

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET

2025 2026 • Artistic Director  
Season Tamara Rojo

# REPERTORY GUIDE



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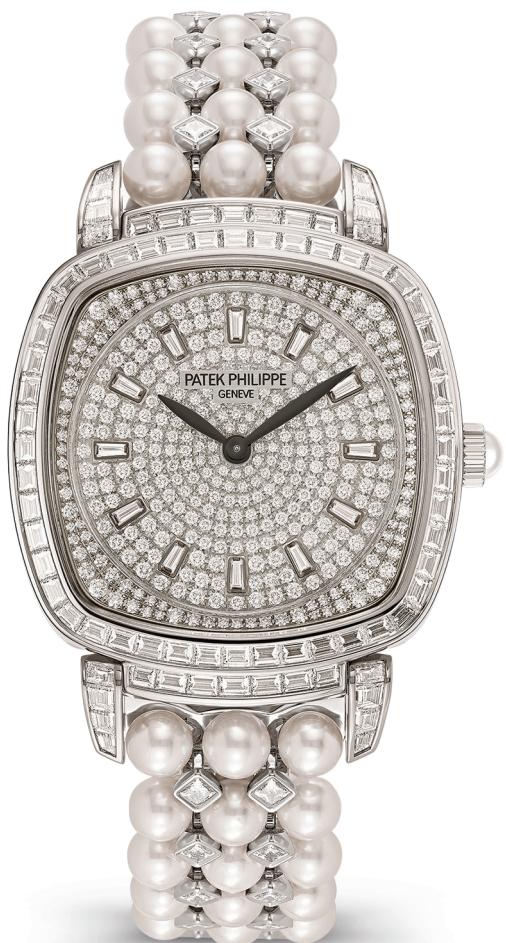
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Season Tamara Rojo

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SAN FRANCISCO BALLET LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT

San Francisco Ballet works and performs on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of the Ramaytush, Lisjan, Karkin, as well as other Ohlone tribes and Indigenous Nations not specifically named here. We acknowledge that we benefit from residing upon the land to which Indigenous peoples remain connected. Acknowledging this connection is one way San Francisco Ballet can intentionally counteract the erasure of Indigenous peoples of California.

CASTING



# Catherine Kwong



# Design

3069 SACRAMENTO STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94115

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CATHERINEKWONG.COM

# GREETINGS FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear supporters,

I am delighted to present the 2025–26 Season of San Francisco Ballet. In the coming months, our extraordinary Company artists will take the War Memorial Opera House stage and transport audiences to places of hope, risk, intensity, heartbreak, and celebration.

This season is imbued with legends—from brilliant choreographers such as George Balanchine and William Forsythe to epic fables of gods, adventure, and otherworldly creatures. I chose to share these great works with San Francisco to showcase how the fantastic art of ballet has transformed over centuries. Each piece represents a unique chapter in history, and each choreographer holds significance as a visionary of their time.

In 2026, we will begin the Repertory Season with the world premiere of our Choreographer-in-Residence Yuri Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin*, a nuanced story of love, privilege, and human relationships. This production marks Yuri's first full-length commission for San Francisco Ballet since he began creating works over 20 years ago. Alongside his mesmerizing choreography, I am so excited for the world to hear a new score by the incredibly talented composer Ilya Demutsky, performed live by the Grammy Award-winning San Francisco Ballet Orchestra. The artistic collaboration that was poured into this production is not something that happens every day, and I am beyond grateful to the *Onegin* creative team for their dedication, trust, and for unleashing a newfound freedom deep within our dancers.

Following our season opening, I invite you to experience the genius of Mr. B. Choreographer George Balanchine is lauded as the father of American ballet, and in honor of America's 250th anniversary, we will stage three works that give audiences a glimpse into the artistic evolution of Balanchine as he shaped the "American style" and cemented his legacy of technical mastery.

*The Blake Works*, opening in late February, uplifts one of the most influential and innovative choreographers alive, William



Tamara Rojo // © RJ Muna

Forsythe. This program redefines what ballet can be, set to the soulful music of popular English singer, songwriter, and record producer James Blake, and includes the highly anticipated Bay Area premieres of Forsythe's *Prologue* and *The Barre Project*.

In the spring, we will revisit two timeless story ballets both performed with exquisite classical technique and rich storytelling that resonate with audiences of all ages. Helgi Tomasson's and Yuri Possokhov's *Don Quixote* is filled with passion, humor, and fiery dancing. Next is *La Sylphide*, a hauntingly beautiful Bournonville classic. Its signature Romantic era enchantment continues to captivate audiences to this day.

We will close with the reprise of Aszure Barton and Sam Shepherd's *Mere Mortals*, the first ballet I commissioned as the Artistic Director of San Francisco Ballet. This production made its world premiere to open my inaugural season in 2024, and ever since then, its message has only become increasingly relevant. With themes exploring the unknowns of technology and artificial intelligence, and a visionary original score composed and performed

live by Sam Shepherd (aka Floating Points), this program belongs to San Francisco.

This season has something for everyone, and as we continue to define the future of ballet, I hope you will join us for the ride.

Sincerely,

Tamara Rojo  
Artistic Director

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(ahn 'fahss) Position of the body in which the dancer is facing directly towards the audience.



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SAN FRANCISCO BALLET

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT ARE MY SUBSCRIBER BENEFITS THIS SEASON?

### BEST SEATS

The best reason to subscribe is the access you get to the best seats in the house. Principal 6 Series subscribers get the same great seats for each performance in their package, and season after season. Create Your Own subscribers receive priority seating for next season.

### DISCOUNTS

Subscribers pay discounted prices on additional tickets. You can share your love of ballet with family and friends or attend multiple times to see a variety of casts.

Lock in the subscriber price for the season, and you don't have to worry about price increases due to demand. Subscribers save on audience engagement programs and at the SF Ballet Shop.

### TICKET EXCHANGE

We're committed to ensuring you never miss a performance. Principal 6 Series subscribers have fee-free exchange privileges until the day of the performance. All other package subscribers pay a \$20 per order exchange fee until the day of show. Exchanges are not applicable to *Nutcracker* or events.

## WHAT ARE MY DINING OPTIONS AT THE OPERA HOUSE?

On almost every level of the Opera House, you can find full course restaurants to cafes.

**Prelude at the Opera House and Main Bar** (Lower Level)

**North Box Restaurant and Bar** (Mezzanine Level)

**Café Express** (Lower Lounge)

### INSIDER TIP: PRE-ORDER

Before the show, order your intermission refreshments. Visit the bar closest to your seating section and order your intermission drink from the bartender. Your drink will be waiting for you at the bar at the start of intermission. Avoid the long lines.

## WHERE CAN I FIND CASTING?



Casting is available online at [sfballer.org/casting](http://sfballer.org/casting) where you can now print a copy. At the Opera House, casting information is available on display stands on every level, and there are a limited number of printed cast sheets at the information table located on the Main Lobby level.

## DO YOU OFFER WALKING GROUPS TO NEARBY GARAGES AND BART/MUNI STATIONS?

After evening performances only, Civic Center Ambassadors (recognizable from their bright orange jackets) will lead walking groups to Civic Center BART, Civic Center Plaza Garage, and UC Law Garage. Ambassadors will be on the Opera House steps (Van Ness) after the performance. Walking groups will leave 15 minutes after curtain.

## IMPORTANT POLICIES

**SCREENING SYSTEM** on Van Ness and north and south carriage entrances. A fast, frictionless system that will not require patrons to stop, empty their pockets, or open their bags.

**LATE SEATING** and re-entry are not allowed while a performance is in progress. We sympathize with latecomers, but for the sake of the performers and other patrons, you will be asked to stand until a break in the action, which may be at intermission.

**AUDIO/VISUAL RECORDINGS** of your experience before performance are encouraged, but photos and audio/video recordings of the onstage performance are strictly forbidden.

**MOBILE AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES** must be turned off during the performance. Part of the joy of coming to the ballet is disconnecting from the outside world for a couple of hours. Lights and sounds from devices are a distraction to the performers and your fellow patrons.

**CHILDREN** attending performances must have a ticket and occupy that seat regardless of their age. We do not allow children under 3, including babes in arms, in the auditorium.

**ALL BAGS ARE SUBJECT TO SEARCH** upon arrival. Currently, clear bags are not required. Patrons may bring bags into the auditorium, but they must fit under the seat or on the patron's lap (approximately 14 in x 14 in x 6 in). Patrons with large items, inclusive but not limited to large backpacks, luggage, shopping bags, and other large packages that will not fit comfortably at the seat will be asked to check those items at coat check.

**MANAGEMENT** reserves the right to remove any patron who is creating a disturbance and to screen patron bags upon request.

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET

# COMPANY

## MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Tamara Rojo	REHEARSAL DIRECTORS Joanna Berman <sup>†</sup> Ricardo Bustamante <sup>†</sup>	CHOREOGRAPHER IN RESIDENCE Yuri Possokhov	DIRECTOR OF ARTISTIC OPERATIONS Alan Takata-Villareal <sup>†</sup>	ARTISTIC OPERATIONS MANAGER Emily Munoz
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Antonio Castilla	Tina LeBlanc Katita Waldo <sup>†</sup>	SHELBY AND FREDERICK GANS MUSIC DIRECTOR & PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR Martin West	ASSISTANT TO THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Regina Bustillos	PROGRAM LEAD FOR <i>RAISING LEADERS AND</i> CREATIVE COACH FOR <i>CREATION HOUSE</i> Kerry Nicholls
EXECUTIVE REHEARSAL DIRECTOR Felipe Diaz <sup>†</sup>	CHILDREN'S REHEARSAL DIRECTOR Jeffrey Lyons			

## ARTISTS OF THE COMPANY

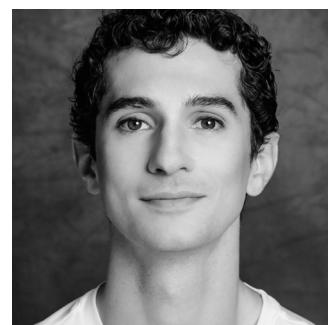
PRINCIPAL DANCERS Dores André Max Cauthorn <sup>†</sup> <i>Randee Seiger Principal Dancer</i> Frances Chung <i>Herbert Family Principal Dancer</i>	Cavan Conley Sasha De Sola <i>Diane B. Wilsey Principal Dancer</i> Nikisha Fogo	Francesco Gabriele Frola Esteban Hernández Harrison James <sup>†</sup> Jasmine Jimison <sup>†</sup>	Wona Park <sup>†</sup> <i>Richard C. Barker Principal Dancer</i> Jennifer Stahl <sup>†</sup> <i>Diana Dollar Knowles Principal Dancer</i>	Joseph Walsh <i>John and Barbara Osterweis Principal Dancer</i> Wei Wang <sup>†</sup> Madeline Woo
GUEST PRINCIPAL DANCER Misa Kuranaga	FIRST SOLOISTS Katherine Barkman	Joshua Jack Price <sup>†</sup>		
SOLOISTS Kamryn Baldwin <sup>†</sup> Fernando Carratalá Coloma Jihyun Choi <sup>†</sup>	Isabella DeVivo <sup>†</sup> Luca Ferrò Ángel García Molinero Carmela Mayo <sup>†</sup>	Sasha Mukhamedov Elizabeth Powell <sup>†</sup> Victor Prigent <sup>†</sup>	Nathaniel Remez <sup>†</sup> Julia Rowe <sup>†</sup> Myles Thatcher <sup>†</sup>	Mingxuan Wang <sup>†</sup> Lonnie Weeks Seojeong Yun <sup>†</sup>
DEMI SOLOISTS Thamires Chuvas <sup>†</sup>	Dylan Pierzina <sup>†</sup>	Simone Pompignoli	Alexis Francisco Valdes <sup>†</sup>	Adrian Zeisel <sup>†</sup>
CORPS DE BALLET Sofia Albers <sup>†</sup> Rebecca Blenkinsop Samantha Bristow <sup>†</sup> Maya Chandrashekaran <sup>†</sup> Rubén Cítores Nieto <sup>†</sup> Carlota Cruz <sup>†</sup> Benjamin Davidoff <sup>†</sup> Emmitt Friedman <sup>†</sup>	Jacey Gailliard <sup>†</sup> Parker Garrison <sup>†</sup> Gabriela Gonzalez Jakub Groot Lleyton Ho <sup>†</sup> Andris Kundzins <sup>†</sup> Katharine Lee	SunMin Lee <sup>†</sup> Lucas López Elizabeth Mateer Justin-Cooper Meeks <sup>†</sup> Nicole Moyer <sup>†</sup> Rimi Nakano Davide Occhipinti <sup>†</sup>	Pemberley Ann Olson <sup>†</sup> Hui-Wen Peng João Percilio da Silva <sup>†</sup> Leili Rackow <sup>†</sup> Anatalia St. Clair <sup>†</sup> Jasper True Stanford <sup>†</sup> Tyla Steinbach <sup>†</sup>	Jamie Adele Stephens <sup>†</sup> Archie Sullivan Benjamin Taber <sup>†</sup> Angela Watson <sup>†</sup> Maggie Weirich <sup>†</sup> Juliana Wilder <sup>†</sup> Juliette Windey
APPRENTICES Anna Chaziroglou <sup>†</sup> Logi Gudmundsson <sup>†</sup>	Aaliyahmarie Key <sup>†</sup>	Logan Shaw <sup>†</sup>	Amelia Soh <sup>†</sup>	Asher Stephenson <sup>†</sup>
PRINCIPAL CHARACTER DANCERS Joanna Berman <sup>†</sup> Ricardo Bustamante <sup>†</sup>	Val Caniparoli <sup>†</sup> Kristi DeCaminada <sup>†</sup>	Jeffrey Lyons	Pascal Molat	Katita Waldo <sup>†</sup>

<sup>†</sup>Received training at San Francisco Ballet School

## PRINCIPAL DANCERS

**DORES ANDRÉ**

Born in Vigo, Spain, Dores André trained with Antonio Almenara and at Estudio de Danza de María de Ávila. She joined the Company in 2004 and was promoted to soloist in 2012 and principal dancer in 2015. She returned to SF Ballet in 2024.

**MAX CAUTHORN<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Tucson, Arizona, Max Cauthorn trained at SF Ballet School. He was named an SF Ballet apprentice in 2013 and joined the Company in 2014. He was promoted to soloist in 2017 and principal dancer in 2020. He returned to SF Ballet in 2024 and was appointed Randee Seiger Principal Dancer in 2025.

**FRANCES CHUNG**

Born in Vancouver, Canada, Frances Chung trained at Goh Ballet Academy before joining SF Ballet in 2001. She was promoted to soloist in 2005 and principal dancer in 2009. She was appointed Herbert Family Principal Dancer in 2018.

**CAVAN CONLEY**

Born in Bozeman, Montana, Cavan Conley trained at The Harid Conservatory and Nutmeg Conservatory. He danced with Tulsa Ballet before joining SF Ballet in 2018. He was promoted to soloist in 2019 and principal dancer in 2025.

**SASHA DE SOLA**

Born in Winter Park, Florida, Sasha De Sola trained at the Kirov Academy of Ballet. She was named an SF Ballet apprentice in 2006 and joined the Company in 2007. She was promoted to soloist in 2012 and principal dancer in 2017. She was appointed Diane B. Wilsey Principal Dancer in 2020.

**NIKISHA FOGO**

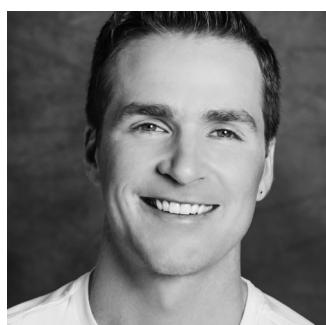
Born in Stockholm, Sweden, Nikisha Fogo trained at Kungliga Svenska Balettskolan and The Royal Ballet School. She danced with Vienna State Ballet before joining San Francisco Ballet as a principal dancer in 2020.

