

Eight

Decades

of American

Ballet

Theatre

In 1940, Ballet Theatre emerged onto the American cultural landscape with a unique, exciting vision of a ballet company that functioned like an art museum. Just as a museum presents paintings by different artists to showcase a wide range of beauty and art, the Company would present ballets by diverse choreographers to showcase all the variety the ballet world had to offer. The Company preserved many of the great European masterpieces and was at the forefront of helping to lay the foundation for new American works.



'60s

In 1967, ABT performed its first full-length classical Russian ballet: *Swan Lake*. This success led to future full-length productions such as *Don Quixote*, *La Bayadère* and *The Sleeping Beauty*.

'70s

This decade marked ABT's arrival as one of the world's major classical companies, and dancers from around the world took notice. International stars Mikhail Baryshnikov, Erik Bruhn, Natalia Makarova, Rudolph Nureyev and Carla Fracci all performed with the Company during this period.

'80s

The Company committed to commission and present post-modern works by choreographers such as Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, Paul Taylor and Merce Cunningham.



'40s

Lucia Chase and Richard Pleasant (co-founders) assembled many of the world's finest choreographers and dancers. Dance pioneers Michel Fokine, Eugene Loring, Antony Tudor, Jerome Robbins and Agnes de Mille were founding members of Ballet Theatre.

'50s

The company traveled the world extensively and, at the request of President Eisenhower, added "American" to its name. The dancers of American Ballet Theatre became cultural ambassadors for the United States.

'90s

In 1992, former ABT Principal Dancer Kevin McKenzie became Artistic Director. Under his leadership, ABT was recognized as having "the most unquestionably impressive roster of male dancers in any ballet company."



'00s

Alexei Ratmansky (former Artistic Director of the Bolshoi Ballet) joined ABT as Artist in Residence; he has choreographed 16 ballets for the Company in his first 10 years.

'10s

In 2013, ABT launched the *Project Plié* initiative to further expand its diversity and inclusion efforts and increase awareness of the lack of diversity in the classical ballet community.

In 2018, the ABT Women's Movement began; it supports the creation, exploration and staging of new works by female choreographers.

Scene from: *Fancy Free*. Photo by Maurice Seymour; Touring as "American" Ballet Theatre Photo by Walter E. Owen; Scene from *Swan Lake*. Photo by Martha Swope

Photo Credits: Natalia Makarova in *Swan Lake*, photo by Kenn Duncan; *In the Upper Room*, photo by Marty Sohl; Kevin McKenzie with Julie Kent and Ethan Stiefel, photo by Rosalie O'Connor; Alexei Ratmansky, photo by Gene Schiavone; Jessica Lang and Michelle Dorrance, photo by Rosalie O'Connor