BALLET

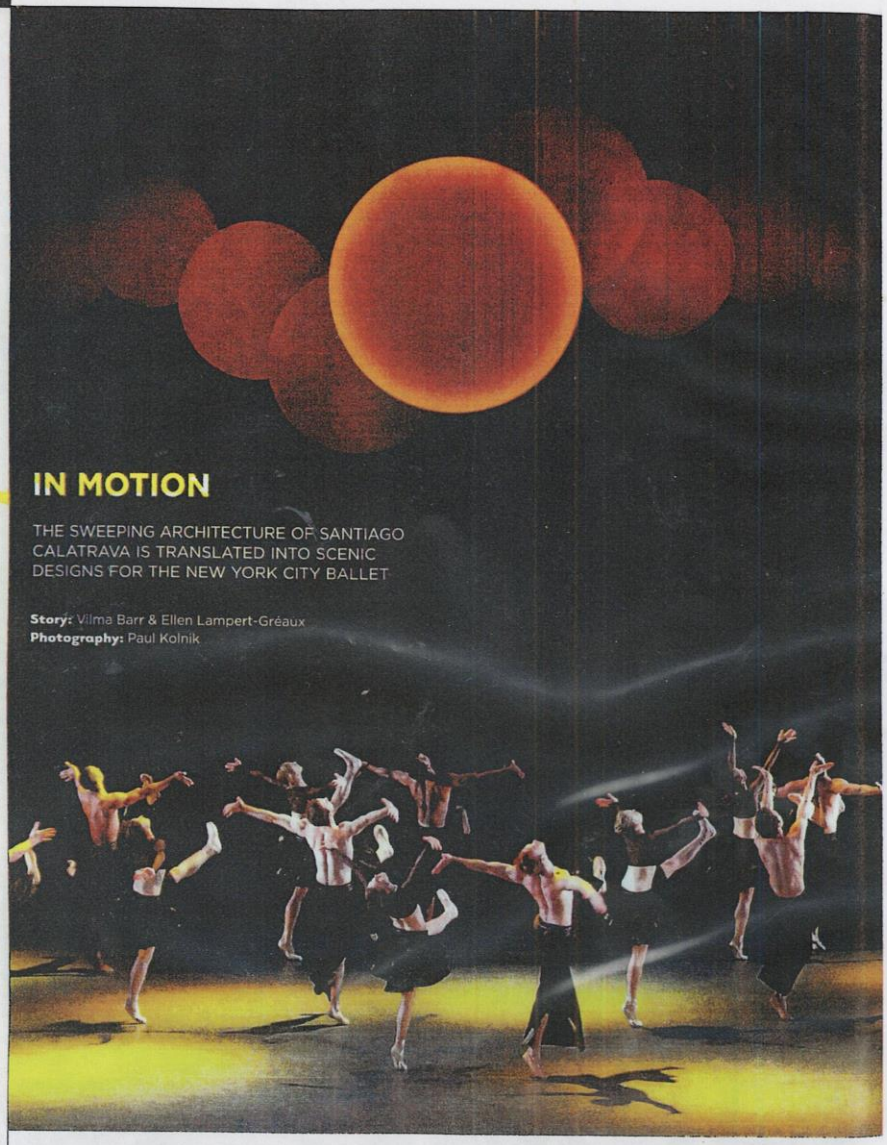
Project: sets, New York City Ballet
Location: Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York
Architect: Santiago Calatrava
Lighting Designer: Mark Stanley

Challenge:

▶ Illuminate custom sculptural elements Santiago Calatrava designed for the New York City Ballet without taking away from the mobile pieces themselves or the performance.

Solution:

▶ Each sculpture was independently illuminated based on its composition. Some were lighted with a light rope imbedded into the sculptural elements, while others were lighted using traditional theatrical spots.



IN MOTION

THE SWEEPING ARCHITECTURE OF SANTIAGO CALATRAVA IS TRANSLATED INTO SCENIC DESIGNS FOR THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET

Story: Vilma Barr & Ellen Lampert-Gréaux
Photography: Paul Kolnik

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Art and architecture combine, as Santiago Calatrava lends his unique talents to Lincoln Center and the NYC Ballet.

THIS SEASON'S "ARCHITECTURE and Dance" festival of world premieres for five new ballets presented by the New York City Ballet at Lincoln Center brought together renowned architect Santiago Calatrava and the Ballet's Stanley. Three of the scenic elements were illuminated moving sculptures, while two were painted drops.