**FRANCESCO GABRIELE FROLA**

Born in Aosta, Italy, Francesco Gabriele Frola trained at Professione Danza Parma, The School of the Hamburg Ballet, and Fomento Artístico Cordobés in Mexico. He danced with English National Ballet and The National Ballet of Canada before joining San Francisco Ballet as a principal dancer in 2025.

**ESTEBAN HERNÁNDEZ**

Born in Guadalajara, Mexico, Esteban Hernández trained at The Rock School for Dance Education and The Royal Ballet School. He joined SF Ballet in 2013 and was promoted to soloist in 2017 and principal dancer in 2019.

**HARRISON JAMES<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Paraparaumu, New Zealand, Harrison James trained at the New Zealand School of Dance and San Francisco Ballet School's Trainee Program. He danced with The National Ballet of Canada, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and Béjart Ballet Lausanne before joining San Francisco Ballet as a principal dancer in 2024.

**JASMINE JIMISON<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Palo Alto, California, Jasmine Jimison trained with Kristine Elliott and at Bay Area Dance School and Menlo Park Academy of Dance before joining SF Ballet School. She was named an SF Ballet apprentice in 2018 and joined the corps de ballet in 2019. She was promoted to soloist in 2021 and principal dancer in 2024.

**MISA KURANAGA**

**GUEST PRINCIPAL DANCER**  
Born in Osaka, Japan, Misa Kuranaga trained at Jinushi Kaoru Ballet School and the School of American Ballet. She was named an apprentice with San Francisco Ballet in 2001, danced with Boston Ballet, and returned to the Company as a principal dancer in 2019. She was named Guest Principal Dancer in 2025.

**WONA PARK<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Wona Park trained at Sunhwa Arts School and San Francisco Ballet School, including the School's Trainee Program from 2016–2017. She joined San Francisco Ballet as a member of the corps de ballet in 2017, was promoted to soloist in 2018, principal dancer in 2020, and appointed Richard C. Barker Principal Dancer in 2024.

## PRINCIPAL DANCERS

JENNIFER STAHL<sup>†</sup>

Born in Dana Point, California, Jennifer Stahl trained at Maria Lazar's Classical Ballet Academy and San Francisco Ballet School. She was named an apprentice with San Francisco Ballet in 2005, joined the Company as a member of the corps de ballet in 2006, promoted to soloist in 2013, principal dancer in 2017, and appointed Diana Dollar Knowles Principal Dancer in 2024.



## JOSEPH WALSH

Born in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, Joseph Walsh trained at Walnut Hill School of the Arts and Houston Ballet II. He danced with Houston Ballet before joining SF Ballet as a soloist in 2014. He was promoted to principal dancer that same year. He was appointed John and Barbara Osterweis Principal Dancer in 2017.

WEI WANG<sup>†</sup>

Born in Anshan, China, Wei Wang trained at Beijing Dance Academy and SF Ballet School. He was named an apprentice in 2012, and joined the Company as a corps de ballet member in 2013. He was promoted to soloist in 2016 and principal dancer in 2018.



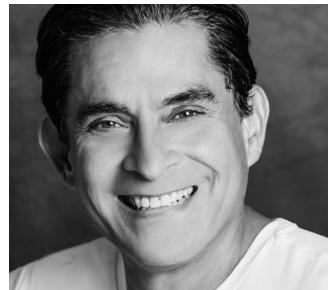
## MADELINE WOO

Born in Huntington Beach, California, Madeline Woo trained at The John Cranko Schule. She danced with Royal Swedish Ballet before joining San Francisco Ballet as a principal dancer in 2025.

## PRINCIPAL CHARACTER DANCERS

JOANNA BERMAN<sup>†</sup>

Born in San Rafael, CA  
Joined in 1984  
Named principal character dancer in 2023

RICARDO BUSTAMANTE<sup>†</sup>

Born in Medellín, Colombia  
Joined in 1980  
Named principal character dancer in 2007

VAL CANIPAROLI<sup>†</sup>

Born in Renton, WA  
Joined in 1973  
Named principal character dancer in 1985

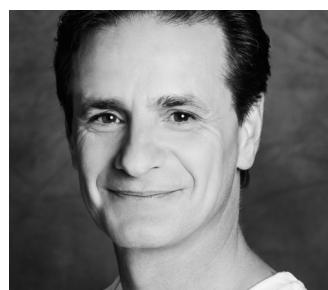
KRISTI DECAMINADA<sup>†</sup>

Born in San Francisco, CA  
Joined in 1995  
Named principal character dancer in 2023



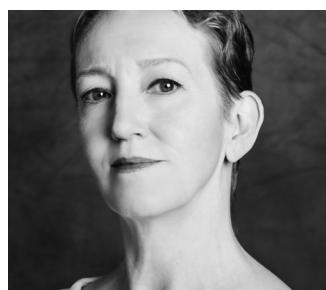
## JEFFREY LYONS

Born in Lake Charles, LA  
Joined in 1999  
Named principal character dancer in 2023



## PASCAL MOLAT

Born in Paris, France  
Joined in 2002  
Named principal character dancer in 2023

KATITA WALDO<sup>†</sup>

Born in Madrid, Spain  
Joined in 1988  
Named principal character dancer in 2022

## FIRST SOLOISTS



**KATHERINE BARKMAN**  
Born in Bucks County, PA  
Joined in 2022



**JOSHUA JACK PRICE<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Wollongong, Australia  
Named apprentice in 2018  
Joined in 2019  
Promoted to soloist in 2024



**JIHYUN CHOI<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Suwon, Republic of Korea  
Named apprentice in 2022  
Joined in 2023  
Promoted to soloist in 2025



**ISABELLA DEVIVO<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Great Neck, NY  
Joined in 2013  
Promoted to soloist in 2017



**SASHA MUKHAMEDOV**  
Born in London, England  
Joined as a soloist in 2019



**ELIZABETH POWELL<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Boston, MA  
Named apprentice in 2011  
Joined in 2012  
Promoted to soloist in 2018



**MYLES THATCHER<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Atlanta, GA  
Named apprentice in 2009  
Joined in 2010  
Promoted to soloist in 2020



**MINGXUAN WANG<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Qingdao, China  
Named apprentice in 2013  
Joined in 2014  
Promoted to soloist in 2025

## SOLOISTS



**KAMRYN BALDWIN<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Honolulu, HI  
Joined in 2015  
Promoted to soloist in 2024



**FERNANDO CARRATALÁ COLOMA**  
Born in Alicante, Spain  
Joined in 2024



**LUCA FERRÒ**  
Born in Novara, Italy  
Joined in 2020  
Promoted to soloist in 2025



**ÁNGEL GARCÍA MOLINERO**  
Born in Madrid, Spain  
Joined in 2025



**CARMELA MAYO<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Las Vegas, NV  
Named apprentice in 2017  
Joined in 2018  
Promoted to soloist in 2024



**VICTOR PRIGENT<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Poissy, France  
Joined in 2024



**NATHANIEL REMEZ<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Washington, D.C.  
Named apprentice in 2016  
Joined in 2017  
Promoted to soloist in 2025



**JULIA ROWE<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Elizabethtown, PA  
Joined in 2013  
Promoted to soloist in 2016



**LONGNIE WEEKS**  
Born in Los Alamos, NM  
Joined in 2010  
Promoted to soloist in 2018

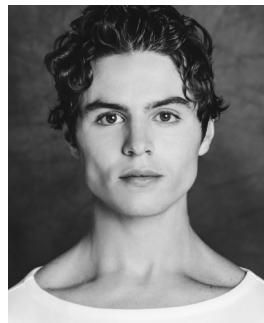


**SEOJEONG YUN<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Paju, Gyeonggi-do,  
Republic of Korea  
Named apprentice in 2022  
Joined in 2023  
Promoted to soloist in 2025

## DEMI SOLOISTS

**THAMIRE CHUVAS<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
Named apprentice in 2014  
Joined in 2015  
Promoted to demi soloist in 2025

**DYLAN PIERZINA<sup>†</sup>**

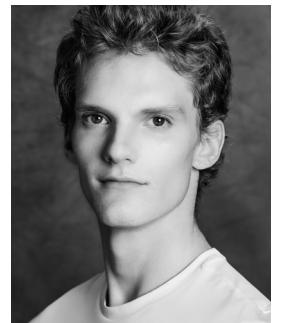
Born in Eugene, OR  
Named an apprentice in 2023  
Joined in 2024  
Promoted to demi soloist in 2025

**SIMONE POMPIGNOLI**

Born in Forli, Italy  
Joined in 2023  
Promoted to demi soloist in 2025

**ALEXIS FRANCISCO VALDES<sup>†</sup>**

Born in La Habana, Cuba  
Named apprentice in 2020  
Joined in 2022  
Promoted to demi soloist in 2025

**ADRIAN ZEISEL<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Vienna, Austria  
Named apprentice in 2019  
Joined in 2020  
Promoted to demi soloist in 2025

## CORPS DE BALLET

**SOFIA ALBERS<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Stanford, CA  
Named apprentice in 2023  
Joined in 2024

**REBECCA BLENKINSOP**

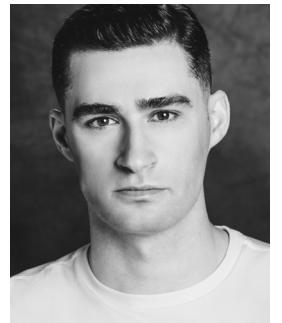
Born in Melbourne, Australia  
Joined in 2024

**SAMANTHA BRISTOW<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Media, PA  
Named apprentice in 2014  
Joined in 2015

**MAYA CHANDRASHEKARAN<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Sydney, Australia  
Named apprentice in 2024  
Joined in 2025

**RUBÉN CÍTORES NIETO<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Valladolid, Spain  
Named apprentice in 2019  
Joined in 2020

**CARLOTA CRUZ<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Coimbra, Portugal  
Named apprentice in 2024  
Joined in 2025

**BENJAMIN DAVIDOFF<sup>†</sup>**

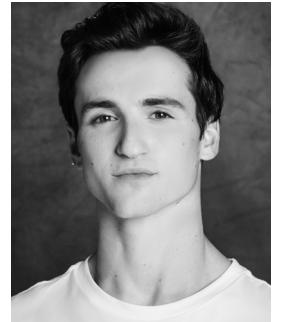
Born in Atlanta, GA  
Named apprentice in 2022  
Joined in 2023

**EMMITT FRIEDMAN<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Chicago, IL  
Named apprentice in 2024  
Joined in 2025

**JACEY GAILLARD<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Philadelphia, PA  
Named apprentice in 2023  
Joined in 2024

**PARKER GARRISON<sup>†</sup>**

Born in Folsom, CA  
Named apprentice in 2022  
Joined in 2023

<sup>†</sup>Received training at San Francisco Ballet School  
Dancer headshots // © Lindsey Rallo

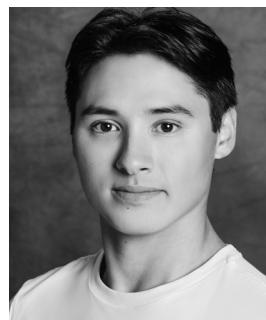
## CORPS DE BALLET



**GABRIELA GONZALEZ**  
Born in Mérida, Mexico  
Joined in 2017



**JAKUB GROOT**  
Born in the Czech Republic  
Joined in 2024



**LLEYTON HO<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in New York, NY  
Named apprentice in 2019  
Joined in 2020



**ANDRIS KUNDZINS<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Halifax, NS, Canada  
Named apprentice in 2020  
Joined in 2022



**KATHARINE LEE**  
Born in Seattle, WA  
Joined in 2023



**SUNMIN LEE<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Seoul, South Korea  
Named apprentice in 2019  
Joined in 2020



**LUCAS LÓPEZ**  
Born in Madrid, Spain  
Joined in 2024



**ELIZABETH MATEER**  
Born in Boca Raton, FL  
Joined in 2016



**JUSTIN-COOPER MEEKS<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Charlotte, NC  
Named apprentice in 2024  
Joined in 2025



**NICOLE MOYER<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Superior, CO  
Named apprentice in 2021  
Joined in 2022



**RIMI NAKANO**  
Born in Tokyo, Japan  
Joined in 2023



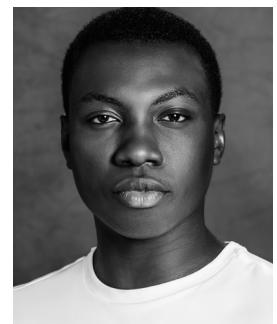
**DAVIDE OCCHIPINTI<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Rome, Italy  
Named apprentice in 2016  
Joined in 2017



**PEMBERLEY ANN OLSON<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in San Francisco, CA  
Named apprentice in 2020  
Joined in 2022



**HUI-WEN PENG**  
Born in Taichung, Taiwan  
Joined in 2023



**JOÃO PERCILIO DA SILVA<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Uberlândia, Minas Gerais, Brazil  
Joined in 2022



**LEILI RACKOW<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Nanchang, China  
Named apprentice in 2018  
Joined in 2019



**ANATALIA ST. CLAIR<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Los Angeles, CA  
Named apprentice in 2017  
Joined in 2018



**JASPER TRUE STANFORD<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in San Ramon, CA  
Named apprentice in 2022  
Joined in 2023



**TYLA STEINBACH<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
Named apprentice in 2019  
Joined in 2020



**JAMIE ADELE STEPHENS<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in San Jose, CA  
Named apprentice in 2021  
Joined in 2022

## CORPS DE BALLET



**ARCHIE SULLIVAN**  
Born in London, England  
Joined in 2024



**BENJAMIN TABER<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Melrose, MA  
Named apprentice in 2024  
Joined in 2025



**ANGELA WATSON<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Oakland, CA  
Named apprentice in 2022  
Joined in 2023



**MAGGIE WEIRICH<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Portland, OR  
Named apprentice in 2014  
Joined in 2015

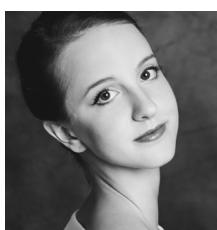


**JULIANA WILDER<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in South Florida  
Named apprentice in 2024  
Joined in 2025



**JULIETTE WINDEY**  
Born in Kortrijk,  
West-Vlaanderen, Belgium  
Joined in 2024

## APPRENTICES



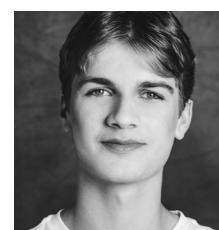
**ANNA  
CHAZIROGLOU<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in New York, NY  
Named apprentice in 2025



**LOGI  
GUDMUNDSSON<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Hafnarfjörður,  
Iceland  
Named apprentice in 2025



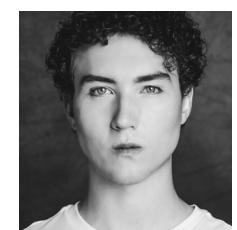
**AALIYAHMARIE  
KEY<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Landover, MD  
Named apprentice in 2025



**LOGAN SHAW<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Ottawa, Canada  
Named apprentice in 2025



**AMELIA SOH<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Sydney, Australia  
Named apprentice in 2025



**ASHER  
STEPHENSON<sup>†</sup>**  
Born in Nelspruit,  
South Africa  
Named apprentice in 2025

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET  
**ORCHESTRA**

Celebrating a milestone 50 years of prestige and artistic excellence, the Grammy Award-winning San Francisco Ballet Orchestra has built a global reputation for musical brilliance and inspired performances. From mastering sweeping classics and symphonic works to challenging abstract and contemporary pieces, SF Ballet commends the Orchestra's artistic achievements and is honored to continue performing alongside this collective of extraordinarily dedicated and talented musicians for seasons to come. Visit [sfballet.org/orchestra](http://sfballet.org/orchestra) for photos and more information.

