

One More Pirouette, Please

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The refusal of the striking orchestra members of the New York City Ballet to accept the settlement proposed by the State Mediation Board has forced the company to cancel its winter season and to consider canceling its spring season, too. If it came to that, this strike could well bring down the curtain on 30 years of struggle by which Lincoln Kirstein and George Balanchine created one of the finest companies in the world in a country with no classical dance tradition.

The musicians apparently did not believe that a company running a deficit of nearly \$2 million a year had exhausted its capacity to lengthen the work season and raise wages. Their aim has been parity—that special New York contract curse—with other orchestras of Lincoln Center. But some artists are clearly more equal

than others. The City Ballet has a no-star system with salaries for dancers that average well below those proposed for the orchestra.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that contracts once negotiated with the general management of City Center are now made with the component companies, the City Opera and City Ballet. Their bargaining skill is not always on a par with the artistic product. And when the union members listen neither to management nor to their own officers, the merely complex becomes uncontrollable.

We all stand to lose in this confrontation. The New York City Ballet is one of the treasures of our city. Its collapse would diminish New York life as well as art.

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