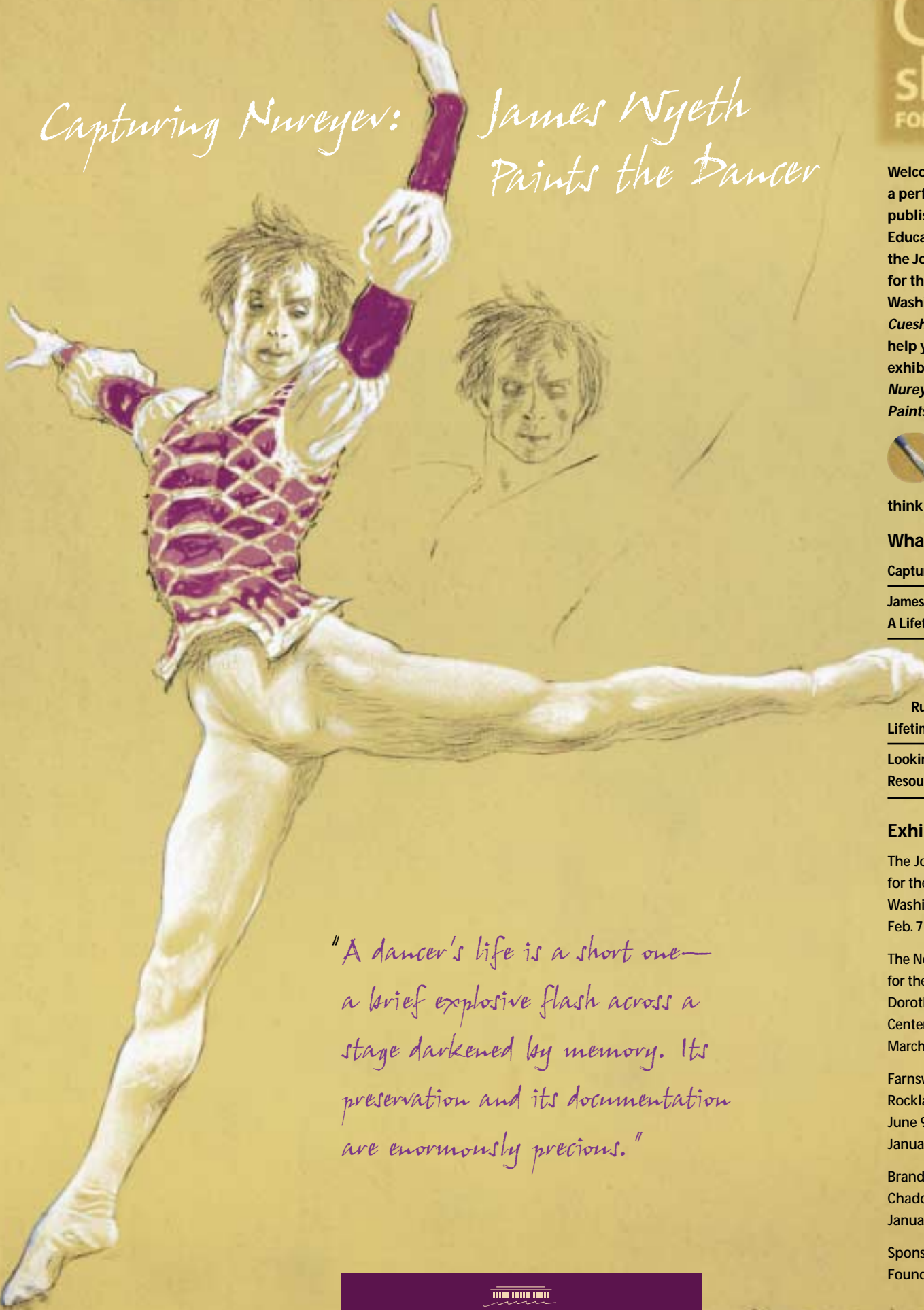


*Capturing Nureyev: James Wyeth
Paints the Dancer*



*"A dancer's life is a short one—
a brief explosive flash across a
stage darkened by memory. Its
preservation and its documentation
are enormously precious."*

Welcome to *Cuesheet*, a performance guide published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC. This *Cuesheet* is designed to help you enjoy the exhibition *Capturing Nureyev: James Wyeth Paints the Dancer*.