SHELBY AND FREDERICK GANS  
 MUSIC DIRECTOR &  
 PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR  
 Martin West

VIOLIN I  
 Cordula Merks, *Concertmaster*  
 Heeguen Song, *Associate Concertmaster*  
 Naoko Nakajima, *Assistant Concertmaster*  
 Heidi Wilcox  
 Robin Hansen  
 Mariya Borozina  
 Minsun Choi  
 Mayumi Wyrick

VIOLIN II  
 Ani Bukujian, *Principal*  
 Craig Reiss, *Associate Principal*  
 Jeanelle Meyer, *Assistant Principal*  
 Laura Keller  
 Jeremy Preston  
 Rebecca Jackson

VIOLA  
 Yi Zhou, *Principal*  
 Anna Kruger, *Associate Principal*  
 Scot Moore, *Assistant Principal*  
 Caroline Lee  
 Joy Fellows

CELLO  
 Eric Sung, *Principal*  
 Jonah Kim, *Associate Principal*  
 Thalia Moore, *Assistant Principal*  
 Mariko Wyrick  
 Saul Richmond-Rakerd  
 Ruth Lane\*\*

CONTRABASS  
 Ethan Moffit, *Principal*  
 So Jung Kim, *Associate Principal*  
 Shinji Eshima, *Assistant Principal*  
 Jonathan Lancelle

FLUTE  
 Susan Kang, *Principal*  
 Julie McKenzie, *2nd & Piccolo*

OBOE  
 Laura Griffiths, *Principal*  
 Marilyn Coyne, *2nd & English Horn*

CLARINET  
 Rebecca Tobin Krissman\*\*, *Principal*  
 Cory Tiffin\*\*, *2nd & Bass Clarinet*

BASSOON  
 Rufus Olivier, *Principal*  
 Shawn Jones\*\*, *2nd & Contrabassoon*

HORN  
 Kevin Rivard, *Principal*  
 Phillip Palmore  
 Brian McCarty, *Associate Principal*  
 Ben Wulfman

TRUMPET/CORNET  
 Adam Luftman, *Principal*  
 Joseph Brown

TROMBONE  
 Jeffrey Budin, *Principal*  
 Michael Cox

BASS TROMBONE  
 Scott Thornton, *Principal*

TUBA  
 Peter Wahrhaftig, *Principal*

TIMPANI  
 Zubin Hathi, *Principal*  
 Simon Gomez Gallego\*\*, *Principal*

PERCUSSION  
 Victor Avdienko\*\*, *Principal*

HARP  
 Annabelle Taubl, *Principal*

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL MANAGER &  
 MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR  
 Tracy Davis

MUSIC LIBRARIAN  
 Matthew Naughtin

# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



San Francisco Ballet Orchestra // © Reneff-Olson Productions

## ● SAN FRANCISCO BALLET ORCHESTRA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF PRESTIGE

This season, San Francisco Ballet is reflecting on the past 50 years of our distinguished, award-winning Orchestra, led by Shelby and Frederick Gans Music Director and Principal Conductor Martin West. Internationally recognized as one of the foremost ballet orchestras in the world, San Francisco Ballet Orchestra debuted in 1975 under former Music Director Denis de Coteau. Every year since, this impressive ensemble of musicians has enriched the War Memorial Opera House theater with luscious melodies and powerful scores, ranging from classics such as Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and Adam's *Giselle* to more abstract and contemporary symphonic works.

The Orchestra was originally credited as the Performing Arts Orchestra of San Francisco, and in 1983, was renamed under de Coteau's leadership. Denis de Coteau was one of the first Black music directors of a major U.S. orchestra, and he served as the founding director and conductor from 1974 to 1998 before being appointed music director emeritus in recognition of his outstanding leadership.

Martin West, who joined SF Ballet in 2005 and is the fifth music director and principal conductor of the SF Ballet Orchestra, was born in Bolton, England.

In his career, he first debuted with English National Ballet as resident conductor in 1997 and has worked with top companies throughout North America and Europe. For his studies, he attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music and London's Royal Academy of Music after studying mathematics at Cambridge University.

In 2006, SFGATE noted how West initially won over the Orchestra musicians with his "unflappable demeanor." The article quoted then-Concertmaster Roy Malan saying, "I'd always go to the conductors before the performance and I'd ask them if they'd want anything. Often they'd be poring over their scores, making notes. Martin would be there with his feet up, reading a novel or doing a crossword puzzle. He knew the score so well, he didn't have to."

For 20 years, West has stewarded the Orchestra's legacy of artistic excellence across genres and across the globe. Over the course of his tenure, the SF Ballet Orchestra has made 14 recordings, including Liebermann's *Frankenstein*, Karpman's Grammy-winning *Ask Your Mama: Twelve Moods for Jazz*, and Winger's Grammy-nominated *Conversations with Nijinsky*.

San Francisco Ballet would like to thank the SF Ballet Orchestra and Martin West as they continue to set the standard for orchestras worldwide, uniting music and motion in perfect harmony.

# BY THE NUMBERS

HERE'S WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED LAST SEASON:

**95**

Live performances onstage  
at the Opera House

**78**

Company dancers from 20 countries  
and 16 U.S. states

**11,000,000**

Visits to the website

**130**

Classes for people with Parkinson's

**50,000**

Individuals reached by SF Ballet's  
Community Engagement Programs

**718**

Students enrolled in SF Ballet School  
from 16 states and 13 countries

**9**

SF Ballet School Trainee  
performances

**2,500**

PreK-12 students participated in  
SF Ballet's Dance in Schools and  
Communities Residency Program

**11,770**

Miles toured beyond San Francisco

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
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# 2026 REPERTORY SEASON

Like our home city, San Francisco Ballet is visionary, boundary-breaking, and relentlessly forward-moving. The 2025–26 Season brings Artistic Director Tamara Rojo's vision to life—redefining ballet for a new era. This season honors tradition while boldly showcasing new works that illuminate the transformative power of dance of the highest caliber. With a stunning world premiere, beloved family classics, and daring contemporary works that push boundaries and expand what's possible on stage, join us and experience dynamic, transcendent, and endlessly inspiring artistry.

EUGENE ONEGIN

BALANCHINE—FATHER OF AMERICAN BALLET

*DIAMONDS*

*SERENADE*

*STARS AND STRIPES*

FORSYTHE'S THE BLAKE WORKS

*PROLOGUE*

*THE BARRE PROJECT*

*BLAKE WORKS I*

DON QUIXOTE

LA SYLPHIDE

MERE MORTALS



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AT THE NIKKO**

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## WORLD PREMIERE

CHOREOGRAPHY  
Yuri Possokhov

MUSIC  
Ilya Demutsky

LIBRETTO  
Valeriy Pecheykin

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY  
Alexander Pushkin

SCENIC DESIGNER  
Tom Pye

COSTUME DESIGNER  
Tim Yip

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
Jim French

PROJECTION DESIGNER  
Finn Ross

ASSISTANTS TO THE  
CHOREOGRAPHER

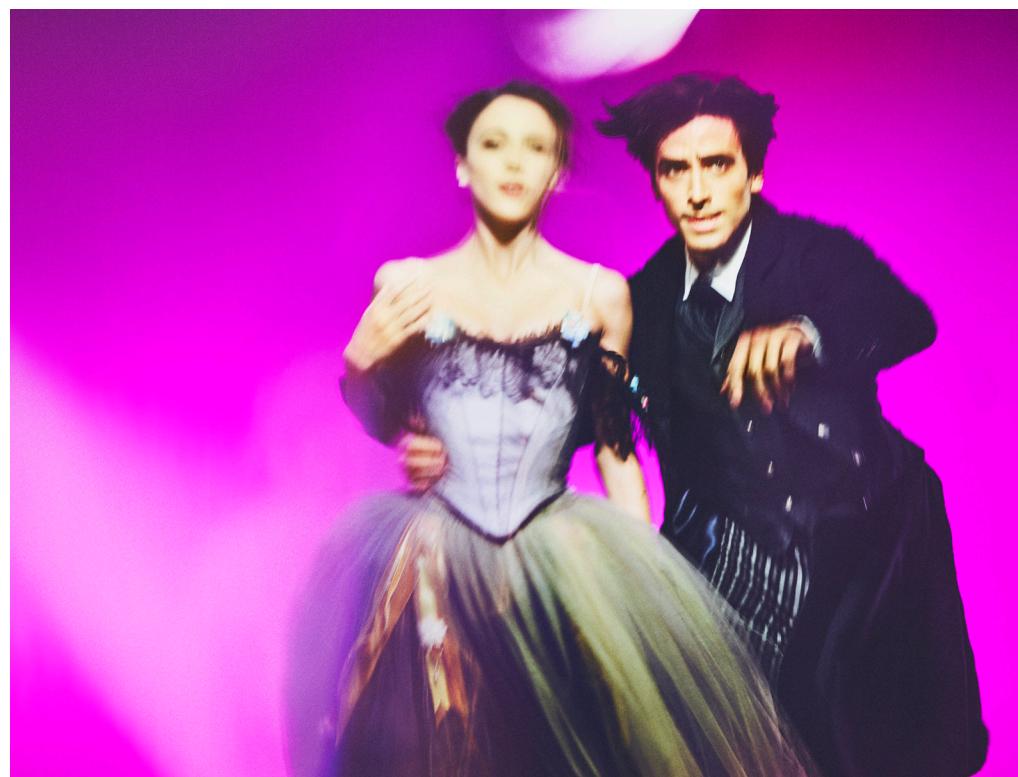
Frances Chung and  
Adam Blyde

PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
Donna Bachman

## PERFORMANCE DATES

January 23	8 pm
January 24	2 pm
January 24	8 pm
January 25	2 pm
January 27	7:30 pm
January 28	7:30 pm
January 29	7:30 pm
January 30	8 pm
January 31	2 pm
January 31	8 pm
February 1	2 pm

# EUGENE ONEGIN



Katherine Barkman as Tatiana and Joseph Walsh as Onegin from Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // © Studio Schuller for San Francisco Ballet

# EUGENE ONEGIN

## ● ICONIC DESIGNER TIM YIP FASHIONS COSTUMES FOR DANCERS TO MOVE IN

By Amy Ovalle

Designing for the stage vs. for film are entirely different. So says legendary designer Tim Yip: “On the stage you need to conjure a whole world; it’s abstract and empty, requiring utter imagination. There is more space for poetry on the stage. In a theater you can see something you cannot see.” Yip would know from decades designing for both stage and screen, including his ground-breaking costume and art direction on Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, for which he won the Academy Award for production design and a BAFTA for costume design, the first Chinese art director to receive these honors.

**“ON THE STAGE YOU NEED TO CONJURE A WHOLE WORLD; IT’S ABSTRACT AND EMPTY, REQUIRING UTTER IMAGINATION”**

—TIM YIP

Yip started sketching as a child in Hong Kong, where people would flock to see drawings by this shy young artist. Later he studied photography at Hong Kong Polytechnic University and was inspired by the fabric on his models: how it moved, hung, folded, and this led to his passion for costume design. He rocketed to global notoriety and has since worked on hundreds of multidisciplinary projects including uniforms for the Olympic games, museum shows, and the fashion house Christian Dior’s 60th anniversary. He loves the challenge of movement within design and now he’s created stunning costumes for SF Ballet’s world premiere of *Onegin*.

The story of *Onegin* focuses on the inevitable passage of time, and regrets that arise from lost opportunities. Yip uses costume changes as character

and scene development. He magically portrays the change of seasons poetically throughout the ballet—dressing the corps of dancers to ethereally represent each season themselves: spring, summer, autumn, culminating in an all-white winter. In contrast, the main characters, Onegin, Tatyana, and Lensky are not abstract at all. Their clothing conveys socio-economic, political, and societal winds, movements from country to city, class differences, the artifice of high society, and the superfluous man. Yip confides that his favorite costume of all is Onegin’s black tuxedo at the end of the ballet, in which, he says, he can’t help but see him as a penguin: silly, strutting, pompous and beautiful, too late and full of regret.

### WORLD PREMIERE

January 23, 2026—San Francisco Ballet, War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

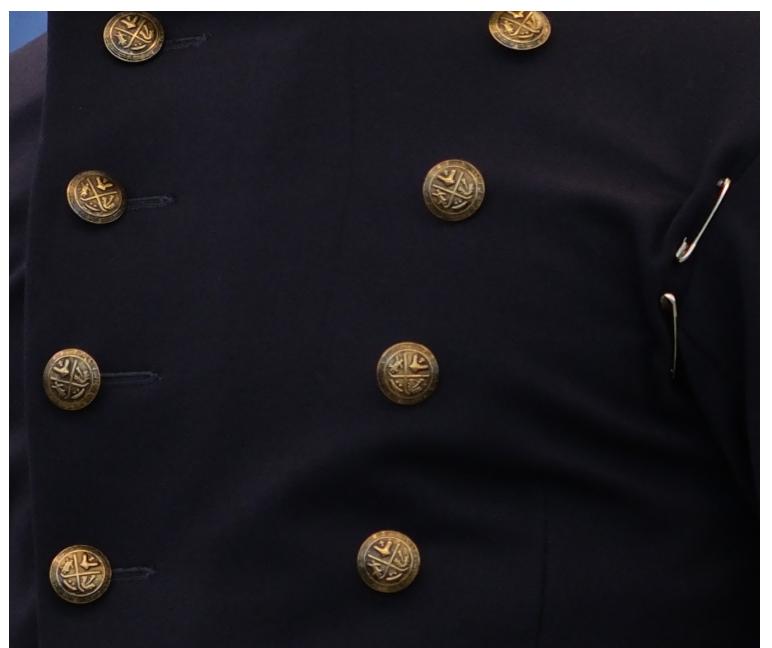
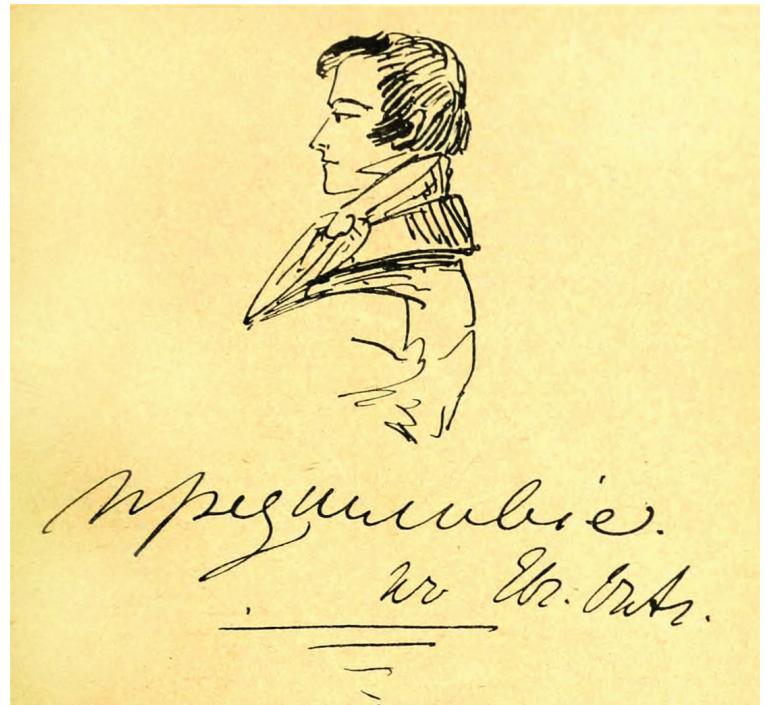
This production of *Eugene Onegin* is a co-production of San Francisco Ballet and The Joffrey Ballet.

### PRODUCTION CREDITS

Music: Original composition commissioned by San Francisco Ballet and The Joffrey Ballet. Assistant Lighting Designer: Erin Earle Fleming. Property Supervisor: Lily Mollgaard. Scenic construction and painting by Bay Productions Limited. Additional scenic construction and painting by San Francisco Ballet Scene Shop. Costumes constructed by The Joffrey Ballet Costume Shop.

