

AUDIENCE PRODUCTION GUIDE

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TERRENCE S. ORR
PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE



UNCOMMON
BACH, BEETHOVEN, BRAHMS

Audience Production Guide for Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's

UNCOMMON

February 3 – 12, 2012
August Wilson Center for African American Culture

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Production Guide created by PBT's Department of Arts
Education and Community Engagement, 2012*

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Uncommon

Uncommon is a mixed repertory performance of contemporary ballet. Featuring the world premiere of *Chromatic*, by Dwight Rhoden, Mark Morris' *Maelstrom*, and Dennis Nahat's *Brahm's Quintet*, *Uncommon* is a fusion of vibrant contemporary movement and technique with virtuosic classical composition.

The August Wilson Center



This is Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's first performance at the new August Wilson Center for African American Culture. We are excited to be a partner of such an important cultural force in Pittsburgh. The theater's intimate setting invites the audience not only to see but also feel the energy and physicality of dance. We are thrilled that the August Wilson Center gives our patrons this opportunity.

The August Wilson Center is named for Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning playwright (and Pittsburgh native) August Wilson. The Center engages regional and national audiences in its mission of preserving, presenting, interpreting, celebrating and shaping the art, culture and history of African Americans utilizing the rich history, legacy and culture of African Americans from Western Pennsylvania as a foundation.

From its home in Pittsburgh's vibrant Cultural District, the Center offers multiple exhibition galleries, a 486-seat theater for performances in all genres, an education center for classes, lectures and hands-on learning, and dazzling spaces for community programs and events. The Center is a place like no other for experiencing theater, dance, music, history, film, literature, visual art, interactive education and spectacular entertainment.

Learn more about the August Wilson Center: <http://www.augustwilsoncenter.org/>

The Mixed Repertory Format

What is a "Mixed Rep"?

When you go to the ballet to see an evening of dance that is not a full length "story ballet" such as *The Sleeping Beauty* or *The Nutcracker*, you are probably attending a "mixed rep," a program consisting of several shorter ballets that are performed together. The works may be plotless or have a storyline; they may be thematically related or have a completely different styles of choreography, mood, music or historical period. The programming possibilities for a mixed rep program are unlimited.

"Mixed rep" is short for "mixed repertory." A ballet company's repertory is the collection of all the works that they are prepared to perform, which include both full-length ballets, excerpts from full-length ballets, and short, one-act pieces. A company alternates between the ballets in their

collection, performing a different combination of works each season. The repertory reflects the artistic style of the company, as well as the technical abilities of the dancers.

Why do a mixed rep program? Why go see one?

A mixed rep performance allows a company to explore and experiment with ballet styles and choreographers, and challenge, extend and showcase its abilities. It is also a great way for the audience to be introduced to several different works and artists in one program.

The *Uncommon* Mixed Rep Program

The thematic construct for the *Uncommon* program is both musical and stylistic. PBT Artistic Director Terrence Orr had the idea of building the program as a tribute to the “Three Bs” of classical music: Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. In addition, the program highlights contemporary choreography, showcasing the work of three of the most well-known contemporary ballet choreographers working today: Mark Morris, Dennis Nahat, and Dwight Rhoden.

Maelstrom

Choreography *Mark Morris*

Staged by *Tina Fehlandt*

Music *Ludwig van Beethoven’s Trio No. 5 in D Major, Opus 70, No. 1, (“Ghost”)*

Costume Design *Martin Pakledinaz*

Lighting Design *James F. Ingalls, recreated by Michael Korsch*

World Premiere *February 9, 1994, San Francisco Ballet*

Choreographer Mark Morris



markmorrisdancegroup.org

Mark Morris was born on August 29, 1956, in Seattle, Washington. In the early years of his career, he performed with the dance companies of Lar Lubovitch, Hannah Kahn, Laura Dean, Eliot Feld, and the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. He formed the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1980, and has since created more than 120 works for the company. In 1990, he founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Morris is much in demand as a ballet choreographer and his work is in the repertory of ballet companies worldwide. He has worked extensively in opera, directing and choreographing productions for The Metropolitan Opera in New York, among others. His numerous awards include being named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation in 1991; in 2010, he received the prestigious Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society.

