BILL’S CAPTIONS AND DESCRIPTION OF IMAGES

CAPTIONS:

1. *Apollo Instructs a Muse.*  Attic kylix, c. 450 BC.

George Balanchine’s bakket *Apollon Musagète* (Apollo, leader of the Muses), 1978, shows the god born as a young man and always remaining young. He is no sooner born that he starts teaching three of his nine Muses the skills by which each is known. The idea for Balanchine’s ballet goes back to at last 5th century Greece, as in this drinking-cup where the young god teaches a Muse whose special skill is, like his, in playing the lyre and singing words as she plays. This Muse is probably Clio, the most important of the nine Muses because she is the muse of epic narratives like Home’s *Iliad*. Her name means, *She who gives fame.* Note the strange combination, to us, of Apollo’s full frontal nudity and his robe. As a god of the perfection of the matured adolescent physique of a young man, he is most often depicted nude. Recent studies have shown that the abdomen or ‘six-pack’ of Greek male gods is depicted as something larger and more developed than any human ever achieves. So he may also be displaying his divine six-pack.

2. *Artemis with Dress and Bow.* c. 530 BC Reconstruction of Peplos Kore (as Athena) by Vincenz Brinkmann, 2004.

Artemis was Apollo’s twin sister, and they both had bows of gold or silver. Artemis used her bow for hunting and for sending death by illness to individuals; Apollo used his bow to send plagues to whole populations, and also to kill those who offend and anger him. Artemis, though a virgin goddess, aided women in childbirth, and cared for the very wild beasts she hunted. Apollo also was a god of contradictions. With the curved strung instrument we call a bow he sends death, often with arrows of plague, while with the curved strong instrument we call a lyre he gave the Greeks the very flower of life, music and dance and song The Greeks painted their statues and temples in vivid colors; ancient Greece was not all white. In this statue of an adolescent girl believed to be Artemis, modern technicians have reconstructed the original paint on plaster casts. Whereas Apollo is usually depicted nude, Artemis is always depicted clothed in a robe of some kind, as in this stature here. Itcome from the century before the images of classical Fifth Century Athens, in an art style called ‘archaic’ which precedes the classical style a century later, and rejoices in elaborate patterns, as on her dress, rather than the classical style’s aim at reducing forms to their simplest essence.

3. *Apollo and Dionysus.* Apollo on West Pediment of Temple of Zeus at Olympia; [2nd century Roman statue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Roman_sculpture) of Dionysus after a [Hellenistic model](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_culture), Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Another immortal son of Zeus who forever remained a young man in late adolescence was Dionysus, god of wine, transformation, masks, and theater. Whereas Apollo was always depicted as a paragon of athletic fitness, Dionysus came to be depicted as softer and more voluptuous, often with grapes in his hair, as befits his perpetual revelry, with the Muses and with his other female followers called Maenads (“Maddened Women”). The philosopher Plato in his old age reflectively joins the two gods and the Muses as gods who accompany our mortal dancing: “The gods, in pity for us, have granted to us as fellow dancers and chorus leaders Apollo and the Muses, and with them a third, Dionysus.” Apollo’s dances are ordered, Dionysus’ are wild.

4. *Apollo Stares Down at Marsyas.* Perugino, 1495, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

If you are a mortal you should not boast to a god that you are better at anything than he or she is. Marysas played a wind instrument, and challenged Apollo to a musical contest as to whether he played his instrument better than Apollo played his lyre. Since the Muses were the judges they naturally gave the prize to their chorus-leader from whom they had learned everything, Apollo. Apollo then promptly flayed Marsyas for his presumption. In this Renaissance painting by Perugino Marsyas has no goat-features, and may be a faun, not a satyr; satyrs are wild bearded drunks and rapists, fauns are shy adolescent boys. Over time the Greek myths, as reinterpreted in Rome and the Italian Renaissance, took on many other fascinating interpretations. Some think Perugino meant the serene Apollo here to be the Sun, presiding over order of the heavenly bodies, and he flayed Marsyas for challenging the cosmic order.

