



Dennis Nahat

Dennis Nahat began dancing at age 6 but began training seriously in Detroit, Michigan at the Ricardeau Dance Studio's with **Jeff** and **Enid Ricardeau** and **Kay Bliss** at the age of 7. He danced as a Bear in his first recital then, danced as *The Tree* in his professional premiere performance in *Peer Gynt*. At age 9 he performed on the Mickey Mouse Talent Scout's and Soupy Sales Show on Detroit TV,

performing a Flamenco solo to *España Cañí*. He began teaching dance classes at age 11 on Saturday's at the Macabees Life Insurance headquarters building in downtown Detroit. He was the only male dancer in the Detroit City Ballet and at age 16, performed in **William Dollar's** Concerto. He passed through Grade IV of the six-graded syllabus in the Cecchetti Ballet Method under the rigid examination process of the Cecchetti Council of America and charter board members **Theodore Smith**, **Enid Ricardeau** and **Gertrude Jory**. He played violin in the Grosse Pointe High School Orchestra and then first chair viola and performed at Michigan State University Summer Orchestra in 1982. At age 15 and 16 he sang tenor and was the pianist/accompanist for his Church Choir and the Grosse Pointe Men's Glee Club. He won the Grosse Pointe High School award for the Fastest Typist, Best Business Student and Most Likely to Succeed Award in his class of 1963. In Detroit after the Detroit City Ballet performance at the Ford Theater, writer and regional ballet movement leader, **Doris Herring** introduced Nahat to Juilliard School Dance Director **Martha Hill** who were both scouting talent in the 'regions'. At 17, he was awarded a full scholarship in dance with a minor in music at the Juilliard School of Music, continuing his training under Hill, **Martha Graham**, **José Limón**, **Donald McKayle**, **Anna Sokolow**, **Antony Tudor**, **Margaret Craske**, **Louis Horst** and modern dance luminaries, **Mary Hinkson**, **Helen McGehee**, **Ethel Winter**, **Betty Jones**, and **Donald McKayle**. While at the Juilliard he danced *The Poet* in *Les Sylphides* by **Michel Fokine** and performed in the original cast of *Sessions for Six* and *Ballad* by Sokolow which was represented at the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center's 1964 inaugural opening program featuring American Dance. He danced *Swingle Singers* by **Kevin Carlisle**, and works by famed ballet-taper **Paul Draper**, **Martha Graham** and **Edward Tuller**. He studied music and dance literature and structure with composer/choreographer/pianist **Louis Horst**. Limón created several new works for Nahat at the Juilliard and restaged **Doris Humphrey's** *Ritmo Jondo* and *A Choreographic Offering* on him. Limón also revived the role of *Cortés*, the Spanish Conquistador in his *La Melinche*, a role he had created for himself. He performed in new works with classmates who became international solo performing artist and choreographers of great acclaim, **Ze'eva Cohen**, Professor of Dance at Princeton University, **Martha Clarke**, International Choreographer, **Jennifer Muller** of The Works, **Carla Maxwell**, Artistic Director of José Limón Dance Company, and **Daniel Lewis** now Dean of Dance at Florida's, New World School of the Arts. Nahat also performed the humorous *Tango-Pasodoble* from **Sir. Fredrick Ashton's** *Façade*. In 1964 he performed as a *Shark* the Guber, Ford and Gross production of *West Side Story* with **Anna Maria Alberghetti** and **Christopher Walken**, and sang and played the role of *Tony*.

In 1965, Nahat was invited by **Robert Joffrey** to join the newly formed The Joffrey Ballet. He appeared with the re-organized company at the June 1965 White House Festival of the

Arts under President **Lyndon B. Johnson**, then performed with the company its public debut in August at Jacob's Pillow with **Ted Shawn**. In 1966 he performed with the Joffrey when it became the official company of the New York City Center known as the Joffrey City Center Ballet. While at the Joffrey, **Glenn Tetley** created Games of Noah on him. He also created roles in the new version of La Fille Mal Gardee staged by **Fernand Nault**, Clowns by **Lottie Goslar**, Incubus, Viva Vivaldi, and Olympics by **Gerald Arpino**, Gamelon by Joffrey and a new work, Opus Jazz by Sokolow. While at the Joffrey daily classes and rehearsals were intense and strict guidance was given by famed ballet master from Argentina, **Héctor Zaraspe**, American Dance Historian, **Lillian Moore**, Chicago's **Enda McRae** and Joffrey. No classes or rehearsal could be missed, the company flourished. Joffrey asked him to teach daily classes for the company and at the companies American Ballet Center. In 1966 he left the Joffrey due to an injury he joined the original Broadway cast of Sweet Charity starring **Gwen Verdon** and performed 8 shows a week for the next years. Among his other Broadway credits include performer and assistant choreographer to **Gillian Lynne** in the 1967 debut of How Now, Dow Jones starring **Tony Roberts**, **Marilyn Mason**, and **Brenda Vaccaro**. He directed and choreographed the New York City Industrial presentation of JP Stevens/Celanese textiles and fabric Industrial Show based on Camelot and Guinevere's Torso. During his Broadway years he continued his studies with Anthony Tudor and Margaret Craske at the Metropolitan Opera Ballet.

