

News from

# THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

# A NEW ERA

Amber Scott and Kevin Jackson, Principal Artists of The Australian Ballet. Photography Pierre Toussaint

Embargoed for release until  
Tuesday 1 December 2020, at 1.00pm AEDT

## Welcome to the New Era of The Australian Ballet

**Embargoed for release until Tuesday 1 December 2020, at 1.00pm AEDT:** The Australian Ballet today announced its 2021 season, the first programmed by its incoming Artistic Director, David Hallberg. Hallberg has curated an ambitious program that will lead The Australian Ballet into a new era under his custodianship and propel the company back onto the stage after the unprecedented disruptions to live performances in 2020. The company's 2021 season will be a year for everyone and includes much-loved story ballets, 20<sup>th</sup>-century classics and exciting new commissions to inspire and energise audiences.

The 2021 season opens with ***Summertime at the Ballet***, a welcome-back gala for ballet lovers and families at Melbourne's Margaret Court Arena, a new venue for the company. Next, an exhilarating triple bill, ***New York Dialects***, will feature two acclaimed masterworks from the great game-changer of 20<sup>th</sup>-century ballet, George Balanchine, and unveil a new contemporary commission by one of the most in-demand New York-based choreographers, Pam Tanowitz. To showcase the versatility of the company, Hallberg has also included a thrilling double bill, ***Counterpointe***, which counterposes the elegant 19<sup>th</sup>-century classic *Raymonda* with the vigour and dynamism of *Artifact Suite* by William Forsythe. Originally scheduled to premiere in the company's 2020 season, the newly commissioned ***Anna Karenina*** by Yuri Possokhov will instead grace the 2021 season, captivating audiences in Melbourne and Adelaide. John Cranko's ***Romeo and Juliet***, the highly acclaimed full-length retelling of Shakespeare's tragic love story, will be performed in Melbourne and Sydney. The Australian Ballet and American Ballet Theatre's co-production of Alexei Ratmansky's ***Harlequinade***, featuring comedic hijinks and madcap characters, will complete the 2021 season.

Incoming Artistic Director David Hallberg says, "I am immensely thrilled and inspired to be stepping into the role of Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet and am proud to unveil the season we have curated for 2021. I have had a close relationship with The Australian Ballet for ten years; a world-class institution, which I greatly admire. I look forward to nurturing the artists of this company into this new era under my artistic leadership. After 20 years at the helm, David McAllister is leaving The Australian Ballet in great shape and I am honoured to have the opportunity to take the reins and pioneer new possibilities built on this foundation. With the challenges this year has brought, art and performance are more relevant than ever and I, along with the entire company, look forward to bringing the joy of dance back in 2021."

Executive Director Libby Christie says, "The Australian Ballet is optimistic about the future. In 2021 David Hallberg leads us into an exciting new era with this marvellous inaugural season. While 2020 has been disappointing and full of challenges, The Australian Ballet's 2021 season has been carefully planned to bring ballet back to the nation's stages safely and with renewed vigour and passion. Australia is a country of exceptional dancers and dance lovers. More than ever, dance will bring joy back to our lives. We invite our audiences around Australia to join us to celebrate The Australian Ballet as we return to stages in 2021. The company is working closely with theatres and health authorities to ensure our performances are of the highest COVID-safe standards to protect our dancers, musicians and our audiences. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to performances in 2021.

As has been announced today by Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul

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# News from The Australian Ballet

Fletcher MP, we are proud and grateful recipients of the RISE grant from the Federal Government. This will enable us to include a digital offering in our 2021 seasons and live stream performances, making ballet more accessible to all Australians.

The Australian Ballet is also very grateful to have received funding for our February 2021 *Summertime at the Ballet* season through the Victorian Government's Strategic Investment Fund. We would like to acknowledge and thank the Victorian Government for supporting this new initiative at the Margaret Court Arena in Melbourne Olympic Park when we will celebrate The Australian Ballet's return to performing for the first time since March 2020."

