. I suppose I always look on the human side of things. That's what I'm always trying to get at. Even in an abstract work, I seem always to be trying to get at some deeper truth, more than doing a study in things like shape and form.

STAGEBILL: *Would you like to have your own company, or to be a resident choreographer somewhere?*

TAYLOR-CORBETT: There was a time when I was just beside myself to belong somewhere. But I gradually have become very comfortable with the fact that I didn't land anywhere, because I realize how much I enjoy the variety. I feel like I'm always learning. And so I guess I've made my peace with what has happened and not happened in my career.

Robert Johnson is news editor of Dance Magazine.

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(continued from page 20B)



Julius Baker, artist-lecturer in flute at Carnegie Mellon University, was born in Cleveland, Ohio. After graduating from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, he returned to Cleveland to play in the orchestra there under

Artur Rodzinski. Mr. Baker then went as solo flutist to the Pittsburgh Symphony under Fritz Reiner. He left Pittsburgh to become solo flute of the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra in New York City, where he played for eight years. During this time, he joined the famed Bach Aria Group, with which he was associated for 18 years. When the CBS Orchestra was disbanded, Mr. Baker became solo flute in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Later he returned to New York to assume the solo flute position with the New York Philharmonic. Now concentrating on solo performances and chamber music in addition to teaching, Mr. Baker is also on the faculty of The Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute of Music. For the 1985-86 season Mr. Baker was named the Philadelphia National Bank Distinguished Artist at the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia. During the summer of 1987 Mr. Baker was a member of the Yamaha International Soloists, a woodwind quintet whose members were invited by Yamaha to give concerts in all the major cities of Japan in celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the Yamaha company. In March 1988 he appeared in recital in Seoul, Korea, and in June 1988 he spent two weeks teaching at Toho University in Tokyo. Mr. Baker has performed as soloist throughout the United States and Canada as well as in Europe, Japan, Korea, and South America. He has recorded for RCA Victor, Decca, Vanguard, Westminster, Desmar, and Vox Cum Laude. His latest recordings are on the Laurel and Fanfare labels.



Andres Cárdenes, professor of violin at Carnegie Mellon University, has garnered international acclaim from both critics and audiences alike for a ferocious technique balanced by remarkable tonal subtlety. Since capturing the top

American prize in the 1982 Tchaikovsky International Violin Competition in Moscow, Mr. Cárdenes has appeared with more than seventy orchestras worldwide, including those of Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Houston, Helsinki, Caracas, and Shanghai, and he has

collaborated with such noted conductors as Lorin Maazel, Charles Dutoit, Eduardo Mata, André Previn, David Zinman, Leonard Slatkin, and Sergiu Comissiona. A frequent recitalist, he has performed in many of the world's cultural capitals, including New York, Washington, DC, Paris, London, Mexico City, and Moscow. Mr. Cárdenes is a member of the renowned Carnegie Mellon Trio, which has toured extensively throughout the United States and is in residence at Carnegie Mellon University. He has also been active as a teacher for 16 years, beginning with his appointment to the faculty of Indiana University in 1979. A former student and protégé of the legendary Josef Gingold, he has continued the legacy and discipline of the master pedagogue as professor of music at the University of Utah, the University of Michigan, and Carnegie Mellon. He has also give numerous masterclasses at Rice and Columbia universities, among many others. In November 1993 Mr. Cárdenes was appointed artistic director of Strings in the Mountains, a summer music festival held annually in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, which brings together some of the finest chamber musicians in the world for performance and teaching activities. A champion of contemporary composers, Mr. Cárdenes has commissioned and recorded many new works from composers such as Ramiro Cortes, Ricardo Lorenz, Edgar Meyer, Fredrick van Rossum, David Canfield, and Mariana Villanueva. Most recently, he commissioned a piano trio from the renowned Spanish composer Leonardo Balada, which was premiered by the Carnegie Mellon Trio in September of 1994. In December of that year, Mr. Cárdenes performed the world premiere of Roberto Sierra's violin concerto *Evocaciones* with the Pittsburgh Symphony, conducted by James DePriest. Additional performances of the concerto are scheduled for the 1995-96 season with the West Virginia and Utah symphony orchestras. On compact disc, Mr. Cárdenes can be heard performing the Arensky and Tchaikovsky trios with cellist Jeffrey Solow and pianist Mona Golabek on the Delos label—a recording that drew rave reviews as well as a Grammy nomination in 1991. In addition, Arabesque Recordings has released Saint Saëns's Sonatas for Violin and Piano with pianist Doris Stevenson and, most recently, *It's Peaceful Here*, a rare collection of 19 short recital pieces for violin and piano with Chilean pianist Luz Manriquez. Mr. Cárdenes can also be heard on the RCA, ProArte, Melodya, Enharmonic, Telarc, and Sony labels. A cultural ambassador for UNICEF from 1980 to 1991 and an indefatigable spokesperson for the arts, Mr. Cárdenes has received numerous awards for his community and cultural contributions, most notably from Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles and from the Mexican Red Cross.

