

# [Theatre essays – jerome robbins and agnes de mille essay](https://assignbuster.com/theatre-essays-jerome-robbins-and-agnes-de-mille-essay/)

## An analysis of the life and plants of the choreographers Jerome Robbins and Agnes de Mille and therole of dance in musical theater

Agnesde Mille and Jerome Robbins worked in musical theater in what is widelyregarded to be the industry ‘ s Golden Era. Many would state that it was theirinnovative attack to choreography in musical theater that brought an energyand a dynamism to the musical, accounting for its rush in popularity. It iscertainly true that they did much to promote the function of dance in musicaltheatre, which was antecedently mostly simply as an accoutrement to the maindramatic event ; pretty adult females with au naturel flesh exhibiting around the stage. Robbins and De Mille regarded dance as a serious art signifier and endeavor to portrayit as such on the phase.

Musicaltheatre as we know it today did non come into being until the twentiethcentury, but song and dance have been a portion of theater for 1000s ofyears. From every bit early as the 5 Thursday century BC the Ancient Greeksemployed music and dance in many of their comedies and calamities to entertainthe public. The Romans carried on this tradition from the 3 rd century BC, with many dramas by Plautus including vocal and dance. They inventedthe first pat places by attaching metal home bases to their places so that the entireaudience, who would sit in a prodigious alfresco theater, could hear the dancesteps ( 1 ) . In the Middle Ages going folk singers and companies of histrions, terpsichoreans and vocalists performed popular vocals and slapstick comedy. Thereligious play of the 12 Thursday and 13 Thursday centuries alsoincluded liturgical vocals, although no dance. In the Gallic tribunal of the RenaissanceLouis XIV insisted that vocal and dance be incorporated into hisentertainments.

InAmerica, some of the first dramatic functions to be performed by terpsichoreans were inmelodrama, which is unsurprising sing the extremely conventionalized motion ofmelodramatic histrions lends itself more to dance than to anything else. MlleCeleste, who was subsequently to go one of the most celebrated terpsichoreans of thenineteenth century, was foremost billed in America as the famed melodramaticactress ( 2 ) . Across the 19th century, circuses, showboats andpantomimes all included dance in some signifier. Stars such as Mlle Celeste andFanny Essler helped make a popular demand for dance and companies began toinclude more luxuriant dances in their eventide ‘ s measure. Melodrama andpantomimes would frequently integrate complex concert dances into their entertainments. In England the most popular signifier of amusement for the working- andmiddle-classes was the music hall, which staged vaudeville amusement in theway of vocalists, terpsichoreans and forte Acts of the Apostless. Vaudeville was besides extremelypopular in America in the 19th century, and by the 1890s dance Acts of the Apostless wereever more in demand. Dances were still, nevertheless, mostly performed in betweenthe Acts of the Apostless of the chief production or before the end-piece to make full the spreads. Therole of dance in the theater at that clip was limited chiefly to entr’actes. Theyexisted strictly to pacify the audience, to showpiece a star, or to titillatepredominantly male audiences with leting spectacle of female limbs in leotardss ( 3 ) . Jack Cole referred to the dances and the terpsichoreans in theater at this timeas wallpaper ( 4 ) .

Itwas n’t truly until the thirtiess that dance began to be an of import portion of themusical. George Balanchine, who trained at the Russian Imperial Ballet School beforeworking with Serge Diaghilev ‘ s Ballets Russes, regarded dance as a legitimateand of import constituent in musical theater. He believed dance to be thegreatest expressive medium and foremost introduced concert dance onto the popular musicalstage with Ziegfeld Folliess . Dancers in the theater began to be takenseriously, instead than regarded simply as pretty misss baring a batch of leg ; Intoa choreographic universe that was a mAA©lange of cosmetic motion, legs and lights-outs, Balanchine opened the door and concert dance leapt on to the popular musical phase, directed by a supreme creative person ( 5 ) . Whereas antecedently merely modus operandis hadbeen performed on the theatrical phase, Balanchine choreographed dances . He refused for his dances to be simply bite-size pieces of entertainmentsandwiched between the chief attractive force and insisted that they be portion of theplot, integrated seamlessly into the action. For the first clip in a musicalthe dances in Balanchine ‘ s On Your Toes really helped to progress theplot. When, in 1982, On Your Toes returned to Broadway, Carol Lawson ofthe New York Times wrote ;

On YourToes was a turning point in the history of musical comedy, for Mr. Balanchine ‘ s dances were more than mere interludes. Alternatively they served asessential facets of the secret plan, and were exhaustively incorporate parts of the production. ( 6 )

Balanchine paved the manner for AgnesDe Mille and Jerome Robbins to wholly alter the kineticss of dance in musicaltheatre, and thereby in musicals has a whole. De Mille introduced the conceptof utilizing dance as a vehicle for story-telling and Robbins transformed the roleof choreographer in a musical to being manager of the full show, makingdance the drive force.

