


- 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

Home > The Company > Repertory Index
Prodigal Son



Photo © Paul Kolnik

Music Le Filis Prodigue, Op. 46 (1928-29) by Sergei Prokofiev
 [Credit >](#)

Libretto Boris Kochno

Choreography George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust

Premiere May 21, 1929, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt, Paris

Original Cast Felia Doubrovskaya, Serge Lifar, Michael Fedorov, Eleanora Marra, Nathalie Branitzka, Léon Woizikowsky, Anton Dolin

NYCB Premiere February 23, 1950, City Center of Music and Drama

Average Length 35 min.

The 1929 premiere of Prodigal Son opened what was to be the last Paris season of the Ballets Russes of Sergei Diaghilev. The story of Prodigal Son comes from the parable in the Gospel According to St. Luke. Kochno added much dramatic material and, to emphasize the themes of sin and redemption, ended the story with the prodigal's return. When the ballet was revived in 1950, the title role was danced by Jerome Robbins. Balanchine's choreography upset Prokofiev, who conducted the premiere. The composer had envisioned a production that was "real"; his concept of the Siren, whom he saw as demure, differed radically from Balanchine's. Prokofiev refused to pay Balanchine royalties for his choreography. However, Prodigal Son was enthusiastically received by both audiences and critics, and

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— Peter Martins

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was one of the first of Balanchine's ballets to achieve an international reputation. Sergei Sergeyevich Prokofiev (1891-1953) was a leading Soviet composer and a brilliant pianist. He left Russia in 1918 and lived in Germany and Paris for the next sixteen years, with frequent trips to America for concert appearances. In 1934 he settled in Moscow and composed prolifically until his death. Among his better known works are the ballet scores Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella, and The Prodigal Son; the opera Love for Three Oranges; the children's classic Peter and the Wolf; the film score and cantata for Alexander Nevsky; and the Classical Symphony.

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