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Ballet

Helgi Tomasson • Artistic Director

Programs 7 & 8 / 1999

p r o **7** g r a m

Theme and Variations

Composer: Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Choreography: George Balanchine
Staged by: Helgi Tomasson
Costume Design: Nicola Benois
Lighting Design: David K.H. Elliott

World Premiere: November 26, 1947 — Ballet Theatre,
 City Center Theater; New York, New York
 San Francisco Ballet Premiere: August 19, 1986 —
 Ravinia Festival, Highland Park, Illinois

The 1997 production of *Theme and Variations* was made possible, in part, by Deloitte & Touche LLP.

Slow

Composer: Graham Fitkin
Choreography: Val Caniparoli
Scenic and Costume Design: Sandra Woodall
Lighting Design: Lisa J. Pinkham

World Premiere: March 5, 1998 — San Francisco Ballet,
 War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

The 1999 Encore of *Slow* is underwritten, in part, by
 ENCORE! in memory of Nadine Kawalek.
 ENCORE! is a volunteer organization of Bay Area young
 professionals who contribute to San Francisco Ballet
 by sponsoring social and educational events.

The 1998 World Premiere of *Slow* was made possible by
 Catherine & Paul Lego and Helen von Ammon.

World Premiere

Sandpaper Ballet

Composer: Leroy Anderson
Choreography: Mark Morris
Costume Design: Isaac Mizrahi
Lighting Design: James F. Ingalls
Assistant to Mr. Morris: Tina Fehlandt

World Premiere: April 27, 1999 — San Francisco Ballet,
 War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

The 1999 World Premiere of *Sandpaper Ballet* is
 underwritten by the Bernard Osher Foundation,
 the Phyllis C. Wattis New Works Fund,
 and Philip Morris Companies, Inc.

Julia Adam and David Palmer in Val Caniparoli's *Slow*

Slow

Slow is an emotionally charged mood piece that upends expectations with its choreographic invention, unanticipated contrasts, and unusual use of space. Performed to Graham Fitkin's single-movement score of the same name, the ballet, like the music, is a complex, multi-textured tapestry tinged with melancholy.

At least as compelling as the powerful undercurrents of emotion that rise and swell throughout the ballet are Val Caniparoli's vocabulary for the piece, and the restraints he placed on his use of the stage. While those well-acquainted with his choreography will find some of the language and style of the ballet familiar, they will also be aware that *Slow* looks and feels different than his previous work. Choreographed last season, it is likely his most experimental dance to date for San Francisco Ballet.

Taking a cue from ice dancing or pairs skating, Caniparoli has invented movements and phrases which create the illusion that dancers are actually gliding on ice. The ballet also contains more floor work, sculptural poses, and every day movements — like walking and running — than any of his other works for the Company. *Slow* is marked by sudden shifts and changes in direction: weight to weightlessness, fast to slow, sky to earth. Most unusual is its traffic pattern: ballets usually cover space laterally, but Caniparoli chose to redirect the bulk of the movement so that it flows from front to back, rather than side to side. He also gave himself an obstacle: he had designer Sandra Woodall block off the sides of the stage, so that the dancers can only enter and exit in the back. The effect of Woodall's black-box set combined with Lisa Pinkham's moody lighting is that the dancers seem to disappear into a void.

World Premiere

Sandpaper Ballet

The music of Leroy Anderson is firmly entrenched in American popular culture, even if most Americans are likely unfamiliar with his name. Anderson (1908-1975) was a composer of distinctive and delightful orchestral miniatures, and ten of his melodies are the inspiration for *Sandpaper Ballet*, the third world premiere by Mark Morris for San Francisco Ballet.