Agnes De Mille

Asa kid, although she came from a theatrical household, De Mille was non permittedformal dance preparation, but would improvize pieces to execute to invitees andnightly improvised to the concomitant of her female parent on the Orchestrelle ( 7 ) . She would pattern her melodramatic playing accomplishments every dark before performingflexibility exercisings to limber up her organic structure in preparedness for the phase. Whenin Hollywood with her household her true terpsichorean ‘ s inherent aptitude became apparent as shefell in love with the broad unfastened infinites of the state environing the town ; this would be a repeating subject in her ulterior stage dancing. In herautobiography, Dance to the Piper, she exclaimed ;

The descendinggrassy inclines filled me with a passion to run, to turn over in craze, to bust up

mybody on the Earth. Space means this to a terpsichorean – or to a kid! The descentthrough

theair, the determination of earth-footage, the embrace and battle with thefundamental

ground. These are to a terpsichorean what strong aromas are to an animate being. ( 8 )

Theday De Mille foremost watched Anna Pavlova perform merely increased her desire tobecome a terpsichorean. She was enthralled, awed, and dumbstruck, and describes thatmoment with passion and relish ( 9 ) . It was this that encouraged de Mille toorganise her first dance show with a group of other misss but she was still notallowed dance lessons and became frustrated with the limited dance she coulddo. It was n’t until her sister was advised by an orthopedist to get down balletdancing that she excessively was permitted to go to the Theodore Kosloff School ofImperial Russian Ballet. Whilst there she learnt technique and poise andtrained her organic structure into that of a terpsichorean ‘ s. She worked feverishly difficult, perhapseven more so because her parents would non let her to hold lessons more thantwice a hebdomad, go forthing her lagging behind the remainder of the category. She resortedto practising in her female parent ‘ s bathroom, where she had installed a barre for her.

Bythe clip De Mille had finished high school nevertheless, she had grown to loath therigours of day-to-day pattern and decided to abandon her categories and her solitarypractices and travel to college. During her clip at UCLA De Mille occasionallystaged dances for pupil mass meetings and towards the terminal of her college life shestarted exerting with the head to acquiring back up on her points. She decidedto dance professionally after run intoing Douglass Montgomery, who convinced herthat she could. Thingss were ne’er traveling to be easy for her though. She movedto New York at a clip when terpsichoreans [ were ] hired on the shininess of the stockingand the blink of an eye of their agent, and when the few dance companies that existed onBroadway were little and dedicated to the personal development of some star ( 10 ) . I have mentioned earlier the limited chances a terpsichorean had in thistime, where no ‘ pure ‘ concert dance was being performed in either music shows ormoving image shows and there was no such word as ‘ choreography ‘ . Whenrehearsing for a concert of her ain stage dancing Montgomery taught De Mille howto act through her dance ; he taught me that every gesture must hold someexplicit significance ( 11 ) . She decided to execute character surveies whereby thedancing revealed personality and was natural in the class of the narrative. Rightfrom the start she wanted to use dance as more than light amusement, asa critical story-telling vehicle. These first efforts, being lone charactersketches, were rather light by nature, and the manner was folk instead thanballet, but it was different to what anybody else had done on the phase before. When she performed some of these at a concert she was received good but whenshe auditioned for Charles Cochran and Noel Coward they told her that she wasmore suited to the concert hall, and that she would ne’er do it in thetheatre.

Aftertouring with Adolph Bolm, she was commissioned as a dancer-choreographer on ChristopherMorley ‘ s resurgence of The Black Crook but the drunken, noisy audience madeher manus her notice in. It was in the mid-thirtiess that the dance scene in NewYork began to stir. Every Sunday a twosome of dance concerts were given, withsoloists experimenting with every dance signifier conceivable. De Mille remembers, we were out remodel our full trade there were no regulations we struck sparksfrom one another ( 12 ) . For five old ages De Mille taught herself to choreograph, but she was seeking to larn to compose dances, non dumb shows, nor dramaticstories, nor character surveies, but planned sequences of sustained movementwhich would be original and compelling ( 13 ) . She viewed dance as a seriousart signifier and wanted to choreograph dances that would show it as such, butwith hardly any formal preparation behind her she found this really difficult. After disastrously choreographing Flying Colours De Mille and her mothermoved to London where, as in New York, she choreographed and danced in her ownrecitals to critical acclamation but with no fiscal addition. At one narration though, Marie Rambert and Arnold Haskell were amongst the audience and were impressedenough to inquire her to remain in London to go on her narrations and be taught atThe Ballet Club.

Itwas at The Ballet Club that De Mille met Anthony Tudor and Fredrick Ashton, both of whom would travel on to go of import choreographers and who, with her, would revolutionize the dance universe. In 1933 she choreographed the dances forCharles B. Cochran ‘ s Nymph Errant in London but during the mid-thirtiess DeMille returned to America several times, dancing in her uncle ‘ s production of Cleopatra in 1934 and choreographing Irving Thalburg ‘ s film-version of Romeo andJuliet . On the latter undertaking she had to digest her dances being cut topieces as the camera cut out most of the group work and showed merely snippets ofthe remainder. The usage at the clip was non to demo a whole dance but to providelight amusement with film editings of dances.

