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**Beethoven Seventh**



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**Music** [Symphony No. 7 in A Major \(1812\) by Ludwig van Beethoven](#)  
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**Choreography** [Twyla Tharp](#)

**Premiere** [January 22, 2000, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater](#)

**Original Cast** [Jenifer Ringer, Peter Boal, Wendy Whelan, Nikolaj Hübbe, Miranda Weese, Damian Woetzel](#)

**Average Length** [39 min.](#)

Twyla Tharp's second ballet for New York City Ballet is a sweeping work for three principal couples and a corps of 12. It is set to music that is often referred to as Beethoven's "dance symphony" (after Richard Wagner's famous statement, "this symphony is the very apotheosis of dance"). The ballet opens with a lighthearted, yet noble first movement, followed by a slow and sensuous pas de deux filled with yearning and passion. After a bright, virtual eruption of high spirits in the third section, the ballet concludes with a playful and rousing finale. A neoclassical ballet, *The Beethoven Seventh* is filled with bravura solos, pas de deux and ensemble work, intricate entrances and exits, and unusual partnering. It also incorporates vernacular movement (including a brief and elegant breakdance) and elements of Tharp's signature slinky, slouchy, syncopated style. Ms. Tharp's first work for New York City Ballet came in 1984 when she collaborated with Jerome Robbins in *Brahms/Handel*. Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* was written in 1812, when the composer was almost totally deaf. With Beethoven conducting, it was first performed in 1813 at a private audition for Archduke Rudolf, one of Beethoven's patrons and students. Later that year the symphony was introduced to the public. The audience at the premiere public concert demanded an immediate encore of the second movement, much to the composer's delight. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), one of the world's great composers, was born into a family of musicians. Early in his career he was influenced by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and studied with Josef Haydn. He was a successful concert pianist in

"A BALLET IS A MOVEMENT IN TIME AND SPACE, A LIVING MOMENT."

— George Balanchine

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addition to his career as a composer. Beethoven earned a comfortable living through his commissioned work and performances. During the early years of his career, he composed scores for two ballets, Ritterballet and The Creatures of Prometheus. Tragedy struck in 1801 when, at the age of 30, Beethoven realized he was going deaf. His increasing hearing impairment led to a withdrawal from society and an end to his career as a pianist. However, he continued to compose and, indeed, created his greatest works after deafness set in. Beethoven's music expresses a broad range of emotions and bridges the Classical and Romantic periods. It is heroic, descriptive of a deep love of nature, and often boisterously humorous. It is frequently triumphant, expressing humanity's ability to overcome misfortune and suffering. His last works are among the most profound ever written. By the end of Beethoven's life, he enjoyed tremendous popularity. His work was seminal and broke new ground for successive generations of composers.

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