

American Ballet Theatre

American Ballet Theatre is recognized as one of the great dance companies in the world. Few ballet companies equal ABT for its combination of size, scope and outreach. Recognized as a living national treasure since its founding in 1940, ABT annually tours the United States, performing for more than 600,000 people, and is the only major cultural institution to do so. It has also made more than 30 international tours to 42 countries as perhaps the most representative American ballet company and has been sponsored by the State Department of the United States on many of these engagements.

When American Ballet Theatre was launched in the Autumn of 1939, the aim was to develop a repertoire of the best ballets from the past and to encourage the creation of new works by gifted young choreographers, wherever they may be found. Under the direction of Lucia Chase and Oliver Smith from 1940 to 1980, the Company more than fulfilled that aim. The repertoire, perhaps unmatched in the history of ballet, includes all of the great full-length ballets of the nineteenth century, such as *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Giselle*, the finest works from the early part of this century, such as *Apollo*, *Les Sylphides*, *Jardin aux Lilas* and *Rodeo* and acclaimed contemporary masterpieces such as *Airs*, *Push Comes to Shove* and *Duets*. In acquiring such an extraordinary repertoire, ABT has commissioned works by all of the great choreographic geniuses of the 20th century: George Balanchine, Antony Tudor, Jerome Robbins, Agnes de Mille and Twyla Tharp, among others.

In 1980, Mikhail Baryshnikov became Artistic Director of American Ballet Theatre, succeeding Lucia Chase and Oliver Smith. Under his leadership, numerous classical ballets were staged, restaged and refurbished, and the Company experienced a strengthening and refining of the classical tradition. In 1990, Jane Hermann and Oliver Smith succeeded Baryshnikov and immediately established an agenda that was dedicated to maintaining the great traditions of the past while aggressively pursuing a vital and innovative future.

In October 1992, former American Ballet Theatre Principal Dancer Kevin McKenzie was appointed Artistic Director. McKenzie, steadfast in his vision of ABT as "American," is committed to maintaining the Company's vast repertoire and to bringing the magic of dance theater to the great stages of the world.

In keeping with the Company's long-standing commitment to bringing the finest in dance to the widest international audience, ABT has recently enjoyed triumphant successes with engagements in Tokyo, London, Paris, Madrid, Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Palermo, Italy.

Over its 67-year history, the Company has appeared in a total of 131 cities in 42 countries. ABT has also appeared in all fifty states of the United States and embarked on its first trip to China in 2001, appearing in both Shanghai and Hong Kong.

On April 27, 2006, by an act of Congress, American Ballet Theatre became America's National Ballet Company.