The picture of a paintbrush marks questions to think about or discuss.

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Exhibition schedule:

The John F. Kennedy Center
for the Performing Arts,
Washington, D.C.
Feb. 7 - March 10, 2002

The New York Public Library
for the Performing Arts
Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman
Center, New York, New York
March 22 - May 25, 2002

Farnsworth Art Museum
Rockland, Maine
June 9, 2002 -
January 5, 2003

Brandywine River Museum
Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania
January 18 - May 18, 2003

Sponsored by the MBNA
Foundation

Capturing Nureyev

capture—to preserve in a relatively permanent form; to hold the interest of

Wyeth— pronounced Y-eth

charismatic—a special charm or allure that inspires fascination or devotion

Nureyev— pronounced noo-REY-ef

studies—preliminary sketches or paintings for an art work or some portion of it

Capture the spirit, energy, and beauty of a ballet superstar in a two-dimensional portrait—that was the challenge American artist James **Wyeth** set for himself after becoming fascinated with the **charismatic** Rudolf **Nureyev**. Wyeth asked Nureyev to pose for him, but it took three years for the busy Nureyev to agree. In 1977, Nureyev opened his ballet world to Wyeth. During one intensive year, Wyeth immersed himself in Nureyev's life, observing and sketching Nureyev at rehearsals, in his dressing room, and on stage. Nureyev also visited Wyeth at his Pennsylvania farm and studio to pose for numerous portraits. During this time, Nureyev and Wyeth developed a strong friendship and a mutual respect for each other's artistry. Their friendship continued until Nureyev's death in 1993.

The exhibit, *Capturing Nureyev: James Wyeth Paints the Dancer*, includes more than 35 paintings and drawings of Rudolf Nureyev. Some, dated 1977, were painted during the initial year of the Wyeth-Nureyev friendship. Others, dated 2001, were created when Wyeth reworked some of his earlier, unfinished **studies** into new paintings to remember his friend Nureyev. The exhibit also includes costumes worn by Nureyev in four ballets and more than 60 photographs documenting Nureyev's remarkable career.

"I spent hours just watching Nureyev practice, and did hundreds or thousands of studies of him, purely because I was dying to record him."

—James Wyeth




© MICHAEL MCKENZIE, 2002

▲ Michael McKenzie, *James Wyeth Measuring Rudolf Nureyev*, 1977

Here Wyeth uses calipers to accurately measure Nureyev's body and record comparisons that would guide his work. Wyeth's sketches often included measurements such as "calf is 2 widths of ankle" or "shoulder (outside) is 4 wrists."

Think about...

 How well does the exhibit "capture" Nureyev the dancer? Nureyev the man?

What performers that you know would you describe as charismatic?

Cover art: *Nureyev*, 1978; Lithograph (A lithograph is a print made using a flat stone or metal plate on which an image is drawn using a special greasy crayon or wash. Oil-based ink sticks to the grease but not to the dampened stone or plate.)

Cover quotation: Barnes, Clive. "Nureyev." *Capturing Nureyev: James Wyeth Paints the Dancer*, Rockland, ME: The Farnsworth Art Museum, 2002.

Wyeth, James. Quoted in Sandra Carpenter's and Greg Schaber's article, "Jamie Wyeth: His Art and Insights." *The Artist's Magazine*, August 1997.

James Wyeth: A Lifetime of Art

4rowing up in a family where his grandfather, father, and aunts were artists, James (Jamie) Wyeth knew he wanted to be an artist when he was 12 years old. In order to spend more time learning to be a painter, Jamie asked his father, Andrew Wyeth, to allow him to leave school and study at home. Beginning in seventh grade, Jamie learned academic subjects with a tutor in the morning and studied drawing with his artist-aunt Carolyn in the afternoon.