Learn more about Mark Morris and the Mark Morris Dance Group:

<http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/?qclid=CN6Uu9jY160CFYbe4AodzTXBkg>

Watch an interview with Mark Morris on *Conversations at KCTS9*, August 14, 2009

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cbHFqiOeTw&feature=related

Watch “Dance Spotlight” from Boston University, a discussion with Mark Morris and Mikko Nissinen, Artistic Director of Boston Ballet, ca. 2006. PBT principal dancer Christopher Budzinski was a dancer at Boston Ballet at the time and is featured in a short performance piece in the video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KH-6O1Bgvu4&feature=related>

Ludwig van Beethoven



Portrait by Stieler, 1820
Source: Wikipedia, PD-US

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was a German composer and pianist. A crucial figure in Western art music, he remains one of the most famous and influential of all composers. His hearing began to deteriorate in his late twenties, yet he continued to compose, conduct, and perform, even after becoming completely deaf. His influence on subsequent generations of composers was profound. Beethoven composed in several musical genres and for a variety of instrument combinations, including 9 symphonies, 16 string quartets, and five string trios.

Learn more about Beethoven: <http://classical.net/music/comp.lst/beethoven.php>

Listen to the second movement of the Ghost Trio: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Up7keh3CN6c>

Read an in-depth analysis of the *Ghost Trio*, by Lawrence Kramer, Distinguished Professor of English at Fordham University: *Saving the Ordinary: Beethoven's Ghost Trio and the Wheel of History*: <http://bf.press.illinois.edu/view.php?vol=12&iss=1&f=kramer.pdf>

Notes on the Ballet

Mark Morris is described as “undeviating in his devotion” to music and is noted for marrying great classical music with innovative ballet technique. The *Ghost Trio* is one of Beethoven’s best-loved piano trios. Its first and third sections are joyous and playful: the first is sunny and soft; the third is cheery and fast, with difficult passages and harmonic surprises. The two movements, purposely created to sound “normal” and overtly good-spirited, contrast sharply with the slower and more profound middle section. It is the brooding, unearthly quality of the second movement, which Beethoven developed as a sketch for a *Macbeth* opera. A haunting, relentless theme recurs throughout this section that gives *Ghost* its name.

When *Maelstrom* had its world premiere at San Francisco Ballet in 1994, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* called it a “jewel...a (creation) that goes right to the core of classical European dance: the duet between man and woman. This being Morris, however, (he) used the tradition and pulled it into its fragmentary essence.”

Maelstrom is a true ensemble piece, with seven “duets”—couples—forming an interrelated whole. Together the dancers create lines, shapes and poses as they move through space in a continuous ebb and flow with the music. The rhythm of the movement creates *voids* as well as shapes, resulting in a mosaic of imagery that one critic compared to “ever-forming and dissipating clouds.” Folk dance motifs (Morris started training as a young dancer in folk dance, flamenco and ballet) and gymnastic movements punctuate the rhythm and imagery.

Though *Maelstrom* receives its Pittsburgh premiere in *Uncommon*, it is not entirely new to the Company. Principal dancers Christopher Budzinski and Alexandra Kochis performed *Maelstrom*

with Boston Ballet in 2002, along with Pollyana Ribiero, a full-time faculty member with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School, and then a principal dancer at Boston Ballet.

Sources: *Maelstrom* Program Notes, San Francisco Ballet, 1994; "Dance Review," by Chris Pasles in the *Los Angeles Times*, 2/11/1994; Boston Ballet review, by S.E. Arnold, *criticaldance.com*, 10/1/2002

Costume and Production

Martin Pakledinaz designs and creates costumes for dance, theater and opera. He has collaborated with Mark Morris on *Maelstrom*, *Romeo and Juliet*, the celebrated *Hard Nut* (Morris' *Nutcracker*) and numerous other works. He has won dozens of awards for his creations, including two Tony Awards.

The *Maelstrom* costumes offer rich texture and movement on stage. The women's costumes are evening gown-style—bare-shouldered with a velvet bodice, the color of cabernet; the men's peach-colored shirts, burgundy tights and velvet cummerbunds are a romantic complement to the women's dresses.

James F. Ingalls is a freelance lighting designer and on the faculty in the Theater and Dance Department at the University of California, San Diego. Early in his career he was stage manager for Twyla Tharp Dance Company. Ingalls credits that experience with his sensitivity to the creative and rehearsal processes and his ability to integrate lighting with the work of other artists and designers. He thinks of lighting design as sculpture: sculpting space and light but also creating a way to see *into*—or understand the meaning of—the action on stage. His design for *Maelstrom* has been described as a "shifting cloudscape . . . (moving) from azure storm clouds to the red anger of a city on fire."¹

See the *Maelstrom* costumes at Pakledinaz' website: http://martinpakledinaz.com/_/Maelstrom.html