On Hurrah for What De Mille came up against the type of work forces that insisteddancers were hired for their sex entreaty and that dances were performed to sellsex. These were the kind of work forces that were maintaining dance from going aserious, of import art signifier and that issued it with merely a cosmetic functionin theater and movies. The direction wanted the misss exposed as much aspossible, face forepart ever, bosom bared, legs merely seeable to the waist, DeMille recalls ( 14 ) . As she refused to conform precisely, desiring her owncreative input, she was fired with one word, before her stage dancing was rippedto scintillas. Without the security of Equity many of the terpsichoreans and histrions werefired without warning as the Business Manager exacted his vision of abosoms-and-legs chorus-line extravaganza. At this clip on Broadway dances, attheir best, were slick and grammatical, but with no great minutes of dramaticrevelation ( 15 ) . When De Mille returned to Broadway some old ages subsequently she wasto dramatically alter this impression.

In1940 Ballet Theatre was formed and De Mille was invited to go one of thechoreographers, on the apprehension that she was non to dance herself. It wasa extremely originative clip for De Mille and she was able to work with some of thefinest terpsichoreans and choreographers of the clip. It was at Ballet Theatre thatDe Mille created her first concert dance, Black Ritual , a controversial piecewith black terpsichoreans ; the first clip this had of all time been attempted by a seriousballet company. Having had lone brief and manic bustles with commercialtroupes of assorted cocottes and chorus terpsichoreans she had non had the experienceof puting a agenda of choreographing and rehearsing and was extremelynervous. Her terpsichoreans did non assist affairs by being systematically tardily and byarriving unprepared. The concert dance was non received good but shortly after shewas hired by a successful engagement director for a national circuit. De Mille andher terpsichoreans prepared for the circuit through blood, perspiration and cryings but it was atotal success, and De Mille discovered something critical: although the managersmay non, the populace liked and appreciated her work.

Notlong after returning to New York, De Mille was asked by Ballet Theatre tocreate Three Virgins and a Devil , which was a immense hit and dAA©buted theyoung Jerome Robbins. In 1942 she was commissioned to make a concert dance for theBallet Russe de Monte Carlo. She extended a piece she had partially choreographedyears earlier, and Rodeo was the consequence. The concert dance formed the basisfor a uniquely American dance manner, utilizing common people subjects, pat dance andenergetic, fast-paced motions, capturing the kernel of a cowpuncher ‘ s manner. Teaching male terpsichoreans who were used to the preciseness and elegance of balletproved to be hard so De Mille resorted to moving lessons to assist herdancers happen their characters. She wanted them to be cowpunchers ; shewanted them to pass on dramatic significance. Come opening dark they wereprepared and the audience adored them. De Mille had created an wholly newand exciting dance manner ; it was the first of its sort, and the minute wasquick with birth ( 16 ) . De Mille successfully turned concert dance into musicalcomedy, and gave the signifier existent energy and relish, with motions ne’er beforeseen in this really precise of dance signifiers.

Wehad breached the ramparts De Mille exclaims in Dance to the Piper ( 17 ) . She, with a few choreographers before her, had created a new tradition, onewith a different root urge to traditional concert dance. She asserts that tocreate a manner that truly differs from concert dance one must establish that manner onanother technique. De Mille integrated folk dances into her work, withoutlowering the public presentations to comedy imitations. Her work, like that of fellowchoreographer Anthony Tudor, conveyed theatrical significance through dance stairss ; the line between histrion and terpsichorean was blurred. Rather than terpsichoreans usingtraditional technique and executing well-known stairss, where the human bodiesare used simply as units of design, grouped, lumped, and directed intopredetermined multitudes, De Mille endeavor for originality and dramaticcommunication in her stage dancing. She writes of Tudor ‘ s work ;

Tudordeveloped the story-telling quality of his stage dancing to such a degree thateach gesture, formed out of the emotional constituents of the minute, is almostas explicit as though the terpsichoreans spoke. The new stage dancing does non arrangeold stairss into new forms ; the emotion evolves stairss, gestures, and beat. ( 18 )

Reading De Mille’sexplanation of her method for making dance in Dance to the Piper , oneis reminded of a manager get downing to present a drama. She spends much clip oncharacterisation ; happening the right gestures and stance for each character actsas a stimulation for the choreographic procedure ( 19 ) . De Mille did non createimpersonal terpsichoreans but characters moving out, through dance, a narrative.

