

OH, THE OF IT ALL

Original Music by Mary Bichner
Ballet Scenario by John J King

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

OH, THE OF IT ALL is a short ballet written as part of **THE MEMENTI MORI OF EDWARD GOREY**, a shuffle play inspired by the life and work of Edward St. John Gorey (1925-2000). There are thirteen vignettes, each of a different genre that Gorey loved: from opera and ballet to hand puppets and silent film. For each performance, several sketches are selected and ordered by an audience volunteer - Tarot card reading style - resulting in a new performance each night. By casting nine actors as different versions of the artist, MEMENTI MORI explores the spectrum and fluidity of identity, artistry, and personhood, through a life.

Throughout the play, Edward Gorey appears as various incarnations, each an anagram of Gorey's name; in OH, THE OF IT ALL Gorey appears as "Garrod Weedy."

SETTING

NYC Streets, and the LOBBY and THEATRE of the NYCBallet.

CHARACTERS

GARROD WEEDY

A HANDBILL ANNOUNCING THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET'S SEASON

BOX OFFICE ATTENDANT

ALLEGRA KENT as the SUGAR PLUM FAIRY

CLARA

SHADOW GARROD

A SMALL CHILD

GEORGE BALANCHINE

A FAN

DEATH

LES BOYS – chorus who alternately appear as any of the small roles above, as well as:

NYC Skyscrapers

A group of regular attendees of the ballet

Posters Advertising Several Ballets:

Agon

The Seven Deadly Sins

Jewels

The Year 1983

BACKGROUND

Gorey was a devotee of George Balanchine and attended every New York City Ballet performance from 1956 – 1978, with the exception of a few Nutcrackers each year. He really did break down sobbing at Allegra Kent's performance as Sugar Plum fairy, though this happened in a rehearsal. From 1965 onward he spent the ballet season in New York, and summered in Cape Cod.

In 1983, Balanchine died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, symptoms of which include dizziness/loss of equilibrium, and deteriorated hearing and eyesight. Gorey did leave New York "permanently" in 1983, after buying a house on the Cape with his money from the Broadway production of Dracula, but Balanchine's death did cast a pall on Gorey's love of the city.

SCENARIO

0:00-0:22 / (Measures 1-6)

GARROD WEEDY doodles in a notebook on the streets of NYC. Utterly bored. He wears a calf-length fur coat.

0:22-0:28 / (Measures 7-8)

A HANDBILL ANNOUNCING THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET'S SEASON enters, blown by the wind...

0:28-0:37 / (Measures 9-11)

...and dances into GARROD's attention. He follows.

0:37-1:18 / (Measures 12-28)

It leads him through the streets to the New York State Theatre at Lincoln Center.

The Ensemble, dressed as skyscrapers, dance past as GARROD and HANDBILL pass through the city.

The Theatre: A sign advertising The Nutcracker.

1:18-1:28 / (Measures 29-31)

GARROD buys a ticket and enters.

1:28-2:17 / (Measures 32-46)

The Company performs *The Nutcracker*, with Allegra Kent as the SUGAR PLUM FAIRY, as she dances and says goodbye to CLARA.

GARROD is spotlit, as though the only person in the audience. He leaves his seat and squats at the foot of the balcony, legs curled up like an eager boy.

CLARA waves goodbye and The SUGAR PLUM FAIRY disappears and GARROD falls into sobs – moved to tears at the dissolution of the little girl's imagination.

2:17-2:24 / (Measures 47-50)

GARROD walks out of the building and wanders the NYC Streets. A SHADOW GARROD – in identical costuming – dances along beside him, revealing GARROD's Inner Heart full of joy and wonder at the ballet experience.

2:25-2:57 / (Measures 51-70)

As GARROD passes strangers, he falls into quiet reserve, while SHADOW GARROD continues to dance fully and openly. When alone, GARROD joins SHADOW GARROD in the dance: exuberant, ecstatic. A SMALL CHILD comes around the corner and sees GARROD dancing full out. She stares at him oddly and he catches himself.

2:57-3:00 / (Measure 71)

GARROD and SHADOW GARROD circle back and return to the ballet. A sign advertising “GEORGE BALANCHINE’s A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’s DREAM.

GARROD buys a Ticket, then sits in the lobby, doodling.

