Tharp, Twyla (1941-) Encyclopedia Article

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Contents

Tharp, Twyla (1941-) Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Tharp, Twyla (1941—).....3

Tharp, Twyla (1941—)

A leading choreographer of modern dance and ballet, Twyla Tharp rose to prominence during "the dance boom" of the 1960s and 1970s. Tharp's choreography incorporates dance elements from roll 'n' roll, blues, and jazz, and has been set to the music of Jelly Roll Morton, Bix Biederbecke, and Fats Waller, as well as Chuck Berry, the Beach Boys, and David Byrne. In the mid-1970s, Tharp began to cross-over into ballet choreography. *Push Comes to Shove* and *Nine Sinatra Songs* were the two finest works that grew from her collaboration with Mikhail Baryshnikov and the American Ballet Theater. Other important works are *The Catherine Wheel* and *In the Upper Room.* Although her work continues to draw on modern dance, she is arguably the most important ballet choreographer since George Balanchine. Tharp's choreography can be seen in the movies, *Hair, Ragtime, Amadeus,* and *White Nights* and a Broadway version of *Singin' in the Rain.* She continues to choreograph for and tour with her own company.

Further Reading:

Baryshnikov Dances Sinatra and More: A Dance Creation by Twyla Tharp: The Little Ballet, The Sinatra Suite, Push Comes to Shove, with American Ballet Theater, Kultur International Films, 1984.

Tharp, Twyla, *Push Comes to Shove: An Autobiography,* New York, Bantam Books, 1992.