

The New Criterion

Dance

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Just the way he was

by [Laura Jacobs](#)

On George Balanchine and "Symphonie Concertante."

When George Balanchine's *Symphonie Concertante* was revived in 1983, it had not been seen since 1952, the year Balanchine let it drop from the New York City Ballet repertory. It was American Ballet Theatre that brought the work back to the stage, not, as one would expect, the New York City Ballet. And it was a ballet that even in its day divided viewers: you either got it (Edwin Denby: "delicate girlish, flower-freshness") or you didn't (John Martin: "perhaps Balanchine's most boring work"). Because of these facts, the revival of *Symphonie Concertante* was controversial. Why was the ballet going to ABT, a company that couldn't hope to perform it as young Balanchine dancers had? And if Balanchine chose to let it go, some argued, why shouldn't we? After all, he'd choreographed it as a one-off for a single student performance in 1945, a program with the National ...

Laura Jacobs's *Landscape with Moving Figures* is available from Dance & Movement Press. She has been the dance critic for *The New Criterion* since 1994. Before that she wrote about dance for *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Ballet Review*, and *Boston Phoenix*. Jacobs is a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*, where she writes about fashion as well as performing arts. From 1987 to 1994, Jacobs was editor in chief of *Stagebill*, the national program magazine. In this position she edited and wrote articles on opera, music, theater, and dance. Jacobs has written two books on fashion (*Beauty and the Beene*, Abrams, 1999; and *The Art of Haute Couture*, Abbeville Press, 1995). Her first novel, *Women About Town*, was published by Viking in May 2002.

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