FROM: **AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE**
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ROBERT IRVING

Robert Augustine Irving was born in Winchester, England in 1913. The son of mountaineer and author R. L. G. Irving, he was educated at Winchester College and New College, Oxford, graduating with a degree in music. He studied with Malcolm Sargent and Constant Lambert at the Royal College of Music from 1934 to 1936. During World War II, he served with the Royal Air Force and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and bar.

Irving then became assistant conductor with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. He was conductor and musical director of Sadler's Wells Ballet from 1949 to 1958, working closely with Sir Frederick Ashton on several ballets. In 1952, he assisted Ashton in choosing music for his *Picnic at Tintagel* for New York City Ballet. That same year, he helped the choreographer to surmount musical problems in the last act of his *Sylvia* by interpolating passages from *La Source*, also composed by Léo Delibes. In 1956, in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Vic-Wells, now The Royal Ballet, Irving arranged music by Alexander Glazunov for a "grand pas de quatorze" by Ashton, *Birthday Offering*.

In 1954 he introduced and conducted music from Act II of *Swan Lake* for a British television broadcast with Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes. In 1958, he conducted the Philharmonia Orchestra for a BBC television performance of *Les Sylphides* with Nadia Nerina and Philip Chatfield. He conducted the 1957 telecast of Ashton's *Cinderella* on NBC in the series *Producer's Showcase.*

From 1958 to 1989, Irving served as music director of New York City Ballet, where he worked extensively with George Balanchine. For many years he conducted the New York City Ballet's annual production of *The Nutcracker*, a task he repeated in the 1958 US telecast of the ballet.

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Irving died in his birthplace in 1991, at age 78. A small memorial plaque to him may be found on the northeast wall of Winchester College chapel cloisters.

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