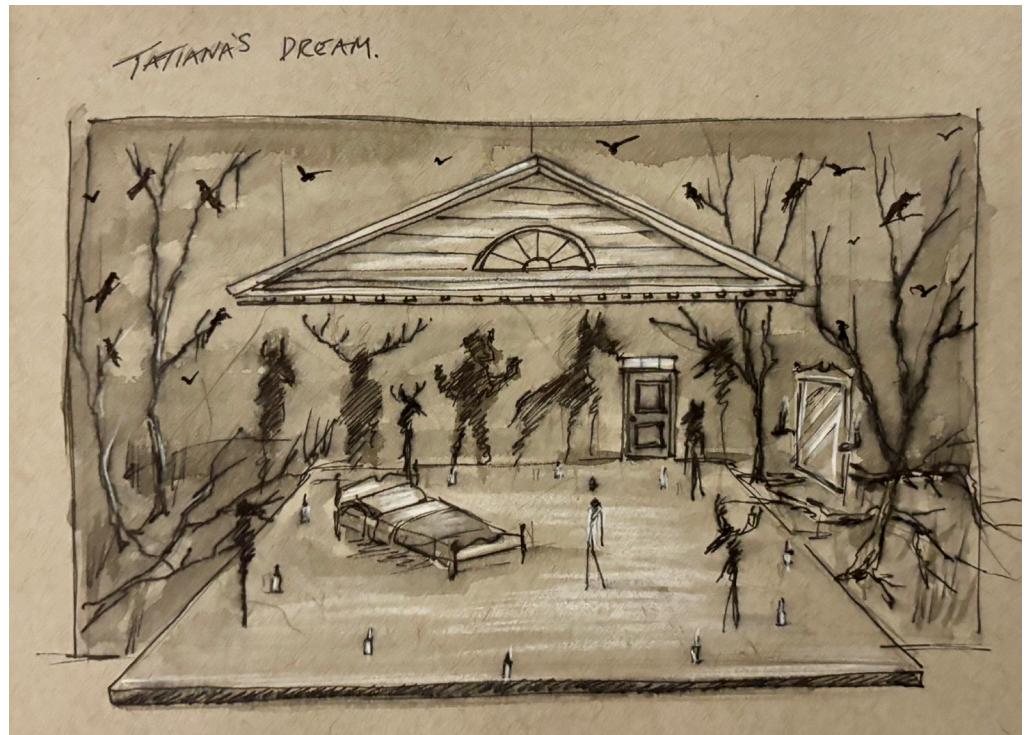


Ziyi Zhang and Michelle Yeoh in “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” (Dir. Ang Lee, 2000, China/Taiwan/US) // © Sony Pictures Classics, Maximum Film / Alamy Stock Photo

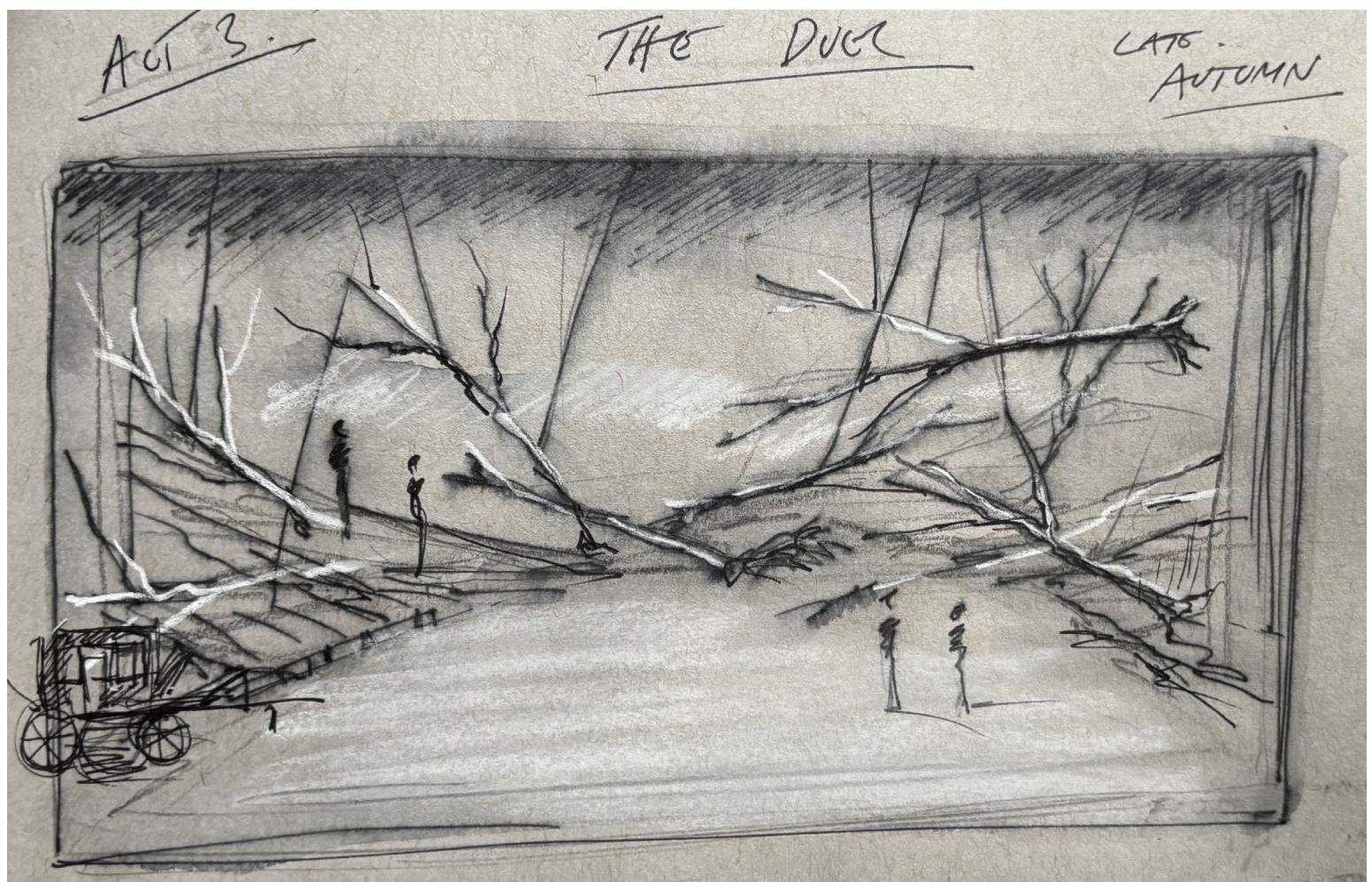


Clockwise from top left: Costume Designer Tim Yip during the fittings for his costumes for Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // © San Francisco Ballet, photo by Alexander Irwin; Nicole Moyer being fitted for a costume by Tim Yip for Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // © Jin Yau; Eugene Onegin as imagined by Alexander Pushkin, 1830 // Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Justin-Cooper Meeks being fitted for a costume for Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // © Jin Yau; Tamara Rojo talking with Tim Yip during the fittings for his costumes for Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // © Jin Yau; Sasha De Sola being fitted for a costume by Tim Yip for Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // © Jin Yau.

● SNEAK PEEK:  
EUGENE ONEGIN SKETCHES



All sketches by Scenic Designer Tom Pye for Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // Courtesy of Tom Pye



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## DIAMONDS

CHOREOGRAPHER  
George Balanchine  
COMPOSER  
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
STAGED BY  
Sandra Jennings  
COSTUME DESIGN  
after Karinska  
ORIGINAL LIGHTING DESIGN  
Ronald Bates

## SERENADE

CHOREOGRAPHER  
George Balanchine  
COMPOSER  
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
STAGED BY  
Sandra Jennings  
COSTUME DESIGN  
after Karinska

## STARS AND STRIPES

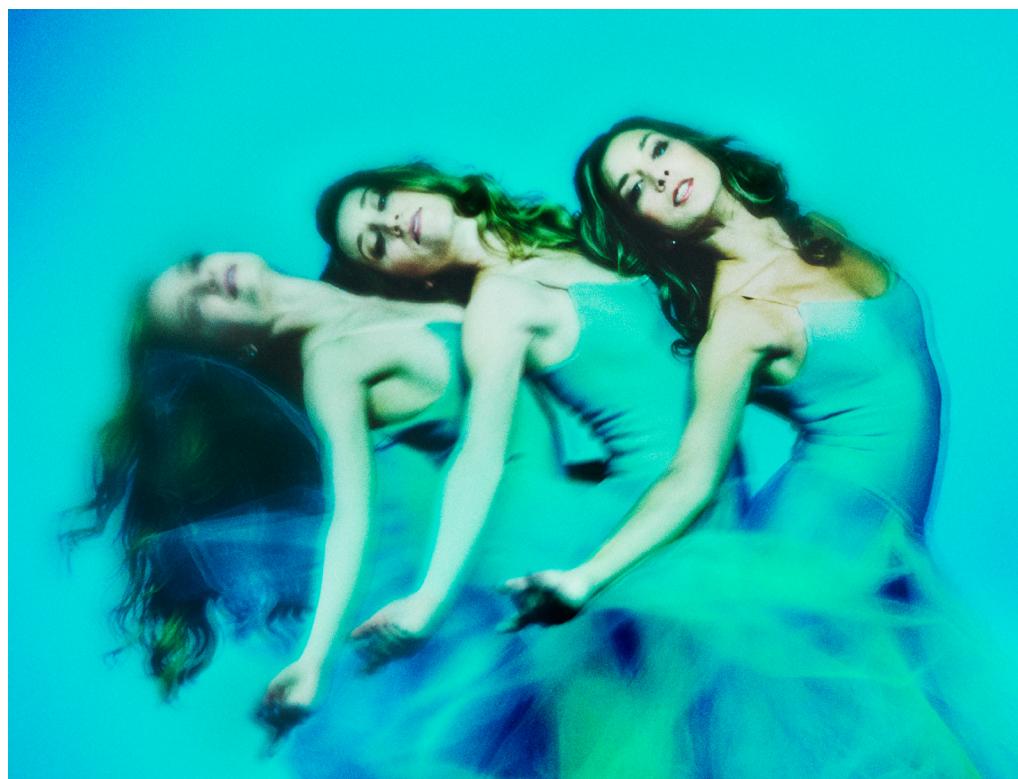
CHOREOGRAPHER  
George Balanchine  
COMPOSER  
John Philip Sousa,  
arranged by Hershy Kay  
STAGED BY  
Sandra Jennings  
COSTUME DESIGN  
after Karinska

## PERFORMANCE DATES

February 10	7:30 pm
February 11	7:30 pm
February 12	7:30 pm
February 13	8 pm
February 14	2 pm
February 14	8 pm
February 15	2 pm

# BALANCHINE

## FATHER OF AMERICAN BALLET



San Francisco Ballet in Balanchine's *Serenade* // © Studio Schuller for San Francisco Ballet

# BALANCHINE

- PRESERVING A LEGACY:  
SANDRA JENNINGS AND THE  
ART OF BALANCHINE  
Interview Edited By Olivia Ramsay



Sandy Jennings // © Maximilian Tortoriello  
Photography

Behind every Balanchine ballet is a guardian of his vision. This Season, Sandra Jennings staged these three hallmark works, passing down the knowledge and artistry she learned directly from the source. A former New York City Ballet dancer, Jennings trained at the School of American Ballet on a Ford Foundation scholarship and worked closely with George Balanchine for nine years. She performed leading roles in works by Balanchine and Jerome Robbins and appeared in major televised dance programs. Since 1985, she has staged Balanchine ballets worldwide.

We sat down with her when she was in our studios to get her take on the three ballets featured in Balanchine—Father of American Ballet:

## DIAMONDS

*Diamonds* is a ballet within the full-length work *Jewels* and is inspired by Balanchine's roots in the Imperial Ballet. It was his homage to the St. Petersburg of his youth, featuring a ballerina who is completely American—strong, independent, and dancing with freedom within the classical idiom to Tchaikovsky's brilliant and beloved *Symphony No 3 in D Major*. The score and the ballerina together create a magical ballet that evokes the grandeur of classical tradition with the cool brilliance of a diamond.



Sasha De Sola performing the pas de deux from Balanchine's *Diamonds* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl //  
Choreography by George Balanchine © The Balanchine Trust; Photo © Sam Zauscher

### What to watch (and listen) for:

The first notes of the pas de deux give you a sense of being lifted to a higher place. Here, you witness one of Balanchine's great pas de deux—romantic, yet centered on a man who offers his hand and cares for a woman who clearly can stand on her own. It is as if she is allowing him to dance with her.

There are many daring moments; you can look for these. The ballet ends with a glorious “Polonaise” which features 17 couples all dancing together. Here the ballerina and her partner have very daring choreography that can have you on the edge of your seat!

### Who it's for:

This ballet is for anyone who loves to hear great music and to be taken to another place. *Diamonds* is in the tradition of the great classical ballets but without a story. One can always imagine a story when there is a man and woman on stage together. The woman in this case is free within the classical ballet vocabulary.

### SERENADE

*Serenade* is considered one of the most beautiful ballets of the 20th century. It is the first ballet that Balanchine created in America. Throughout his life, he continued to make adjustments as his company grew. Its simplicity and sublime dancing create an atmosphere that anyone can be brought into. The opening notes of the score of Tchaikovsky can move you in a way that is quite spiritual!

### What to look (and listen) for:

The curtain opens to 17 women standing in a bowtie formation with their right arm reaching up into space. The original ballet was created in and for an outdoor space. It was said that the ladies were blocking the sun from their eyes. For me, I always felt like I was reaching for something. Maybe the unattainable?

The last section of the ballet is called “The Elegy.” Here we have a man enter with a woman who is directing his movements from behind. Her arms from behind look like wings. Balanchine was influenced by his early education with Sergei Diaghilev, the impresario of the

Ballets Russes. Diaghilev took Balanchine to the museums in Paris, where he saw some of the greatest art. There are many motifs in The Elegy section that remind us of these statues and paintings.

#### Who it's for:

*Serenade* is for those who love ballet and those who have never seen ballet. It is iconic! Ideal for anyone who loves a lush Tchaikovsky score with strings and beautiful dancing, it is a ballet where people can imagine their own story or just enjoy beautiful dancing. The work of the corps de ballet is so inspiring; I am sure people will feel uplifted after seeing it!

#### STARS AND STRIPES

*Stars and Stripes* is Americana with a Broadway flair. It's such a fun ballet. This year marks the 250th anniversary of the USA, and Tamara wanted to honor that—so we thought, what better way than with *Stars and Stripes*!?

#### Something to look out for:

Balanchine was masterful at creating patterns and shapes. Watch for the "Men's Regiment" where they're dancing all together. It's like a chorus line, but instead it's all men dancing these super athletic steps.

Also, watch for the energy between the lead couple. Their choreography is especially playful; it's like they are going back and forth playing a game with each other. I remember the original couple, Melissa Hayden and Jacques d'Amboise, talking about it. They'd have this fun sense of competition between one another.



Julia Rowe and San Francisco Ballet in Balanchine's *Serenade* // Choreography by George Balanchine © The Balanchine Trust; Photo © Erik Tomasson

#### Who it's for:

Anyone who loves a real spectacle. It's worth taking it all in and seeing nearly the whole Company on stage. The finale is especially powerful. Each regiment has 13 people, and they all come together in the grand finale. It's a lot of fun!

and has been produced in accordance with the Balanchine Style® and Balanchine Technique® service standards established and provided by the Trust. Scenery courtesy of Sarasota Ballet. Costumes courtesy of The Australian Ballet.

#### SERENADE

##### WORLD PREMIERE

March 1, 1935—American Ballet, Adelphi Theater; New York, New York

##### SF BALLET PREMIERE

April 18, 1952—War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

© The George Balanchine Trust

##### PRODUCTION CREDITS

Music: *Serenade in C Major for String Orchestra*, Op. 48. This performance of *Serenade*, a Balanchine® Ballet, is presented by arrangement with The George Balanchine Trust and has been produced in accordance with the Balanchine Style® and Balanchine Technique® service standards established and provided by the Trust. Costumes constructed by Barbara Matera, Ltd., New York, NY.

