

Unveiling the Mastermind: William Forsythe And The Creation Of 21st Century Ballet

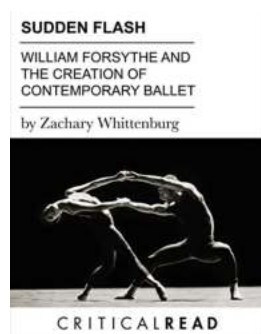
Critical Read

When it comes to revolutionizing the world of ballet, one name stands out above all others: William Forsythe. This visionary choreographer, born on December 30, 1949, in New York City, has pushed the boundaries of traditional ballet, redefining the art form for the 21st century. With his innovative approach, Forsythe has managed to captivate audiences worldwide, leaving a lasting impact on the world of dance.

Journey to Mastery

William Forsythe during a rehearsal

William Forsythe's journey into the world of dance began at an early age. He started studying ballet at eight years old, training in classical ballet techniques in his hometown of New York City. At the age of 14, he moved to Jacksonville, Florida, where he continued his ballet education at the School of the Jacksonville Ballet Theatre.



Sudden Flash: William Forsythe and the Creation of 21st-Century Ballet (Critical Read)

by Encyclopaedia Universalis, (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

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After completing his formal training, Forsythe joined the Joffrey Ballet in 1971. During his time with the Joffrey Ballet, he had the opportunity to work with renowned choreographers such as Rosalind LeBlanc, Gerald Arpino, and Robert Joffrey himself. These experiences allowed Forsythe to develop a deep understanding of ballet's traditional form and structure.

The Birth of a Visionary

However, it wasn't until Forsythe became the resident choreographer of the Frankfurt Ballet in 1984 that he truly began to make his mark on the world of dance. It was here that he started experimenting with unconventional and avant-garde movement techniques, breaking away from the rigid rules of classical ballet.

William Forsythe's iconic ballet piece "In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated"

Forsythe's groundbreaking work, "In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated," premiered in 1987 at the Paris Opera Ballet. This piece marked a turning point in his career and gained international recognition. With its athletic and complex choreography, it challenged the traditional notions of ballet, showcasing Forsythe's unique style and artistic vision.

Following the success of "In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated," Forsythe continued to create innovative and thought-provoking ballets. His works, including "Artifact" and "Enemy in the Figure," explored the limits of the human body and pushed the

boundaries of what ballet could be. Forsythe's choreographic language became synonymous with athleticism, intricate partnering, and intricate spatial patterns.

A New Movement Language

At the core of Forsythe's approach to choreography is his belief that ballet is a living art form that should constantly evolve. He focused on the idea of "improvisation as structure," allowing dancers to have creative input and freedom within the framework of his choreography. This approach challenged the traditional hierarchical structure of ballet companies and encouraged a more collaborative and dynamic creative process.

Forsythe's innovative approach to ballet also involved integrating technology into his choreographic practice. He started incorporating digital media and interactive installations to enhance the audience's experience and create immersive performances. With his use of motion-sensing technology and real-time data visualization, he brought ballet into the digital age, further blurring the lines between dance and technology.

A Legacy That Continues

William Forsythe coaching dancers

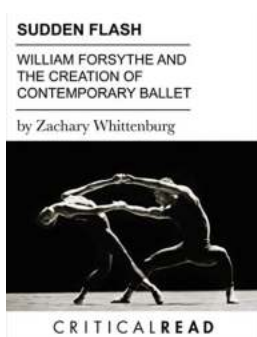
Throughout his illustrious career, William Forsythe has received numerous accolades and recognition for his contributions to the world of ballet. He has been honored with prestigious awards, including the Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance and the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in Dance at the Venice Biennale.

But Forsythe's impact extends beyond his own work. Through the Forsythe Company and his role as a guest choreographer, he has mentored and inspired a

new generation of dancers and choreographers. His approach to ballet has influenced the way dance is taught, performed, and conceptualized, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to shape the future of the art form.

William Forsythe's relentless pursuit of innovation and his fearless exploration of the possibilities of ballet have transformed the art form, propelling it into the 21st century. With his distinct style and visionary approach, Forsythe has reimagined ballet, pushing it beyond its traditional boundaries and into uncharted territories. His legacy as one of the most groundbreaking choreographers of our time is undeniable, and his influence will continue to shape the future of dance for generations to come.

Alt attribute for the main image: William Forsythe during a rehearsal



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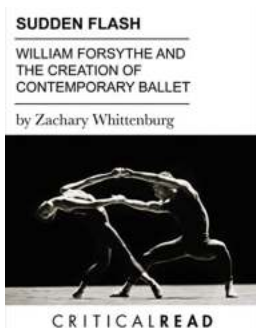
In 1987 an American choreographer working in Europe turned ballet on its head. William Forsythe's 'In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated,' created for the Paris

Opera Ballet and with music by Thom Willems, challenged the company's classical dancers to move in ways they never had.

As author Zachary Whittenburg explains, "In less than half an hour, 'In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated' decoupled the spatial-geometric tenets of ballet — that the relationships between limbs make certain positions of the body appear 'classical' in nature, or not — from the established list of steps with French names in ballet's centuries-old syllabus. Where five degrees of torsion, or *épaulement*, once gave a basic classroom shape some cosmopolitan *élan*, Forsythe pushed those tensions to their theoretical and physical breaking points." The ballet set a new standard, making classical dance more athletic and sexier than it ever had been.

Sudden Flash is the first history of this important work of art that forever changed the way we see ballet.

A regular contributor to Dance Magazine, Zachary Whittenburg is Communications and Engagement Director with at Arts Alliance Chicago. He is a member of the executive committee for the Chicago Dance History Project, serves on the artistic advisory council for High Concept Laboratories, and tweets @trailerpilot about contemporary culture and the performing arts.



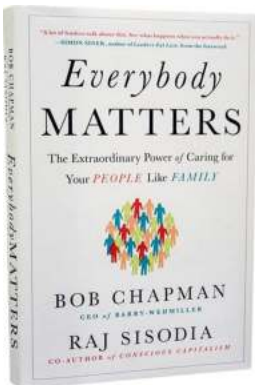
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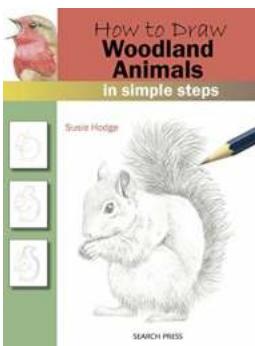
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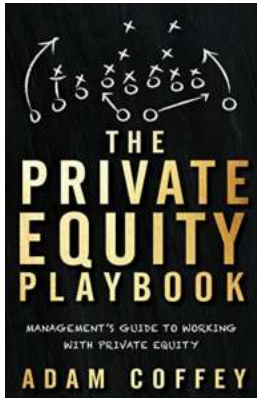
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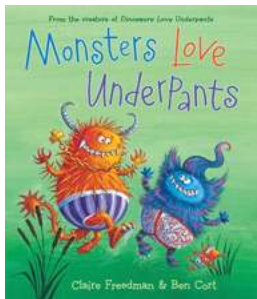
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