



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

## Brilliant Celebration of American Ballet Style

Volksoper, 10.05.2026 [ENA]

American Signatures at the Volksoper Vienna looks like a particularly stimulating and finely curated ballet evening, one that brings together four distinct American choreographic voices in a single, cohesive program. Rather than offering a single stylistic argument, the production celebrates range: musical playfulness, formal wit, emotional intimacy, and spiritual depth all appear in one evening.

That variety is exactly what makes the program so attractive. It gives the audience not only a survey of American ballet creativity, but also a vivid demonstration of how flexible and expressive the medium can be. The opening work, Jerome Robbins' *Interplay*, immediately establishes the evening's lively character. Robbins is one of the defining figures of twentieth-century dance, and his early choreography already shows the wit, buoyancy, and rhythmic intelligence that would make him so influential. In this ballet, classical ballet language is enlivened by jazz-inflected energy and youthful competition, producing a sense of freshness that is both technically polished and delightfully informal.

The work feels like a dance playground in the best sense: energetic, playful, and sharply musical. One of the most appealing aspects of *American Signatures* is the way it places choreography in dialogue with music. Jerome Robbins' *Interplay* uses Morton Gould's score to create a buoyant and stylish atmosphere, while Pam Tanowitz's *Dispatch Duet* and Ted Hearne's music deliberately twist classical expectations in witty and surprising ways. This gives the evening a modern intelligence that is highly satisfying for viewers who appreciate both form and invention. The choreography does not merely illustrate music; it responds to it, teases it, and occasionally subverts it.

Pam Tanowitz's *Dispatch Duet* promises a particularly intriguing contrast. Tanowitz is known for reshaping ballet vocabulary in fresh and unexpected ways, and here she appears to play with classical line and structure while keeping the dance lucid and highly articulate. The result is likely to be one of the evening's most thought-provoking moments, not because it rejects tradition, but because it engages it with such intelligence. That kind of formal play can be immensely rewarding when performed with precision and ease.

Lar Lubovitch's *Each In Their Own Time* adds a more intimate and emotionally concentrated dimension to the program. Created during the Covid period, the work reflects a sensibility shaped by isolation, fragility, and human closeness. The pairing of two dancers in a pas de deux setting offers a chance for subtle

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movement, tactile sensitivity, and architectural poise. Set to live piano by Johannes Brahms, the ballet bridges contemporary feeling and classical musical beauty in a way that should give the evening emotional resonance.

The final work, Jessica Lang's Let Me Mingle Tears With Thee, deepens the program further by bringing in a spiritual and lyrical dimension. Inspired by Pergolesi's Stabat mater, the piece seems designed to move fluidly between tenderness and intensity. Lang's choreography often finds beauty in sustained line and expressive flow, and that quality seems especially well suited to sacred music of this kind. It offers a graceful conclusion to the evening, one that allows the audience to leave with a sense of uplift and reflection.

What makes the program especially strong is its internal balance. The evening is not built on sameness, but on contrast, and those contrasts are carefully chosen. Lightness and gravity, wit and emotion, neoclassicism and contemporary invention all have their place. That is a mark of thoughtful programming. It respects the audience's intelligence while also giving dancers the opportunity to show versatility across very different choreographic languages.

The Volksoper is an excellent home for such a production because it can support both stylistic variety and musical nuance. The venue's tradition of accessible yet serious artistic programming makes it well suited to a mixed ballet evening that wants to be both enjoyable and artistically substantial. The result should feel polished, lively, and generous in spirit. It is the kind of program that can appeal both to ballet lovers and to audiences discovering American dance for the first time.

In sum, American Signatures looks like a wonderfully intelligent and richly varied ballet evening: stylish, humane, and full of choreographic personality. It offers the rare pleasure of seeing several major American voices in conversation, each illuminating a different aspect of dance's expressive power. That makes the performance not just enjoyable, but genuinely memorable.

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