In 1968 he joined American Ballet Theatre (ABT) and in 1969 he choreographed Momentum and Brahms Quintet for the company. He continued his daily training with ballet master and mentor, **William Griffith** and with one of the great ballerinas of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, **Maria Swoboda**. He was a favorite dancer of choreographer **Léonide Massine** and in 1968-69 he recreated roles for Nahat in Gaité Parisienne and Aleko and taught him his Three-Cornered Hat. Nahat subsequently choreographed five original works for ABT. He was one of three dancer/choreographer who immersed during the late 1960's and early 1970's that ABT. **Elliot Feld**, **Michael Smuin** and Nahat all eventually went on to head their own major ballet companies. He danced in Felds, Harbinger, and At Midnight and performed in Smuin's Pulcinella Variations, and Gardenfest. He was promoted to principal dancer and performed with internationally known ballerinas such as **Eleanor D'Antuono**, **Cynthia Gregory**, **Toni Lander**, **Roni Mahler**, **Natalia Makarova**, **Carla Fracci**, **Zhandra Rodriguez**, **Mimi Paul** and **Sally Wilson**. He has performed in tens of ballets by many of the greatest choreographers of the 19th and 20th century. During his ten-year career as a dancer with ABT, he was best known and critically acclaimed internationally as one of worlds finest *caractère* dancers of his generation.

In 1971 he again performed in one of the oldest and most important ballets in ballet repertory by **Jean Dauberva**, this time staged by **Dimitri Romanoff** as the *Lead Gypsy* in La Fille Mal Gardee. He was particularly famous for his interpretation of classic roles such as *Madge the Witch* in La Sylphide from **August Bournonville**, *Carabosse* in The Sleeping Beauty from **Marius Petipa**, the *Drummer* and *Head Mistress* in **David Lachine's** Graduation Ball and Helen of Troy. He danced the principal character *Spalanzani/Doctor Miracle/Dapertutto* in Tales of Hoffman choreographed by **Peter Darrell** in 1973. He became legendary in the role of *The Devil* in **Agnès de Mille's** Three

Virgins and A Devil and taught the role of *The Devil* to **Mikhail Baryshnikov**. He later staged it again for ABT in 2003 and for Oakland Ballet. He received critical acclaim as the *Charlatan* and *Petrushka* in Fokine's *Petrushka* and he performed in two parts of *The River* working with composer **Duke Ellington** and choreographed by **Alvin Ailey**. In 1976, celebrating America's Bi-Centennial, he danced and at the same time, played the violin, was caller and baton twirler in *de Milles, Texas Fourth*. He was acclaimed in the roles of *The Moor* and *Iago* in *The Moor's Pavane* and *A Follower* in *The Trader* by Limón. In 1973 he was asked to film his ballet *Some Times* for Bavarian TV. As well, his major accomplishments were performances in **Jerome Robbins'** NY Expo: *Opus Jazz*, *Fancy Free* and *Les Noces*, *Mercutio* in **Antony Tudor's** *Romeo and Juliet*, *Dark Elegies*, *Jardin Aux Lias* (*Lilac Garden*), *Pillar of Fire* and *Gala Performance* and *Alias* in *Billy The Kid* from **Eugene Loring**. He performed the pas de deux and solo in **Sir Kenneth MacMillan's** *Concerto* and **George Balanchine's** *Theme and Variations*. He also performed solo roles **Harold Landers** *Etudes*, **Tomm Rudd's** *Polyandron*, *Miss Julie* by **Birgit Cullberg** and *Les Patineurs* by Ashton. His performances extended into other de Mille's ballets such as *Rodeo*, *Fall River Legend* and *A Rose for Miss Emily*. In 1972 he performed as a guest artist with the London Festival Ballet and staged his Mendelssohn *Symphony* for the company. As well, he created *Ontogeny* for the Royal Swedish Ballet (RSB) before bringing it to ABT. That same time he staged his Brahms *Quintet* for the RSB and he introduced José Limón to legendary premier dancer and close friend, **Erik Bruhn** at a private dinner at his NY apartment. They were both long time admirers of each other but had never met. Bruhn was the Artistic Director of the RSB and subsequently invited Limón to stage two works for the RSB, *There is a Time* and *The Moor's Pavane*.

