First movement: Allegro vivace. The curtain rises before the music begins. Two small groups of girls begin to dance with the opening chord. As the orchestra plays the first theme and repeats it, the two groups dance in opposition, first dancing all together, then alternately following the movements of two leaders.

The ballerina appears as the second theme is announced by the oboe and strings. She dances forward in crisp, open movements to the rhythm of the melody, turning gracefully as she poses and balancing for a moment as she waits for the theme to begin anew. Her dance now becomes brisk and flourishing. She pirouettes swiftly as the two soloists join her, balances again briefly, and leaves the stage.

After the orchestra has given an intimation of the first theme and horns have played a short transition, the two boys enter to support the soloists. The ballerina returns with her partner. She dances around the stage, retires to the rear, and, as the first theme of the movement returns, leads the ensemble. On the last clipped chord she stands supported in a quick, graceful pose.

Second movement: Adagio. The corps de ballet moves slowly to the introductory passage. A second ballerina enters with her partner as the soft central theme of the movement is sounded by the oboe. She is lifted low off the floor and moves as if in slow motion, then is lifted high, her legs describing sweeping arcs in the air. Her partner supports her in long, slow lifts and held poses while the corps de ballet gathers about her. As the movement ends, the ballerina falls back in her partner’s arms.

Third movement: Allegro vivace. Here the music is spirited and lively. Six girls, in a third corps de ballet, dance forward; two couples join them to leap across the stage; and, finally, a third ballerina and her partner enter to circle the stage in broad leaps. They dance together briefly, turning rapidly in the air together, and rush off into the wings. Soon they return, repeat their dance, and lead the corps de ballet to the bright, ebullient music. At one point the boy lifts the ballerina off the floor and drops her, pushing her forward, so that she seems to bounce to the music. The entire group joins in the final measures, the corps de ballet kneeling as the ballerina is held in a graceful pose at the last chord.

Fourth movement: Allegro vivace. In the final movement, the principals of the first three movements join with a fourth ballerina and her partner in an exhilarating display of virtuosity that becomes at times a contest. The fourth ballerina and her accompanying group dance first. They are followed by the ballerina of the first movement and her corps de ballet. The ballerina of the Adagio movement appears next, then the ballerina of the third movement. The thirty-two girls who have made up the four corps de ballet now line the stage at the sides and across the back. All four ballerinas dance in their
midst, each executing the same brilliant steps. Their partners enter for their
turn, while secondary soloists dance behind them. At the close, all forty–
eight dancers – soloists and corps de ballet – join the principals in a brilliant
finale. As the last chord of the music sounds, the ballerinas turn quickly and
fall back over their partners’ arms as the secondary soloists are lifted high
behind them in a climactic tableau.

(from George Balanchine and Francis Mason,
Balanchine’s Festival of Ballet, London 1978)

(Traduzione di Klaus Ruch)

Allegro brillante,
il Quarto movimento
di Symphony in C
di George Balanchine
nella ripresa
di Colleen Neary.
Teatro alla Scala,