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Meet the Composer



Born in Barcelona, Spain, on September 22, 1933, **Leonardo Balada** graduated from the Conservatorio del Liceo of that city and from The Juilliard School in 1960. Since 1970 he has been teaching at Carnegie Mellon University

in Pittsburgh, where he is university professor of composition. Mr. Balada's works are being performed by the world's leading orchestras, such as the philharmonics of New York, Los Angeles, and Israel; the Philadelphia Orchestra; the Philharmonia Orchestra of London; the symphonies of Cincinnati, Detroit, Dallas, Prague, Barcelona, and Mexico; the radio orchestras of Leipzig, Madrid, Hanover, Moscow, Helsinki, Luxembourg, BBC, and Jerusalem; and the national orchestras of Spain, Lyon, Toulouse, and Marseilles. His work has been conducted by artists such as Maazel, Rostropovich, Frühbeck de Burgos, Lopez-Cobos, and Lukas Foss, among others. He has been commissioned by many outstanding organizations in the United States and Europe, including the Aspen Festival, the San Diego Opera, the Pittsburgh Symphony, National Endowment for the Arts, Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, the Millennium of Catalonia, Sociedad Estatal del V Centenario, and the National Orchestra of Spain, and he has composed works for artists such as Alicia de Larrocha, the American Brass Quintet, Andres Segovia, and

Narciso Yepes, and he has collaborated with artists and writers such as Salvador Dali and Nobel Prize winner Camilo Jose Cela. A large number of his compositions are recorded on the Louisville Orchestra Editions, Deutsche Grammophon, Serenus Records, Grenadilla Records, and New World Records. The last of his recordings include the cantata *Torquemada* and *Steel Symphony*, this with the Pittsburgh Symphony conducted by Lorin Maazel. His *Preludis Obstinants* are to be recorded by pianist Alicia de Larrocha. Mr. Balada's large catalog of works includes, in addition to chamber and symphonic compositions, cantatas, a chamber opera, and three full-length operas, including *Zapata*, written for Sherril Milnes, and *Christopher Columbus*. This opera premiered in Barcelona in September 1989, with José Carreras and Montserrat Caballé singing the leading roles, and attracted international attention. *Christopher Columbus* will soon be released on CD. Mr. Balada has recently completed a sequel to this opera entitled *The Death of Columbus*. Recent symphonic world premieres of Mr. Balada's works were given by the Spanish RTV Symphony, the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, the Prague Symphony, the National Orchestra of Spain, and the Pittsburgh Symphony. In November of 1993 that orchestra performed the world premiere of *Music for Oboe and Orchestra*, commissioned by Lorin Maazel and the Pittsburgh Symphony Society. Leonardo Balada has received several international composition awards, including the Bohuslav Martinu, City of Zaragoza, and City of Barcelona prizes.

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This celebration provides a unique opportunity for college actors, technicians, directors, producers, and designers to display their art on the national stage. The plays presented at the Kennedy Center are the survivors of a lengthy process that reached its peak in January and February with eight regional festivals on college campuses across the country.

Begun in 1968 by Kennedy Center founding chairman Roger L. Stevens, KC/ACTF has engaged more than 225,000 student participants and upwards of 15 million theatergoers. KC/ACTF involves more than 400 academic institutions annually, exemplifying the Kennedy Center's broad reach in fulfilling its legislative mandate as a national leader in arts education.