While still with ABT, he choreographed and directed Shakespeare plays for the New York Shakespeare Festival and in 1971 he was asked by **Joseph Papp** and **Bernard Gerstein** to 'Doctor' and re-choreographed the Broadway, National Company and London's West End Tony award-winning hit musical version of *Two Gentlemen from Verona*. In 1972 he conceived the staging and choreographed **Tom Stoppard's** *Jumpers* starring **Brian Bendford** and **Jill Clayburgh**, which appeared at the Kennedy Center and the Billy Rose Theater on Broadway. In 1975 he choreographed the original Broadway musical version of *Good Time Charlie* starring **Joel Grey**, which opened at the Palace Theater on Broadway with additional staging by **Ona White**.

Still performing with ABT, working around the world and on Broadway, in mid 1971 - 1972 he co-founded the Cleveland Dance Center in Cleveland, Ohio with **Ian (Ernie) Horvath**, and four years later as an out come of their school in 1976, they founded Cleveland Ballet and renamed the school as the official School of Cleveland Ballet. They invited prima ballerina Cynthia Gregory to dance with the company where she appeared each season as permanent guest artist and Nahat created over five new works for her and continued dancing in major premieres such as *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*. Together they danced in, *Brahms Quintet*, *Grand Pas Classique*, *Grand Pas de Dix*, *In Concert*, and *MacMillan's Concerto*. In addition to his dancing with ABT, and starting the new Cleveland Ballet, he choreographed **Anne Bancroft's** ballet sequences and staged additional scenes in the film *The Turning Point*, and he played himself in the same movie appearing on the big screen in 1977. In a short time, Cleveland Ballet would develop into

what New York and International writer, Walter Terry would describe as “one of America’s freshest and fastest growing companies in the country.” And Clive Barnes said, “something is happening at Cleveland Ballet – a company to seriously watch...” It made its New York City debut at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1979 and broke box office records presenting two programs with six ballets of works by Nahat, Horvath including Kurt Jooss’s *The Green Table*. Write **Doris Herring** wrote, “this Company is what ballet in America is all about...” It toured the East Coast of America and appeared in Toronto where Erik Bruhn said, “after only five years, this company has no right to be this good this young...” It would last for the next 28 years and beyond. Nahat became the Company's sole artistic director in 1983 when Horvath retired from the Company.

At the Cleveland Ballet, Nahat created over 80 works including major productions that were the lifeblood of the company continuing to perform in *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *Coppélia*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Giselle*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and an original Holiday two-act ballet, *The Gift*. These ballets along with *Celebrations* and *Odd* have broken box office records making them individually the most profitable ballets at their premier performances. His *Carmina Burana* has continued to be a sell out at each performance since 1997. He has performed in his own *The Nutcracker* without missing a season for 30 years.

He has commissioned music for dozens of works and continued to stage major works by Balanchine and performed in *The Four Temperaments* and again, *Theme and Variations*. He took his company of dancers on tour, choreographed and danced in *Paint Your Wagon* starring **Gordon MacRae** produced by the **Kenley Players**. He continued to bring in works by Massine, Tudor, Limón, Juilliard class mates **Louis Falco**, **Lar Lubovitch** and **Murray Louis** created *By George* for Nahat. Works by Jooss and **Flemming Flindt** and American choreographers Smuin, **Donald McKayle**, and **Murray Louis** were presented during the 1990’s and he traveled to Paris to meet with legend, **Roland Petit** and brought his *Carmen* to the company in 1990. Ballet San Jose is the only company in the America that has been allowed to produce the full *Carmen* by Petit. Ballet San Jose’s long relationship with **Flemming Flindt** reached back to the early 1970’s. Ballet San Jose is a repository of Flindt’s greatest works. His discovery and reproduction and choreography of **August Bournonville’s** *The Toreador* is also the only one of its kind in the world. He recreated the role of *Akaky Akakievich* for Nahat in *The Overcoat*. Flindt and Nahat dedicated these performances to the memory of the their friend and worlds greatest dancer, **Rudolf Nureyev**.