Anderson's best-known work is undoubtedly the jaunty Christmas perennial, "Sleigh Ride," but equally well-known to a certain segment of the population is "The Syncopated Clock." For

more than twenty-five years, "The Syncopated Clock" was the theme music for "The Late Show," the late night movie on Channel 2 in New York. "When 'The Late Show' was about to go on the air, the people at WCBS were sent several recordings to consider for the theme," says Eleanor Anderson, the composer's widow. "One of them was the Percy Faith recording of 'The Syncopated Clock.' Someone at the station liked it, and when 'The Late Show' premiered in February, 1951, 'The Syncopated Clock' was its theme. That night the station's switchboard lit up, with people calling in to request the name of the song." A year later, Anderson's "Blue Tango" reached No. 1 on the pop charts, becoming the first instrumental piece to sell over one million copies. It earned him a gold record.


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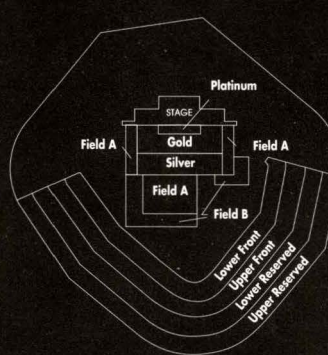
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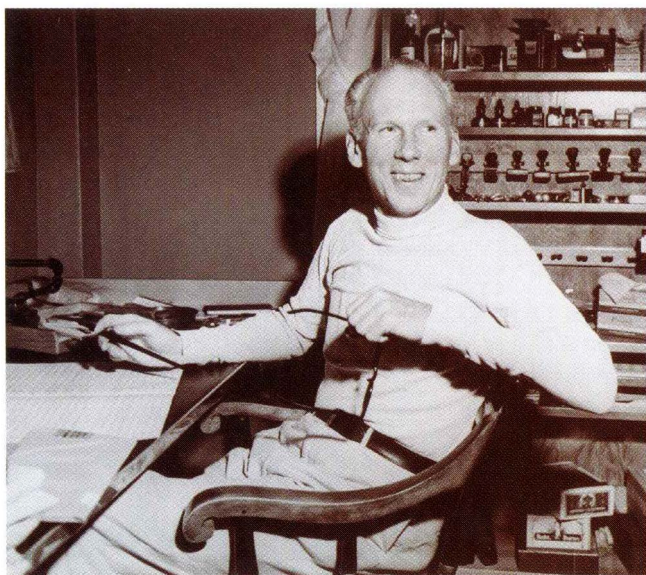
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LOCAL PROMOTION BY




Composer Leroy Anderson

It is virtually impossible to listen to Anderson's delicious tunes without smiling. He could make irresistible music out of even the most unexpected sounds. The only solo in the daffy "The Typewriter" is played by — what else? In "The Sandpaper Ballet," a catchy soft-shoe number, the sandpaper has the effect of a pair of dancing feet performing on sand. (Despite the ballet's title, Morris does not use Anderson's composition of the same name in his ballet.) There are no vocalizing felines in "The Waltzing Cat," but Anderson's use of the strings is, well, the cat's meow.

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts to Swedish immigrants, Anderson grew up in a musical family. His mother played organ and piano, his father played the mandolin and banjo. Anderson's first instrument was the piano, but he would go on to study trombone, bass fiddle, tuba, accordion, organ, and cello. "He started playing bass fiddle in high school," says Mrs. Anderson. "His brother once said that Leroy went to see the leader or teacher of the high school orchestra, who pulled a bass fiddle out of the closet. Nobody was playing it, so the teacher said, 'Try this.' Leroy took it home, and the next day he was playing something on it. The other kids were quite amazed. That became the instrument he played the most. He studied with a member of the Boston Symphony, and played in dance bands and other kinds of small orchestras in the Boston area for several years. He took up the trombone around the same time as the bass fiddle. I think he was self-taught. His father wanted him to play it so that he could be in the front row of the Harvard band during football games."

