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BARISHNIKOV'S LIFE IN BALLET

M.Baryshnikov (1948) began his ballet studies entered the Vaganova School (St. Petersburg) in 1964 and soon he won the top prize in the junior division of the Varna International Ballet Competition.

Recognizing Baryshnikov's talent, in particular the strength of his stage presence and purity of his classical technique, several Soviet choreographers, including Oleg Vinogradov, Konstantin Sergeyev, Igor Tchernichov, and Leonid Jakobson, choreographed ballets for him [3].

The successes of his early career had been marked by formal competitions and roles in modern and classical repertory. He won a gold medal at the Varna, Bulgaria, ballet competition in 1966, and in 1968 he won the gold medal at the First International Ballet Competition in Moscow. His professional debut, in the «peasant Pas de Deux» of «Giselle», would much later be echoed in the West in his New York City debut with American Ballet Theater in August 1974. His partner was Natalia Makarova, who had defected from the Kirov in 1970.

His Western admirers, critics and fans alike, immediately compared Baryshnikov with another of Pushkin's students, Rudolf Nureyev, who had fled the former Soviet Union and the haven of the Kirov Ballet in 1961. His technique was

praised for its ease and purity, and his elevation and balloon (the ability to appear to pause, suspended in the air during leaps) were universally acclaimed. As Baryshnikov explored the various styles of American modern dance and contemporary ballet for which he had left the comparatively constrained environment of the Kirov, his abilities seemed limitless [4].

Since 2005, Baryshnikov has been the artistic director of the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York, which brings together artists of different disciplines from around the world, to experiment and to perform. He has consistently supported Russian culture, hosting productions by small Russian theatre companies, and helping students to come on exchange programmes to the US. The centre is also a hotbed of international choreographic talent, its enterprising programme shaped by Baryshnikov's personal taste for the new, the unlikely – and the excellent.

His hunger to work with the very best in every field, to ask questions of his physique and of his mind, took his career in many directions. He has worked with virtually every great choreographer in ballet and in contemporary dance, in America and Europe [1].

The purity of his ballet technique, the virtuosity of his split leaps and cyclonic pirouettes that did not compromise it and the fullness of his ambition combined to make Baryshnikov the preeminent dancer of the late 20th Century. His appearances in movies and his high-profile romances heightened his allure and turned him into the first electronic-media ballet star, his fame surpassing that of the ground-breaking Rudolph Nureyev, who had preceded him [5].

«The world where I am now is closer to the reality of people growing older. Maybe it's an illusion, but it's pleasant to think that over the years there's something of more depth and importance to say. I'm not rejecting my past: I have a few remarkable moments in my memory. But I'm prouder of the work that I'm doing now - that's for surey», said Baryshnikov in 2001 [2].

Bibliography

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