

# The New Criterion

## Dance

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### Prodigal son

by [Laura Jacobs](#)

On Jerome Robbins.

When I started reviewing dance in New York City, Jerome Robbins was alive and well and making ballets for the New York City Ballet. It was 1984, the year after George Balanchine died. Peter Martins was the story then, intensely watched, each new ballet a clue to what he might do with Balanchine's kingdom, for it was Martins who had stepped into the directorship and Martins who was steering the company. There'd been a skirmish about that. Robbins pulled a Philip Larkin—he didn't want the job but he felt the least they could do was offer it to him. Robbins was given the title of "co-ballet master in chief," and his presence at NYCB continued as always: he was a deputy who was a genius and in those dark days a ballast. So he was a surety, a continuity, choreographing new pieces until his death in 1998.

I didn't pay proper attention to Robbins in those fourteen years. I was ...

**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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