#### STARS AND STRIPES

##### WORLD PREMIERE

January 17, 1958—New York City Ballet, City Center of Music and Drama; New York, New York

##### SF BALLET PREMIERE

January 19, 1981—War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

© The George Balanchine Trust

##### PRODUCTION CREDITS

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Jasmine Jimison in Balanchine's *Stars and Stripes* // Choreography by George Balanchine © The Balanchine Trust; Photo © Lindsay Thomas



Katherine Barkman and San Francisco Ballet rehearsing Balanchine's *Serenade* // Choreography by George Balanchine © The Balanchine Trust; Photo © San Francisco Ballet, by Lindsey Rallo



Leili Rackow and San Francisco Ballet rehearsing Balanchine's *Stars and Stripes* // Choreography by George Balanchine © The Balanchine Trust; Photo © San Francisco Ballet, by Lindsey Rallo



Sasha De Sola backstage at the Hollywood Bowl before rehearsals of the pas de deux from Balanchine's *Diamonds* // © Sam Zauscher

● SHAPING AMERICAN BALLET:  
CHRISTENSEN'S LEGACY AND  
BALANCHINE'S INFLUENCE

By Olivia Ramsay

Lew Christensen, who served as San Francisco Ballet's Artistic Director from 1951 to 1984, was a pioneering force in shaping ballet on the West Coast. Before his tenure in San Francisco, Christensen was closely connected to George Balanchine, one of the most influential choreographers of the 20th century.

Christensen's relationship with Balanchine began in the 1930s, when he joined the fledgling American Ballet Caravan, the company Balanchine founded with Lincoln Kirstein. He rose to prominence as a dancer, becoming the first American-born male to perform the title role in Balanchine's landmark ballet, *Apollo*. This performance cemented Christensen's importance as both an interpreter of Balanchine's work and a model for the emergence of the American ballet dancer.

In 1945, Christensen was inducted into the military and posted in Germany until the end of World War II when he returned to work with Balanchine for several seasons at the newly formed Ballet Society, which later became New York City Ballet, absorbing the choreographer's modern, musical, and distinctly American sensibility. These years proved formative: Balanchine's influence can be traced in Christensen's

**"CHRISTENSEN'S CAREER ILLUSTRATES HOW BALANCHINE'S VISION RADIATED BEYOND HIS OWN COMPANY."**



Lew Christensen as Apollo with Daphne Vane in American Ballet's production of Balanchine's *Apollo* // Apollo Choreography by George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust; Photo © Richard Tucker, Christensen-Caccialanza Papers, Museum of Performance + Design

clean, structured choreography and in his emphasis on musicality.

When Christensen returned west to join San Francisco Ballet, first as Associate Director in 1949 and then as Co-Director in 1951, he brought Balanchine's influence with him, blending classical tradition with a distinctly modern American style. He expanded the Company's repertory, nurtured new generations of dancers, and transformed SF Ballet into the first major ballet company established outside of New York.

Christensen's career illustrates how Balanchine's vision radiated beyond his own company. Their relationship not only shaped Christensen's artistic voice but also left a lasting imprint on the development of dance in America, playing a major role in anchoring San Francisco Ballet as a major cultural institution.

Artistic Director Tamara Rojo continues to honor this shared legacy, ensuring Balanchine's work remains an integral part of our repertory. This Season, we celebrate the connection with an entire evening dedicated to Balanchine, reaffirming the enduring influence of his artistry on the Company and the broader American ballet tradition. Balanchine—Father of American Ballet showcasing his evolution as a choreographer with *Diamonds*, *Serenade*, and *Stars and Stripes* is onstage February 10–15.



George Balanchine // Photo by Tanaquil LeClercq; BALANCHINE is a trademark of The George Balanchine Trust.



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SF BALLET PREMIERE  
**PROLOGUE**

CHOREOGRAPHY, SCENIC  
AND COSTUME DESIGN  
William Forsythe

COMPOSER  
James Blake

LIGHTING DESIGN  
Tanja Ruehl

STAGED BY  
Jodie Gates and  
Noah Gelber

SF BALLET PREMIERE  
**THE BARRE PROJECT**

CHOREOGRAPHY, SCENIC  
AND COSTUME DESIGN  
William Forsythe

COMPOSER  
James Blake

LIGHTING DESIGN  
Tanja Ruehl, based on  
the original design by  
Brandon Stirling Baker

STAGED BY  
Jodie Gates and  
Noah Gelber

**BLAKE WORKS I**

CHOREOGRAPHY, SCENIC  
AND COSTUME DESIGN  
William Forsythe

COMPOSER  
James Blake

COSTUME DESIGN  
Dorothee Merg and  
William Forsythe

LIGHTING DESIGN  
Tanja Ruehl

STAGED BY  
Jodie Gates, Felipe Diaz,  
and Katita Waldo

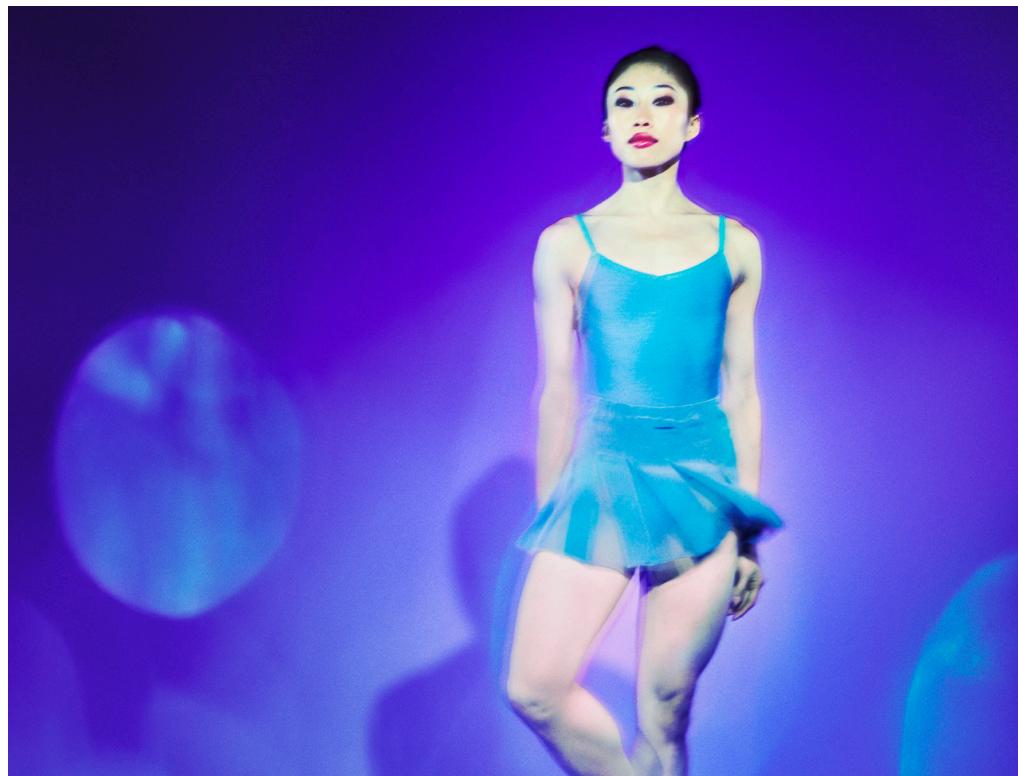
ORIGINAL STAGING (2022)  
Ayman Harper

PERFORMANCE DATES

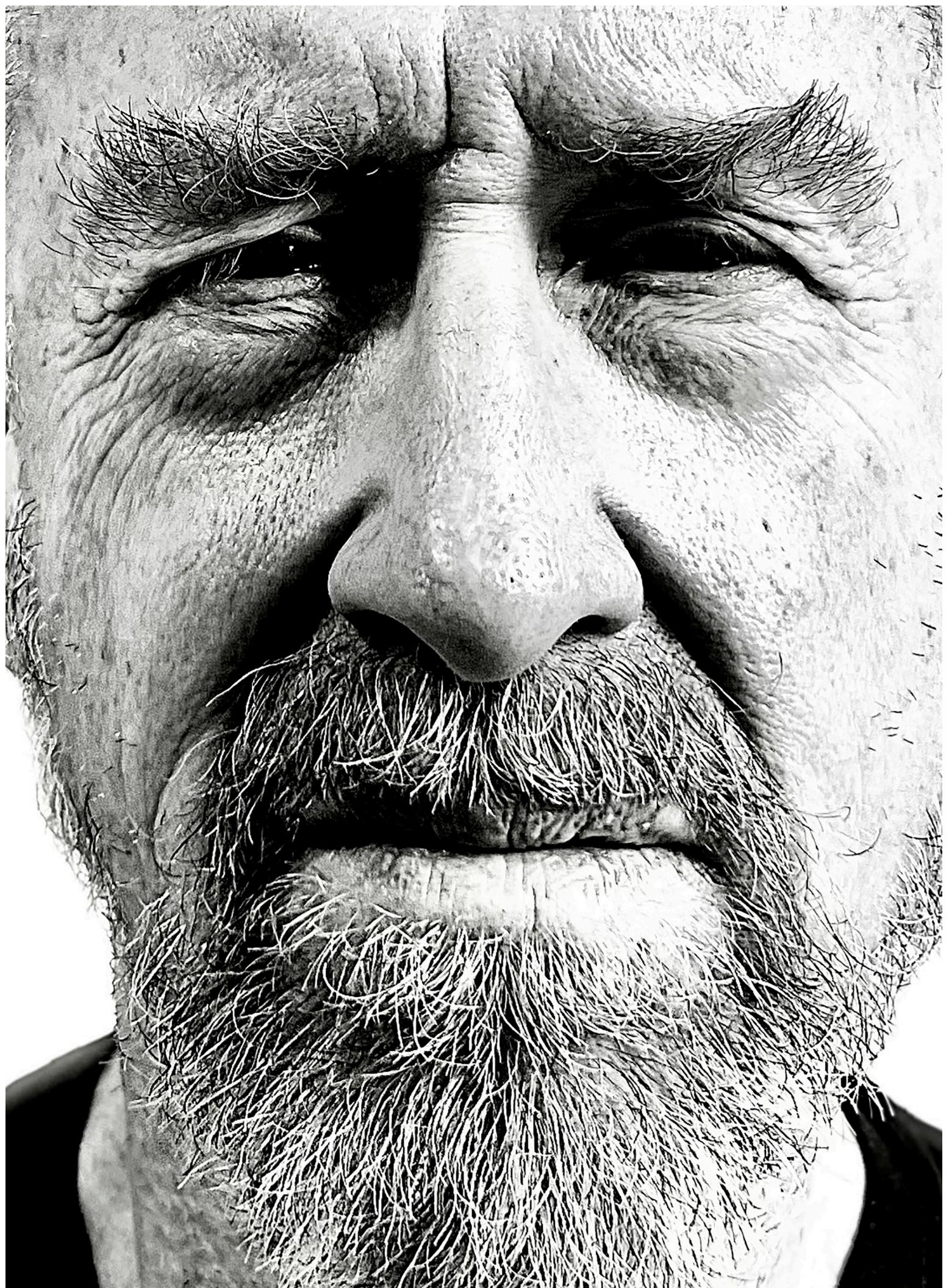
February 27	8 pm
February 28	2 pm
February 28	8 pm
March 1	2 pm
March 3	7:30 pm
March 4	7:30 pm
March 5	7:30 pm
March 6	8 pm
March 7	2 pm
March 7	8 pm
March 8	2 pm

FORSYTHE'S

# THE BLAKE WORKS



Madeline Woo // © Studio Schuller for San Francisco Ballet



# THE BLAKE WORKS



San Francisco Ballet in Forsythe's *Blake Works* // © Lindsay Thomas

## ● THE BLAKE WORKS

William Forsythe (September 2025)

### PROLOGUE

There is both music and mathematics in my family background, and I am certainly drawn to the “mathiness” of both music and ballet. It was part of the appeal when I first heard *Lindisfarne 1* by James Blake, which has become the first work of the three-part choreography *The Blake Works*. The music is defined by its virtually uncountable caesura: silences of indeterminate length. Blake asked if he should “regularize” these pauses for me, but I felt that would remove the tension from the work, and I wanted to keep its sense of respiration. Often with what I call my “tacet” or “a cappella” pieces, we develop a “breath score”, where the only acoustic element of the choreographic structure is deliberate patterns of breathing. Here, though, I had to figure out a counting scheme that would enable dance and structured silence to cohere. The real challenge was to find four different counting strategies for each of the four sections. I played the music many hundreds of times, and it literally took me from 2011 until 2023 to find those structures that worked. Dancers have commented that they had acquired a kind

of audio acuity which they said left them in a constant state of suspended anticipation during the dance.

### THE BARRE PROJECT

*The Barre Project* was conceived at the height of the pandemic as an homage to the legions of dancers who, while holding on to any available piece of domestic furniture, attempted to sustain their professional abilities with at-home barre exercises.

The project’s choreography contains no traditional arrangement of academic barre sequences. Rather, it is a rigorous display of the winding and unwinding kinetic logic that informs the most fundamental elements of classical ballet’s vocabulary. This foundational coordination is called “Epaulement” in ballet terminology and is the glue that unifies the balletic body’s attention to its many simultaneously moving parts.

Traditionally, the musical accompaniment for barre work has consisted of regularly metered excerpts of classical music repertoire. In this work, Blake also uses familiar time signatures to reframe diverse facets of classic composition in his densely counterpointed structures. Blake’s

musical erudition allows him to navigate between traditional compositional conventions and contemporary genres with sophisticated ease, delighting and exciting performers and audiences alike.

#### BLAKE WORKS I

The final work of the evening is *Blake Works I*, performed in costumes that are reminiscent of the French ballet academy. It was created for the Paris Opera Ballet in 2016, and was the first work fashioned in the classical idiom after a hiatus from classical ballet for more than 15 years. While the work explores various facets of the strict academic tradition that underlies all ballet technique, *Blake Works I* also celebrates the delightful tension that arises through the introduction of choreographic exception to ballet's conventional rules. The work deploys a distinctly historical approach to the genre, versus the analytical approach I used in a majority of the previous ballet-oriented works.

*Blake Works I* displays my deep affection for the language of ballet, and revives several iconic fragments from works of the genre's great practitioners that had been deeply influential during my formative years.

Certain academic tropes that have the distinct imprint of the French style were introduced to me by Prima Ballerina and Director of the Paris Opera's École de Danse Elizabeth Platel and the venerated teacher and transmitter of French "Batterie" Gilbert Mayer. These lessons were like being placed in an actual time machine, where a window to the formative state of the art suddenly appeared and allowed me a privileged and precious view of our common ground.

#### PROLOGUE

##### WORLD PREMIERE

May 10, 2023—Ballet Company Teatro alla Scala; Teatro alla Scala; Milan, Italy

##### SF BALLET PREMIERE

February 27, 2026—War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

#### THE BARRE PROJECT

Originating from *The Barre Project* (*Blake Works II*), created and filmed in 2020 for its broadcast on March 25, 2021 on the CLI Studios Digital Platform [clistudios.com](http://clistudios.com)

##### SF BALLET PREMIERE

February 27, 2026—War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California



San Francisco Ballet in Forsythe's *Blake Works I* // © Erik Tomasson

#### BLAKE WORKS I

##### WORLD PREMIERE

July 4, 2016—Paris Opera Ballet, Palais Garnier; Paris, France

##### SF BALLET PREMIERE

February 3, 2022—War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

##### PRODUCTION CREDITS

Sound Supervisor for *The Blake Works*: Niels Lanz. Music: Prologue — "Lindisfarne I" from James Blake (2011); *The Barre Project*—"Buzzard & Kestrel" from *The Bells Sketch* (2010), "Lullaby for My Insomniac" from *Assume Form* (2019), and "200 Press" from *200 Press* (2014). *Blake Works I*—Songs from *The Colour in Anything* (2016): "I Need a Forest Fire," "Put That Away and Talk to Me," "The Colour in Anything," "I Hope My Life (1-800 Mix)," "Waves Know Shores," "Two Men Down," and "f.o.r.e.v.e.r." Costumes constructed by San Francisco Ballet Costume Shop.

“BLAKE WORKS I DISPLAYS MY DEEP AFFECTION FOR THE LANGUAGE OF BALLET, AND REVIVES SEVERAL ICONIC FRAGMENTS FROM WORKS OF THE GENRE’S GREAT PRACTITIONERS THAT HAD BEEN DEEPLY INFLUENTIAL DURING MY FORMATIVE YEARS.”

