

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

## PETITE MORT

**Company Premiere**  
(1991)

*Choreography by Jiří Kylián*  
*Restaged by Patrick Delacroix*  
*Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*  
*Original Costume Design by Joke Visser*  
*Set Design by Jiří Kylián*  
*Lighting by Joop Caboort*

This suite of duets for six couples was choreographed by celebrated Czech choreographer Jiří Kylián for the Salzburg Festival in commemoration of the second centenary of Mozart's death in 1991. Set to two of Mozart's most beautiful and popular piano concertos (Piano Concerto in A Major – Adagio, and Piano Concerto in C Major – Andante), it is the first work by Jiří Kylián to enter the Ailey repertory. Showing the sensuality, humor, and technical prowess of Ailey's dancers, Kylián's dynamic choreography addresses the relationship between sexes as a kind of duel, complete with fencing foils that appear and disappear on coasters and with which the dancers are called upon to interact.



Photo credit: Scot Goodman

*Petite Mort* evokes a sexual undertone as “12 bodies [are] molded and remolded like clay into imaginative combinations.” (*New York Times*)

“This deliberate choice should not be seen as a provocation or thoughtlessness – rather as my way to acknowledge the fact that I am living and working as part of a world where nothing is sacred, where brutality and arbitrariness are commonplace,” said Kylián. “It should convey the idea of two antique torsos, heads and limbs cut off – evidence of intended mutilation – without being able to destroy their beauty reflecting the spiritual power of their creator.”

“Jiří Kylián is one of the top international choreographers who I was introduced to when I was a student at Juilliard,” said Artistic Director Robert Battle. “I find Kylian’s partnering and his movements are more reflective of some of the modern dance pioneers and *Petite Mort*, one of his best works, will be his first piece set on the Company. This work will stretch the dancers and the way people see Ailey since it’s a work that they’re not necessarily expecting.”

## Jiří Kylián

Jiří Kylián (Czechoslovakia, 1947) started his dance career at the age of nine, at the School of the National Ballet in Prague. In 1962 he was accepted as a student at the Prague Conservatory. He left Prague when he received a scholarship for the Royal Ballet School in London in 1967. After this, he left for the Stuttgart Ballet led by John Cranko. There Kylián made his debut as a choreographer with *Paradox* for the Noverre Gesellschaft. After having made three ballets for NDT (*Viewers*, *Stoolgame* and *La Cathédrale Engloutie*), he became the company's artistic director, together with Hans Knill, in 1975. During the 1978 Charleston Festival in the United States Kylián put NDT on the international map with *Sinfonietta* (Leoš Janáček). After an extraordinary record of service Kylián handed over the artistic leadership in 1999, but remained associated to the dance company as house choreographer.



In the course of his career Kylián has received many international awards and honours, including Officer of the Royal Dutch Order of Orange-Nassau, honorary doctorate of the Juilliard School in New York, three Nijinsky Awards in Monte Carlo (best choreographer, company and work), Benois de la Danse in Moscow and Berlin, Honorary Medal from the President of the Czech Republic and Chevalier du Légion d'Honneur in France. In June 2008 Kylián was awarded the 'Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement' of the Venice Biennale during the sixth international festival of contemporary dance. On 2 December 2008 Her Majesty the Queen presented him with the Medal of the Order of the House of Orange for Arts and Science. October 2011 Jiří Kylián received a Lifetime Achievement Award for dance and theatre by the Czech Ministry of Culture.

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born Jan. 27, 1756, Salzburg, [Austria]—died Dec. 5, 1791, Vienna) Austrian composer widely recognized as one of the greatest in the history of Western music. With Haydn and Beethoven he brought to its height the achievement of the Viennese Classical school. Unlike any other composer in musical history, he wrote in all the musical genres of his day and excelled in every one. His taste, his command of form, and his range of expression have made him seem the most universal of all composers; yet, it may also be said that his music was written to accommodate the specific tastes of particular audiences.

### Petite Mort

Music Credit Information

Song: **Piano Concerto in A Major – Adagio**

Composed by: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Performed by: The English Chamber Orchestra; Jeffrey Tate (conductor); Mitsuko Uchida (piano)

Song: **Piano Concerto in C Major – Andante**

Composed by: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Performed by: The English Chamber Orchestra; Jeffrey Tate (conductor); Mitsuko Uchida (piano)