The festival offers not only the exposure of appearing at the national center for the performing arts before a valuable network of theater professionals, but, with funding from the Kennedy Center and the participating institutions, a series of awards, scholarships, grants, and other financial opportunities for young performers, playwrights, and designers.

Free tickets to the national festival of KC/ACTF, two tickets per person per production, will be available Saturday, April 8, beginning at 10 a.m. in the Grand Foyer. You won't want to be left out.

—Grant Goldstein

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WEST END CAFE—1 Washington Circle, NW, (202-872-1680 or 293-5390), seasonal menus feature updated American cooking. Sun-Mon 7 am-10 pm, Tue-Thur 7 am-11:30 pm, Fri-Sat until midnight. Casual, piano entertainment nightly, complimentary limo service to Kennedy Center, free parking, all major credit cards.

Dance Theatre of Harlem is a powerful presence at the Kennedy Center—from its annual Opera House engagement, April 11–23, to its Community Residency programs for Washington-area students.



MARY KERNER fills in the background with lesser-known DTH data.



MARTHA SWOPE

To the pointe: Tai Jiminez and Eddie J. Shellman in Dance Theatre of Harlem's Dialogues

PATRIMONIO UC

Audiences first got to know Dance Theatre of Harlem as America's first African-American classical ballet company. Most of us also know that Arthur Mitchell, DTH's artistic director (and a 1993 Kennedy Center Honoree), started the troupe in a Harlem garage. Today, 25 years later, DTH is among the country's top five ballet companies, recognized for excellence, invention, and exuberant classical dancing.

Since the fall of 1993, DTH has extended its reach in the Washington area through a Kennedy Center-sponsored Community Residency program, providing more than 400 young people and their families with opportunities to learn about and participate in ballet. The company's dancers and instructors have led activities including lecture-demonstrations, workshops for teachers, low-cost dance training, and even public performances in the Opera House featuring local students.

This month, with DTH coming to Kennedy Center for its annual visit, *Stagebill* wondered what we *don't* know about this beloved company. Here are a few facts and details from DTH's 25 years as one of the world's leading ballet companies.

★ DTH gives an Open House on the first Sunday of every month, at a nominal charge, to show its home community what

POINTES *of*

it is doing. There may be jazz singers or fashion shows along with dance performances by school students; an informal party follows.

★ When DTH gave its first unofficial performance (outside New York City), one of its two leading ladies didn't even know how to apply her own stage makeup. A few years later, she was doing Revlon commercials.

★ Artistic director Arthur Mitchell donated out of his own pocket the \$25,000 that started DTH.

★ Your children probably have seen DTH on "Sesame Street" (no, they don't dance with the Cookie Monster—it's real ballet choreographed specially for children).

★ More than 30 students from the Harlem school have graduated into the DTH company over the years.

★ DTH was the first dance company to perform for integrated audiences in South Africa.

★ DTH tours abroad more than any other American ballet company, and destinations have included Russia, Egypt, and South America, as well as Europe.

★ The DTH school has doubled its enrollment in the last 10 years, to the current 1,265.

★ Students in the DTH school come from 13 states and five foreign countries.

★ DTH alums currently in other companies include Marcus McGregor, Feld Ballet; Kareen Pould, Miami City Ballet; Erika Lambe, Boston Ballet; and Pierre Lockett, Joffrey Ballet.

★ DTH women wear tights and toe shoes dyed to match their personal skin tone, not the traditional ballet pink.

★ On February 6, 1995, Arthur Mitchell received an award from the School of American Ballet (which prepares students to enter the New York City Ballet), exactly 40 years after he received a scholarship to study there. While accepting the Lifetime Achievement Award, he said, "I'm only just beginning."

His company is, too. ■

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Next Month at the Kennedy Center

Who, what, where, and when in May!



JOAN MARCUS

WHAT: *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*

Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning tale of life in the age of AIDS, is sure to be the talk of the town this spring. Subtitled "A Gay Fantasia on National Themes," this epic comedy-drama turns an unflinching eye to issues such as sexuality, religion, and ethnicity, and features such real-life characters as politico Roy Cohn, played by Jonathan Hadary (pictured at left). *Contains mature themes and sexually explicit scenes.* Part Two, *Perestroika*, opens June 9.