—WILLIAM FORSYTHE



James Blake at the Wang in Boston // Photo by Knar Bedian from Wikimedia Commons



Joseph Walsh and San Francisco Ballet in Forsythe's *Blake Works I* // © Lindsay Thomas

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Photo taken at The Sequoias San Francisco

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## CHOREOGRAPHER

Alexander Gorsky,  
after Marius Petipa

## COMPOSER

Ludwig Minkus

STAGING AND ADDITIONAL  
CHOREOGRAPHY

Helgi Tomasson and  
Yuri Possokhov

## ADDITIONAL PRINCIPAL COACHING

Tamara Rojo and  
Loipa Araújo

ADDITIONAL STAGING  
Anita PaciottiSCENIC AND COSTUME DESIGN  
Martin PakledinazLIGHTING DESIGN  
James F. IngallsASSOCIATE SCENIC DESIGN  
Arnulfo MaldonadoASSOCIATE COSTUME DESIGN  
Heather LockardAUTHOR OF *DON QUIXOTE*  
Miguel de Cervantes

## PERFORMANCE DATES

March 19	7:30 pm
March 20	8 pm
March 21	2 pm
March 21	8 pm
March 22	2 pm
March 24	7:30 pm
March 25	7:30 pm
March 27	8 pm
March 28	2 pm
March 28	8 pm
March 29	2 pm

# DON QUIXOTE



Madeline Woo as Kitri and Harrison James as Basilio from Tomasson/Possokhov's *Don Quixote* // © Studio Schuller for San Francisco Ballet

# DON QUIXOTE

- FROM STUDIO TO SPOTLIGHT:  
THE YOUNG CUPIDS OF SF BALLET  
By Olivia Ramsay

In *Don Quixote*, San Francisco Ballet School students have a special opportunity to dance alongside Company members as the Little Cupids, affectionately nicknamed “Don Qties” behind the scenes. More than a cameo, this role is a formative step in their training. Students in Level 6, typically aged 13 and 14, earn the opportunity to dance alongside Company members in Act II, during the dream sequence. Amid *Don Quixote*’s enchanting vision of ethereal dryads, the Queen of the Dryads, and Cupid, the Little Cupids play a vital part in the ballet’s most poetic scene.

SF Ballet School Director Grace Maduell Holmes shares what a profound effect these opportunities play in their overall development: “Having to embody a character and to perform at this technical level will challenge them physically and artistically, enhancing their journey toward a professional ballet career.”

Principal Dancer Jasmine Jimison and Corps de Ballet member Pemberley Ann Olson both performed as Little Cupids in 2015, years before joining the Company. For today’s students, the role is an early test of stagecraft and discipline, demanding mastery of intricate choreography, precise cues, and the exacting standards of an SF Ballet production. Dancing alongside the Principal Dancers she always looked up to, Jimison recalls “as a 12-year-old it made me think, oh, that could maybe be me one day.” Olson adds that the experience was a turning point in her pre-professional training. “Looking back, I think of my Little Cupid performances as being transitional. It gave us all a unique first-hand and first-time experience at what it is to be a professional ballerina, and helped us become the dancers we are today. Little Cupids was a thrilling experience and something I will always fondly remember.”

With a legacy of training dancers who go on to have professional careers around the world, SF Ballet School provides stepping stones that connect classroom technique to the artistry of the stage. Last

“IT GAVE US ALL A UNIQUE FIRST-HAND AND FIRST-TIME EXPERIENCE AT WHAT IT IS TO BE A PROFESSIONAL BALLERINA, AND HELPED US BECOME THE DANCERS WE ARE TODAY.”

—PEMBERLEY ANN OLSON



San Francisco Ballet in Tomasson/Possokhov’s *Don Quixote* // © Erik Tomasson

summer alone, six Trainees were named apprentices with SF Ballet, while others joined the ranks of The Royal Winnipeg Ballet, The Joffrey Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, and Ballet West among others. Opportunities like the Little Cupids offer a first glimpse of that future, where their dedication in the studio translates into life on the professional stage.

- WHO'S WHO IN DON QUIXOTE:  
MEET THE KNIGHTS, LOVERS, AND  
TOREADORS OF BALLET'S MOST  
STYLISH ROM-COM

With sparkling wit and show-stopping dancing, the ballet *Don Quixote* features a colorful cast of characters:

#### DON QUIXOTE

A dream-chasing, would-be knight who ventures out on the ultimate quest for love. Short on sleep and rich in grandiose ideas, he and his sidekick, Sancho Panza, travel near and far to defend virtue and punish all those who transgress the code of chivalry. The man knows how to make an entrance.



Jim Sohm as Don Quixote in Tomasson/Possokhov's *Don Quixote* // © Erik Tomasson



Wona Park as Kitri and Joseph Walsh as Basilio in Tomasson/Possokhov's *Don Quixote* // © Erik Tomasson



A display of hand fans in assorted colors and design // Photo by Toon Machiels from Pexels

#### KITRI

The playful and fun-loving innkeeper's daughter is always at the center of attention. Whether it is her fancy footwork and fan tricks, or her stunning beauty, all the men in town clamor for her attention. Will she marry her longtime love Basilio, choose a life of luxury with the wealthy nobleman Gamache, or abandon them all for the chivalrous Don Quixote?

#### BASILIO

The town barber, he's rich with charm, but not with money. Basilio captures Kitri's heart with his dashing ways and witty personality. Though not her father's first pick, Basilio's love for beautiful Kitri is deep and true. He's not bad on the Spanish guitar, either.



Myles Thatcher as Gamache in Tomasson/Possokhov's  
*Don Quixote* // © Erik Tomasson

#### GAMACHE

A rich and pompous nobleman with a penchant for purple velvet and big hair, and an eye for Kitri. Using his money to impress Kitri's father, he's won himself a marriage, but will he also be able to dissuade Kitri of her love for Basilio and win it for himself?

#### LORENZO

Kitri's heart may be uncertain, but her father Lorenzo's is not. He would have his daughter marry Gamache and be treated like a princess. (It wouldn't hurt his pockets much either!) His heart is in the right place, but will he see the error of his ways?

#### DULCINEA

Don Quixote's ideal woman, whose appearance in his dreams spurs his quest for love and helps him change his mind about helping the young lovers Kitri and Basilio.



Windmills on a Hill Under Cloudy Blue Sky // Photo by Gijs Jakobs from Pexels



Misa Kuranaga as Dulcinea in Tomasson/Possokhov's *Don Quixote* // © Erik Tomasson

**SANCHO PANZA**

Don Quixote's would-be squire and consummate companion who is always getting himself into trouble. When he isn't riding alongside Don Quixote on his faithful donkey, Johnny Appleseed, he is stealing hams, drinking wine, and being chased by angry townsfolk. Clearly this roly-poly sidekick isn't aware of the townspeople's "punishment by giant trampoline"!

**MERCEDES & ESPADA**

The legendary bullfighter Espada and his sultry partner Mercedes fire up the townspeople with an entourage of toreadors and dagger-wielding dancers. Their cape whirling and fiery chemistry often make this dancing duo the talk of the town.



Pascal Molat as Sancho Panza in Tomasson/Possokhov's *Don Quixote* // © Erik Tomasson



Jennifer Stahl as Mercedes in Tomasson/Possokhov's *Don Quixote* // © Erik Tomasson

**CUPID**

The fairy of love, who only appears in their dreams. This spunky and energetic goddess flitters around the ether tethering together the heartstrings of young lovers. She is a little matchmaker with a big heart.

WORLD PREMIERE (ORIGINAL PETIPA PRODUCTION)  
December 26, 1869—Imperial Ballet, Bolshoi Theatre; Moscow, Russia

WORLD PREMIERE (GORSKY PRODUCTION)  
December 6, 1900—Imperial Ballet, Bolshoi Theatre; Moscow, Russia

WORLD PREMIERE (TOMASSON/POSSOKHOV STAGING)  
March 14, 2003—San Francisco Ballet, War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

The 2012 production of Helgi Tomasson and Yuri Possokhov's *Don Quixote* was made possible by New Productions Fund Lead Sponsors Mrs. Jeannik Méquet Littlefield and Mr. and Mrs. John S. Osterweis; Major Sponsors Rudolf Nureyev Dance Foundation and Larry and Joyce Stupski; and Sponsors Richard C. Barker, Christine H. Russell Fund of the Columbia Foundation, Suzy Kellems Dominik, Stephanie Barlage Ejabat, Gaia Fund, The William Randolph Hearst Foundation, Cecilia and Jim Herbert, Alison and Michael Mauzé, and Diane B. Wilsey.

**PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Music: *Don Quixote* by Ludwig Minkus. Additional music: Act I, Overture: Galop from *La Source* Act I by L. Delibes, with introduction by Patrick Flynn. No. 17, "Basilio's Variation" is "Ole de la Curra" by A. S. Arista, orchestrated by Patrick Flynn. Act II, No. 21a, additional material in opening ensemble by Patrick Flynn; No. 23, "Kitri & Basilio" is "Three Spanish Women" by V.P. Soloviev-Sedoi; No. 30, Queen of the Driads Variation; "Souvenir du Bal" by A. Simon; No. 31, "Cupid's Variation" from *Paquita* by L. Minkus; No. 32, "Kitri's Variation" by R. Drigo. Act III, No. 48, "Fandango" by Eduard Napravnik; No. 51, Finale: Galop from *La Source* Act I by L. Delibes, with introduction by Patrick Flynn. Assistant Costume Designer: Shawn McCulloch; Assistant Interns to Martin Pakledinaz: Hannah Kittel, Giulia Cauti, Laura Ortiz. Costumes constructed by: Carelli Costumes Inc. New York, NY; Krostyne Studio Pittsburgh, PA; Parsons-Meares Ltd., New York, NY; Tricorne Inc. New York, NY; Driad tutus by Yoshi Terashima London, England; Masks, Millinery and Head Dressing by Carelli Costumes Inc. New York, NY; Karen Eifert New York, NY; Rodney Gordon New York, NY; Arnold S. Levine, Inc. Theatrical Millinery and Crafts New York, NY; Lynne Mackey Studio New York, NY; Don Quixote armor by Costume Armour New York, NY; Painting and distressing by Jeff Fender Studio Inc. Brooklyn, NY; Fabric dyeing by Eric Winterling Inc. New York, NY; Kimtex Fabric Services New York, NY; Lisa Sacaris Houston, TX; Jewelry by Franklin Labovitz Washington, D.C.; Boots by Hiatt Dance Boots Salt Lake City, UT; Pluma Portland, OR; Scenic construction and painting by San Francisco Ballet Scene Shop. Horses courtesy of Prince Horse Rental.



Isabella DeVivo as Cupid in Tomasson/Possokhov's *Don Quixote* // © Erik Tomasson

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CHOREOGRAPHER

August Bournonville

COMPOSER

Herman Løvenskiold

PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY

Helgi Tomasson

STAGED BY

Ulrik Birkkjaer

## PERFORMANCE DATES

April 10	8 pm
April 11	2 pm
April 11	8 pm
April 12	2 pm
April 14	7:30 pm
April 15	7:30 pm
April 16	7:30 pm

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPAL COACHING

Tamara Rojo and

Loipa Araújo

SCENIC AND COSTUME DESIGN

Jose Varona

LIGHTING DESIGN

Sara Linnie Slocum

# LA SYLPHIDE

Jasmine Jimison as the Sylph and Cavan Conley as James in Bournonville's *La Sylphide* // © Studio Schuller for San Francisco Ballet

# LA SYLPHIDE



Wona Park and Joseph Walsh in Bournonville's *La Sylphide* // © Erik Tomasson

## ● UNPACKING BOURNONVILLE WITH *LA SYLPHIDE* STAGER ULRIK BIRKKJAER Edited by Skylar De Paul

In the 19th century, during a revered period of creativity and innovation in Denmark, choreographer August Bournonville cemented his place in dance history.

As a choreographer with the Royal Danish Ballet for almost 50 years, Bournonville crafted a style that was uniquely his own—a movement vocabulary now synonymous with the Danish school of ballet.

Ulrik Birkkjaer, former San Francisco Ballet principal dancer and current stager for *La Sylphide*, was born in Copenhagen and grew up studying Bournonville style at the Royal Danish Ballet School, later performing professionally with the Royal Danish Ballet. Ulrik retired from the stage in 2022, but this season, he returned to San Francisco to stage this beloved production on our dancers.

**SFB:** Ulrik, when were you first introduced to the Bournonville style?

**UB:** At the Royal Danish Ballet School, you're onstage with the professional company very, very young. My first Bournonville experience was at age six. Bournonville always used kids in his productions, and since he is such a big part of the world dance heritage, at eight or nine years old I was already in California touring *La Sylphide*. It was a really magical upbringing. I appreciate how well I know the ballet by now, over 30 years later, having done most of the male parts and seeing it every year for decades. It's fun to now get the opportunity to help stage *La Sylphide* here in San Francisco.

**SFB:** What makes the Bournonville style so unique?

**UB:** Bournonville actually wrote a whole manifesto describing what he appreciated in dance and what he thought his work should look like, what



Nathaniel Remez in Bournonville's *La Sylphide* // © Erik Tomasson

“IN ALL OF HIS BALLET, THE STORY IS TOLD BY MIME, AND IN HAPPY MOMENTS, PEOPLE START DANCING.”

—ULRIK BIRKKJAER



Julia Rowe and Joseph Walsh in Bournonville's *La Sylphide* // © Erik Tomasson



Traditional Scottish sporran and a kilt // Photo by Lewis Ashton from Pexels

San Francisco Ballet in Bournonville's *La Sylphide* // © Erik Tomasson

it should communicate to the audience. For him, the movement was always an expression of joy. In all of his ballets, the story is told by mime, and in happy moments, people start dancing.

Bournonville himself was a very good dancer, but a terrible partner, resulting in his ballets not having much partnering in them. He performed as James at the opening night of *La Sylphide*, so of course, his choreography showcased what he was good at: jumping a lot and quick footwork, like the legs scissoring in the air. In his manifesto, he described how he wanted dance to be harmonious, and therefore the movement of the upper body is quite calm, clean, and slow. You're kind of drawing in the air more and trailing with the back of your leg. This harmonious appearance makes the movement look effortless, but is very, very difficult to achieve. You could say that the upper body is the melody and the legs are the rhythm.

**SFB:** What should audiences take away from the story of *La Sylphide*?

**UB:** *La Sylphide* is a story about humanity. It's a story about someone, James, seemingly having it all, but still wanting more. I think all human beings can relate to that. In 2025, I'm trying to not make it a story about a man choosing between women—it's a story about how enough is never enough, how we always want more, and the effect that has on a human being. That, for me, is the moral of this story and why it's still so alive today.

#### WORLD PREMIERE

November 28, 1836—Royal Danish Ballet; Copenhagen, Denmark

#### SF BALLET PREMIERE

October 25, 1987—Neal Blaisdell Concert Hall; Honolulu, Hawai'i

#### PRODUCTION CREDITS

Music: *La Sylphide*. Costumes constructed by Dallas Ballet Costume Department, Dallas, Texas. Additional costumes constructed by San Francisco Ballet Costume Shop.

#### WHAT IS A SYLPH?

A sylph is a mythical spirit of the air. An ethereal, winged creature drawn from Romantic folklore. Light as air and impossible to hold, the sylph embodies mystery, freedom, and unattainable beauty. In *La Sylphide*, she lures the hero James away from earthly life, symbolizing the irresistible pull of dreams and the dangers of chasing the intangible.



