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After the Rain



Photo © Paul Kolnik

Music Tabula Rasa (1977) (First movement - "Ludus") and Spiegel Im Spiegel (1978) by Arvo Pärt

Choreography Choreography by Christopher Wheeldon

Premiere January 22, 2005, New York State Theater, New York, NY

Original Cast Wendy Whelan, Sofiane Sylve, Maria Kowroski, Jock Soto, Edwaard Liang, Ask la Cour

Average Length 22 min.

Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain* is a ballet of bold movements and heartfelt emotion. In Part I, danced to the first movement of Pärt's *Tabula Rasa*, the three couples' opening movements find the men lying on the floor with the women standing over them, en pointe, with their left legs thrust in the air. From that powerful image, the couples perform a series of intricate lifts and turns that often mirror one another. They are dressed in steel gray, reflecting the striking backdrop, in which a revolving palette of grays resembles glass covered with raindrops. The colors and mood shifts dramatically in Part II, a pas de deux danced to *Spiegel im Spiegel*. The ballerina is dressed in pink and her partner is bare chested. In a series of unfolding partnering moves, the dancers explore the shifting emotions of their relationship. At times they are close and tender with one another, while at other times they inhabit the same space but are separated and searching for one another. The ballet is short in length—lasting about 22 minutes—but rich in invention and feeling. Arvo Pärt was born in Estonia in 1935. From 1958 to 1967 he was employed as a recording director and a composer for film and television. He studied composition under Heino Eller at the Tallinn Conservatory, graduating in

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— R.G. Collingwood

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1963. His early works—a string quartet and some neoclassic piano music (two sonatinas and a partita in 1958)—written while he was still a student, demonstrate the influence of Russian neoclassic composers such as Shostakovich and Prokofiev. Pärt was at the forefront of developing new methods of composition in Estonia in the early 1960s. His Nekrology of 1960 was the first Estonian composition to employ serial technique. He continued with serialism through the mid '60s in pieces such as the 1st and 2nd Symphonies and Perpetuum Modile, but ultimately tired of its rigors and moved on to experiment with collage techniques, in works such as Collage on B-A-C-H. The technique he invented and to which he has remained loyal practically without exception is tintinnabuli (from the Latin, little bells). "I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played," he has said. "This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements—with one voice, two voices. I build with primitive materials—with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells and that is why I call it tintinnabulation."