Calatrava, trained in both architecture and engineering, is known for buildings character-

The process to design the pieces for the ballet started when Calatrava received a call from Peter Martins, the ballet's master-in-chief. A long-time admirer of Calatrava's work, Martins invited him to participate in commemorating

Center for the Performing Arts. Calatrava accepted, referring to his designs as "scenography." He designed the sets independently, in the abstract, not specifically for each ballet. "We worked to unify them into each piece and respect his design," Stanley explains. "It wasn't like having conversations with a set designer who comes in with sketches. Having sculpture on stage is a challenge in terms of to make the sets work in repertory; the sculptures have to come and go at intermission in a very short amount of time."

FLEXIBILITY
The discs are lit using NSL's Brite Strip with clear, 24-volt, 10-watt incandescent Festoon clear lamps in horizontal individual sockets.

Luce Nascosta (Unseen Light). Calatrava's suspended sculpture (left) is a large mobile hanging over the stage. At the ballet's start, it is a single glowing moon-like gold disk. As the ballet progresses, it expands via motors to a full 28 ft. in width, with four additional gold disks on either side, against a dark backdrop. Calatrava says he designed the disks to telescope out or in like a sunbeam. Built of milky, semi-translucent Plexiglas painted with metallic gold paint, the center "moon" is built like a light box, 8 ft. in diameter. It is lit from the interior using Brite incandescent Festoon clear lamps in horizontal individual sockets parallel wired to flat power wire. Lamps are spaced an inch apart. The circle is also lit from the front with Rosco R16 gel in ETC Source Four ellipsoidals to add to the glow. "The Brite Strip was brighter than any LED strip that could fit into the limited 4 in. of depth we had to work with," explains Stanley. "This gave us more intensity and coverage, especially in the middle of the concave face of the disk, which angles in toward the center."

CREATING COLOR
Philips Vari-Lite VL 3500 spotlights are used to illuminate the harp-like "Mirage" hanging Sculpture below. ETC Source Four ellipsoidal spots augment the arch lighting and the Luce Nacosta discs. Stanley also employed Wybron CXI color scrollers to slowly cross fade between colors on the arch.

For **Mirage**, Calatrava's sculpture is a 3-D, gold metallic frame to which a series of stretched cords are attached, creating a suspended harp-like structure.

"It is a large circle that breaks in half, moves and tilts toward the audience, traveling in space with the dancers moving under it," Stanley points out.

To light this sculpture, Stanley used an additional four Vari-Lite VL3500 spots perched atop 10-ft. aluminum truss towers, with two towers in each of the side wings of the stage. "The sculpture had to be lit as it came into view and track it as it moved," notes Stanley, who used all white light until the last 30 seconds of the ballet, when he added multi-color overlapping patterns. "The color came from the high-powered moving lights," he explains.

Am I Not Where You Are saw the curtains part to reveal a large double arch—27 ft. × 44 ft.— with rows of reflective surgical tubing between the arches. Stanley morphed color slowly on the arch, using five Source Fours on either side in the wings for cross light with Wybron CXI color scrollers to slowly cross fade between colors. "The tubing shimmered when the dancers moved around it," says Stanley.

At the grand finale of the ballet, the arch tips to almost a 45° angle. Here, Stanley utilized strong white backlight provided from VL3500 wash units on a pipe at the third wing upstage position. (The house rig was augmented with additional moving lights for this season's performances.) "It is very stark and harsh at the end," notes Stanley. "The large white sculpture features pliable chords, allowing the structure to move around the stage."

Stanley enjoyed the challenge of creating a world with live, kinetic sculptures. "It was fun having something three-dimensional on stage to light in addition to the dancers," he says.

Calatrava, at the opening performance, compared architecture with the dance. "In my profession, I create things that remain," he said. "It was a unique experience for me to make something for dance, which is about an instant," he said. "But, in reality, so many times, I have drawn people who seem to be dancing."

PRODUCTS USED:

1. **NSL** (Bright Strip) www.nlusa.com **Circle 201.**
2. **Philips Vari-lite** (VL3500 luminaire) www.vari-lite.com **Circle 200.**
3. **City Theatrical** (yoke) www.citytheatrical.com **Circle 199.**
4. **Wybron CXI** (color scroller) www.wybron.com **Circle 198.**

ETC (Source Four Ellipsoidals) www.etcconnect.com **Circle 197.**
Rosco (R16 gels) www.rosco.com