The young Wyeth spent two years learning the basics of drawing and developing his observation skills. He also learned painting by working alongside his father. Like generations of artists before him, Jamie Wyeth further developed his ability to depict the human body accurately by dissecting and sketching **cadavers** at a hospital morgue.

As a young artist, Jamie Wyeth's skills won him an invitation from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to document America's space program. As a mature artist, Wyeth became known for his paintings of animals, birds, and landscapes, especially the area around his home in Maine and his family farm in Pennsylvania. He is also known for his portraits of prominent people, such as Presidents John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Carter.

"When I draw a person's cheek, I know what's under that. I actually took that apart and felt that muscle and felt the various bone structures...."
—James Wyeth


cadavers—
corpses;
dead bodies

© KEVIN FLEMING/CORBIS



▲ Jamie Wyeth concentrates as he creates a painting in his studio.

Think about...

 What are the effects of growing up in a family in which many members choose the same profession?

► *Double Image, Head, Nureyev (Study #21), 1977; Combined mediums, Collection of the Artist*

This study reveals Wyeth's working process; multiple images are explored in one work. Locate the three images in this study.



► *Unfinished Coat, In Fur, Nureyev (Study #13), 1977; Combined mediums, Collection of the Brandywine River Museum*


Wyeth painted on colored backgrounds, using the background tone as the mid-tone for the flesh. He then added white for highlights and charcoal or dark washes for shadows. Nureyev did not wear fur coats when dancing or rehearsing. The use of fur coats was Wyeth's invention designed to suggest Nureyev's Russian background.



► *Black Leotard, Nureyev (Study #3), 1977; Combined mediums, Private Collection*

By observing Nureyev carefully, Wyeth identified Nureyev's natural pose—standing with both hands on his hips and shoulders slightly forward.

Think about...

 What pose is natural for you? Ask your friends to help you identify it.


A Glimpse

Next to each painting in the exhibition, a wall sign lists the work's title, the year it was made, the materials used (the medium), and the person who or organization that loaned the work to the exhibition.

Paintings Created in 1977

Wyeth's 1977 portraits include both studies and fully developed portraits. Many of the works in the exhibit have been created using combined mediums. This means Wyeth used a variety of materials (e.g., charcoal, paint, pastel) in a single work of art.

Think about...

 What do you see in each of the three paintings on this page that indicates each work is a study?




of Wyeth's Paintings

Paintings Created in 2001

In Wyeth's new works, Rudolf Nureyev is often depicted performing on stage. Although the subject of all the paintings in the exhibition is Rudolf Nureyev, Wyeth's painting style has changed from 1977.

Think about...

 In what ways has Wyeth's style changed?



▲ *Nureyev—Swan Lake, 2001*; Combined mediums on cardboard, Collection of the Artist

Notice the realistic, detailed treatment of the face in contrast to the rest of the body and the fantasy of the background.



▲ *Mort de Nureyev, 2001*; Combined mediums on cardboard, Collection of the Artist
Wyeth's title translates to "Death of Nureyev." The French title and the French spelling for the dancer's name, connect Nureyev to the country where he lived and worked for many years. Here, Wyeth shows Nureyev in a ballet death scene.

Think about...


 How might this scene comment on Nureyev's real death?



◀ *Nureyev—Don Quixote—Yellow Background, 2001*; Combined mediums on cardboard, Collection of the Artist

Wyeth captures Nureyev in a dramatic gesture.

Think about...

 How does Wyeth capture the feeling of stage lighting? What is the effect of the strong diagonal?

Rudolf Nureyev: A

Perhaps more than any other dancer of the 20th century, Rudolf Nureyev (1938-1993) elevated the importance of the male role in ballet. Nureyev danced with impressive athletic power and intensity. His superstar status drew new audiences to ballet. In addition, Nureyev broke with tradition, crossing boundaries to perform both ballet and modern dance.