Listen to a 2010 interview with Pakledinaz about his recent Broadway projects: http://americantheatrewing.org/downstagecenter/detail/martin_pakledinaz

Read a brief bio of Pakledinaz at Mark Morris Dance Group website: http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/the_company/artistic_personnel/designers

Review a list of Pakledinaz Broadway design credits: <http://ibdb.com/person.php?id=25098>

Learn about Ingalls' philosophy of lighting design: <http://www.steppenwolf.org/watchlisten/backstage/detail.aspx?id=33>

¹ *Dance Magazine*, Sept. 1994

Brahms Quintet

Choreography *Dennis Nahat*

Music *Johannes Brahms: Quintet in G Major, Opus 111*

Costume Design *Willa Kim*

Lighting Design *Michael Korsch*

World Premiere *December 10, 1969, American Ballet Theatre*

Choreographer Dennis Nahat

Dennis Nahat began his training in Detroit, Michigan at the age of eight under the direction of Enid and Jeff Ricardeau and Kay Bliss at the Ricardeau Studios. At 17 he was awarded a full scholarship in dance and minored in music at the Juilliard School of Music, while continuing his training under the guidance of Martha Hill, Martha Graham, José Limón, Anna Sokalow, Antony Tudor, and Louis Horst.

In 1965 Nahat joined the newly formed City Center Joffrey Ballet and from 1966 to 1968 performed in the original Broadway Musical SWEET CHARITY with Gwen Verdon. He joined American Ballet Theater in 1968 - 1979 where he performed as a principal.

Nahat co-founded the School of Cleveland Ballet in 1972 and Cleveland Ballet in 1976 with the late Ian (Ernie) Horvath. In 1983 Nahat became sole Artistic Director and in 1985 created the co-venture between San Jose, California and Cleveland, Ohio. Known as San Jose Cleveland Ballet, it performed full seasons in both communities for 15 years and was reborn as Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley in October 2000, now Ballet San Jose.

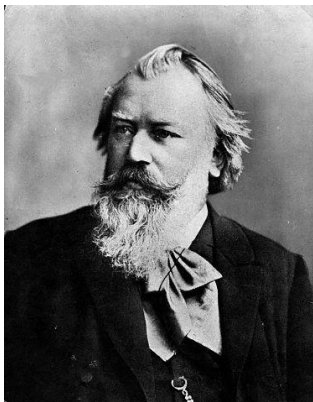
Currently, in addition to leading Ballet San Jose and its professional School, Nahat serves as choreographer, judge and teacher for competitions, seminars and companies throughout the world.



balletsj.org

Find more information about Dennis Nahat and Ballet San Jose: <http://www.balletsj.org/>

Johannes Brahms



Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a German composer and pianist, and one of the leading musicians of the Romantic period. Born in Hamburg, Brahms spent much of his professional life in Vienna, Austria, where his popularity and influence were considerable. He composed for piano, chamber ensembles, symphony orchestra, and for voice and chorus. A virtuoso pianist, he premiered many of his own works, dozens of which have become staples of the modern concert repertoire. An uncompromising perfectionist, he destroyed many of his works and left some of unpublished.

Portrait by Brasch; Source: Wikipedia, PD-US

Learn more about Brahms: <http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/brahms.php>

Listen to *Brahms Quintet*:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zM4ZfVINK3c&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PL50698C3C8F0D016B

Notes on the Ballet

Brahms Quintet was the second ballet Dennis Nahat choreographed for American Ballet Theatre (ABT). Because of the favorable response to his first work, *Momentum*, Lucia Chase, ABT Artistic Director, asked him to create a new ballet for the 1969-70 Season. She stipulated that he use eight principal dancers and as many soloists as possible. Nahat remembers thinking to himself, “Good God, how lucky can you get?” To be *required* to create a work for eight premier dancers in one of the world’s premier ballet companies was an honor and a thrill.

It was 1969, the year of the American landing on the moon. Nahat recalls “driving to Atlantic City to perform on a terrible rainy night, when Cynthia Gregory, Terrence Orr, Ian (Ernie) Horvath and I stopped in a bar to watch the landing on TV.” They were mesmerized. “The way (the astronauts) glided on the lunar landscape fascinated me and everyone else,” says Nahat. He felt drawn to capture that profound moment in human history. The luminous image of the astronauts gliding and hovering in space stayed with him as he began choreographing to Brahms’ *Double Concerto in A Minor for Violin and Cello*. After completing a substantial part of the ballet, however, Nahat realized that he had not followed Chase’s directive—he had only used two of the principal dancers and a few soloists. He knew that to add six more dancers would mean reworking the ballet.

