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Photo © Steven Caras

Music Black and White (1988) by Michael Torke

Choreography Peter Martins

Premiere May 7, 1988, New York City Ballet, American Music Festival, New York State Theater

Original Cast Heather Watts, Jock Soto

Black and White, commissioned for the New York City Ballet's American Music Festival, is the second collaboration between Peter Martins and Michael Torke. The ballet is both an exploration of adagio and partnering, and a suite of dances for changing divisions of the corps. By turns romantic and jazzy, its seven sections are full of sensuous intertwinings and formal architectural patterns. Michael Torke (b.1961) was graduated in composition and piano from the Eastman School of Music in 1984. His fifteen minute chamber opera, The Directions, premiered at the Summer '86 Festival in Iraklion, Crete. His composition Ecstatic Orange, commissioned for the New York City Ballet, premiered in 1986. In 1987, his Verdant Music was presented as the second section of an expanded Ecstatic Orange. Black and White is a continuation of Mr. Torke's preoccupation with aural sounds suggesting visual color. The composer has called the music, the first he has written specifically for the dance, "a set of variations on the theme that is stated before the curtain opens."

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— Peter Martins

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