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The Goldberg Variations



Photo © Paul Kolnik

Music The Goldberg Variations (1742) by Johann Sebastian Bach
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Choreography Jerome Robbins

Premiere May 27, 1971, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater

Original Cast Renée Estopinal, Michael Steele, Gelsey Kirkland, Sara Leland, John Clifford, Robert Weiss, Robert Maiorano, Bruce Wells, Bryan Pitts, David Richardson, Delia Peters, Christine Redpath, Bettijane Sills, Stephen Caras, Hermes Conde, Richard Dryden, Francis Sackett, Suzanne Erlon, Gloriann Hicks, Virginia Stuart, Karin von Aroldingen, Susan Hendl, Patricia McBride, Peter Martins, Anthony Blum, Helgi Tomasson, Merrill Ashley, Rosemary Dunleavy, Johnna Kirkland, Deborah Koolish, Gail Kachadurian, Colleen Neary, Susan Pilarre, Giselle Roberge, Polly Shelton, Marjorie Spohn, Lynne Stetson, Victor Castelli, Nolan T'Sani

Average Length 1 hr. 19 min.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was born into a family of musicians successful for over two centuries. The Goldberg Variations (Aria and Variations 1-30) (1742) was originally composed for Count von Kayserling, formerly the Russian Ambassador to the Court of the Elector of Saxony. The Count, who was often ill and suffered from insomnia, asked Bach for some clavier pieces which Johann Goldberg, Bach's pupil and the Count's organist, could play for him in an adjoining room to relieve the tedium when he could not sleep. This piece is the only one of Bach's works in the form of a theme and variations. Other works by Bach in the repertory of New York City Ballet include Concerto Barocco.

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— George Balanchine

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