Anderson received Bachelor and Masters degrees in music from Harvard, and taught music for two years at Radcliffe. Yet there was a period when it seemed that music would not become his life's work. He was an accomplished linguist, and upon completing his music studies at Harvard, he remained at the university another four years, 1931 through 1935, working toward a Ph.D in German and Scandinavian languages. During that period he was also director of

Harvard University Band, where he was developing a reputation as a first-rate arranger. Although he put aside his language studies in favor of a career in music, he ultimately became fluent in eight foreign languages: German, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and Icelandic (which he called his "primary" languages), and French, Italian, and Portuguese, (which were "secondary").

"He considered a career in languages because he was turned down twice for a fellowship at Harvard," says Mrs. Anderson. "He thought that the fellowship was the next step toward a career as a musician, because it meant he would have gone to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger. After he was turned down the first time, they told him it was because he played in the band. Harvard academics didn't believe that working with the band was a serious pursuit. They advised him to drop the band for a year and reapply, which he did. But he was still turned down. So he started studying for his Ph.D in languages. He didn't complete it, but he was offered a job at a private boys' school in Pennsylvania teaching languages. He didn't take it because the Boston Pops happened."

In 1936 Anderson was invited to arrange a medley of Harvard songs for the Pops. "Every year they had a Harvard night at the Pops," says Mrs. Anderson, "for the class celebrating its twenty-fifth reunion. George Judd, the manager of the Pops, was part of the class that year. He had heard these really clever arrangements that Leroy did for the Harvard Band, and asked him to orchestrate and arrange some Harvard songs for the Pops program."

Following the premiere of "Harvard Fantasy," which he also conducted, Anderson was approached by music director Arthur Fiedler, who said, according to Mrs. Anderson, "Why don't you bring something original to me?" Two years later, he did. Fiedler and the Boston Pops gave the first performance of Anderson's "Jazz Pizzicato," marking the beginning of a long-term artistic relationship.

In 1950 Anderson signed a contract with Decca Records to record and conduct his own music with a large studio orchestra, made up of some of the finest musicians in New York. While the Boston Pops introduced many of Anderson's works over the years, a good number of his melodies, including "Blue Tango" and "The Typewriter," were first heard on these Decca recordings. Anderson remained with the label until 1962.

He made a rare venture beyond the world of miniatures when he wrote a piano concerto in 1953. "He withdrew it in 1954, after conducting it three times," says Mrs. Anderson. "He wanted to rework the first movement, but he never got around to it. We, his family, have re-released it. I like the piece a lot, and so do many other people. One or two reviewers said they could see why Leroy withdrew it, but most people can't imagine why he didn't like it."

Anderson also wrote one Broadway show, *Goldilocks*, which opened in October, 1958, and ran for just 161 performances. The book and lyrics were written by Jean and Walter Kerr (who were assisted on the lyrics by Joan Ford). Walter Kerr directed, Agnes de Mille was the choreographer, and the