Fromthe success of Rodeo , every bit good as for its all-American manner and subject, De Mille was asked by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein to choreographdances for their new production, Sooner state! De Mille knew the projectwas traveling to be hard as, unlike concert dance where the choreographer is themaster and swayer of the show, many elements other than dance contribute to formmusical theater. The performing artists must take way from the manager, thecomposer, the writer of the book, and the manufacturer. The dance manager gotlittle say in the agreement. Singing and moving were the chief constituents inmusical theater at the clip ; dance was simply for ornament. When projecting thedancers, De Mille insisted on endowment and personality, Rodgers wanted faces, although his thought of a face had often to make with the character in it, but Mamoulian, the manager, wanted slender legs above all ( 20 ) . It was assumedthat the populace, besides, were far more interested in the vocalizing and the dramathan the dance. The Numberss of dances were hence limited. De Milleinsisted, nevertheless, that every terpsichorean was hired for merely one ground – that heor she was the best available performing artist for the function ( 21 ) . She did non cavein to the caprice of the manager ; she wanted her terpsichoreans to be seriousprofessionals, and Rodgers agreed. Once, during dry runs, a note was playedout of melody and one of the chorus ‘ faces winced with hurting, but it was notannoyance or amusement, it was agonized concern. When Rodgers saw herexpression – 1 he had ne’er seen cross a chorus miss ‘ s face – he realisedthat responsible creative persons had entered the ranks ( 22 ) . The chorus terpsichoreans wereno longer pretty faces, good legs but nil between the ears ; everyperformer, including the terpsichoreans, knew their trade. Another trouble DeMille would hold was that the dances would hold to be created from the impetusof the book, they would hold to construct the writer ‘ s line and develop his action ( 23 ) , instead than being created from abrasion from characters developed by her. De Mille was besides faced with the job of fleetly going from duologue, to song, to dance, and back to duologue once more without it looking ludicrous. Asthe choreographer she was traveling to hold to larn surgery, to graft and splice ( 23 ) .

DeMille achieved all this and more. She succeeded in promoting her function aschoreographer to that of equal importance with the dramatist, the composer andthe lyrist, and she did what no choreographer had successfully done before -she integrated the concert dances into the narrative. Her terpsichoreans were non merelydecoration but characters , and she worked with them to accomplish deepness ofcharacter, motive and emotion. Dancers could no longer project theirpersonal response to a piece of music. They needed to travel as the charactersthey were portraying. Their reactions, their facial looks, all needed tofurther the audience ‘ s apprehension of their character. This requiredin-depth book readings and analysis of character motives, merely as adirector would take a firm stand on for his or her histrions. De Mille realised that this canreally help the terpsichorean. Whereas in concert dance the terpsichorean has to trust on what theyfeel to give the dance energy and dynamism, they now had the vocalizing and actingto give them background and motive to assist give their dance, as thesecharacters, expressive motion ( 24 ) . If the function of dance in Sooner state! was to pass on dramatic significance to the audience, and to foster the secret plan, the terpsichorean had to become the character, and cognize it wrong-side-out.

AsDe Mille herself notes, it was Anthony Tudor who foremost shocked audiences intoviewing a concert dance terpsichorean as an single capable of dramatic communicationthrough her organic structure, by dressing them in long Edwardian frocks ( 25 ) . No longerwas the concert dance dancer the conventionalized, typical image that made it acceptable forwomen to bare their legs and weaponries and wrap their limbs around a adult male. She wasnow familiar ; like their female parents and aunties. They could now pass on humantruths and take portion in the relation of a narrative. Dressed as the characters of aSouth-western town, instead than leotardss and a Tutu, the audience was able to hum terpsichoreans as worlds with a narrative to state.

Thecrowning glorification of De Mille ‘ s stage dancing on Sooner state! was without doubtthe dream-ballet which occurs at the terminal of Act 1. With this De Milleexperimented with something wholly new in musical theater, and for many yearsto come hardly a musical was made without it incorporating a dream concert dance. Inthis extended concert dance Laurie acts out her quandary through dance ; a highlyimaginative method of traveling the narrative frontward. Dance was inextricably boundto the secret plan of the musical. Whereas in old musicals dance was simply aside amusement and could be cut without the narrative losing any of itsmeaning, one could non take the dream concert dance out of Sooner state! withoutruining the secret plan. By utilizing dance the ideas and feelings in the head and theheart of Laurie could be conveyed and explored far more efficaciously thanthrough consecutive duologue. The dances were intended to beef up theaudience ‘ s apprehension of the characters and farther the secret plan, every bit good ascomplement the wordss and the duologue, and it worked. Now, every bit good as singingand playing, dancing added to the dramatic impact of the musical on theaudience.

AsKislan notes, dance besides adds to the of import subject of unfastened infinite in Sooner state . It is the steering metaphor for the promise of the American Dream and thelimitless chances for the ‘ brand new province ‘ the lovers are destined tolive in ( 26 ) . The audience is ever cognizant of the physical infinite on phase asthe terpsichoreans ne’er seem crowded, no affair how many occupy the infinite. In thedream concert dance Curly lifts Laurie up in the air, making for the sky, and theballetic manner danced in invariably opens the organic structure up, widening weaponries and legsto give the feeling of illimitable infinite. In Dance to the Piper DeMille writes of the sense of infinite concert dance terpsichoreans work with ; Every articulation andsinew is pulled long, the weaponries are broad and free the stretching up and out, the emancipating leap, the racing over and off from the Earth ( 27 ) . Thefeeling of infinite conveyed on phase through dance complements the vocals, withlyrics such as plentifulness of room to swing a rope/plenty of bosom and plentifulness ofhope ( 28 ) .