Other notable productions he choreographed were, *Tommy* starring **Bette Midler** for the Seattle Opera and *Die Fledermaus* for **Cynthia Gregory** and **Beverly Sills** at New York City Opera. He co-conceived with writer of *The New Yorker* magazine, **Brendon Gill**, directed and choreographed the production of *Meeting Mr. Ives* based on the life of American composer Charles Ives for Lenox Arts Center in Massachusetts, and the San Francisco Opera. He later created the ballet *Things Our Fathers Loved* expanding his idea of using Ives songs and orchestral pieces based on the things American fathers loved. He has appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show with Gwen Verdon dancing *I’m a Brass Band* from *Sweet Charity* and Carol Baker in *Diamonds are a Girls Best Friend*. He also choreographed *Aida* for Cleveland Opera and choreographed and danced a solo at the

Grand Ball as *The Famous Nahat!* in *Die Fledermaus*. In 1985 he choreographed **Igor Stravinsky's** *Renard* for the Cleveland Orchestra under conductor **Christoph von Dohnányi** and its premiere was at the Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center, New York City. On that same evening Nahat flew back to Sea World where he choreographed and performed with his Cleveland Ballet at the opening ceremony of the new Penguins Pavilion in Puttin' On the Ritz where he tap danced as a Penguin and swam with Sahmu, the killer whale. He conceived and staged the gala, *An Evening for Agnes* with guest artists such as composer Morton Gould, and staged her two most famous works, *Fall River Legend* and *Rodeo* for that event. Agnes de Mille received a 10-minute standing ovation when she appeared on stage and the company with all the guests received another 13 minute standing ovation at the end of the performance. Nahat toured and performed solo with de Mille in a demonstration of *Dances Through the Ages* with de Mille narrating.

In 1984 Nahat prepared his company for their opening performances in their new home at the State Theater, Playhouse Square in *Celebrations* and *Ode* a full evening work to Beethoven's 7th and 9th Symphonies in their entirety. In 1985, Nahat collaborated with the Ballet Guild of San Jose Chairwomen **Karen Loewenstern** and Vice Chairwomen **Anita Del Grande** in the co-venture between San Jose, California and Cleveland, Ohio known as Cleveland San Jose Ballet. He fashioned one of the most highly acclaimed ballet companies in the country and developed two internationally known schools in both cities and continued created over 100 works for his company and others. It became a model in the United States in ballet co-ventures between cities and the longest running successful co-venture in history. He presented other companies to his audiences including Twyla Tharp Dance Company, the Royal Birmingham Ballet, Dance Theater of Harlem, American Ballet Theater, The Joffrey Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, The Houston Ballet, The Moscow Ballet Theater, Sydney Dance Company, Paul Taylor Dance Company, The Martha Graham Dance Company and José Limón Dance Company. In 1996 he conceived, choreographed and directed his ground breaking *Blue Suede Shoes* set to 36 original songs by **Elvis Presley**, created a National Tour of the work and televised it for Public Television where it appeared on 350 stations raising funds for PBS. It received two Emmy nominations for the best broadcast in dance. It also broke box office records at its premiere in Cleveland and San Jose. Cleveland San Jose Ballet performed full seasons in both Cleveland and San Jose communities for 15 years together until the Cleveland based company folded after over 30 years serving the greater Cleveland and Northeast Ohio and it was reborn as Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley in October 2000 (now Ballet San Jose) and instantly, once again, became the newest professional ballet company in America opening with a new repertory three weeks later in San Jose, California, its new home base. In 2000 he created the staging and choreography in *Sampson and Delilah* as a gift to the Opera before leaving Cleveland for San Jose.

In 2005, his collaboration with **Ann Woo**, **Phil Young** and **Yong Yao** of Chinese Performing Arts of America (CPAA) resulted in the ground breaking hit 3 act ballet, *Middle Kingdom Ancient China*. He traveled to China three times to supervise the building of the sets and costumes. Nahat has choreographed works for American Ballet Theatre, Atlanta Ballet, and the Royal Swedish Ballet, and staged many of his ballets for Hartford Ballet, The London Festival Ballet, Ballet Nuevo Mundo de Caracas, St. Louis

Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, and many others. In 1993, he created the collaboration with Cleveland San Jose Ballet, Atlanta Ballet and artistic director **Bobby Barnett** and Ballet Nuevo Mundo de Caracas, former ABT colleague and ballerina/director Zhandra Rodriguez. He formed what was an unprecedented three major ballet company performance cycle of productions that allowed them to work together presenting performances from coast to coast. He is a five-time recipient of the Cleveland Arts Prize's and two Cleveland Magazine Arts Prize Awards. He was the most recognized person in the city of Cleveland above the major in a survey during the 1990's and, in 1995 he received the American Dance Guild Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance in New York City. Since 2000 he has served as Artistic Director of New York's Usdan Center for the Creative and Performing Arts ballet program and since 2009 serves as advisor and teacher. In 2002 he invited **Lainie Kazan**, Broadway stage, screen and television star to perform with the Ballet San Jose in his revival of In Studio D. In 2002 he received the California Dance Educators Association Award presented at San Jose State University and, in 2005 Nahat received the Arts Council Silicon Valley Artists Fellowship for Choreography. In 2008, he was presented with the Dance Master of America Award for Lifetime Achievement for the advancement of dance in America and the world. In 2010 he received the ABBY award from the Arts Council Silicon Valley for Leadership in the Arts and a special recognition for 45 years Tenure in the Arts.

In addition to leading Ballet San Jose and its professional school, Nahat serves as choreographer, judge and teacher for competitions, seminars and companies throughout the world. He was asked by **Doris Herring** to teach The Art of Choreography at college campuses across the United States. He was invited four times to Denmark, Copenhagen where he taught the art of choreography, *pas de deux* (dance for two or partnering) and repertory classes at the prestigious Bartholin International Ballet Seminar. Nahat served as emcee at the US International Ballet Competition (USIBC) in Jackson, Mississippi with Broadway Star, **Ann Ranking**, taught the competitors daily classes, taught The Art of Choreography class and coordinated the choreography for the Competition Gala. As well he has served on the International Selection Committee over the past 16 years at the prestigious USIBC. Nahat has also served as teacher and judge at The International Ballet and Modern Competition at USA International Ballet Competition, Nagoya and Tokyo, Japan and Copenhagen, Denmark. In 2010 he was invited to Tokyo, Japan to teach and judge at the Nippon Ballet Association Competition and he returned in 2011.

His proudest achievement for Ballet San Jose was his work coordinating the China Goodwill and Cultural Exchange Between Two Great Nations Tour of 2008. His work took him to China eight times over a 4-year period developing the tour, which took the company to an unprecedented eight major cities in China during five weeks starting in Shanghai where Ballet San Jose performed in Balanchine's Serenade and Nahat's Carmina Burana with the Shanghai Symphony and 135 singers of the Festival Choral of Shanghai. Other programs included Nahat's The Firebird, Ontogeny, Pas de Cinq from Swan Lake Act I, Mendelssohn Symphony, and Introduction to Dance. He worked closely with international known **Sylvia Young** and continues a close collaboration with her as Ballet San Jose's Overseas Travel Advisor. His relationship with the Chinese Ministry of Culture and arts organizations throughout China continues today in a stream of communication and collaboration of Good Will.

In January of 2011 Nahat will once again collaborate with **Ann Woo** from CPAA to creating the new International Arts Competition in San Jose, California. Ballet San Jose's 2010-2011 season celebrated its 25th Anniversary of performing and presenting professional dance in San Jose, California and the greater Bay Area.

No longer with the company he developed, after 40 years as Founding Artistic/Executive Director of Ballet San Jose, in January 2012, he set his sights on his newest company unveiling Theatre Ventures International School and Productions (TVI) in San Jose in April 2012. In 2012 he created a new production entitled YULAN a multi-media international cultural extravaganza with its world premiere-taking place on November 28, 2012 in Dalian, China. For the same troupe, a new idea of a Nutcracker entitled TERRACOTTA NUTCRACKER. Working closely with two of China's theatrical leaders, **Qi Chinsheng** and **Zhao Bin** with the Dalian Acrobatic Troupe in Dalian, China, Nahat arranged and toured the 105 performers in both productions of the Dalian Acrobatic Troupe of Dalian to California where he presented them in San Jose, Pasadena and Los Angeles in 2013. In March of 2013 Nahat staged a new work for **Charles Anderson's** Company C performing in Walnut Creek, San Francisco and the Bay Area, California. In 2014 he staged his *Pas de Cinq* except from his full length SWAN LAKE for Menlowe Ballet and will also recreate his classical ballet from 1977, IN CONCERT for Menlowe Ballet. On August 1, 2014 he produced **Dionne Warwick** in concert at the Center for the Performing Arts in San Jose for the Sister City International Conference. TVI will open is Fall Semester ballet classes in August 2014 and will end the semester on December 20, 2014.