

Patricia McBride Lousada, One of Balanchine's Originals, Dies at 89

Patricia Lousada in an undated photo. George Balanchine entrusted Ms. Lousada, then known as Pat McBride, with important roles in the earliest years of New York City Ballet.
Paul Himmel

By **Roslyn Sulcas**

Jan. 28, 2019



LONDON — Patricia McBride Lousada, who was a founding member of [New York City Ballet](#) and interpreter of some of George Balanchine's seminal early works and who later became a noted cookbook author, died on Jan. 8 in London. She was 89.

The cause was a heart attack she had while riding her bicycle, her daughter Carla Capalbo said.

Ms. Lousada danced under the name Pat McBride with Ballet Society, which was founded in 1946 by Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein, and with the company after it was renamed New York City Ballet in 1948. She performed in works by Balanchine, Frederick Ashton, Merce Cunningham, Lew Christiansen and Jerome Robbins. (She is not to be confused with the principal dancer Patricia McBride, who joined City Ballet in 1959.)

Ms. Lousada was a cast member of many central works created by Balanchine, including “The Four Temperaments,” which had its premiere on Ballet Society's opening night, Nov. 20, 1946, at the Central High School of Needle Trades.

Along with dancing in the corps de ballet of Balanchine's “L'Enfant et les sortilèges” (1946), “Symphony in C” (1947) and “Symphonie Concertante” (1947), she performed the solo role of the Young Girl in “The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne” (1947), to a commissioned score by Vittorio Rieti, and the role of Eurydice in “Orpheus” (1948).

“How lovely she was, such a perfect Balanchine body, and well into a great career,” the eminent dance researcher Ann Hutchinson Guest wrote in a letter to Ballet Review in 2016.

Ms. Lousada also took part in City Ballet's first professional production, in 1948, of [Balanchine's “Serenade”](#) (1934), as the Dark Angel, and created the role of the Princess in his “Firebird” (1949).

“Her characterization grew in charm as the season progressed,” Lillian Moore wrote in Dancing Times in February 1950.

Ms. Lousada performed in two early Merce Cunningham works: “The Seasons” (1947), Ballet Society's inaugural commission from an outside choreographer, and “Games” (1950), a trio in which she appeared alongside Tanaquil Le Clercq

and Cunningham himself.

She remained friendly with Cunningham and his partner, the composer John Cage, who were frequent visitors to her London home in later years.

Ms. Lousada was also immortalized in another art form. In 1950, the photographer Paul Himmel photographed her emerging from the water on Fire Island; the portrait, [called “Botticelli Girl,”](#) was part of the 1955 “Family of Man” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Patricia Marie McBride was born on April 4, 1929, in Manhattan to Charles McBride, a stockbroker from Ballybofey, Ireland, and Marie Minon Camera, an opera singer from Piedmont, Italy. After her father lost his money in the crash of 1929, the family moved to Bronxville, N.Y., where her father was a building manager and her mother a seamstress.

Ms. Lousada, right, with her fellow ballerina Tanaquil Le Clercq in an undated photo. Ms. Lousada left City Ballet in 1951 and said she regretted that decision for the rest of her life.
via New York City Ballet

Patricia began dance classes at a young age with a local teacher in Bronxville. When she was 10, she began attending classes at the School of American Ballet, founded by Balanchine and Kirstein in 1934. She was given a scholarship when she told the school that her parents could not afford to send her more frequently.

Balanchine, one of her teachers, was “struck by Pat’s special beauty and glow,” said Nancy Lassalle, a director emeritus on City Ballet’s board, who met Ms. Lousada when they were both students at the school.

When Ballet Society was formed, Ms. Lousada was invited to join, along with several fellow students, including Le Clercq, a close friend who would become [a major ballerina](#) and Balanchine’s fourth wife.

In 1951, Ms. Lousada left City Ballet and married [the producer Carmen Capalbo](#). She expressed regret about her early retirement from ballet all her life, telling an interviewer in 2012 that she didn’t like to think back on the City Ballet years because “I ratted my chances.” Balanchine, she said, had believed in her and had been “totally disappointed” when she left.

Ms. Lousada had two children with Mr. Capalbo, but the marriage lasted just a few years. After they divorced, she danced in the original Broadway production of “Silk Stockings” and was given a small speaking role in the show because of her ability to imitate a Russian accent.

In 1957, she moved with her children to Paris; it was there that she met the photographer [Henri Cartier-Bresson](#), who became a close friend. After two years, Ms. Lousada moved back to New York, where she worked as a representative for the photographer [Gordon Parks](#) while pursuing her own interest in photography.

During that time she met Anthony Lousada, a British lawyer with many artist clients, including Henry Moore, Ben Nicolson and Barbara Hepworth. Mr.

Lousada was chairman of the Tate Gallery from 1967 to 1969 and introduced Ms. Lousada to a wide artistic circle. She moved with her children to London, and they married in 1961.

For a while she ran a small dressmaking business from the basement of their house in the Chiswick neighborhood. She later took cooking courses at the Cordon Bleu Institute and La Varenne. A chance remark to her friends Anya Sainsbury, the former Royal Ballet ballerina Anya Linden, and John Sainsbury, the head of the British grocery chain Sainsbury's, led to her first cookbook.

It was about pasta. "I think it's going to be a big thing," Ms. Lousada told them.

"Pasta Italian Style," published by Sainsbury's in 1981, was a success, and Ms. Lousada went on to write a dozen more recipe books, introducing British cooks to such exotica as burgers and tapenade.

She served as a board member of the Royal Ballet and maintained a lively social life, meeting and making new friends who were often generations younger.

In addition to her daughter Carla, Ms. Lousada is survived by three other children, Marco Capalbo, Sebastian Lousada and Isabella Lousada; five grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

After Mr. Lousada's death in 1994, Ms. Lousada reconnected with an old friend, the lawyer and law professor John Lowenthal, with whom she lived [until his death in 2003](#). Mr. Lowenthal's passion for music brought her more closely into that world, and at 80 she began to learn the piano, practicing three or four hours a day.

Ms. Lousada remained a keen gardener, cyclist and hostess until her death.

Correction: Jan. 29, 2019

An earlier version of this obituary referred incorrectly to the November 1946 performance of George Balanchine's "The Four Temperaments," of which Ms. Lousada was a cast member. It was the opening night of Ballet Society — not of New York City Ballet, the name by which the company became known in 1948.

A version of this article appears in print on, on Page B12 of the New York edition with the headline: Patricia McBride Lousada, Early Balanchine Muse, 89. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe



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