Atlast dance as more than an accoutrement, but as a serious art signifier, had arrivedonto the popular phase, and the audience were howling. They were howling. People had n’t seen misss and boys dance like this in so long. Of class, theyhad been dancing like this, but non merely where this audience could see them ( 29 ) . Possibly the most of import achievement for dance in Sooner state! was that De Mille was a choreographer on the show, non a dance manager. Thedifference being that dance managers worked for audience blessing ; choreographers work for audience enlightenment ( 30 ) . Her dances were integralto the narrative – they added and enlightened instead than decorated. This was anew function for dance in musical theater.

DeMille went on to choreograph the dances for many more Broadway musicals in the1940s and 1950s, including One Touch of Venus in 1943, Carousel in 1945, Brigadoon in1947, Gentlemans Prefer Blonds in 1949, and Paint Your Wagon in1951. Tally-Ho ( 1944 ) and FallRiver Legend ( 1948 ) provided her with the chance to farther herrevolutionary manner. She continued to project terpsichoreans that were skilled at projectingcharacter every bit good as executing the right stairss. Kislan records that dancersthat worked with De Mille have testified to her antic ability to feel eventhe smallest dramatic quality in their dance, and, together, manage to put itfree and incorporate it into the stage dancing so that the dance is alwaysexpressive of the play ( 31 ) .

De Mille was still responsible to the manager, the lyrist andthe writer of the book though. Her stage dancing had to suit the other elementsof the musical, and dance was frequently of secondary importance to those elements. Choreographers such as Jerome Robbins were to alter the function of thechoreographer, and therefore the function of dance in musical theater, everlastingly. Banishedwas the mindless aesthetics that enslaved dance to the colossal, opulent, andlavish demands of the manufacturer, the star, or the forte act ( 32 ) . Dance wasto be given the highest position of the production. The choreographer was torule the show. Indeed, the choreographer would no longer be simply the dancecreator, but the director-choreographer ; the dance-director follows, thechoreographer adapts, but the director-choreographer leads ( 32 ) . JeromeRobbins was a innovator of this alteration in position for the function of dance in musicaltheatre.

Jerome Robbins

Robbinswas born into a piously Judaic household in 1918, but resented being Judaic, withits conservativism and old ways. His big household, nevertheless, provided him withmany theatrical contacts and influences. His uncle, Jack Silverman, startedout as a dance hall terpsichorean with the two work forces he was populating with, Bing Crosby andGeorge Raft. Edward G. Robinson was besides related, and another of Robbins’uncles, Daniel Davenport, owned a concatenation of music hall and burlesque theatres. Davenport ‘ s male parent and his brother performed on the music hall circuit underthe name of the Davenport Brothers, presenting athletic Acts of the Apostless. It is to this partof the household that Robbins owes his gusto for vaudeville-comedy.

Robbins’parents ensured that both their kids were educated in the humanistic disciplines, and this iswhere Jerome shone. He saw it as an flight path, a manner by which he could haveaccess to the possibilities which lay beyond his community ; When I was a childart seemed like a tunnel to me. At the terminal of that tunnel, I could see lightwhere the universe opened up, waiting for me ( 33 ) . Both he and his sister, Sonia, were strongly encouraged by their female parent to draw a bead on to the phase. Soniatook dance lessons and Jerome music lessons, and by the clip he was three and ahalf he was composing pieces and giving narrations on the piano. Indeed, heexcelled in anything originative that he tried, but admitted that this wasbecause, the lone universe that was truly exciting for me was the universe in whichI could do believe that things were non the manner they were ( 33 ) . The worldof musical theater was hence the perfect universe for him, subsequently, to populate in.

Robbinshad to maintain his love of dance a secret from his parents, particularly his male parent, and his school friends, who were all into athleticss. As his sister danced her wayinto the limelight Jerome was left practicing in private, frequently with the helpof Sonia. At the Weehawken schools he attended Robbins performed in manyschool dramas, but it was at his summer cantonments that he fell in love with Gilbertand Sullivan musicals, and played the amusing leads in HMS Pinafore , TheMikado , and Plagiarists of Penzance . Jerome ‘ s bent for comedy was madeevident through his public presentations in these functions. A fellow camper latercommented, Jerry had a enormous sense of temper in everything he did ( 34 ) . He still kept his dancing a secret though. At one parent ‘ s twenty-four hours at the camphowever, Robbins performed a dance on the table-tennis tabular array and, as anothercamper remembers, had the grownups in cryings. Furthermore, This was a bigaudience and he was wholly uninhibited ( 34 ) .