3:00-4:00 / (Measures 72-84)

GEORGE BALANCHINE, enters, excited for opening night. A FAN stops him for his autograph, pointing at his name on the poster, then back to BALANCHINE. BALANCHINE graciously does this. THE FAN enters the theatre.

BALANCHINE glances at doodling GARROD, checks his watch, confused, and ducks into the theatre. GARROD closes his book and enters the theatre.

4:00-4:03 / (Measures 84)

Applause begins...

4:03-4:20 / (Measures 85-91)

... and GARROD exits the theatre. He takes his perch and doodles.

4:20-4:30 / (Measures 91-96)

GEORGE BALANCHINE sneaks out of the theatre – thrilled – and his face drops as he sees GARROD doodling. BALANCHINE exits.

4:30-5:33 / (Measures 96-121)

LES BOYS enter from the Theatre. They join GARROD and all gossip and bitch excitedly about the performance.

Can ballet have spoken text? Supertitles? THIS ONE DOES!

- GARROD: I never stay for the curtain call. This company loathes curtain calls; if they see you standing, they lose all respect for you.
- LES BOY: If I see that Lavender leotard with the little skirt that doesn’t match ONE MORE TIME...
- LES BOY 2: This program is all wrong: Mikhail didn’t do his first variation, and Patty didn’t do her second.
- LES BOY 3: Barbara did the fifth instead of the fourth.
- GARROD And Susan wasn’t there at all, but then who was ... what’s her name? The short one with the feet like baked potatoes in foil?
- LES BOY 2: Don’t you feel the whole idea of sets and costumes is vulgar?”
- GARROD: I leave New York the day the season closes and I arrive back the day before it opens. I’m only in the city for George.
- Quote: “You can often hear me bitching about somebody’s performance, but I’m bitching on a terribly high level.”

5:22

A Bell rings. LES BOYS re-enter the theatre (exiting the stage). GOREY remains, doodling and noting his program.

GEORGE BALANCHINE enters. Again, he sees GARROD: Bemused! This man comes to sit and draw, and never watches the ballet!

BALANCHINE enters the theatre.

5:33-5:47/ (Measure 122-128)

GOREY closes his program and enters the theatre.

The Years Pass. Posters of various masterpieces dance across:

AGON...

The SEVEN DEADLY SINS...

JEWELS...

GOREY sits in the lobby, doodling and writing.

1983 dances across.

5:48-5:59 / (Measures 128-132)

BALANCHINE, older, weak, enters the lobby. He sees GARROD, laughs and shakes his head.

5:59-6:04 / (Measures 133-134)

He is about to enter the theatre when the door bursts open – DEATH dances out.

6:04-6:20 / (Measures 135-140)

DEATH is a giant TOP HAT with a black ribbon of mourning tied around and flowing like a train from the brim.

6:20-6:58 / (Measures 141-152)

DEATH engages BALANCHINE in a Pas de deux, dancing faster, jumping higher, DEATH puppeting BALANCHINE.

BALANCHINE increasingly loses his balance, stumbling, struggling to see, and to hear the music and keep with it.

GARROD fights to stop this dance of death – performing the dance on his own so that BALANCHINE may escape.

But he has neither the skill nor the allure.

GARROD tries to grab and hold BALANCHINE, to pull him from Death's sway, but BALANCHINE falls out of his grasp.

6:58 - 7:21 / (Measure 153-157)

DEATH takes BALANCHINE in his arms and they dance a duet. The Theatre Disappears – they've entered a twilight zone, a place of Limbo.

GARROD falls to his knees as BALANCHINE is led away by DEATH.

7:22-7:48 / (Measures 158-165)

The ENSEMBLE, as skyscrapers, dance past GARROD and off into the distance, as though he is driving out of New York City. Perhaps there is a CAT with him.

SUPERTITLE: In an act of aestheticism worthy of Oscar Wilde, artist Edward Gorey leaves New York City for good after the death of George Balanchine.

GARROD's thoughts projected: "God is dead. Who'd want to stay."

7:49-8:02 / (Measures 166-169)

GARROD stands on the shoreline of the cape, looking out at the waves...

8:03-8:41 / (Measures 170-177)

...as a bird that looks like George Balanchine dances and leaps over them.

END