

RODEO

The Courting at Burnt Ranch

Background

Rodeo: The Courting at Burnt Ranch is a ballet in two scenes. It was choreographed by Agnes de Mille with music by Aaron Copland, and first presented by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City on October 16, 1942. *Rodeo* became the first hit ballet on an American subject and is still a favorite of audiences all over the US.

Rodeo is really a love story set on a ranch in the American Southwest around 1900. It's about a rough and tumble Cowgirl back in a time when girls were expected to be ladies, wear frilly dresses, and watch the cowboys perform. Our Cowgirl, however, would rather be in the rodeo than watch it and is much more comfortable in dusty cowboy boots than any fancy dress. She is also in love with the Head Wrangler, but he hardly knows she exists. Today is the day of the weekly rodeo and the big Saturday night dance.



David Krensing (Head Wrangler), Edward Ceislak

Jeffrey Gribler (Champion Roper), James Ihde
As the story begins, a half-dozen cowboys and the Cowgirl, dressed in baggy brown pants, heavy boots and a bright red shirt, are hanging around the corral, leaning against the fence waiting for the weekly rodeo to start. The cowboys all begin doing various rodeo tricks--riding bucking broncos and roping calves--and the Cowgirl tries to join in, all the while keeping her eye on the Head Wrangler. The cowboys ignore her, hoping she'll go away, but the Cowgirl stays put, still trying to catch the Head Wrangler's eye. Eventually, the Head Wrangler and the others tell her to go away--that she isn't wanted. But the Cowgirl just hitches up her pants and scuffles her feet, more determined than ever to compete in the rodeo.

Just as the Head Wrangler is about to lose all patience with her the corral is transformed by the arrival of a group of city girls from back East, friends of the rancher's daughter who've come to see the rodeo. The cowboys all slap their thighs in enthusiastic welcome and the Champion Roper steps out to show off his skill before the girls. The Cowgirl disapproves of their



Jodie Gates (The Cowgirl)



Jodie Gates and the "city girls"

silly, giggly flirting and when the Head Wrangler steps over to them politely and takes off his hat to the rancher's daughter, she can't stand it any longer and rides off in a jealous rage.

Other young women arrive to see the rodeo and all are quite entertained until the Cowgirl suddenly rides in on a bucking bronco and is promptly thrown off, only to be laughed at by the other girls. She gets up, thumbs her nose at them, shrugs her shoulders and tries to rejoin the cowboys with a friendly poke in the ribs, but they ignore her and stare off into the distance. The Head Wrangler jerks his thumb toward the house, telling her it's time to go. She realizes he's right and leaves the corral in tears.

Soon the rodeo ends, and the daytime sounds of clapping horses and tapping cowboy boots give way to the softer sounds of evening in the old West. The women and the cowboys pair off and slowly leave the corral, heading home after a busy, tiring day. As the couples begin to disappear, the Cowgirl returns and tries to attract the

attention of the Head Wrangler, who doesn't even notice that she's there. Instead, he goes to the rancher's daughter and slowly escorts her off into the night. The Cowgirl is left all alone. The Head Wrangler returns for a moment but leaves quickly when another cowboy calls to him. The women try to call her home, but she ignores them. The Champion Roper crosses the back of the corral and disappears. The Cowgirl remains alone and, clearly hurt and confused, she falls to the ground.

At this point in the ballet the curtain falls and four couples run out and begin a square dance to the sounds of hand-clapping and the caller's voice as he shouts out directions to the couples. The couples dance faster and faster until they are all out of breath and run off the stage shouting.



David Krensing, Jodie Gates, Jeffrey Gribler

Later, inside the ranch house, the Cowgirl sits watching the cowboys warm up for the big Saturday night dance. One of the cowboys is the Champion Roper, now dressed in his Saturday-night best. The Cowgirl, still dressed in the dusty clothes from the



corral, feels out of place but she's trying
The "Company" at the community dance

to have a good time anyway. Couples are dancing and strolling in and out.

The Champion Roper notices the lonely Cowgirl and tries to get her to dance. She says she doesn't know how. He tells her the first thing she should do is look more presentable and he tries to clean her up a little.

Just as the Cowgirl is beginning to enjoy herself, the Head Wrangler comes in and goes over to the rancher's daughter and she forgets all about the Champion Roper. He gets angry and walks out on her. The Cowgirl starts to cry and, watching the Head Wrangler dance with the rancher's daughter, falls to the floor in tears.

Gradually the room fills with people getting ready for the community dance. The boys line up on one side and the girls on the other. The Cowgirl decides to try again and bravely gets in line. When the boys approach and take their partners, however, she is left standing alone again. The couples all

begin to dance, but the Cowgirl can't bear to watch and turns away.



Jeffrey Gribler as the "Champion Roper"

The Champion Roper comes back in and does a solo dance. When he's finished he goes over to the Cowgirl to cheer her up and to try to get her to dance with him again. The Cowgirl smiles, hitches up her belt and everything is all right for a few seconds while they dance. The mood is spoiled, however, when the Head Wrangler and the rancher's daughter come back into the room. The Champion Roper catches the Cowgirl watching them, but before he can do anything about it, she runs away. He gives up and goes after another



er girl he sees walking by herself.

Jeffrey Gribler and Jodie Gates

All the couples resume their loud and lively dance, clapping joyously to the music. Suddenly, everyone stops and just stares as the Cowgirl returns, this time wearing a shockingly bright dress. The Champion Roper goes to her, hitches up his pants, and asks her to dance. Even in her new dress, the Cowgirl hitches up her clothes, too, and they start to dance. The Head Wrangler notices the Cowgirl and forgets about the rancher's daughter. Now he wants to dance with the Cowgirl, too. The Champion Roper and the Head Wrangler playfully toss her back and forth between them. When the Head Wrangler tries to kiss her, the Champion Roper steps in and kisses her first. They kiss again and both realize that what they've really wanted all along was each other. The Head Wrangler rejoins the rancher's daughter and the whole group dances happily as the Cowgirl and the Champion Roper stare into each other's eyes.



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The End