WHERE: Kennedy Center Eisenhower Theater

WHEN: May 2–June 8



RICHARD CHOLT

WHO: Jean-Yves Thibaudet

WHAT: This thrilling young pianist, said by the *Los Angeles Times* to possess a "gift of magic" at the keyboard, joins the National Symphony Orchestra for performances of Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 5. Other works on the program, conducted by Jiri Behloulávek, include Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* and Martinu's *Symphony No. 4*.

WHERE: Kennedy Center Concert Hall

WHEN: May 11, 12, 13, 16



JOAN MARCUS

WHAT: *Crazy for You* "uncorks the American musical's blend of music, laughter, dancing, sentiment, and showmanship with freshness and confidence." (*The New York Times*). Chock-full of glorious tunes by George and Ira Gershwin, this smash Broadway hit features dazzling choreography by Susan Stroman and a rollicking script by Washington's own Ken Ludwig.

WHERE: Kennedy Center Opera House

WHEN: May 16–June 18

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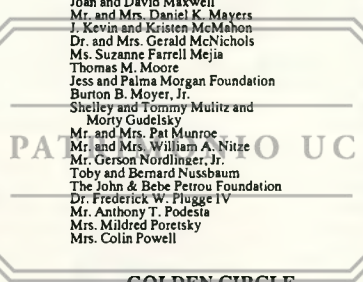
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Performance Highlights

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A nobler-than-usual form of seduction sweeps the capital off its feet this month as Georges Bizet's irresistible *Carmen* receives a new production from **The Washington Opera** April 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 9 in the Opera House. Washington's own Denyce Graves, the "international Carmen of the 1990s," returns home to reprise the role of the fatally flirtatious Gypsy girl, while tenor Neil Rosen-shein plays Don José, her jilted lover. (On April 2 and 6, Suzanna Guzman and William Joyner sing the leads.) Changing the musical pace April 3 and 8, the Opera's music director Heinz Fricke conducts the Washington premiere of one of his favorite works, Eugen d'Albert's *Tiefland*, a German *verismo* opera not seen in this country for 80 years. Vocalists include Carol Yahr, Richard Paul Fink, James O'Neal, Gabor Andrasy, and Elisabeth Comeaux.

Artists from the Sunshine State brighten up the Kennedy Center April 24–30 in celebration of Florida's performing arts prowess—and its sesquicentennial. Dance legend **Edward Villella** brings his thrilling **Miami City Ballet** to the Opera House April 25–30 for programs featuring Balanchine's *Jewels* and the world premiere of *Mystery of the Dancing Princesses* by Lynne Taylor-Corbett, created under the auspices of the Kennedy Center Ballet Commissioning Project. In the Terrace Theater April 28, trumpet titan **Arturo Sandoval** leads his ensemble in Latin-flavored big-band jazz, and on April 29, transplanted Floridian **Grant Johannesen** takes total con-

trol of the keyboard for pieces by Fauré, Chopin, Copland, and Rachmaninoff. And joining the **National Symphony Orchestra** and conductor **Zdenek Macal** in the Concert Hall April 27–29 is Florida-born virtuoso **Tzimon Barto**, for performances of Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor.



World famous and divinely gifted, **Midori** unpacks her 1722 Stradivarius (or maybe her 1735 Guarnerius del Gesu) April 30 for an afternoon of unforgettable bowing in the Concert Hall. The 24-year-old marvel performs Schnittke's *Suite in the Old Style*; Bartók's Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano; Brahms' Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 100; Szymanowski's *Dryads et Pan* from *Mythes*, Op. 30; and Saint-Saëns's *Introduction and Rondo capriccioso*, Op. 28.

Arthur Mitchell, a 1993 Kennedy Center Honoree, brings his electrifying **Dance Theatre of Harlem** into the Opera House

April 11–23 for a Washington-premiere production of Balanchine's *Prodigal Son*, staged by Richard Tanner, with rehearsals supervised by Suzanne Farrell. Other works by this mesmerizing troupe include John Taras' romantic *Designs with Strings*; two very different dances by Glen Tetley, *Dialogues* and *Voluntaries*; a new piece by Alonzo King, *Signs and Wonders*; Michael Smuin's fiery *A Song for Dead Warriors*; and the ever-popular *Firebird*.

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