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**VIOLETTE VERDY AND JEAN-PIERRE BONNEFOUX TO TAPE VIDEO
SERIES FOR THE GEORGE BALANCHINE FOUNDATION**

**Verdy to coach the role she originated in *Liebeslieder Walzer*,
partnered by Bonnefoux**

New York City—Violette Verdy and Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux, former principal dancers with New York City Ballet, will teach and coach their roles in *Liebeslieder Walzer* for The George Balanchine Foundation's Video Archives. The aim of the series is to document the viewpoints of dancers on whom Balanchine choreographed his ballets, capturing his intentions at the time of creation through coaching sessions with dancers of today. Verdy danced in the ballet's premiere in 1960, partnered by Nicholas Magallanes; Bonnefoux was her partner in performances in the 1970s. Taping over a two-day period will commence March 28, 2010, in New York City Ballet studios in the Rose Building, Lincoln Center, New York.

Verdy and Bonnefoux will work with Jennie Somogyi and Sébastien Marcovici, both principals with New York City Ballet. Nancy Reynolds, a dance historian and the Foundation's Director of Research, will supervise the project and conduct interview segments with the two coaches.

Liebeslieder Walzer, a lengthy two-part ballet for four couples, with four singers and two pianists also on stage, is danced solely to Brahms waltzes. When first announced, it was considered a daring choice on Balanchine's part. But the ballet was immediately greeted as a masterpiece, inspiring such comments as "Balanchine has captured and epitomized the essence of the waltz for all time" (Arthur Todd) and "His variations on the waltz reach into infinity" (P.W. Manchester). *Times* critic John Martin went so far as to observe that "After an hour and five minutes of sheer waltzing, and by only four couples at that, one's major reaction was to wonder if perhaps Brahms had not still another opus hidden away somewhere" (Nov. 23, 1960). Other critics noted that, for all its ravishing dances, the ballet also dealt with the deepest of emotions. Passion, sorrow and joy lay just beneath the surface. Referring to both aspects of the work, Verdy recalled, "It is so incredibly complete in whatever concerns the business of waltzes forever and the possibilities of relationships between men and women of a particular time in a particular situation. I think the exploration, the confession, is total."

BIOS

VIOLETTE VERDY began ballet training in her native France. After dancing with Roland Petit's Ballets des Champs-Élysées, London Festival Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre, she joined New York City Ballet in 1958. While there she danced more than 25 principal roles in a performance career that extended through 1976. In addition to *Liebeslieder Walzer*, Balanchine created roles for her in *Episodes*, *Sonatine* (partnered by Bonnefoux), *Tschaikovsky Pas de Deux*, "Emeralds" from *Jewels*, *The Figure in the Carpet*, *La Source*, and the Act II pas de deux from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, among others. Jerome Robbins created roles for her in *Dances at a Gathering*, *In the Night*, and *Beethoven Pas de Deux* (again paired with Bonnefoux). Verdy also made guest appearances with major ballet companies in America and Europe.

After her retirement from performing, she became the first woman to be artistic director of the Paris Opera Ballet and was later artistic director of the Boston Ballet. Verdy has been a guest teacher throughout the world and has been awarded many honors. Since 1996, she has been a Distinguished Professor of Ballet at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, Bloomington. She has participated in three earlier Balanchine Foundation Video Archives tapings, coaching her created roles in *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux*, "Emeralds" from *Jewels*, and the Act II pas de deux from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

JEAN-PIERRE BONNEFOUX, also from France, began his dance career with the Paris Opera Ballet and later performed with the Bolshoi and Kirov companies. In 1970 he joined New York City Ballet as principal dancer. During his tenure, Balanchine created roles for him in several ballets, including *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, *Cortège Hongrois*, *Sonatine* (in which he partnered Verdy), and *Union Jack*; Jerome Robbins's choreography for him included *Beethoven Pas de Deux* (again dancing with Verdy) and *An Evening's Waltzes*. In 1977 Bonnefoux joined the faculty of the School of American Ballet. He gave his final performance in 1980.