Illustration by Alfred Edward Chalon of Marie Taglioni dancing the title role in Filippo Taglioni's *La Sylphide* // Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons



Ulrik Birkkjaer in Bournonville's *La Sylphide* // © Erik Tomasson

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Aszure Barton

MUSIC COMPOSED BY  
Floating Points

PRODUCTION DESIGN AND VISUALS  
Hamill Industries

COSTUME DESIGN  
Michelle Jank

LIGHTING DESIGN  
Jim French

DRAMATURG  
Carmen Kovacs

COLLABORATIVE ASSISTANT  
James Gregg

## PERFORMANCE DATES

April 24	8 pm
April 25	2 pm
April 25	8 pm
April 26	2 pm
April 28	7:30 pm
April 29	7:30 pm
April 30	7:30 pm
May 1	8 pm
May 2	2 pm
May 2	8 pm
May 3	2 pm

# MERE MORTALS

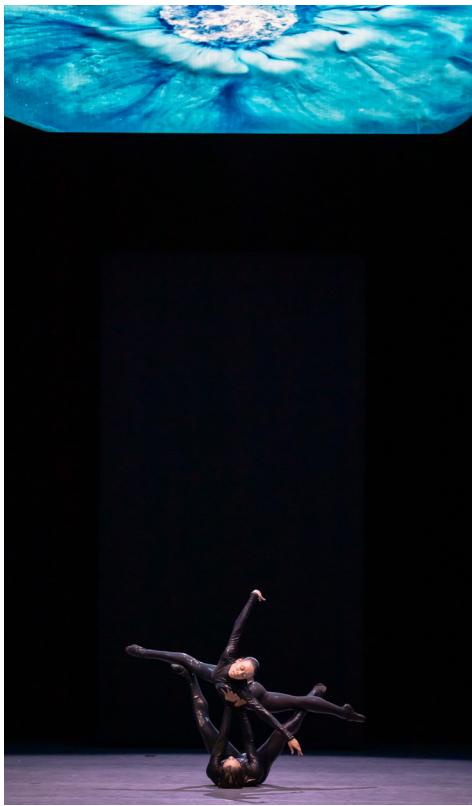


Nikisha Fogo as Pandora and Wei Wang as Hope from Aszure Barton and Sam Shepherd's *Mere Mortals* // © Studio Schuller for San Francisco Ballet

# MERE MORTALS



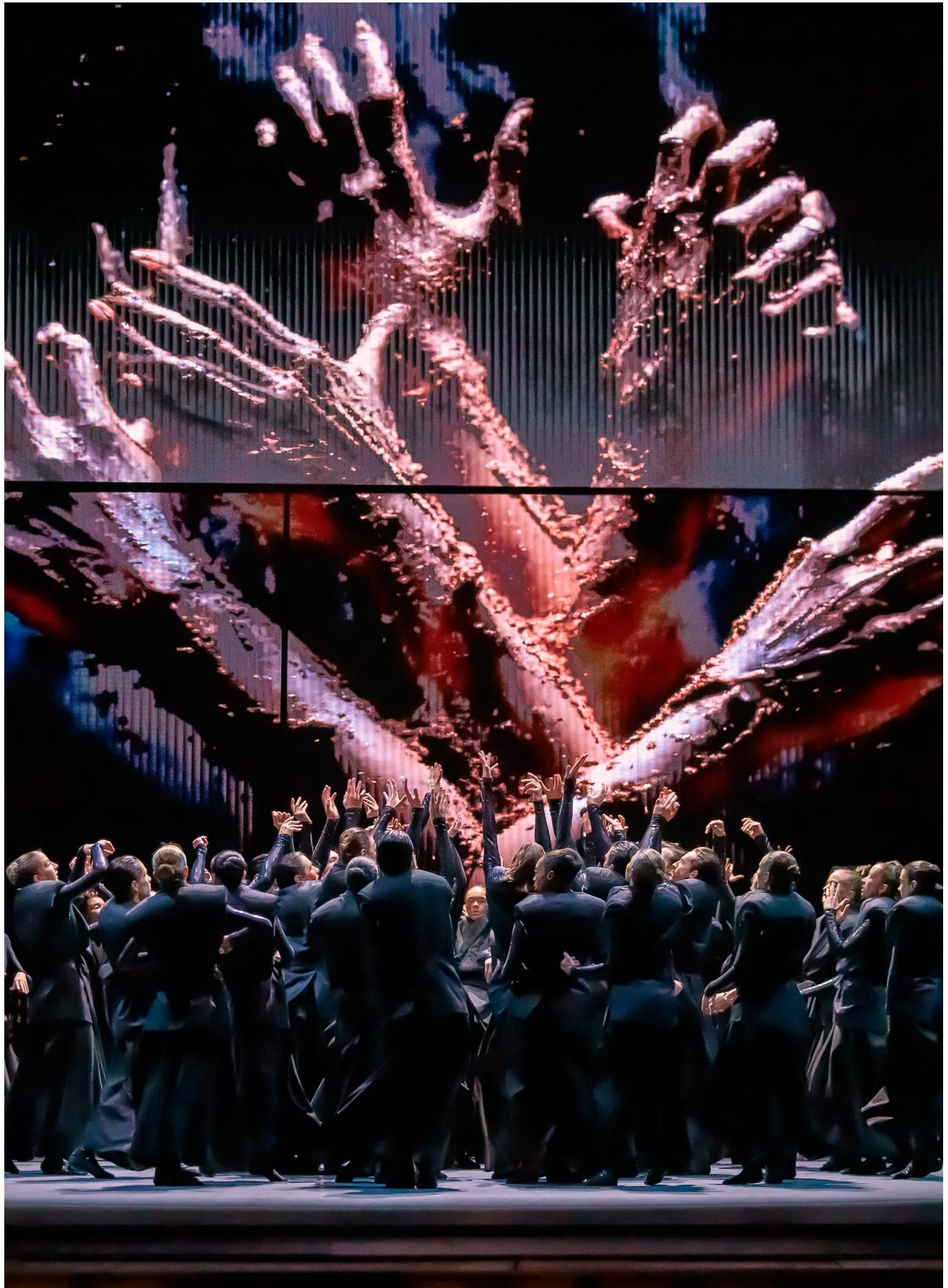
San Francisco Ballet in Aszure Barton and Sam Shepherd's *Mere Mortals* // © Chris Hardy



## ● FROM TAMARA ROJO ON MERE MORTALS

It's important that the work we do at SF Ballet is relevant not only to the company, but to the people who live here in the Bay Area, and many of us are considering the role of artificial intelligence in society and in our individual lives. *Mere Mortals* began with a conversation about the philosophical questions that have emerged and will continue to emerge from this new technology. We wanted to find a story from history that engendered these same philosophical questions. We landed on the Prometheus and Pandora myths: the stealing of fire, which was both positive and an incredible danger, and the opening of the jar. These are the first times that humanity openly disregards profound consequences in the pursuit of knowledge—and yet humankind has always moved forward despite the risks.

Nikisha Fogo and Esteban Hernández in Aszure Barton and Sam Shepherd's *Mere Mortals* // © Reneff-Olson Productions



## ● ADAPTING PANDORA'S MYTH

By Olivia Ramsay

In the ancient Greek poem of “Theogony”, Pandora is the first mortal woman created by the gods. She’s given a jar as a gift from Zeus and an explicit warning not to open it under any circumstances. When curiosity gets the better of her, she opens the jar, releasing all the evils and miseries into the world. Only hope remains trapped inside. While the narrative dates to the first centuries of humanity, there are parallels found in contemporary society today, including unintended consequences of technology, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI), and ethical dilemmas in science and technology. Dramaturg Carmen Kovacs notes, “We started with the original myth, but since it has been changed and interpreted in so many ways, we thought we would do our own story and combine it with this idea of AI and how humankind has brought it upon themselves.”

Greek mythology buffs might identify some nuanced parallels between Aszure Barton and Sam Shepherd’s *Mere Mortals* and the myth of Pandora’s Jar; however Kovacs notes that anyone will be able to follow the story. “The audience doesn’t have to know the myth at all to take meaning from the ballet because you will naturally feel what it’s about, plus you can interpret and project your own ideas and feelings. But I think it might be interesting to have that context of the actual myth and then to see, especially in combination with AI, what happens and to follow that journey.”

### WORLD PREMIERE

January 26, 2024—San Francisco Ballet, War Memorial Opera House; San Francisco, California

The 2024 world premiere of *Mere Mortals* was made possible by Grand Benefactor Sponsors Anonymous and John S. Osterweis; Lead Sponsors Carol Franc Buck Foundation, in support of Original Composition and Performance, Shelby and Frederick Gans in honor of Sam Shepherd, Jennifer and Steven Walske, and E. L. Wiegand Foundation.

### PRODUCTION CREDITS

Music: Original composition commissioned by San Francisco Ballet. Costumes constructed by Parkinson Gill Ltd. Scenic construction and painting by San Francisco Ballet Scene Shop.



Nikisha Fogo in Aszure Barton and Sam Shepherd's *Mere Mortals* // © Reneff-Olson Productions



Wei Wang and San Francisco Ballet in Aszure Barton and Sam Shepherd's *Mere Mortals* // © Reneff-Olson Productions

## • WHO'S WHO IN MERE MORTALS

By Olivia Ramsay

While the characters won't be introduced onstage in a traditional way, these are the key players that will emerge from the larger group of dancers:

### HOPE

Hope is the first character that we meet, one that Barton and Kovacs sketched out to be ever-present onstage as a metaphor—a constant grounding presence from the start of the ballet. Described here by Kovacs, “Hope is a floating particle that will forever surround us, like curiosity . . . an enormously powerful force that dies last, or not at all.” Audiences will notice that the character of Hope is not part of the ensemble; they are the only dancer that remains on the outside of the group. Choreographically speaking, “Hope is like a peaceful tornado, a force of nature that can’t go away.”

### PROMETHEUS

Prometheus is the second character we meet. He is a cunning character who, in our telling of the story, is part of the gods but is also a rebel who thrives in chaos. He steals the fire from the gods and brings it to the humans because he is bored and looking to play. The fire represents progress, enlightenment, power, and destruction all at once. Kovacs notes, “Instead of representing Zeus as a separate character onstage, we melted a touch of Zeus into Prometheus. Onstage he emerges as a leading figure, often pulling the strings, quite literally, for the group as a whole.”

### PANDORA

Pandora is a new human species with advanced skills that embodies progress and learning. She is more knowledgeable than the gods, though it's not immediately clear exactly what this knowledge is. Kovacs notes that in the myth, Pandora doesn't have a voice: “We don't know what she's thinking or feeling, what her intentions are, or what her truth is. So, we took the opportunity to give her a voice with a kind of monologue where she introduces herself choreographically, and she shows that she has a totally different skill set from the group of dancers.”

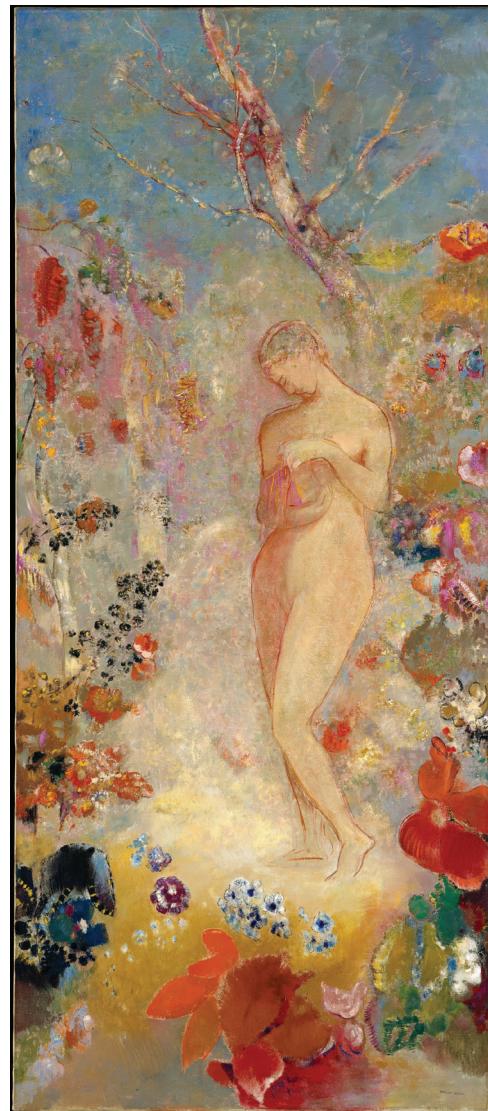
In this introduction, the beginning of her “coming to life,” there is a sense of not

**VIEWERS CAN WATCH FOR HOW PANDORA'S MOVEMENT DIFFERS FROM THAT OF THE GROUP, HOW SHE PRESENTS THE CHOREOGRAPHY WITH AN EARTHY AND GROUNDED QUALITY.**

yet knowing herself, and she experiences the wide range of physical, sensory, and mental consciousnesses with wonderment. She is learning to feel complex emotions, although fear is not part of her program. Viewers can watch for how Pandora's movement differs from that of the group, how she presents the choreography with an earthy and grounded quality. Together with Epimetheus, Pandora opens the jar. “It is their combined limitless and fearless curiosity that opens the door to inevitable change—and as soon as the others realize what's possible, they want to be part of that, too.”

### EPIMETHEUS

We meet Epimetheus throughout the ballet. He is Prometheus' brother, so viewers can look at how the choreography showcases their brotherly relationship while also hinting at potential familial conflict. In contrast to the original narrative, Epimetheus is not a simple or naive character, Kovacs notes; instead, he is “one of the few fearless beings who follows his curiosities and welcomes new ideas and inventions.” He is a divine being with intuition, passion, and unstoppable drive, willing to take risks and follow the people and ideas that excite and delight him.



“Pandora” by Odilon Redon, 1914 // Metropolitan Museum of Art collection from Wikimedia Commons

# EXPLORE MORE WITH SF BALLET

- We are excited to share the 2026 Season with you! From pre-performance talks with dancers and tours of the Opera House, to family workshops and ballet classes for adults, we offer an array of programs for new audience members and balletomanes to hear about the artistic process, dig deep into new works, and experience the transformative power of the art form.

## MEET THE ARTIST SERIES

Throughout the 2026 Season

Join us in the Opera House before performances on Friday evenings and Sunday matinees for a free, informative talk featuring dancers, musicians, choreographers, and other artists in conversation with a moderator. Or tune in all Season to the podcast recordings of Meet the Artist interviews. No Meet the Artist talks during *Mere Mortals*.

## PRE-PERFORMANCE EVENTS

Throughout the 2026 Season

Take a deep dive into the Season with a dynamic series of pre-performance panel discussions and lectures by authors, museum curators, and scholars who offer rare insight into the works onstage. The pre-performance event schedule will be announced in January.

## FAMILY VIEWING AREA

Throughout the 2026 Season

This family-friendly space is perfect when you or your child needs to step out of the auditorium for a break. The area includes a monitor to watch the performance as well as self-serve activities for children. From coloring activities, books, and more, the Family Viewing Area will entertain children until they're ready to go back to their seats in the auditorium. Located in the Dress Circle lobby throughout the Season.

## OPERA HOUSE TOURS

Spring 2026

Backstage like you've never seen it before. Join a walking tour of the War Memorial Opera House—a 1932 Beaux-Arts building designed by Arthur Brown. Go behind the scenes to learn about the unique technical and structural elements of the auditorium and experience the Opera House like the artists. Tickets go on sale in January.



SF Ballet's Sensory Friendly Dance-Along Workshop // © Alex Akamine

## DANCE-ALONG WORKSHOPS

Spring 2026

SF Ballet's Dance-Along workshops explore the story, choreography, music, and characters of some of the most famous full-length ballets, including *Nutcracker* and *Don Quixote*. Family Dance-Alongs offer a fun introduction to ballet for very young children. Sensory Friendly Dance-Alongs provide a dedicated and relaxed environment for individuals with developmental, physical, and cognitive disabilities to experience ballet on their own terms.

## ADULT DANCE CLASSES

Year-Round

At San Francisco Ballet School, we believe dance is for everyone, including adults with little or no dance experience. Adult classes offer a great workout, grounded in classical technique, led by Company and School faculty members. Adult classes include Ballet, Contemporary Ballet, Gentle Ballet, Conditioning, and Progressing Ballet Technique. We also offer dance classes designed specifically for individuals with Parkinson's. Classes are available online and in the studio. All ability levels are welcome.



Visit [sfballet.org/audience-programs](http://sfballet.org/audience-programs) or scan the QR code to learn more.

