



Ballet Music: The Soul of Movement

Dr. Rachel Franklin

Tuesday, October 7-28, 2025 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. ET

Ballet Music: The Soul of Movement

We love the spectacle and the sets, we adore the costumes, we thrill to the brilliance and beauty of the choreography and the performers, and above all we are moved and exalted by the music. But while dance is as old as we are, ballet is a much more recent evolution. By tracing ballet's rapid journey from French courtly dance to an internationally beloved artform, we find its path travels directly through the magnificent scores of composers like Debussy, Stravinsky, Copland, and of course, Tchaikovsky.

British-born concert pianist Rachel Franklin has been a featured speaker for organizations including the Library of Congress and NPR, exploring intersections among classical and jazz music, film scores, and the fine arts.

Week 1, Oct. 7: From the *Ballet de la Nuit* to *Coppélia*: Desperately Seeking Composers

Ballet is a unique experience in performance art, but what really takes it to its greatest heights is the musical score. It's a bald but undeniable fact that the finest ballets are driven by the finest music. But finding composers who understood how to write for dance wasn't always easy. Today we follow ballet's escape from the French court of the Sun King, its long-standing partnership with opera, and the first great scores by Gluck, Adolphe Adam, and Léo Delibes.

Works explored, media used:

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893): The Nutcracker, 1892

- New York City Ballet: Balanchine version, Ashley Boudier, 2011
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKcZL8q1eBw>

Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake, 1877

- Post:ballet: Robin Dekkers, 2021
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIMAMlWp17g>

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687): Ballet de la Nuit, 1653

- Entrée d'Apollon, la Compagnie l'Eventail, 2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l09uJkHJI8g>
- Excerpt from film, "Le Roi Danse," 2000
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqMIUoeubLI>

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764): Les Indes Galantes, 1735

- Les Sauvages, Forêts paisibles: The New York Baroque Dance Company, 2019
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDPgXSv-t9s&list=RDGDPgXSv-t9s&start_radio=1

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714- 1787): Don Juan, 1761

- la Compagnie l'Eventail, 2006
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8bjlCzlwic>
- Malandain Ballet Biarritz, 2005
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdktG6Wa5fk>

Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864): Robert le Diable, 1830

- Royal Opera House, clip from Ballet of the Nuns, 2012
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fwehe3L6D1g>

- Teatro Juarez, Guanajuto, Mexico, Alicia Alonso and Jorge Esquivel, 1972
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUt3VnRs2Tc&t=362s>

Adolphe Adam (1803-1856): Giselle, 1841

- Royal Ballet documentary, Marianela Nuñez and Vadim Muntagirov in rehearsal with choreographer Peter Wright, 2016
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6E24RojO4vl&t=16s>
- Royal Ballet, Marianela Nuñez, Mad Scene, Act I finale, 2014
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySHiD3-zDi0>
- Royal Ballet, Natalia Osipova and Carlos Acosta, Act II pas de deux, 2015
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ql3o-1eSdbQ>

Léo Delibes (1836-1891): Coppélia, 1870

- École de Danse de l'Opéra National de Paris, Charline Giezendanner, 2001
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBZ05MGb1RQ&t=501s>
- Royal Ballet, choreography Ninette de Valois. Marianela Nuñez, Gary Avis, 2019
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDYKDfM5A5s>