

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 26, 2004

Media Contacts: Rita Peer 202-268-2126
George Flood 973-468-7126
Postal Service Web Site: www.usps.com
Stamp News Release Number: 04-024

AMERICAN CHOREOGRAPHERS STAMPS DANCE

U.S. Postal Service to Dedicate Stamps Honoring Extraordinary Artists

WASHINGTON – Four choreographers of the 20th century—Alvin Ailey, George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille and Martha Graham—who left a profound mark on the language of dance will be honored by the U.S. Postal Service with commemorative postage stamps. The first-day-of-issue ceremony is scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday, May 4, at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center's Victoria Theater, One Center St., Newark, NJ. The event is free and open to the public, and will feature live performances by the New York City Ballet, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater and the American Ballet Theater showcasing each choreographer's style.



“The American Choreographers stamps vividly show both the choreographers—and a touch of the choreographies—that are so beloved by audiences around the world,” said Linda Kingsley, Vice President Strategic Planning for the U.S. Postal Service, who will dedicate the stamps. “The Postal Service is delighted to commemorate these artists, as well as the grace and beauty they created through dance, for the enjoyment of fans everywhere.”

Joining Kingsley at the ceremony will be Agnes de Mille's son, James Prude, Professor of History, Emory University, Atlanta, GA; and Sylvia Waters, former Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater company member and current Artistic Director of Ailey II.

Alvin Ailey was one of the leading choreographers of his era. His work incorporated elements of jazz, modern dance, classical ballet, and African and Caribbean movements—different styles that made tremendous demands on his dancers—and helped popularize dance in America. Born Jan. 5, 1931, in rural southeast Texas, Ailey was comforted and stimulated by the traditions of the black church, and the more vibrant life of the local roadhouse. The experiences would serve as his inspiration later in life as he sought to present the beauty and complexity of African-American culture to a diverse audience. Through the years, he choreographed for his own company, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and others, earning repeated honors. He died Dec. 1, 1989, in New York City.

A graduate of St. Petersburg's Imperial Theatre School, George Balanchine's choreography blends the classical with the modern and is intensely musical, reflecting his early interest in

becoming a composer. Balanchine created more than 200 ballets, as well as numerous dances for theater and film, and he made the New York City Ballet into one of the finest companies in the world. Balanchine created an American style of classical ballet, one that reflected the accelerating speed of life in 20th-century American cities like New York. Balanchine died in New York City on April 30, 1983. He is remembered as a brilliant choreographic artist who was idolized by many of the most famous dancers of his era.

Agnes de Mille built a bridge between the world of ballet and the Broadway musical. The genius of de Mille lay in her ability to blend the language of classical ballet, the expressive quality of modern dance and the traditions of American folk dance. The result was superior choreographic entertainment that appealed to a broad audience. She choreographed several noted musicals, using dance to advance the plot, to great critical acclaim. Also an engaging writer, de Mille published several books, including two autobiographical volumes. She died at her home in New York City on Oct. 6, 1993.

The principal founder of modern dance in America—Martha Graham—created dances distinguished by their expressive qualities and by the way they acknowledged gravity. Before Graham, dancers usually pretended they were lighter than air, not subject to the same laws of gravity that affect mere mortals. A decade after her first dance lesson, Graham established her own dance company, starring in productions that were distinguished by their sharp, angular movements and blunt gestures imbued with tension and pathos. In 1969, at the age of 75, Graham gave her last performance in “The Lady of the House of Sleep.” She continued to choreograph, teach and travel with her company until her death at age 96. An acknowledged genius in the world of dance, Graham choreographed more than 180 works in her lifetime. She died on April 1, 1991, at her home in New York City.

To see the American Choreographers stamps and other images from the 2004 Commemorative Stamp Program, visit the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop and click on “Release Schedule” in the Collector’s Corner.

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free phone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. A wide selection of stamps and other philatelic items is also available at the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop. Beautifully framed prints of original stamp art for delivery straight to home or office may be purchased at www.postalartgallery.com.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service makes deliveries to more than 141 million addresses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. Moreover, today's postage rates will remain stable until at least 2006. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 43 percent of the world's mail volume - some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year - and serves seven million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Issue: *American Choreographers*
Item Number: 456000
Denomination & Type of Issue: 37-cent Commemorative
Format: Pane of 20 with header (4 designs)
Series: N/A
Issue Date & City: May 4, 2004, Newark, NJ 07102
Designer: Ethel Kessler, Bethesda, MD
Engraver: N/A
Art Director: Ethel Kessler, Bethesda, MD
Typographer: Ethel Kessler, Bethesda, MD
Modeler: Joseph Sheeran
Manufacturing Process: Offset
Printer: Ashton Potter (USA) Ltd. (APU)
Printed at: Williamsville, NY
Press Type: Mueller Martini, A76 Modified
Stamps per Pane: 20
Print Quantity: 57 million stamps
Paper Type: Prephosphored, Phosphor 175 PMU
Adhesive Type: Pressure-sensitive
Processed at: Ashton Potter (USA) Ltd.
Colors: Black, Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, PMS 7506 (Beige)
PMS 2776 (Purple)
Stamp Orientation: Horizontal
Image Area (w x h): 1.42 x 0.84 in./36.068 x 21.336mm
Overall Size (w x h): 1.56 in.0.99 in./39.625 x 25.146 mm
Full Pane Size (w x h): 7.24 x 6.47 in./183.896 x 164.433mm
Plate Size: 240 stamps per revolution
Plate Numbers: "P" followed by six (6) single digits
Marginal Markings: © 2003 USPS • Plate numbers • Price • Header "American Choreographers" Plate
position diagram • Proprietary notices • 4 Barcodes on back
Catalog Item Number(s): 456020 Block of 4 — \$1.48
456030 Block of 10 — \$3.70
456040 Full Pane of 20 — \$7.40
456063 First Day Cover Set of 4 — \$3.00
456091 Ceremony w/FDC Set of 4 — \$8.95
456093 Full Pane w/FDC Set of 4 — \$10.40

HOW TO ORDER THE FIRST DAY OF ISSUE POSTMARK

Customers have 30 days to obtain the first day of issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local post office, by telephone at 1 800 STAMP-24, and at the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

AMERICAN CHOREOGRAPHERS COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS
POSTMASTER
2 FEDERAL SQUARE
NEWARK NJ 07102-9998.

After applying the first day of issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by June 3, 2004.