One evening, needing inspiration, he turned on his record player to listen again to the *Concerto*. To his surprise, the Brahms *Quintet in G Major, Opus 111* began to play—he had mistakenly cued up the wrong side of the album. He loved the piece and let it finish; then he “sprang up and repeated the recording,” his legs performing “new and better choreography.” The new ballet began to take shape. Nahat created movements that seemed to emerge from the *Quintet* itself in an organic, abstract interpretation of the music. He discarded much of the work he had already done, but the unearthly quality of the ballet—inspired by the beautiful, gliding movements of those first steps on the lunar surface—remained.

Extracted from *Ballet Notes* by Dennis Nahat

See photos from a 2001 performance of Brahms’s *Quintet* by Ballet San Jose, and from a 1994 performance by Cleveland Ballet: <http://www.shomler.com/dance/brahmsg/index.htm>

Costume Design



Tony Award-winning designer Willa Kim has designed costumes for more than 150 ballets and theater productions, including *Brahms Quintet*. When Dennis Nahat created the ballet in 1969, he asked Kim to design something that had the “unearthly” feeling of the ballet’s choreography and that had “grace of material movement.” For *Brahms*, as for several of her other works, Kim painted images onto plain fabric, customizing the design for each dancer.

Because the original costumes have seen many years of wear through many performances, the PBT Costume Shop is making fresh costumes for *Uncommon*, using the originals and photographs from previous performances as guides. PBT Costume Department staff created patterns, researched fabric selection, matched paint colors, and painted the images on the new fabric, carefully replicating Kim’s design. It took three weeks for Costume Assistant Katie DeCaria to hand-paint *Brahms*’ 13 costumes.

After *Uncommon*, the costumes will become part of PBT’s costume stock and will be used for future performances or for rental to other companies.

Photos by Alyssa Herzog Melby



Read a short biography of Willa Kim: http://www.abt.org/education/archive/designers/kim_w.html

Watch a 2002 interview with Willa Kim, in which she recounts being the first designer to use Lycra in ballet costume design: <http://www.cuny.tv/show/womenintheatre/PR1004620>

Chromatic

Choreography Dwight Rhoden

Music Johann S. Bach: *Partita for Solo Violin #2 in D Minor—Allemande; Piano Concerto #1 in D Minor – Allegro – 1st Movement; Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor; Prelude and Fugue in C Minor; Piano Concerto #1 in D Minor – Allegro – 3rd Movement; Concerto for Harpsichord, Strings & Continuo #5 in F Minor*

Costume Design Christine Darch

Lighting Design Michael Korsch

World Premiere February 3, 2012, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre

Choreographer Dwight Rhoden



Complexionsdance.org

Dwight Rhoden is the founding Artistic Director/Resident Choreographer of Complexions Contemporary Ballet in New York City. A native of Dayton, Ohio, he began dancing at age 17. He performed with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Les Ballet Jazz De Montreal and as a principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He has appeared in numerous television specials, documentaries and commercials throughout the United States, Canada and Europe and has been a featured performer on many PBS “Great Performances” specials.

Mr. Rhoden has established a remarkably wide-ranging career, earning distinction from The New York Times as “*one of the most sought out choreographers of the day.*” He has directed and choreographed for TV, film, theater and live performances including So You Think You Can Dance, E! Entertainment’s “Tribute to Style” and Cirque Du Soleil. He has also worked with such high-profile artists as Prince, Lenny Kravitz, Kelly Clarkson and Patrick Swayze.

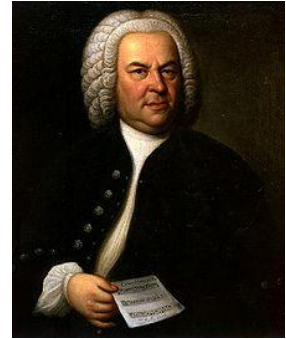
Mr. Rhoden is the Resident Choreographer of North Carolina Dance Theatre and has lectured, taught, created works for and served as Artist-in-Residence at universities around the United States.

Read an interview with Dwight Rhoden about his work and his thoughts about contemporary ballet: <http://artslouisville.blogspot.com/2011/11/interview-with-dwight-rhoden-of.html>

Learn more about Dwight Rhoden and Complexions Contemporary Ballet: <http://complexionsdance.org/>

Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was a German composer whose sacred and secular works for choir, orchestra and solo instruments drew together the strands of the Baroque period and brought it to its ultimate maturity. His works are revered for their intellectual depth, technical command and artistic beauty. He is now generally regarded as one of the main composers of the Baroque style and as one of the greatest composers of all time.