# A FULL SCHOOL YEAR

## • FALL

### TRAINEE TOUR

The Trainees traveled to Sun Valley, Idaho in October for their annual tour presented by Ballet Sun Valley. The 14 students were coached and led by Pascal Molat, Associate Director of the San Francisco Ballet School Trainee Program, and performed two nights of sold-out shows at the Argyros Theater in Ketchum, ID. To learn more about the Trainee program, visit our website at [sfballet.org/the-school/trainee-program/](http://sfballet.org/the-school/trainee-program/).



San Francisco Ballet School Students during summer session at SF Ballet School // © San Francisco Ballet, photo by Lindsey Rallo

## • SPRING

### THE NUREYEV PROJECT

In collaboration with Paris Opera Ballet School, Australian Ballet School, Royal Danish Ballet School, and Canada's National Ballet School, San Francisco Ballet School will celebrate Nureyev's choreography through a program of workshops, seminars, and master classes in May which will culminate in an in-studio performance for families of students. We will welcome guest faculty and former SF Ballet Principal Dancers Karin Avery and Pierre-François Vilanova to coach variations and refine repertory in Nureyev's choreographic style. To deepen the study of Nureyev's impact on the ballet world and San Francisco, the program will include seminars delivered by San Francisco's illustrious ballet historian, Mary Wood. This is the first year of a three-year collaboration with these other international ballet schools celebrating the legacy of Rudolph Nureyev.



San Francisco Ballet Trainee in Vainonen's *Flames Of Paris* // © Kirsten Shultz

## • WINTER

### SCHOOL AUDITIONS

Every student performing on the War Memorial Opera House stage with the San Francisco Ballet company is selected by the artistic staff and is a student at San Francisco Ballet School. To register for a future audition for the 2026–2027 School Year, please visit our website at [sfballet.org/the-school/admissions/](http://sfballet.org/the-school/admissions/).

### ALUMNI

Whether you spent multiple years of your youth or just one summer of training at San Francisco Ballet School, we hope that you remember your time here fondly, and we welcome you to stay connected with the Ballet School family. There are multiple ways you can engage. We hope to see you at an alumni event in the future—our next event is January in New York City. Join the newsletter here at [sfballet.org/the-school/alumni/](http://sfballet.org/the-school/alumni/).



San Francisco Ballet Trainees rehearsing Thatcher's *Mayfly* // © San Francisco Ballet, photo by Lindsey Rallo

# SAN FRANCISCO BALLET LEADERSHIP



## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Tamara Rojo

Appointed Artistic Director of San Francisco Ballet in 2022, Tamara Rojo is the first woman to lead the company and only its fifth Artistic Director since the company was founded in 1933. At SF Ballet, she has already commissioned three world premieres,

added new works to the repertoire, instituted choreographic and professional development opportunities for the Company, expanded audiences, and secured a transformational \$60 million gift. Before coming to San Francisco, Rojo served as Artistic Director and Lead Principal of London's English National Ballet (ENB) for nine and a half years, where she brought groundbreaking programming, garnered the company critical accolades, and spearheaded a successful £50-million capital campaign to create a new headquarters for the company that opened in 2019. Rojo danced as a professional ballerina for 30 years, dancing principal roles all over the world, including at La Scala de Milan and The Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, and as a member of the English National Ballet and The Royal Ballet in London. Raised in Madrid, Rojo has received Spain's three highest honors, two Olivier Awards, and the Kennedy Center Gold Medal for Fine Arts.



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Branislav Henselmann

Branislav Henselmann joined San Francisco Ballet as Executive Director in 2024, bringing more than three decades of experience in arts leadership, cultural policy, and business strategy. Most recently, he served as Managing Director for Arts, Culture,

and Tourism for the City of Vancouver, where he led a 10-year cultural plan adopted by elected officials. This work positioned arts and culture as essential civic infrastructure—the fourth pillar of sustainability—expanded municipal investment, and advanced cultural equity through support for artists and spaces. Following his career as a performing artist, Henselmann has held leadership roles across North America and Europe. These include Artistic Curator for New York City Ballet's Choreographic Institute, Director of Programming and Learning for DanceEast, Executive Producer for Michael Clark Company, and Executive Director of Ballet BC. He holds an MFA in Dance and Business Administration from New York University and a Master of Public Administration from the London School of Economics.



## SHELBY AND FREDERICK GANS MUSIC DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

Martin West

Martin West leads the world-renowned San Francisco Ballet Orchestra on-stage at the War Memorial Opera House and beyond, stewarding the orchestra's legacy of artistic excellence

across genres and across the globe. He joined San Francisco Ballet as Music Director and Principal Conductor in 2005, a position named in honor of Shelby and Frederick Gans in 2025. Over the course of his 20-year tenure, the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra has made 14 recordings, including the complete score of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, and an album of suites from Delibes' *Sylvia* and *Coppélia*. West conducted the award-winning DVD of Neumeier's *The Little Mermaid*, and SF Ballet's productions of *Nutcracker* for PBS and *Romeo & Juliet* for *Lincoln Center at the Movies: Great American Dance*. West is acknowledged as one of the foremost ballet conductors. He debuted with English National Ballet as resident conductor in 1997 and has worked with many top companies in North America and Europe, including the New York City Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, and The Royal Ballet. Born in Bolton, England, West attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music and London's Royal Academy of Music after studying mathematics at Cambridge University.



## DIRECTOR, SAN FRANCISCO BALLET SCHOOL

Grace Maduell Holmes

Since 2024, Grace Holmes has served as Director of the San Francisco Ballet School and Trainee Program. In her role, she cultivates the next generation of professional dancers, building on her varied career as a dancer and educator with over

20 years of experience teaching students of all ages in both the United States and the United Kingdom. Holmes began her training at the SF Ballet School in 1979 under educators including longtime company director Lew Christensen. She launched her professional career at New Orleans Ballet Theatre and joined SF Ballet's company in 1983, where she was promoted to soloist in 1990 and danced until 1995. Following her tenure at SF Ballet, Holmes danced as a Senior Soloist with Birmingham Royal Ballet. Her repertoire as a dancer includes over 100 ballets and she has worked with internationally acclaimed choreographers including William Forsythe, Wayne McGregor, Val Caniparoli, David Bintley, and James Kudelka, among others. After retiring from the stage in 2000, she transitioned to a role as Birmingham's Education Projects Officer and went on to serve as Ballet Education Manager at The Royal Ballet/Royal Opera House at Covent Garden. In the United States, she created a ballet program for Tapestry Dance Company in Austin, Texas; was a professor of dance at the University of Texas at Austin; and served as the School Director of Kansas City Ballet from 2014 to 2023. Holmes has a Master's degree in Dance in Education and Community from Westhill College at University of Birmingham, UK.

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The Orthopedic Sports Medicine Institute at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital is the official health care provider for San Francisco Ballet School. Special thanks to Dr. Victor Prieto, Dr. Rémy Ardizzone, and the Dance Medicine and Physical Therapy Department for generously providing their service.

# SPECIAL EVENTS

## ● OPENING NIGHT GALA

JANUARY 14, 2026  
SAN FRANCISCO CITY HALL & WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE

The curtain rises on a night where fashion, music, and visual art collide—at San Francisco Ballet’s 2026 Opening Night Gala. Walk the red carpet and enjoy cocktails before dinner at San Francisco City Hall, followed by a one-night-only performance at the War Memorial Opera House. Then, dance the night away at our legendary After Party. More than an evening—it’s a multisensory celebration of innovation and movement: provocative, relevant, and electric. For dinner packages, visit [sfballet.org/gala](http://sfballet.org/gala); or for performance and after-party packages, visit [sfballet.org/gala-performance](http://sfballet.org/gala-performance).



Atmosphere at San Francisco Ballet’s 2025 Opening Night Gala // © Drew Altizer Photography, photo by Jessica Monroy

## ● SAN FRANCISCO BALLET ORCHESTRA 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

MARCH 8, 2026  
HERBST THEATER & GREEN ROOM AT VETERANS BUILDING

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Grammy Award-winning San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, join us for a special evening on Sunday, March 8. Shelby and Frederick Gans Music Director & Principal Conductor Martin West has curated a one-night-only concert showcasing the remarkable artistry and range of the Orchestra. A fundraising dinner will precede the performance, honoring this milestone occasion. Dinner guests are also invited to an exclusive post-concert after party with the musicians. Concert-only and dinner package tickets are available, with dinner packages starting at \$750. For dinner packages, visit [sfballet.org/orchestracelebration](http://sfballet.org/orchestracelebration); or for concert-only tickets, visit [sfballet.org/orchestra-concert](http://sfballet.org/orchestra-concert).



San Francisco Ballet Orchestra // © Reneff-Olson Productions

## ● SAN FRANCISCO BALLET SCHOOL SPRING FESTIVAL

MAY 8 AND 9, 2026  
WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE

Following the spectacular success of last year’s event, the San Francisco Ballet School students will again take the stage at the War Memorial Opera House for the annual San Francisco Ballet School Spring Festival. Making it extra special, the Grammy Award-winning San Francisco Ballet Orchestra will perform alongside the students. The gala-style performances will take place at the Opera House on May 8 and 9. A special fundraising dinner will take place in the grand Main Lobby on Saturday, May 9, following the matinee performance. Tickets will go on sale in January. For more information, please visit [sfballet.org/springfestival](http://sfballet.org/springfestival).



San Francisco Ballet School Students performing a demonstration during Spring Festival 2025 // © Lindsay Thomas

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Sasha De Sola and Harrison James rehearsing Balanchine's *Diamonds* // Choreography by George Balanchine © The Balanchine Trust; Photo © San Francisco Ballet, by Lindsey Rallo

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Nikisha Fogo and Nathaniel Remez rehearsing Possokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // © San Francisco Ballet, photo by Lindsey Rallo

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 Susan E. and John E. Johnson, Jr.  
 Mark G. Jones  
 Dr. Devorah Joseph,  
     in memory of Nerrissa Joseph  
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 David A. Kaplan  
 Rose Adams Kelly  
 John Kerns  
 Mrs. Jerome Ormond Kirschbaum  
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 Suzanne Knott and Tom Rose  
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 Steven and Niko Mayer  
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Katherine Barkman rehearsing Balanchine's *Stars and Stripes* // Choreography by George Balanchine © The Balanchine Trust; Photo © San Francisco Ballet, by Lindsey Rallo

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 \*In memoriam

# THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

San Francisco Ballet is strengthened by the generosity, passion, and commitment of our volunteers. As cherished members of the SF Ballet family, they bring our mission to life, supporting performances, events, and education and training programs with skill, heart, and unwavering spirit. We are deeply grateful for their tremendous dedication, which ensures that breathtaking artistry and the transformative impact of arts experiences continue to inspire and engage our community.

## AUXILIARY

Since 1942, the Auxiliary has spearheaded initiatives and events that raise millions of dollars each year for San Francisco Ballet and San Francisco Ballet School. The Auxiliary is a vibrant community of dedicated champions who share a love for dance and a commitment to SF Ballet's mission. Through volunteering, fundraising, and outreach, members help expand the Ballet's reach, strengthen community connections, and enhance its visibility across the globe.

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San Francisco Ballet rehearsing Balanchine's *Serenade* // Choreography by George Balanchine © The Balanchine Trust; Photo © San Francisco Ballet, by Lindsey Rallo

# THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

## BRAVO

Each year, BRAVO members graciously contribute a collective total of more than 11,000 hours of volunteer assistance to San Francisco Ballet. In the process, they get a behind-the-scenes look at the inner workings of SF Ballet, all while supporting our mission and helping us continue to inspire future generations of ballet lovers. Learn more at [sfballet.org/braovo](http://sfballet.org/braovo).

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Julie Hawkins,  
Vice President

Patricia Knight,  
Secretary

Bill Brockett  
Paulette Cauthorn  
Martha Debs

Kia Macpherson  
Herm Sinoy  
Lacy Steffens

We are pleased to recognize BRAVO members who contributed 40 hours or more during the 2024–2025 Season.

### 250+ HOURS

Bill Brockett  
Paulette Cauthorn  
Martha Debs  
Julie Hawkins  
Giovanna Jackson\*  
Susanne Johnson  
Kathryn Judd  
Patricia Knight  
Sabrina Leong  
Pirkko Lucchesi  
Dossia Mathews  
Steve Merlo  
Pauline Roothman  
Herm Sinoy

### 100–249 HOURS

Vivey Chen  
Linda Drake  
Philip Fukuda\*  
Gwendolyn Ho  
Carolyn Hutchinson  
Suzanne Knott\*  
Melissa Lau  
Lucy Lo  
Jolissa Lybarger  
John Mazurski  
Keiko Moore\*  
Erin Noble  
Rebekah Nummer  
Deborah Ortego  
Rosa Park  
Kathryn Roberts  
Dana Smith  
Lacy Steffens  
Edyta Zabrewska

### 55–99 HOURS

Jenya Bordas  
Marilyn Breen\*  
Lar Bryer  
Briana Cavinta  
Inna Edwards  
Amy Gurvitz  
Mollie Hart  
Jon Hubert  
Lauren Jew  
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Sherrie Szalay  
Kalla Vieaux  
Susan Warble  
May Yasui

\*25 or more years of BRAVO membership

## YOUNG PATRONS CIRCLE

The Young Patrons Circle (YPC) unites more than 150 young professionals who share a passion for dance and a commitment to supporting San Francisco Ballet. Dedicated to fostering the next generation of ballet enthusiasts and patrons, YPC offers a meaningful way to engage with the Ballet through exclusive behind-the-scenes access, special events, and vibrant social gatherings. Designed for members ages 21–40, YPC curates dozens of unique experiences each season that celebrate artistry, community, and philanthropy. To learn more and join, please visit [sfballet.org/ypc](http://sfballet.org/ypc).

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Lauren Schutz,  
Immediate Past Co-President



Sasha De Sola and Francesco Gabriele Frola rehearsing Posokhov's *Eugene Onegin* // © San Francisco Ballet, photo by Lindsey Rallo

# 2025 2026 SEASON CALENDAR

## 1 - EUGENE ONEGIN

January 23–February 1

## 2 - BALANCHINE—FATHER OF AMERICAN BALLET

*DIAMONDS*

*SERENADE*

*STARS AND STRIPES*

February 10–15

## 3 - FORSYTHE'S THE BLAKE WORKS

*PROLOGUE*

*THE BARRE PROJECT*

*BLAKE WORKS I*

February 27–March 8

## 4 - DON QUIXOTE

March 19–29

## 5 - LA SYLPHIDE

April 10–16

## 6 - MERE MORTALS

April 24–May 3

## SPECIAL PERFORMANCES

### OPENING NIGHT GALA PERFORMANCE

January 14

### ORCHESTRA 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

March 8

### SPRING FESTIVAL

May 8–9

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
JAN				14 Opening Night Gala	15	16	17
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24 8 pm 1 8 pm 1
	25 2 pm 1	26	27	28 7:30 pm 1	29 7:30 pm 1	30 8 pm 1	31 2 pm 8 pm 1
FEB	1 2 pm 1	2	3	4 7:30 pm 2	5 7:30 pm 2	6 8 pm 2	7
	8	9	10 7:30 pm 2	11 7:30 pm 2	12 7:30 pm 2	13 8 pm 2	14 2 pm 8 pm 2
	15 2 pm 2	16	17	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27 8 pm 3	28 2 pm 8 pm 3
MAR	1 2 pm 3	2	3	4 7:30 pm 3	5 7:30 pm 3	6 8 pm 3	7 2 pm 8 pm 3
	8 2 pm 3	9	10	11	12	13	14
	15	16	17	18	19 7:30 pm 4	20 8 pm 4	21 2 pm 8 pm 4
	22 2 pm 4	23	24	25 7:30 pm 4	26 7:30 pm 4	27 8 pm 4	28 2 pm 8 pm 4
	29 2 pm 4	30	31	1	2	3	4
APR	5	6	7	8	9	10 8 pm 5	11 2 pm 8 pm 5
	12 2 pm 5	13	14	15	16	17	18
	19	20	21	22	23	24 8 pm 6	25 2 pm 8 pm 6
	26 2 pm 6	27	28	29	30	1 8 pm 6	2 2 pm 8 pm 6
MAY	3 2 pm 6	4	5	6	7	8 Spring Festival	9 Spring Festival

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