5. *Exterior of the Temple of Apollo Bassae.* Temple of Apollo the Healer, Bassae, Peloponnesus, Greece, late 5th century BC, designed by Iktinos.

The most famous Greek temple is the Parthenon, and the same architect who designed it designed the Temple of Apollo at Bassae not much later. Bassae means ‘The Gorges’, and its temple was built on a wild height overlooking many gorges, with no other sign of human settlement in sight. Its formal name was the Temple of Apollo Epikourios, the ‘healer’, in thanksgiving for the departure of a plague, thought to have both been sent by Apollo and removed by Apollo. On a good day you can see from it all the way to the distant seas to the west and to the south. Iktinos’ Parthenon is the ultimate temple at the center of a great city; his Bassae Temple is the ultimate temple in the wilds.

6. *Interior of the Temple of Apollo Bassae Looking and Plan from Above.*

The Bassae temple is the temple we know to first combine all three types of classical columns in one building. The Doric type of column is severe, no ornament at the top, ‘masculine’, like a soldier marching into battle. The Ionic column, has a grscroll ornament at the top in the form of a spiral, is ‘feminine’, graceful, more slender that the earlier Doric. The Corinthian column, which is known to us for the first time in this temple, has a more ornate scroll at the top, with acanthus leaves. The Greeks saw their temple columns as trees in a sacred grove, but also as people with generic personalities expressed both by their costume and their posture.

7. *Pantheon, Shaft of Light from the Eye in the Sky.* Rome, built in present form by the Emperor Hadrian c. 126 AD.

As the Parthenon in Athens is the most famous Greek building, the Pantheon in Rome is the most famous Roman. As rebuilt by the Emperor Hadrian from an earlier temple, it has sublimely simple geometrical design. Its appearance from the outside is a dome, the upper part of which, if continued round to the ground by the mind’s eye, is a perfect sphere, and its lower part is the beginning of a cube whose upper half has been cut away to allow the sphere of the dome to emerge from it. It is supremely classical in that it strips its elements down to the simplest possible geometrical components, the cube and the sphere. The dome has an ‘oculus’ or ‘little eye’ at the top, a small space open to the sky through which the sun’s shafts descend on different parts of the ornate interior at different seasons and different times of day. That mysterious shaft of light can be whatever you make of it, since Hadrian left no clues. Some say it symbolizes the sky of the whole world funneled down on the ordered space of the Roman Empire, which was at its largest around the time Hadrian was emperor. A backdrop of it in a ballet would be the ultimate stage setting.

8. *Palladio, Villa Rotonda in Spring.* In Vicenza, in the countryside near Venice, designed by Andrea Palladio and begun in 1567.

Andrea Palladio was the Renaissance architect most famous reviving the architectural styles of anb ancient Rome. The Villa Rotonda here was his most famous design for private residence. It was as admired in the Renaissance as Hadrian’s Pantheon temple was admired in ancient Rome, and is in fact modeled on that masterpiece. The central part of the building is a set of rooms in the form of a square, and they give on to a central circular domed hall in the form of a circle, originally with an oculus in its dome to let in light, just like Hadrian’s. The building is perfectly symmetrical, and on all four sides you see the same ‘portico’, an ancient Greek roofed porch, often with columns, and Palladio, aiming at reviving the antiquity of Greece and Rome, went all the way and added triangular pediments on each, as in the Parthenon, and statues of Greek deities. The building’s mathematically precise symmetry, as at Bassae but not quite so wild, faces out in each of its four symmetrical sides in the direction on a different kind of landscape—a forested slope, a gradual hill slanting downwards, a valley, and a distant view. It is a deep instinct of classicism to put mathematically precise formed buildings in the wilds or among fertile landscapes. Thus geometrical beauty created by man is set right next to organic forms given us by nature—as in the stage settings of *The Sleeping Beauty.*

9. *Epidauros Theater, Summer Sunset.*  Epidauros, north-eastern Peloponnesos, Greece, 4th century BC.

