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Symphony in C



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Music Symphony No. 1 in C major (1855) by Georges Bizet
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Choreography George Balanchine © School of American Ballet, Inc.

Premiere July 28, 1947, Paris Opéra Ballet, Théâtre National de L'Opéra, as Le Palais de Cristal

Original Cast Lycette Daronval, Tamara Toumanova, Micheline Bardin, Madeleine Lafon, Alexandre Kalioujny, Roger Ritz, Michel Renault, Max Bozzoni

NYCB Premiere October 11, 1948, City Center of Music and Drama

Average Length 32 min.

Bizet composed his Symphony in C major when he was a 17-year-old pupil of Charles Gounod at the Paris Conservatory. The manuscript was lost for decades, and was published only after it was discovered in the Conservatory's library in 1933. Balanchine first learned of the long-vanished score from Stravinsky. He required only two weeks to choreograph it as Le Palais de Cristal for the Paris Opera Ballet, where he was serving as a guest ballet master. When he revived the work the following year for the first performance of New York City Ballet, he simplified the sets and costumes and changed the title. The ballet has four movements, each featuring a different ballerina, danseur,

"BALLET IS IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT—YES. BUT FIRST OF ALL, IT IS A PLEASURE."

— George Balanchine

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and corps de ballet. The entire cast of 48 dancers from all four movements gather for the rousing finale. Georges Bizet (1838-1875) is best known for Carmen, one of the most successful operas ever written. However, he had more success in his lifetime with non-operatic works. He was an excellent pianist and wrote many pieces for that instrument, including Jeux d'Enfants. Many of the operas Bizet wrote, with the exceptions of Carmen and The Pearl Fishers, were destroyed by the composer or never finished.

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