

- The Company
- Mission Statement
- Ballet Master in Chief
- Dancers
- Orchestra
- Personnel
- Volunteers
- NYCB Alumni
- Repertory Index
- The Viewing Room
- Brief History
- NYCB Lyre
- Annual Reports
- Job Postings

Home > The Company > Repertory Index
The Chairman Dances



Photo © Costas

Music The Chairman Dances (1985) by John Adams

Choreography Peter Martins

Premiere May 14, 1988, New York City Ballet, American Music Festival, New York State Theater

Original Cast Darci Kistler

Average Length 12 min.

Combining the vocabulary of classical dance with a suggestion of traditional Chinese lyric gestures and pageantry, *The Chairman Dances* builds on the repetitiveness of its minimalist score and boldly colorful staging. It features a lead dancer and a corps of 16 women attired in brilliantly colored Chinese-style costumes, with decor by Rouben Ter-Arutunian. The ballet was inspired by a scene originally written for, but not included in, the production of Adams' opera, *Nixon in China*, that of Chairman Mao dancing with his future bride, the movie star Chiang Ch'ing. John Adams (b. 1947) grew up in New England and studied at Harvard with Leon Kirchner and Roger Sessions. He lives in San Francisco where he is music adviser to the San Francisco Symphony and a faculty member at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Influenced by John Cage and Steve Reich, Mr. Adams' music is both electronic and instrumental, and is known for its combination of minimalism and romanticism.

"BALLET IS IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT—YES. BUT FIRST OF ALL, IT IS A PLEASURE."

— George Balanchine

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