

## ABOUT ARB & TWYLA THARP

American Repertory Ballet has been proud to have produced several works by Twyla Tharp in the past including *Baker's Dozen* in 2006, *Octet* in 2007 and *Sinatra Suite* in 2008. The restaging of *Eight Jelly Rolls* is supported by an "American Masterpieces" award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Many of our alums have worked with Twyla Tharp. Amy Spencer and Lynda Sing danced with Ms. Tharp's company, Twyla Tharp Dance. Former ARB Ballet Mistress Elaine Kudo served in the same position for Ms. Tharp. PBS alum Andrew Pirozzi danced the lead in a touring company of Ms. Tharp's Broadway show, *Movin' Out*, set to the music of Billy Joel. And Laura Meade danced one of the lead characters in Ms. Tharp's *Come Fly Away*, based on the songs of Frank Sinatra.

This production of *Eight Jelly Rolls* has been staged by Katie Glasner and Jennifer Way. Ms. Glasner taught at Princeton Ballet School in the early 90s, and returned this past summer as a guest faculty member of our Summer Intensive, teaching choreography to aspiring young dancers. Rika Okimoto, another faculty member of our Summer Intensive, starred in Tharp's *Moving Out* and *Come Fly Away* and has given master classes in Tharp movement at Princeton Ballet School.

## ABOUT ACCESS & ENRICHMENT

*American Repertory Ballet's Access & Enrichment department is dedicated to exposing New Jersey communities to the art form of dance, as active participants and informed observers, and to develop life-long dance enthusiasts.*

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# Eight Jelly Rolls



Photo: Brittany Fridenstine. Courtesy of Valerie Ford Photography



AMERICAN REPERTORY BALLET  
PRINCETON BALLET SCHOOL

## ABOUT EIGHT JELLY ROLLS

*The following abstract is provided by twylatharp.org*

Set to late-1920s jazz by Jelly Roll Morton, *Eight Jelly Rolls* marks Tharp's first music-inspired dance. At once suggesting a nostalgic nod to the "old guys," as Tharp has referred to the early masters of Jazz, America's "classical" music, and taking a fresh look at jazz dancing, the eight-part suite has its dancers riding the crest and swimming in the waves of Morton's sly, colorful and suave compositions. While each of the six dancers involved gets to make some individual mark, three dominate as the focus remains fluid, shifting between who's in the foreground and who's in the background, or, more precisely, who's the lead and who's the back-up. Consistently, one downstage dancer assumes the position of a lead performer, while the others hang back, smoothly drilling away upstage, as the "back up" unit.

After an opening, introducing the performers, Jelly Roll Morton's "Shreveport Stomp" accompanies a kind of game between two of three leading dancers.

"Mournful Serenade," gives one of the two dancers playing their game, a chance to build a solo of her own by way of personally choosing what of the movement "motifs" she chooses to create her spontaneous dance.

For "Black Bottom Stomp," the trio of prominent dancers take charge intermixing pratfalls and hand-jive movements that have the weight and texture of sly pantomime.

In "Strokin' Away," a solo made for Tharp herself and nicknamed "The Drunk," one of the leading "characters" has slipped away from the "crowd," and in a sequence of slipping, sliding and melting maneuvers, with rubbery pratfalls like a burlesque comic's, the loner seeks solace in a kind of dreamtime away from the real world.

The last of the Morton selections, "If Someone Would Love Me," recapitulates the soloist-to-back-up scheme and, incorporating dance forms such as the Black Bottom and the Charleston with those of pure Tharpian invention, the affair wraps up its world jazz dance and jazz-artist characters.

Tharp has referred to the witty and slippery world of her *Eight Jelly Rolls* as one inspired by the plain-faced and deeply original humor of masterly comedic filmstar Buster Keaton. As the individual dancers strut and stride through their musically attuned and witty dance moves, their spiraling and spinning produces stage pictures dotted with vestigial gestures, reminiscent of those jazz performers make when blissfully lost within their music.

## LEARN MORE

American Repertory Ballet's Website has additional resources about this piece:

<http://goo.gl/yV186>

Dancer Audra Johnson talks about Eight Jelly Rolls:

<http://goo.gl/BEpbR>

Photo: Michelle de Fremery  
Courtesy of Valerie Ford Photography