Portrait by Hausseman, 1748
Source: Wikipedia, PD-US

Listen to the title work from the ballet: Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor*, played by pianist Glenn Gould: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGO0wbRdl4Y&feature=related>

Learn more about Bach: <http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/bachjs.php>

Read a short description of *Chromatic* and its significance:

<http://www.ljms.org/Performances-and-Tickets/Program-Notes/JOHANN-SEBASTIAN-BACH-Chromatic-Fantasy-and-Fugue-in-D-Minor-BWV-903.html?Itemid=0>

Notes on the Ballet

Choreographer Dwight Rhoden has created ballets for PBT using a wide range of musical styles and composers—from classical to Doo Wop, from Billy Strayhorn to Paul Simon. When Artistic Director Terrence Orr invited him to be part of the *Uncommon* project, Rhoden knew he would love the challenge and inspiration of Bach's music—its energy and depth and its beautiful rhythms. It says *dance*. He is captivated by the Baroque era, finding that the complex detail and ornamentation in its art and architecture—the “curlicues”—are mirrored its music. And while most Baroque music is more than three centuries old, Rhoden sees and hears freshness and relevance. Even the harpsichord, one of the signature instruments of the period, for Rhoden “all of a sudden today sounds modern.”

One of his goals as he began to shape *Chromatic* was to create a diverse musical experience and Rhoden purposely chose pieces that offer a variety of sound and cadence, from solo instrument to lush orchestration. He excerpted sections and movements of larger works, in effect deconstructing the originals and then bringing parts of them together to create a new composition. Rhoden continued to fit the pieces together until quite late in the creative process; in rehearsals, the dancers didn't know if the section they were working on came first or last or would eventually land somewhere in the middle of the ballet. While this method may have kept everyone guessing (including Rhoden himself) it also kept the work “out on the edge,” which is where he likes it to be. It is from that vantage point of uncertainty that Rhoden, and the dancers, can ultimately “discover” the ballet.

Rhoden describes his choreography in similar terms—on the edge, daring. He places dancers off-center, challenging balance and gravity. His movement style is overtly physical, with emphasis on a mobile torso and power in the upper body and arms. He uses a lot of steps,

making movement sequences dense and complex. His work, he says, is reflective of the busy and intense time in which we live.

Rhoden describes that reflection in *Chromatic* as a moving painting, morphing from image to image—the changing picture dependent upon what the music says to him. The effect is abstract, both contemporary and classical: a 21st century-spin on a centuries'-old aesthetic.

Costume Design

The costumes for this world premiere ballet were designed by Christine Darch and built in the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre Costume Shop under the supervision of PBT's Costumier, Janet Marie Groom. Darch has worked extensively with Mr. Rhoden and designed PBT's *Step Touch* costumes, Rhoden's 2009 PBT ballet. She designs costumes for ballet, theater and film.

The *Chromatic* costumes consist of strips of stretchy Lycra, milliskin and mesh fabric, which were cut and numbered by Ms. Darch and sent to PBT to be built into full costumes. Some of the strips are actually a double layer of Lycra and mesh: when worn by dancers on stage this combination refracts the lighting and provides visual movement. The strips are sewn together with a special stitch called a "magic stitch" and a small zig-zag stitch, which are commonly used on dance costumes to provide enough stretch and flexibility in the material for the dancers to move comfortably.



Photo by Alyssa Herzog Melby

See more of Christine Darch's designs at her website: <http://www.christinedarch.com/content.htm>

Review • Reflect • Respond

The reviews below give some idea of the critical response to the *Uncommon* works and choreographers. Take a look at the reviews, and after seeing the ballets, what are your thoughts?

Review of *Brahms Quintet* in *Ballet Magazine*, May 2001:
http://www.ballet.co.uk/magazines/yr_01/jun01/rr_rev_bsj_0501.htm

Review of *Maelstrom* at *criticaldance.com*, 2002
http://www.criticaldance.com/reviews/2002/bostonballet_021001.html

Dance magazine review of *Maelstrom*, 1994
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1083/is_n9_v68/ai_15825436/

Review of *Maelstrom* in *The Phoenix*, 2002
<http://www.bostonphoenix.com/boston/arts/dance/documents/02454614.htm>

Review of a Complexions performance at the Joyce Theater in *The New York Times*, 2008:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/20/arts/dance/20comp.html>

Review of several Rhoden works in *The Orange County Register*, 2011:
<http://complexionsdance.org/news/dancers-move-to-bach-and-u2-at-laguna-fest/>