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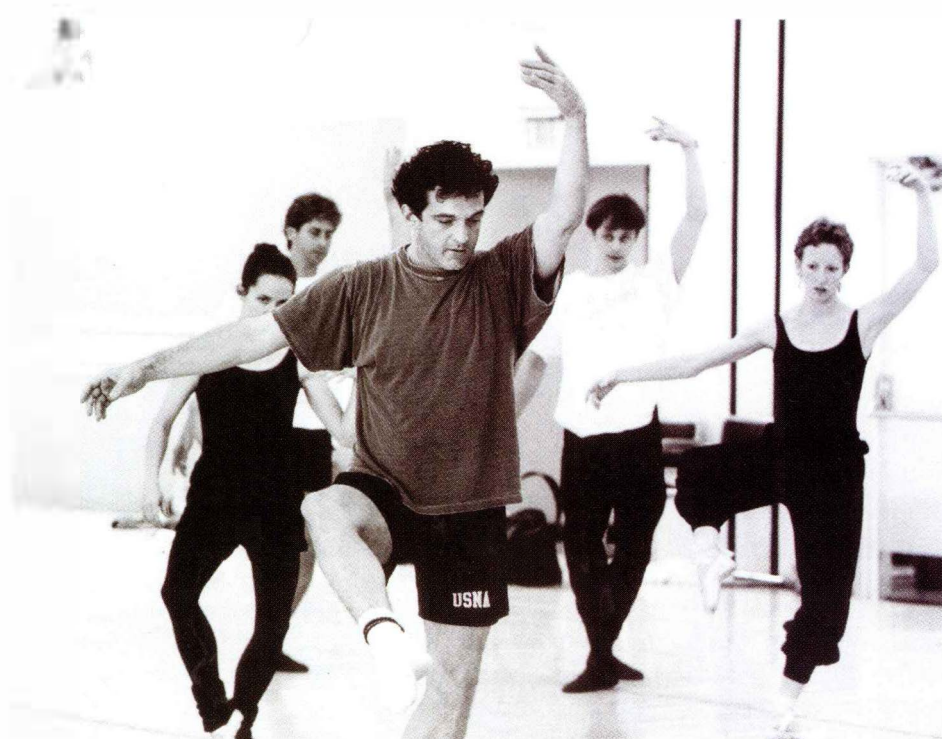
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stars were Elaine Stritch and Don Ameche. According to most critics, the problem with the show was the book; de Mille's choreography and Anderson's music were generally well received. In *The New York Times*, Brooks Atkinson wrote, "Leroy Anderson has written a melodic score in civilized style." The score is still available on CD. "He wanted to write more musicals, but he never did," says Mrs. Anderson. (One fascinating footnote: Several years earlier, Anderson was asked to write the music for a new Broadway show, *Wonderful Town*. "He was working with a lyricist whose name I've forgotten," says Mrs. Anderson. "The producers didn't like the lyricist, and told Leroy they wanted to use [Betty] Comden and [Adolph] Green. Comden and Green agreed to do the show, but said they wanted Leonard Bernstein to write the music. Leroy was very disappointed.")

Anderson was much sought after by orchestras throughout the country, and he continued to conduct his own work with the Boston Pops and other music organizations until 1974, the year before he died. He was elected to the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1988.

When Anderson died, "The Late Show" was still running on WCBS in New York. Although he and his wife lived in Connecticut, they never had the opportunity to hear what millions of others had heard, "The Syncopated Clock" introducing the program. "At first, we didn't have a TV," says Mrs. Anderson. "And when we finally got one, there was a hill between us and New York that made us unable to receive the signal. So we heard about it, but we never heard it ourselves."

PRODUCTION CREDITS: *Theme and Variations* — Music: Theme and Variations (final movement of Suite No. 3 in G, Opus 55.) Costumes constructed by Kim Baker, London, England. The performance of *Theme and Variations*, a Balanchine® Ballet, is presented by arrangement with the George Balanchine TrustSM and has been produced in accordance with the Balanchine Style® and Balanchine Technique®, service standards established and provided by the Trust. **Slow** — Music: *Slow*. Costumes constructed by Catalyst Design, Hartford, Connecticut. Scenic construction and painting by San Francisco Ballet Carpentry and Scenic Departments, at the San Francisco Opera Scenic Studios. **Sandpaper Ballet** — Music: Leroy Anderson: "Sleigh Ride (Overture)," "The Typewriter," "Trumpeter's Lullaby," "Sarabande," "Balladette," "Jazz Pizzicato," "Jazz Legato," "Fiddle Faddle," "The Girl in Satin," "Song of the Bells," "The Syncopated Clock." EMI Music Mills Inc. publisher and copyright owner for all songs except "Balladette," Woodbury Music Company of Woodbury, CT. (All Rights Reserved). Costumes constructed by Ann Beck Dance and Specialty Costumes, San Francisco. Fabric Screening by Dye-namix, New York.



Mark Morris creating *Sandpaper Ballet* for members of San Francisco Ballet.

MARTY SOHL