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Chichester Psalms



Photo © Paul Kolnik

Music Chichester Psalms by Leonard Bernstein

Choreography Peter Martins

Premiere June 2, 2004, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater

Original Cast Carla Körbes and Amar Ramasar with the Juilliard Choral Union

Average Length 19 min.

Chichester Psalms a theatrical work that explores Leonard Bernstein's melodic score is to all or part of six psalms, which call for spiritual reconciliation and brotherhood. As the dance begins, a chorus and dancers stand on risers in a semicircle. The dancers move onto the stage, led by a male and female dancer, in an exploration of the first part of the music, which celebrates the "joyful noise" of Psalm 100. The second section, which features a boy soprano, is more somber, reflecting the clash between the spiritual and secular worlds described in Psalm 2. In the final section, the dancers and singers celebrate the understanding between these two worlds in a celebration of unity. The costumes, with men dressed in black and women in white. Mark Stanley's lighting shifts from white to gold and back to white. Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990), the gifted and versatile American conductor and composer of symphonic music and Broadway shows, was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts. At the age of 17, he entered Harvard. He went on to study at the Curtis Institute and then at Tanglewood. Serge Koussevitzky took interest in his talent and promoted his conducting career. Bernstein's great chance came when, on short notice, he substituted brilliantly for Bruno Walter, who had become ill. He performed as a conductor and pianist, and lectured at universities and on television programs. His compositions ranged from the classical to the musical stage, and included Mass, Kaddish, West Side Story (again in collaboration with Jerome Robbins), Candide, and The

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— George Balanchine

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Age of Anxiety. He was the first native-born American to become conductor of the New York Philharmonic, and he conducted around the world.

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