Robbinseventually took dance lessons with Sonia ‘ s dance instructor in modern dance, theform that was the emerging tendency in the Depression old ages of the 1930s, whenpeople wanted a dance signifier that could more readily show the societal realismsof the clip than could ballet. Jerome witnessed many open uping greats of thedance phase, such as Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, and Doris Humphrey, but in1932 he was to run into the adult male he would subsequently name his ‘ guru ‘ , Gluck Sandor ( 35 ) . Sandor directed, choreographed and danced in many of the productions staged atthe Dance Centre, at which Sonia danced. He worked in music hall and onBroadway in the 1920s and was a enormously expressive terpsichorean, manipulatingevery gesture for dramatic consequence, which was to a have profound influence onRobbins ‘ future work. As Robbins himself has cited, We terpsichoreans were taught toperform with the concentration of an histrion ( 36 ) . Anzia Kubicek, a terpsichorean, remembers that Sandor, preferred to make things with a narrative line hisimagination would merely travel a stat mi a minute, and he worked with the organic structures he hadto work with, which were sometimes really limited ( 37 ) . Robbins would work withboth rules in his stage dancing, get downing with a narrative from which hisdancers could develop their characters, and hence their motions.

Aftergraduating from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1935 Robbins entered New YorkUniversity to analyze Chemistry, but in his 2nd twelvemonth his male parent ‘ s corsetbusiness was in danger of traveling insolvent and he could no longer fullyfinancially back up Jerome ‘ s instruction. Jerome was by this point desperate todrop out and follow his dream of going a professional terpsichorean and, throughhis sister, he managed to successfully try out for an apprenticeship withSandor ‘ s company. With the aid of Sandor, Jerome convinced his parents tolet him seek to do it as terpsichorean, and he left the university. Sandor persuadedan unconvinced Robbins to concentrate on concert dance instead than modern dance but itwas n’t until he saw Alexandra Danilova perform with the Ballet Russes that Robbinsagreed that concert dance held many chances for him. Jerome progressed quicklyand Sandor recognised him as a natural terpsichorean, remembering old ages subsequently ;

Oncehe saw something, he could make it backward. Before I would make a thing he had it. He could expect what was to come. He was sensitive and he was musical. ( 38 )

In1937 Robbins secured his first portion in The Brothers Ashkenazi , whichintensified his passion for the theater. Throughout its tally he would practiceon the barre, much to the obfuscation of the Yiddish dramatis personae of the drama. Hisfellow performing artists recall him invariably dancing ( 39 ) . After two old ages trainingat the Dance Centre, and holding procured functions in assorted dramas, Robbins leftthe company in hunt of more commercial work. He found work in the chorus ofa figure of musicals which, in the mid-thirtiess, were mostly amusing. AlthoughRobbins went on to choreograph and dance in such musicals, he besides wanted totake the medium farther, and utilize musical theater as a vehicle for explorationinto the human mind. He would subsequently state, Musicals tend to be bantering. Noone has of all time used them as a medium to picture deep personal battle, and Ithink this can be done ( 40 ) . He would travel on to make merely that.

Aswell as his brief brushs with Broadway, in the summer of 1937 Robbins startedworking as portion of the amusement staff at Camp Tamiment, a summer occupation hewould have for five old ages. The resort played host to many up-and-comingtalents, such as Danny Kaye, Imogene Coca, and Carol Channing. It was avirtual genteelness land for instrumentalists, comics, vocalists and terpsichoreans. Robbinschoreographed and danced in many of the public presentations held in the societal hall. It was a really originative ambiance, with new productions performed every week. Max Lieberman, manager of the amusement plan at Tamiment, endeavor forBroadway-quality pieces, and with merely a hebdomad to make and practise each one, thoughts had to flux. Robbins ‘ work was of two extremes ; burlesque sketches onthe one manus and socially serious dramatic dances such as Strange Fruit and Death of a Loyalist on the other. Some of his pieces were performed atthe 92 neodymium Street YMHA, under the protections of the Theatre ArtsCommittee, every bit good as in the Straw Hat Revue , which Tamiment opened onBroadway in 1939. The review was an merger of many of the sketchesperformed at that summer ‘ s cantonment but, due to the sensitive ambiance followingthe eruption of war in Europe, they were merely allowed to include the comedysketches. Robbins suffered a immense blow to his self-importance when Jerome Andrews, who hadbeen brought in by the angels to oversee the dances, was given exclusive crediton the charge for the stage dancing. It did nevertheless give him a determinationto be entirely in charge of any stage dancing in future productions, and led to hislater devising of the function of the all-controlling director-choreographer.

Inthe summer of 1940 Robbins joined Ballet Theatre and was taught by some of thegreat choreographers of the twenty-four hours, including Tudor and De Mille. They trainedRobbins and his fellow pupils to move every bit good as dance, and taught thatdancers must non merely be able to execute stairss accurately but must besides be ableto show the dramatic content of dance. He danced in the corps in manyballets at this clip, among them Anthony Tudor ‘ s Goya Pastoral . Robbinslearnt much from Tudor, whose ability as a story-teller through dance was hisforte. This was the sort of dance Robbins wanted to see in musicals, for whileother choreographers were interested in stairss and cosmetic motion, Tudorwas devoted to analyzing human passions and relationships ( 41 ) . Robbins wouldtake much of what he learnt whilst working with Tudor and utilize it as astarting-block for his ain expressive stage dancing.