Growing Up with a Passion

Rudolf Nureyev grew up in extreme poverty in a remote region of the Soviet Union.

At age seven, Nureyev hid in the balcony of a theater to see his first ballet performance. Afterwards, Nureyev knew he must become a dancer. Nureyev's father, however, wanted his son to study engineering or medicine and did everything to prevent the boy from achieving his dream.

Despite his father's protests, Nureyev learned Russian folk dance at school. When he was eleven years old, Nureyev snuck out of his home to take twice-weekly ballet lessons free from a ballerina who recognized his talent. His dream was to study at Leningrad's world-famous Kirov Ballet School.

Nureyev had the daring to write the school requesting an audition and scholarship. While waiting for a response, Nureyev performed in a folk dance company that traveled the region. At age 17, Nureyev was accepted at the Kirov Ballet School and started his intensive training, when most dancers are almost finished training.

At school, Nureyev broke rules he considered unimportant and challenged some teachers' authority. His disinterest in **Communism** led to suspicions about his patriotism. Despite Nureyev's unwillingness to conform, his talents as a dancer were recognized at both his graduation performance and a prestigious Moscow ballet competition.




▲ Nureyev in *The Sleeping Beauty*, with the Royal Ballet, 1974; Photograph © by Louis Pères, Metropolitan Opera House, 1974. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Leaping high above the stage, Nureyev keeps his torso erect, legs together, and toes pointed.

Performing with Russia's Kirov Ballet

After graduation, Nureyev joined the world-renown Kirov Ballet. He danced leading roles, bypassing the normal sequence of lesser roles for beginning dancers. In 1961, the Kirov Ballet traveled to Europe to perform. Concerned about Nureyev's overly friendly attitude toward people in non-Communist countries, the Soviet government sent secret police to follow Nureyev.

Think about...

 If you could choose one famous person for a series of portraits, whom would you choose? Why?

Rudolf Nureyev. Quoted in Linda Maybarduk's biography, *The Dancer Who Flew: A Memoir of Rudolf Nureyev*. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books of Northern New York, 1999.

"In all my life,
there has just
been one love—
dancing.
I couldn't live
without dance.
When you
watch me
dance, you see
[the] real me."
—Rudolf Nureyev

Communism—an economic and political system in which all property and means of production are owned by the government rather than by individuals

Lifetime of Dance

Defection and the Western Career

In Paris, Nureyev's dancing won him superstar status. Breaking company rules, Nureyev toured the city on his own, making friends. As a result, Nureyev was prevented from boarding the plane to London with the rest of the Kirov company. Told that he must return to the Soviet Union, Nureyev realized that would probably mean imprisonment. Nureyev daringly escaped his Soviet guards and **defected**. Nureyev's defection made international headlines; he was a hero in the non-Communist world but an embarrassing traitor in his homeland. The Soviets charged Nureyev with crimes against the government (treason) and sentenced him to seven years in jail. (Nureyev was finally cleared of all charges five years after his death.)

From 1963 through the 1970s, Nureyev danced with England's Royal Ballet partnering ballerina Margot Fonteyn (mar-go fahn-TAYN). Their dancing ignited international attention and acclaim. Nureyev

defected—fled one's country for political or artistic freedom

curtain calls—performers' appearances in front of the closed curtain, in response to audience applause



▲ Rudolf Nureyev and Bill Holloman in *Moments* (Choreographed by Murray Louis, 1976); Photograph © by Jack Vartoogian/FrontRowPhotos, NYC; Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Nureyev broke with tradition; he performed both classical ballet and modern dance. Here, Nureyev leaps with angled legs and gaze downward, a move typical of this modern work.



▶ Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn in *The Sleeping Beauty*; Photograph © by Louis Péres; Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Fonteyn's partnership with Nureyev is considered one of the most memorable in ballet history.

was also an international guest artist, appearing with companies around the world.