Still used for outdoor dramatic performances, the Theater at Epidauros seats 15,000 spectators. Like most ancient Greek theaters—and also like the Apollo Temple at Bassae— it is designed so that the spectators will look down on acircular dancing floor called the orchestra (‘space for dancing’). It was used by the chorus, dancers who moved to the same rhythm both while dancing and chanting words-- a central feature of ancient drama. The spectators would see above the orchestra a slightly elevated rectangular stage set, and beyond that a natural landscape meant by the designer to be part of the larger view. Tragic and comic plays were performed from dawn to dusk in the daytime only, starting in spring and ending in winter. This picture shows the summer sun setting at the end of an ancient day’s dramatic performances.

10. *Perspective with Igor Dancing.* Excerpt from "The Topological Picturebook" (Springer Verlag 2006), visible online at

http://new.math.uiuc.edu/math403/public/perspective/alberti/alberti.html

Italian architect and art theorist Leon-Battista Alberti gave the West perspective theory in his book *On Painting* written in 1435, in the early Renaissance. This illustration of “Igor Dancing”, from a book published in 2006 will give you the basics if you just spend a couple of minutes with it. Happily for us, the subject of the painting is an imaginary dancer, a stick-figure named Igor, holding some kind of long thin bar as he dances. At the upper left is the eye of a viewer look at a painting. The checkerboard floor and the large stick figure Igor dancing on it is what the artist would have been looking at when he or she reduced this three dimensional dance in real time to a frozen two-dimensional image on a canvas. Look at how the eye of the viewer has three lines going out from it through a three-dimensional rectangle. You will see on the largest visible side of the rectangle the image of Igor dancing as he appears on the canvas. He is smaller than the Igor actually on the checkerboard in real time, but the angle of his feet and hands and bar are the same. That smaller Igor on the front side of the three-dimensional rectangle is Igor as he appears on the canvas when painted using Alberti’s perspective system.

11. *Raphael’s “School of Athens” with vanishing point.* Fresco painted 1510/1511 for a wall in the Vatican Palace in Rome.

This fresco in the Vatican depicts most of the great thinkers of Greek antiquity, against a vast noble architectural backdrop presented in perfect perspective. In this image a set of straight lines in three colors has been added to show the vanishing point on the horizon line, on which the blue and the red and the orange lines all converge. The vanishing point doesn’t point to any figure in the painting; it points to a place right between the two most important thinkers in the picture, Plato and Aristotle. The two top red perspective lines follow the architecture of the great space, a perfectly symmetrical temple. The 21 thinkers all have expressive postures, and against the architectural backdrop they resemble dancers occupying the space of the stage against some painting of a classical building. It is like a ballet with 21 principals on stage and no *corps de ballet.*

12. *Mariinsky Theater, Czar’s Box.* Mariinsky Theater, opened in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1860.

Ballet as evolved in Europe from the 16th through the 19th century was mostly a court art, and a privileged central viewing point was always reserved for the monarch. A French king or a Russian Czar would sit in a special central box on what we nowadays call the first tier. This photograph shows the Czar’s box directly opposite the center of the stage. From that box the Czar would view the ballet in much the same way the eye of a spectator looking at a painting in Alberti’s perspective system would see the real life scene the painting depicts, as reduced to a two-dimensional space on the canvas. The Czar would see a three-dimensional dance, but like a painting it would be framed by the proscenium. The intricate patterns of the dancers would be best seen from *his* perspective, and the choreographers had that fact in mind when they choreographed for him. Classical ballet takes its place along with Renaissance painting as an intelligible ordering of buildings (background) and figures (foreground) in rationalized space.