Robbinswas shortly promoted to solo functions, his first as the Youth in De Mille ‘ s ThreeVirgins and a Devil . He was lauded for his expressive motions andgestures, which made his an improbably amusing character to watch. De Mille’sinfluence led Robbins further into the field of moving, by presenting him to agood friend of hers, Mary Hunter, who had late established a theater groupcalled the American Actors Company. She showed him the procedure ofimprovisation which greatly influenced and improved the staginess of hisdancing and stage dancing. He realised that, holding started dancing relativelylate in life, he did n’t hold the proficient accomplishments, but his playing experienceprovided him with a dramatic genius.

Thegreatest solo public presentation of his early calling was as the marionette in Petrouchka , and his readying for the function was intense. He studied images of thepuppet in minute item, seeking urgently to capture the kernel ofPetrouchka in order to acquire every individual gesture merely right. He prepared as anactor would fix for a function, seeking to happen the character ‘ s motive, hisemotions, ideas and feelings, so that he could feed that into hismovements. In this manner every gesture conveyed dramatic significance. The criticsand the audience raved about him and he became one of the taking terpsichoreans ofthe company.

Robbinsdesperately wanted to choreograph his ain concert dances for Ballet Theatre andeventually was given the opportunity to after an thought he pitched to them, of aballet about three immature crewmans on leave in Manhattan, was given the go-aheadand Fancy Free was born. He gave each of the terpsichoreans exactdetail of the characters they were playing, and he expected an exactperformance in return ( 42 ) . Like De Mille on Sooner state! , Robbins pickeddancers that were the most appropriate for the functions, and the consequence was anincredibly tight, character-driven concert dance which became a smash-hit. JohnMartin reported in the Timess , He has managed to acquire into thislight-hearted small piece of American genre the same quality of temper whichhas ever characterised his personal dance, the same histrion ‘ s sense of thetheatre ( 43 ) . Each character had a alone personality, which was portrayedbrilliantly in the dance, particularly in the person dances where eachtries to court the miss. He integrated classical concert dance with modern dance formsand images of modern-day American civilization in a manner that no-one had seen onthe phase before.

Perhapsinevitably, Fancy Free was turned into a Broadway musical entitled Onthe Town , and contained the highest figure of dances of any Broadway showyet. In Sooner state! the dances moved the narrative frontward but in On theTown the dances really hold the production together. The kernel of thewhole production, commented Leonard Bernstein, is contained in these dances ( 44 ) . Importantly, there is no effort to do the dances realistic ; thecharacters in On the Town dance every bit of course as they sing and speak, andthe audiences accepted this. Robbins successfully farther grounded dance inmusical theater as an indispensable story-telling component.

Following On the Town every musical Robbins worked on contained essentialstory-telling elements – a secret plan, characters, and a point. Billion DollarBaby , High Button Shoes , and Look, Ma, I ‘ m Dancin ‘ were allconceived around a solid narrative with strong characters, and with the secret plan andaudience apprehension of the characters both furthered by the dances. In Look, Ma, I ‘ m Dancin ‘ , a partly-autobiographical show about an incrediblyambitious, hard-working dancer-choreographer and the rich inheritress that backshis company, the two concert dances Robbins creates illustrate the alterations theprotagonist ‘ s character makes. In the first he is cock-sure, loud andenergetic and the concert dance mirrors this, being fast-paced, complex, and full ofyouthful exuberance. The 2nd concert dance is unagitated, brooding and altogethermore heartfelt, bespeaking his changed temper and the fact that he has come toreflect on his life and what he values most. The concert dances have a more profoundeffect on the musical than any of his others as, They grow out of the hero’spersonality and in that manner they develop the narrative ( 45 ) .

Throughoutthe 1940s Robbins had continued dancing at Ballet Theatre but in 1949 he leftto join Balanchine ‘ s fledgling New York City Ballet, where he was almostinstantly appointed Associate Artistic Director. He danced with the companyuntil the mid-1950s but his stage dancing was his most of import part tothe company. His plants contained his hallmark staginess and were infusedwith modern dance signifiers and music. His work in musical theater continuedalongside his residence at City Ballet, with his most of import piece in theearly 1950s being The King and I . This proved to be one of his toughestchallenges yet, as his mostly Western set of terpsichoreans had to larn and performa assortment of Eastern dance signifiers. His most of import piece in The King andI is doubtless the concert dance, ‘ The Small House of Uncle Thomas ‘ , into which waspoured historical information, researched oriental dance signifiers, and personalcreativity. Conventionalized gesture and motion, masks and mummer, all characteristic but donot overwhelm the other facets of the dance, such as the comedy of theballet. The concert dance besides helped convey one of the cardinal subjects of themusical ; that love and ground can get the better of cultural differences and racism.

