

Agnes de Mille was an American dancer, choreographer, and director who shaped the way we see both classical ballet and theatre dance. Her career marked many firsts for the ballet and theatre dance communities, for example, she choreographed *Black Ritual* for Ballet Theatre (known today as American Ballet Theatre), the first production by a serious company to feature black dancers. de Mille was never one to stay within boundaries. Her career was full of risks and new chances that ultimately broadened the horizons of ballet and theatre dance. With her choreography she sought to reflect the times and create art that was relatable and impactful to her audiences. She brought comedy and lyricism to her work that hadn't been seen before in classical ballet or in theatre. In my opinion, her work on Roger's and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* marks her innovation. Her choreography reflected the American pride that audiences were seeking at the time, when World War II was raging. She introduced plot, humor, and substance to her dances like nothing any Broadway choreographer had done before. She was able to communicate a story entirely through her choreography.

de Mille was not just a dancer and choreographer. She was highly intellectual and this only served to heighten her creative process. She wrote books about dance, gave interviews, and has been awarded with honorary doctorates from several universities. When creating her works she had fervent passion as well as a wealth of knowledge and intellectualism to draw from. She was in tune with the times and her audiences and created her pieces to suit what the world was aching to see, or to surprise audiences with things they had never expected.

de Miller said once, "The artist never entirely knows. We guess. We may be wrong, but we take leap after leap in the dark." I think this really sums up her career and contribution to the dance community. She had a passion for dance and her creative process was driven by humanity. In pursuit of her passion she never played it safe, and gave to audiences an experience that they could get behind. As a performer myself, I am inspired by her willingness to take countless leaps of faith in pursuit of her passion. She was truly an incredible woman and

her artistic process as well as her outlook on life are things I will try to emulate in my own career.