

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

## *After the Rain Pas de Deux* (2005 / Ailey Company Premiere – 2014)

*Choreography:* Christopher Wheeldon

*Music:* Arvo Pärt

*Costumes:* Holly Hynes

*Lighting:* Mark Stanley

*Restaged by* Jason Fowler

**Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain*** was an instant hit when it premiered in 2005 at New York City Ballet's annual New Combinations Evening, which honors the anniversary of George Balanchine's birth with world premiere ballets. A ballet in two parts, the work's second section is a male-female pas de deux that has become a standalone piece. Praised for its sublime simplicity and intricate partnering, it is revealed in a fresh light as the Ailey dancers make it their own. Set to music by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, the sensual duet has resonated deeply with audiences and was Christopher Wheeldon's first work to enter the Ailey repertory. *Dance Magazine* described *After the Rain* as "an intelligently, masterfully choreographed ballet that strikes an emotional chord. The still point at the heart of the work lingers long after the curtain has descended."

"The body language suggests intimacy and, on the woman's part, aspects of **abandon and ecstasy.**"

*The New York Times*

"Rare is the ballet that resonates so profoundly with audiences that it becomes **an instant hit.**"

*Dance Magazine*

"The work is set to Arvo Pärt's "Spiegel Im Spiegel" ...which prompts **languid and soaring moves** that Mr. Wheeldon's choreography inventively embodies with full-figure and fleet-limbed accentuation."

*The Wall Street Journal*

### **Christopher Wheeldon**

Christopher Wheeldon was born in Yeovil, Somerset, England. He began his ballet training when he was eight years old at the East Coker Ballet School. At the age of eleven, Wheeldon enrolled at The Royal Ballet School where he trained until he was 18. He joined England's Royal Ballet in 1991, and danced in works by Ashton, MacMillan and Balanchine. That same year, he won the Gold Medal at the Prix de Lausanne competition. In 1993, Wheeldon was invited to become a member of New York City Ballet's corps de ballet and was promoted to the rank of Soloist in 1998. As a dancer with New York City Ballet, Wheeldon appeared in many works in the repertory, dancing featured roles in George Balanchine's *Divertimento No. 15*, *The Four Temperaments*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Nutcracker* and Jerome Robbins' *The Concert*, *Dances at a Gathering* and *The Goldberg Variations*.

Wheeldon retired from dancing at the end of the Spring 2000 season to concentrate on his choreographic work. He was chosen to be New York City Ballet's first Artist in Residence, soon after he created *Polyphonia*, set to piano music by Györgi Ligeti, which was given its world premiere in May 2001. That same month, Wheeldon was named Resident Choreographer for New York City Ballet. As a choreographer, Wheeldon has also created works for Boston Ballet, The Colorado Ballet, The Royal Ballet, The Royal Ballet School, San Francisco Ballet, The Hamburg Ballet, The Australian Ballet and Pennsylvania Ballet. Wheeldon made his Broadway choreographic debut in March 2002 with the stage version of the film *Sweet Smell of Success*. He also staged the ballet sequence for the Columbia Pictures feature film *Center Stage*.



AAADT's Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims in Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.



Arvo Pärt. Photo by  
Eric Marinitsch.

### **Arvo Pärt**

Arvo Pärt was born in 1935 in Paide, Estonia. After studies with Heino Eller's composition class in Tallinn, he worked from 1958 to 1967 as a sound engineer for Estonian Radio. In 1980 he emigrated with his family to Vienna and then, one year later, travelled on a DAAD scholarship to Berlin.

As one of the most radical representatives of the so-called 'Soviet Avant-Garde', Pärt's work passed through a profound evolutionary process. His first creative period began with neo-classical piano music. Then followed ten years in which he made his own individual use of the most important compositional techniques of the avant-garde: dodecaphony, composition with sound masses, aleatoricism, collage technique. *Nekrolog* (1960), the first piece of dodecaphonic music written in Estonia, and *Perpetuum mobile* (1963) gained the composer his first recognition by the West. In his collage works 'avant-garde' and 'early' music confront each other boldly and irreconcilably, a confrontation which attains its most extreme expression in his last collage piece *Credo* (1968). But by this time all the compositional devices Pärt had employed to date had lost all their former fascination and begun to seem pointless to him. The search for his own voice drove him into a withdrawal from creative work lasting nearly eight years, during which he engaged with the study of Gregorian Chant, the Notre Dame school and classical vocal polyphony.

In 1976 music emerged from this silence – the little piano piece *Für Alina*. It is obvious that with this work Pärt had discovered his own path. The new compositional principle used here for the first time, which he called tintinnabuli (Latin for 'little bells'), has defined his work right up to today. The 'tintinnabuli principle' does not strive towards a progressive increase in complexity, but rather towards an extreme reduction of sound materials and a limitation to the essential.

*This production was made possible with leadership support from the Elaine P. Wynn and Family Foundation. Generous support was provided by The Jaharis Family Foundation, and Judith Kaminski and Joseph Kaminski.*

### **After the Rain Pas de Deux**

#### Music Credit Information

**Song: Spiegel Im Spiegel (1978)**

By: Arvo Pärt

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