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Western Symphony

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Photo © Paul Kolnik

Music Traditional American melodies orchestrated by Hershy Kay

Choreography George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust

Premiere September 7, 1954, New York City Ballet, City Center of Music and Drama

Original Cast Diana Adams, Janet Reed, Patricia Wilde, Tanaquil LeClercq, Herbert Bliss, Nicholas Magallanes, André Eglevsky, Jacques d'Amboise

Average Length 27 min.

Set on a rugged Old West street populated by cowboys and dance hall girls, Western Symphony nevertheless is very much a classical work. The steps Balanchine uses from the traditional ballet vocabulary allude to the steps, formations, and gestures of American folk dancing. The ballet is a striking example of Balanchine's fascination with American themes. The lively and familiar score consists of classic American folk songs, including "Red River Valley," "Old Taylor," "Rye Whiskey," "Good Night Ladies," "Oh Dem Golden Slippers," and "The Girl I Left Behind Me." Hershy Kay (1919-1981) established himself as a preeminent orchestrator of musicals with Leonard Bernstein's *On The Town* in 1944. His works for the ballet include *Cakewalk*, *Clowns*, *Western Symphony*, *The Concert*, *Stars and Stripes*, *Who Cares?*, and *Union Jack*; his works for the musical theater include *Peter Pan*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Candide*, *A Chorus Line*, *Evita* and *Barnum*. A composer in his own right, Hershy Kay also reconstructed Louis Moreau Gottschalk's *Grande Tarantelle* for Piano and Orchestra, which later became the Balanchine ballet *Tarantella*. Mr. Kay's work also includes a children's record, *Mother Goose*.

"A BALLERINA IS A PERSONALITY AND A PERSONALITY MEANS IMPROVISATION."

— George Balanchine

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