

Home > The Company > Repertory Index
Variations pour une Porte et un Soupir

- The Company
- Mission Statement
- Ballet Master in Chief
- Dancers
- Orchestra
- Personnel
- Volunteers
- NYCB Alumni
- Repertory Index
- The Viewing Room
- Brief History
- NYCB Lyre
- Annual Reports
- Job Postings



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Music Sonority by Pierre Henry (14 of 25 numbers from Variations pour une Porte et un Soupir) (first performed 1963)

Choreography George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust

Premiere February 17, 1974, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater

Original Cast Karin von Aroldingen, John Clifford

Average Length 23 min.

At the suggestion of Nicholas Nabokov, the composer of Balanchine's Don Quixote, Balanchine heard Henry's work during a visit to Paris and decided then that someday he would like to do a ballet to it. The score makes use of the gamut of sounds associated with human sighing and the opening and closing of doors including creaking, slamming, and swinging on ungreased hinges. The ballet is a set of 14 variations in pas de deux form for a female "Door" and a male "Sigh." The dancers' movements are in precise accord with the separate sounds and vibrations that form the score. An integral part of the choreography is an enormous black cape attached to the "Door," which in the end envelops the "Sigh." Pierre Henry (1927-) was born in Paris, where he studied with Nadia Boulanger and Olivier Messiaen. Early in his career he moved away from traditional instruments. From the time he was 15 he experimented with the sounds that could be made from various objects, and was fascinated by the possibilities of integrating noise into music. He worked with Pierre Schaeffer in the development of musique concrète, the use of electronic techniques to record any and all sounds and the use them to compose music with tape recorders and other electronic devices. He was the first to use musique concrète in commercial films in France, and scored more than thirty films. He collaborated with Maurice Béjart and created many scores for the Ballet of the 20th

"CLASSICISM IS ENDURING BECAUSE IT IS IMPERSONAL."

— George Balanchine

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