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**Prism**



Photo © Paul Kolnik

**Music** Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1, by Ludwig van Beethoven



**Choreography** Helgi Tomasson

**Premiere** May 3, 2000, The Diamond Project IV, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater

**Original Cast** Jared Angle, Jenifer Ringer, Jeroen Hofmans, Maria Kowroski, Charles Askegard, Benjamin Millepied

**Average Length** 35 min.

Prism, set to an early Beethoven piano concerto, is a rich and vibrant three-part, neo-classical ballet for 28 dancers. The swiftly paced first movement for three sets of three dancers and an ensemble is filled with sprightly contrapuntal steps. A langorous second movement featuring a poetic pas de deux that is echoed by the section's background couples is followed by an exuberant final movement that is a showcase of male dancing. Prism is Mr. Tomasson's second work for New York City Ballet. In 1983 he created Ballet d'Isoline on the Company. Helgi Tomasson was born in 1942 in Reykjavik, Iceland. After studies at the Royal Danish Ballet School and dancing with the Harkness Ballet and Joffrey Ballet, he joined New York City Ballet in 1970. During his career at NYCB, he danced many roles that were created on him by George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins before retiring in 1985. One of the finest male dancers of his generation, Mr. Tomasson was noted for his clarity of movement, refinement and musicality, attributes that he brings to his choreography. In 1985, Mr. Tomasson was named Artistic Director of San Francisco Ballet where he has created many works including Meistens Mozart (1991), Nanna's Leid (1993), and Two Tidbits (1998). Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), one of the world's great composers,

"WHAT ATTRACTS ME VERY MUCH TO THE COMPANY IS THAT THERE ARE REALLY NO SET RULES."

— Peter Martins

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was born into a family of musicians. Early in his career he was influenced by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and studied with Josef Haydn. He was a successful concert pianist in addition to his career as a composer. Beethoven earned a comfortable living through his commissioned work and performances. During the early years of his career, he composed scores for two ballets, Ritterballet and The Creatures of Prometheus. Tragedy struck in 1801 when, at the age of 30, Beethoven realized he was going deaf. His increasing hearing impairment led to a withdrawal from society and an end to his career as a pianist. However, he continued to compose and indeed, created his greatest works after deafness set in. Beethoven's music expresses a broad range of emotions and bridges the Classical and Romantic periods. It is heroic, descriptive of a deep love of nature, and often boisterously humorous. It is frequently triumphant, expressing humanity's ability to overcome misfortune and suffering. His last works are among the most profound ever written. By the end of Beethoven's life, he enjoyed tremendous popularity. His work was seminal and broke new ground for successive generations of composers.

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