Since his retirement from the stage, Bonnefoux has served as choreographer and ballet master for the Pittsburgh Ballet, as chairman and artistic director in the Ballet Department of the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, and as choreographer and teacher at the company and school of the Chautauqua Institute in New York, where he remains on the faculty. Since 1996 he has been artistic director of the North Carolina Dance Theater, based in Charlotte. His choreographic works include *Carmina Burana*, *Cinderella*, *Peter Pan*, *Nutcracker*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Shindig*.

JENNIE SOMOGYI began her dance training with Nina Youshkevitch and entered the School of American Ballet at the age of nine. A year later she was cast as Marie in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*. She joined New York City Ballet in 1994 and was promoted to principal dancer in 2002. Known for her technical virtuosity, she has danced principal roles in most of the Balanchine repertory, including *Liebeslieder Walzer*, *Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze'*, *Symphony in C* (3 movements), *George Balanchine's*

The Nutcracker (Sugar Plum Fairy and Dewdrop), *Symphony in Three Movements*, *Tschaikovsky Pas de Deux*, and *Tschaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2*. She has appeared in Robbins's *Dances at a Gathering*, *The Cage*, and *In the Night*, among others, and she has performed in several ballets by Peter Martins, including the leading role of Odette/Odile in his version of *Swan Lake*. Somogyi has participated in three previous Balanchine Foundation archival videos, working with Maria Tallchief, Frederic Franklin, Violette Verdy, and Conrad Ludlow.

SÉBASTIEN MARCOVICI, born in Paris, trained at the Paris Opera Ballet School. Later, while studying with Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux and Patricia McBride, he was invited to take class with New York City Ballet, which he joined in 1993. In 2002 he was promoted to principal. Known for his dramatic presence, he has performed leading roles in Balanchine's *Apollo*, *The Four Temperaments*, *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*, *Liebeslieder Walzer*, *Movements for Piano and Orchestra*, and *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, among others; in Robbins's *Afternoon of a Faun*, *The Cage*, *The Four Seasons*, *The Goldberg Variations*, and others; in several works by Peter Martins, including *Hallelujah Junction* and *Fearful Symmetries*; and in Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain* and *Polyphonia*. He has originated roles in works by Robbins, Martins, Wheeldon, Stephen Baynes, Mauro Bigonzetti, Albert Evans, and Twyla Tharp, among others.

NANCY REYNOLDS, a former dancer with New York City Ballet, has been Director of Research for The George Balanchine Foundation since 1994. She conceived and continues to direct the Video Archives program. Also an author, her most recent books are *No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century* (co-authored with Malcolm McCormick) and *Remembering Lincoln*.

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The George Balanchine Foundation (www.balanchine.org) is a not for profit corporation established in 1983. Its mission is to create programs that educate the public and further Balanchine's work and aesthetic, with the goal of advancing high standards of excellence in dance and its allied arts. Among the Foundation's major initiatives are the Video Archives (<http://www.balanchine.org/balanchine/03/gbfvideoarchives.html>), in which important Balanchine dancers teach and coach roles created on them by Balanchine with dancers of today (Interpreters Archive) or recreate Balanchine ballets that are rarely performed and in danger of disappearing (Archive of Lost Choreography). Legendary dancers who have taken part in this project include Alicia Markova, Maria Tallchief, Frederic Franklin, Alicia Alonso, Melissa Hayden, Allegra Kent, Todd Bolender, Merrill Ashley, Suzanne Farrell, Rosella Hightower, Marie-Jeanne, Violette Verdy, Edward Villella, Patricia Wilde, Yvonne Mounsey, and Helgi Tomasson, working with leading dancers from such companies as New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Miami City Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, and The Suzanne Farrell Ballet, among others.

In 2007 the Foundation announced the completion of another major initiative, the online publication of the *Balanchine Catalogue*, a fully searchable database giving first-

performance details of all known dances created by Balanchine, supplemented by lists of companies staging the ballets, a bibliography, a videography, reference resources, a database of roles Balanchine performed, and additional related materials (<http://www.balanchine.org/balanchine/03/balanchinecataloguenew.html>). The project was made possible by a leadership grant from The Jerome Robbins Foundation.

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