In1957 Robbins embarked on what was to go his greatest accomplishment in musicaltheatre yet ; West Side Story . The challenge for the confederates of WestSide Story was, harmonizing to Robbins, to see if all of us – Lenny [ Bernstein ] who wrote ‘ long-hair ‘ music, Arthur [ Laurents ] who wrote seriousplays, myself who did serious concert dances, Oliver Smith who was a serious painter -could convey our Acts of the Apostless together and make a work on the popular phase The thought wasto make the poesy of the piece come out of our best efforts as seriousartists ( 46 ) . Robbins ‘ actuating force was to wholly incorporate the book, mark, stage dancing, and design of highbrow creative persons and convey it to the commercialstage. Although there were other major subscribers to West Side Story the musical was conceived, directed and choreographed by one adult male, Robbins, andas such was the first of its sort. West Side Story furthers the ideasthat Sooner state! foremost suggested, that musicals can be wholly integratedso that every component works together to back up the implicit in subjects, its plotand its characters.

Forthe first clip in a musical, instead than project a chorus and chief terpsichoreans, an ensemble of 40 performing artists was cast who could all sing, act and dance, toenable West Side Story to be a genuinely incorporate show. The dramaticcommunication inherent in all the dances was really of import to Robbins. Heundertook extended research into gang civilization, including in-depth observationof, and conversations with, teenage pack members on the west side. Once heknew what he wanted to portray he instilled it in his performing artists utilizing Method Actingtechniques. The rival packs ( the Sharks and the Jets ) were n’t allowed tosocialise with each other even wing and in between dry runs. He wantedto construct a bitterness and a misgiving between the packs that would come out intheir public presentations. He besides wanted each performing artist to cognize their charactersinside-out. Chita Rivera, who played the lead female function, recalls Robbinstalking to her about her character ;

Weused to sit and merely speak about the character. I ‘ d ne’er speak aboutsomething I did n’t cognize about earlier, a individual, and he talked in colors andtextures, that kind of thing. It was merely a absorbing manner to dissect aperson and why they existed. ( 47 )

For each component to cometogether in public presentation, everything had to be tight, and Robbins took on thejob of seeing that every facet of the show was watertight.

Forthe first clip in musical theater, dance was an perfectly equal spouse to thewords and the music. If anything, wordss and vocal served the dance ( 48 ) . The extremely stylised motions and gestures of the terpsichoreans effectivelycommunicated the tensenesss between the packs and the personalities of the characters. Furthermore, dance is employed to travel the secret plan frontward in the least sum oftime possible. For illustration, dance novices and introduces the audience to theconflict between the Jets and Sharks in the ‘ Prologue ‘ , it advances theconflict during the ‘ Dance at the Gym ‘ and it concludes the action in ‘ TheRumble ‘ ( 49 ) . The ‘ Dance at the Gym ‘ besides provides an emotional aspect withoutstalling the action of the play. Much happens between Tony and Maria in ashort sum of phase clip. Through dance they meet and fall in love in onlyforty steps of music. If the scene was dialogue-led it would hold takentriple the sum of clip. Further, moving out this stamp foremost love scenewithout words makes it far more emotional and sensitive.

Robbinscontinued to choreograph and direct Broadway musicals, each wholly integratedto create a tight, seamless production. His background in both musical theatreand concert dance, combined with his many accomplishments, gave him the ability to near ashow with the over-all position with which to intermix all the elements into ahomogenous, seamless, whole. He became a director-choreographer, with fullcontrol over the production, promoting dance to the highest position.

AgnesDe Mille and Jerome Robbins both contributed greatly to the altering function ofdance in musical theater. De Mille started the tendency for incorporate musicals, guaranting that dance furthered the secret plan, and provided her terpsichoreans with dramaticgestures and characteristics, analyzing character motive and emotions with them. Robbins further advanced the importance of the function of choreographer todirector-choreographer, doing dance the indispensable component of the show. Dancebecame non simply the support for the chief theatrical show, but the showitself. Not merely did this alteration in function for dance benefit terpsichoreans by creatingmore chances and raising the importance of the medium they worked in, butmusical theater itself evolved into a far more originative art. With a singledirector-choreographer supervising the full production, the histrions, singersand dances could far more easy work together.

Hubert Saal, composing in Newsweek ten old ages after Robbins foremost started on Broadway, asserted ;

danceremains the kernel of the Broadway musical Body English is an eloquentlanguage all its ain. It may merely be heightened or stylised motion, or ameans of altering gait, or a stageful of ebullient organic structures exposing rawenergy, but the exhilaration of Broadway beat is every bit strong as of all time The newbreed of choreographers, following such ground-breakers as Jerome Robbins, Agnes De Mille and Bob Fosse, has gone to great strivings in their attempts tointegrate dance into the secret plan. ( 50 )

Thankss to the innovativenessof choreographers such as De Mille and Robbins, and their defeat with thelimited function danced played in musical theater, dance is now an of import andfully incorporate component of any musical. The pinnacle of their success wasprobably the juncture, for West Side Story , that the first box in aprogramme was posted with the words, Entire production, way, andchoreography by Jerome Robbins ( 51 ) . From that minute on, dance would beforever built-in to musical theater.

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