Expanding the Repertory

Always adventurous, Nureyev expanded his dancing style, performing with American modern dance companies. From the mid-1970s to the 1980s, he organized performances called "Nureyev and Friends" which featured a wide variety of choreography. He worked as director of and principal choreographer for the Paris Opéra Ballet from 1983-89.

In 1989, 28 years after his defection, the Soviet authorities invited Nureyev to return home to perform with the Kirov Ballet. At his performance, he received 20 **curtain calls**—a hero's welcome.

Rudolf Nureyev died in 1993.

Looking at Nureyev

Capturing Nureyev in Photographs

Nureyev was one of the most photographed dancers of his time. The challenge for dance photographers is to capture the moment that represents the dancers' abilities. To do this, dance photographers must know the choreography of ballets. They must be able to anticipate the special moments which would yield vivid photographs. For example, where will Nureyev perform spectacularly daring leaps? When will he lift the ballerina with deceptive ease?

Think about...



Which photographs best capture Nureyev as:

- ▶ an athletic performer?
- ▶ an expressive dancer?
- ▶ a skillful partner of ballerinas?
- ▶ a friendly colleague?

What is the effect of photographs taken from unusual angles such as from beside or above the stage?

Tights, Tunics, and Leotards

Costumes for male ballet dancers allow for freedom of movement. For traditional story ballets, costumes consist of tights and hip-length jackets (tunics). Tights enable the audience to see the dancer's legs as they execute the steps. Hip-length tunics help communicate the dancer's role in a story ballet (e.g., whether a prince or a peasant). In modern ballets, male dancers often wear leotards and tights to help audiences focus on the abstract line of the body.



▲ Rudolf Nureyev taking a curtain call in his costume for *The Sleeping Beauty*, August 6, 1974; Photograph by Robin Platzer, Twin Images; Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts



▲ *Portrait of Rudolf Nureyev—Dress Rehearsal/ Raymonda*, 1977; Combined mediums, Collection of the Artist

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**Capturing Nureyev:
James Wyeth Paints
the Dancer**

This exhibition *Capturing Nureyev: James Wyeth Paints the Dancer* is organized by the William A. Farnsworth Art Museum and Wyeth Center, Rockland, Maine, in collaboration with The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C., and The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center, New York, N.Y. Sponsored by the MBNA Foundation

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Cuesheet

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Nice Pictures

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Center for the Performing Arts

Resources

To learn more about Jamie Wyeth, you may want to...

visit:

The Wyeth Center at the Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine.

The Wyeth Center contains many original works created by three generations of the Wyeth family. In addition, the Center has a research library and database.

wyethfam@qsilver.net

watch:

Labovsky, Stephen. *Capturing Nureyev: James Wyeth Paints the Dancer*. Full Circle Production, 2001.

This documentary film about James Wyeth's friendship with Rudolf Nureyev is available at the Farnsworth Art Museum.

www.farnsworthmuseum.org/estore

read:

Brokaw, Tom, David Michaelis, et al. *One Nation: Patriots and Pirates Portrayed by N.C. Wyeth and Jamie Wyeth*. New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2000.

Duff, James H. et al. *An American Vision: Three Generations of Wyeth Art: N.C. Wyeth, Andrew Wyeth, James Wyeth*. Vol. 1. New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1989.

To learn more about Rudolf Nureyev, you may want to...

read:

Maybarduk, Linda. *The Dancer Who Flew: A Memoir of Rudolf Nureyev*. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books of Northern New York, 1999.

Nureyev, Rudolf. *Nureyev: An Autobiography with Pictures*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1962.

Péres, Louis. *Rudolf Nureyev*. NY: Dance Horizons, 1975.

watch:

Rudolf Nureyev. Image Entertainment, 2002. Videocassette or DVD. (90 minutes, color).

To learn more about both artists:

Capturing Nureyev: James Wyeth Paints the Dancer

Find out more about both artists—their passions and their struggles.

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/exploring/ballet/nw>