

# American<sup>®</sup> MASTERS



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## **THIRTEEN's *American Masters* presents the national premiere of *Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance* Friday, December 28 on PBS**

*Mandy Patinkin narrates the first film chronicle of the pioneering dance company founded by Robert Joffrey and Gerald Arpino*

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***American Masters Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance***, premiering nationally Friday, December 28, 2012 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings), tells the story of the first quintessentially American dance company, the Joffrey Ballet. Founders Robert Joffrey (12/24/1930 – 3/25/1988) and Gerald Arpino (1/14/1923 – 10/29/2008) revolutionized American dance by combining modern with traditional ballet to create a new and daring art form. Narrated by Tony<sup>®</sup> and Emmy<sup>®</sup> Award-winner Mandy Patinkin (*Homeland*), the 90-minute documentary is the first to chronicle the Joffrey Ballet's pioneering dance philosophy. Award-winning filmmaker Bob Hercules traces the company's struggles and triumphs: from its humble beginnings in 1956, touring the United States in a borrowed station wagon, to becoming one of the world's most exciting and prominent ballet companies.

Using rare archival footage and behind-the-scenes photos, ***American Masters Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance*** features excerpts from signature company works, including *Astarte*, *Trinity* and *Billboards* (the latter with music by Prince) as well as its breakthrough collaborations with legendary choreographers Kurt Jooss (*The Green Table*) and Leonide Massine (*Parade*). The Joffrey Ballet also commissioned early works by Twyla Tharp (*Deuce Coupe*, *As Time Goes By*), Laura Dean (*Night*, *Creative Force*) and Margo Sappington (*Weewis*, *Face Dances*), introducing these innovative choreographers to larger audiences.

***American Masters Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance*** illustrates the dynamic trajectory of the groundbreaking company through archival interviews with Joffrey and Arpino and original interviews with former and current Joffrey star dancers and ballet notables, including Gary Chryst, Trinette Singleton, Helgi Tomasson, Kevin McKenzie, Ashley Wheater, Christian Holder, Francoise Martinet, Davis Robertson, and Adam Sklute. These insiders describe what it was like to be a part of the company, Joffrey's and Arpino's different teaching styles, and how the Joffrey Ballet broke barriers by: accepting and cultivating a diverse group of talented dancers regardless of race and body type, integrating pop and rock music scores and art with social commentary, and resurrecting nearly lost early 20<sup>th</sup> Century masterpieces. They also explain how the company repeatedly resurrected itself after devastating financial and artistic setbacks such as the Rebekah Harkness funding power struggle, National Endowment for the Arts cutbacks, Joffrey's death, and the move from New York City to Chicago in 1995.

"The Joffrey's history is exciting, accessible and a great lesson to us all about the power of creative risk-taking and artistic collaboration," says Susan Lacy, series creator and executive producer of ***American Masters***.

"The Joffrey story is surprisingly dramatic, filled with several near collapses and amazing resurrections. It's a universal story of the triumph of the grit and determination of two amazing artists," says Bob Hercules, whose past films include *American Masters Bill T. Jones: A Good Man*, *Forgiving Dr. Mengele* and *Senator Obama Goes to Africa*.

Since its 1986 premiere, ***American Masters*** has earned 24 Emmy® Awards – including 8 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series since 1999 and 5 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Special – the 2012 Producers Guild Award, 12 Peabodys, an Oscar®, and 3 Grammys®. Now in its 26<sup>th</sup> season on PBS, the series is a production of [THIRTEEN](#) for [WNET](#), the parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21, New York's public television stations, and operator of NJTV. For 50 years, THIRTEEN has been making the most of the rich resources and passionate people of New York and the world, reaching millions of people with on-air and online programming

that celebrates arts and culture, offers insightful commentary on the news of the day, explores the worlds of science and nature, and invites students of all ages to have fun while learning.

To take ***American Masters*** beyond the television broadcast and further explore the themes, stories and personalities of masters past and present, the companion website (<http://pbs.org/americanmasters>) offers streaming video of select films, interviews, essays, photographs, outtakes, and other resources.

***American Masters Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance*** is a production of Lakeview Films, Inc. A presentation of THIRTEEN's ***American Masters*** for WNET. Bob Hercules is writer and director. Jay Alix and Harold Ramis are executive producers. Una Jackman and Erica Mann Ramis are producers. Mandy Patinkin is narrator. Michael Swanson and Keith Walker are directors of photography. Melissa Sterne is editor and Mark Bandy is music composer. Susan Lacy is series creator and executive producer of ***American Masters***.

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#### **About WNET**

In 2012, WNET is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of THIRTEEN, New York's flagship public media provider. As the parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21 and operator of NJTV, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to over 5 million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [Need to Know](#), [Charlie Rose](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as [Get the Math](#), [Oh Noah!](#) and [Cyberchase](#) and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [NYC-ARTS](#), [Reel 13](#), [NJ Today](#), and [MetroFocus](#), the multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region.