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**Robert Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze"**

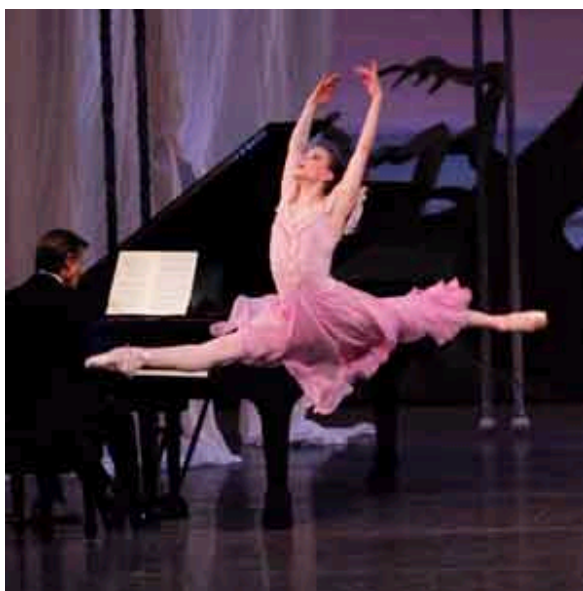


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**Music** Davidsbündlertänze, Op. 6 (1837) by Robert Schumann



**Choreography** George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust

**Premiere** June 19, 1980, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater

**Original Cast** Karin von Aroldingen, Suzanne Farrell, Kay Mazzo, Heather Watts, Adam Lüders, Jacques d'Amboise, Ib Andersen, Peter Martins

**Average Length** 41 min.

Robert Schumann's Davidsbündlertänze was one of Balanchine's last major works. Against a setting inspired, in part, by the works of the 19th century German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, a series of dances unfolds for four couples. While not literally a biographical narrative, the ballet draws on the life of Schumann, its alternating moods suggesting the episodes of joy and depression that marked the composer's short career. Schumann composed the 18 piano pieces that comprise the Davidsbündlertänze to celebrate his reconciliation with sweetheart Clara Wieck after a 16-month estrangement in 1837; the work was published, at his own expense, the next year. The title, which literally translates as "Dances of the League of David," refers to an imaginary society of artists created by Schumann whose members represent different aspects of his personality. Their common aim: to fight the Philistines, those who oppose art or innovation in the arts. Robert Schumann (1810-1856) to many scholars represents the quintessential Romantic composer, both for the emphasis on lyrical self-expression in his work, and for the emotional turbulence that

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— George Balanchine

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characterized his life (his wooing and eventual winning of his wife Clara — one of the great pianists of the time — reads like a nineteenth-century novel). Known primarily for the genius of his piano pieces and lieder, Schumann also wrote music criticism and headed a circle that included much of Germany's musical elite, including Mendelssohn and Brahms.

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