

Tommy tune



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There are many great American choreographers of our time. It is through their creative genius that musicals and movies are made memorable. If it wasn't for the work of these choreographers, musical theatre wouldn't be what it is today. It is because of these choreographers that musical theatre is what it is. These choreographers brought to musical theatre dance technique that was only once used in ballet. In fact it was because of this that ballet and jazz, as well as all the other forms of dance.

One of these great American choreographers is Tommy Tune. Tommy Tune was born on February 28, 1939 on Wichita Falls, Texas. He was born to the parents of Jim P. and Eva Mae Tune. He was the only son of these Jim and Eva Tune. Tommy and his family moved to Houston, Texas in the early 1940's. His father went to Houston to service oil rigs. Jim Tune also trained horses as a hobby and side income for the family. It was here that " Young Tommy Tune often dallied around the paddocks, attempting to imitate the horses' gaits."(p417, Moritz) Already we can see that Tommy had a gift for copying moves and gestures, which is a main form of dance. Dance was evident in Tommy's blood. In fact both of Tommy's parents were both amateur ballroom dancers, so it is really clear that Tommy was a born dancer. The Tunes " hoped to find a constructive outlet for their son's enormous energy by enrolling him in a dance class when he was five."(p417, Moritz) So Tommy began his training in dance at an early age. Tommy was taking classes in tap and acrobatics. However Tommy really enjoyed ballet; it is said that he loved " loved the feeling of flying"(p16, Bordman). Even as a kid Tommy had the calling of a director within he him. He claims that " I whipped a lot of kids I knew into shape."(p417, Moritz) Tommy recalls that " We had a stage, sheets for curtains, tin cans with Christmas lights for

footlights, flashlights for spotlights and for music there was a record player. It was a really big ta-dum."(p417, Moritz) It was clear that from a very young age Tommy was interested in dance and the director he was destined to be was already forming within him.

It is clear that Tommy wanted to be a dancer, to dance in a premier dance company. But there was one problem that Tommy was not able to control, it was his unusual height. Tommy was six feet six inches by the time he was in high school. This was very agonizing for Tommy, not only emotionally, but physically as well. Because of Tommy's speedy growth, he suffered severe growing pains. Tommy had to suffer six months on crutches to correct his problem. However that did not help Tommy fully; he still had to suffer the emotional pains of not being able to dance ballet as he had dreamed to. However, there was something that gave Tommy the hope to be a dancer again. It was when Tommy saw a traveling production of The King and I, he realized that he could still be a dancer. Tommy realized that " For the first time I saw singing and dancing and acting all woven together"(p36, Bordman). Tommy realized that it was something that he wanted to do. He realized that it was something that he also wanted to do and couldn't see himself not going into musical theatre. Tommy joined the drama program at his school. This was one of the best creative outlets that Tommy could have. It was during his time in high school that he began to stage student productions. After his trip to New York, and seeing the shows there, he decided that he wanted to go into show business.

Tommy Tune attended junior college in Texas where he studied theatre. While attending school Tommy did work in the local community theatre,

where he received rave reviews for his role as a chorus member. Apparently, he was singled out in his chorus role. He was given compliments on handling his unusual length with grace. Apparently Tommy was able to use his weakness to his advantage and able to get noticed for it. Tune received a part in the chorus of a touring show on his first day in New York. Already Tune's luck seemed to be on his side. Tommy loved doing chorus work. In fact he claimed " it was the best feeling in the world."(p205, Cohen) However Tommy gained better luck in receiving speciality parts, and choreographic assignments in regional theatre.

Tommy Tune went to California to work as assistant choreographer and dancer on The Dean Martin Show. Tune was rescued from his stint on the show by doing a movie with Twiggy. It was this movie that made Tommy Tune noticed nationwide. After the movie Tommy went to Chicago to work on the play Two for the Seesaw. Tommy was called in to choreograph, and direct the show, however after seeing his talent he was also casted into the show. Tommy explained his dance style, he claimed, " I like to get an image in my head of something-just about anything- the slow gait of a five-gaited horse, a giraffe running over a plain, a rubber band being stretched- and I let the image work through the rest of my body." When Two for the Seesaw opened in New York, it opened to rave reviews. However after that, he had some trouble finding jobs. So Tune realized that he had to change his goal if he still wanted a career in theatre.

Tommy Tune agreed to direct an off-broadway play The Club. Tune received the credit for this plays success, and marked his beginning as a director, and a successful director. In 1977 Tune was asked to get The Best Little

Whorehouse in Texas up and going. He helped add punchier numbers, choreographed the show, and gave it an overall style. It was quite clear that Tommy Tune made it in the theatre world. Although this wasn't what Tommy originally dreamt of, it was more than he could ever ask for. Tommy was involved in dance by choreographing and acting and singing through his directing. Tommy continued to make a successful career in directing and especially in choreography. Tommy Tune's career is not over anymore, in fact he is doing a show at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Bibliography: