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Calcium Light Night



Photo © Paul Kolnik

Music The Seer, The New River, Incantations, At Sea, Ann Street, Gyp the Blood or Hearst? Which is Worst?, Halloween, and Calcium Light Night by Charles Ives



Choreography Peter Martins

Premiere January 19, 1978, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater

Original Cast Heather Watts, Daniel Duell

Average Length 14 min.

Calcium Light Night was Martins' first choreographic work; sections of the ballet were originally performed during a program presented at Brooklyn College in 1976. Set against a bare stage with an overhead square of white light, the ballet is a series of solos and duets for two dancers. First the boy dances, then the girl, in one case repeating on pointe a version of the boy's steps. Charles Ives (1874-1954) was born in Danbury, Connecticut. His early musical training was with his father, and he began composing at age twelve and continued until about 1925. During his lifetime he was known more for his career in the insurance business, an economic necessity, as his musical ideas were ahead of his time. His early resetting of hymns and psalms, and an interest in New England transcendentalism lent a religious and philosophical tone to much of his work. Harold Schonberg described Ives' works as "a fiendish mixture of crazy polytonalities and polyrhythms... of unparalleled density, complexity and technical difficulty.... At the same time, nearly every work is a tone picture of a vanished America... a grab-bag of gospel hymns, popular music, ragtime, jazz, patriotic tunes from 'Yankee Doodle' on." Other New York City Ballet

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— George Balanchine

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works to music of this most American of composers include
Ivesiana by Balanchine, Ives, Songs by Robbins, and The
Unanswered Question by Eliot Feld.

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