The 2021 season opens in February with a spectacular gala, *Summertime at the Ballet*, to welcome ballet back into the spotlight and onto the stage at Melbourne's Margaret Court Arena. Under the summer night's sky, the beauty and versatility of The Australian Ballet's dancers will shine in a selection of excerpts from ballet's most celebrated classics, new contemporary works and signature Australian repertoire. The company will honour its past, embrace its future and revel in the pure joy of dance. *Summertime at the Ballet* will be staged in Melbourne only and the repertoire will include excerpts from Marius Petipa's *La Bayadère*, Tim Harbour's *Filigree and Shadow*, Steven Baynes' *Molto Vivace*, George Balanchine's *Tschaikovsky Pas de Deux* and *Themes and Variations*, Rudolf Nureyev's *Don Quixote*, Ronald Hynd's *The Merry Widow* and Lucas Jervies' *Spartacus*.

The Sydney Opera House will be alive with ballet in April as The Australian Ballet's dynamic triple bill, *New York Dialects*, unveils a brand-new work by the American contemporary choreographer Pam Tanowitz – the first commission by incoming Artistic Director David Hallberg – performed alongside two acclaimed 20<sup>th</sup>-century classics from George Balanchine, *Serenade* and *The Four Temperaments*. The lyrical *Serenade* was the first work that Balanchine choreographed in America after his arrival from Paris, where he had been working with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, while *The Four Temperaments* is the epitome of his stark neo-classical style. This program, offering audiences both a fresh contemporary vision and timeless appeal, will premiere in Sydney in April and Melbourne in June.

Following *New York Dialects* will be *Counterpointe*, a program featuring both the beauty of ballet's pristine tradition and its contemporary force. Showcasing two juxtaposed works, Act III of Marius Petipa's *Raymonda* and William Forsythe's *Artifact Suite*, this double bill depicts the evolution of classical ballet. *Artifact Suite* highlights Forsythe's groundbreaking signature style: crystal clear movement, extensions of form and dynamically fast weight changes. The third act of Marius Petipa's *Raymonda* depicts the wedding of the hero and heroine. As in his *Sleeping Beauty* and *Paquita*, Petipa uses the celebration to create a sparkling display of classical technique, with Hungarian-inflected dances culminating in one of ballet's most famous solos for a leading ballerina. This staging, based on the traditional Petipa choreography, will be

David Hallberg's first for The Australian Ballet and will show in an April/May season in Sydney.

A new ballet of Leo Tolstoy's classic tragedy *Anna Karenina* is The Australian Ballet's first co-production with The Joffrey Ballet. Visionary choreographer and former Bolshoi Ballet dancer Yuri Possokhov leads a decorated creative team including Ilya Demutsky, who composed the specially commissioned score; internationally acclaimed set and costume designer Tom Pye; and renowned lighting designer David Finn. Evoking Imperial Russia while infusing the classical ballet style with a modern sensibility. *Anna Karenina* opened to great acclaim at Chicago's Joffrey Ballet in 2019, and will make its Australian debut in Melbourne in June, before a season in Adelaide in July.

John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* was an instant success when it was premiered by The Australian Ballet in 1974 and hasn't been performed by the company since 2003, *Romeo and Juliet* will make a jubilant return for the 2021 season. With its passion, drama, magnificent decor and costumes, exuberant dancing and touches of comedy, as well as Sergei Prokofiev's superbly atmospheric score, Cranko's production of *Romeo and Juliet* remains a hallmark of The Australian Ballet's history and has been danced by generations of its stars. *Romeo and Juliet* will be staged in Melbourne in the August/September season and in Sydney in November.

Slapstick, mayhem, wicked wit and outright absurdity are the irresistible ingredients of *Harlequinade*. Originally created in 1900 by the father of classical ballet, Marius Petipa, the ballet disappeared from the stage following the Russian Revolution but has been reconstructed and revitalised by leading choreographer Alexei Ratmansky, working from the original notation. Families will delight in the joyous dancing and eye-poppingly colourful costumes of *Harlequinade* when it makes its Australian debut with a Melbourne season in September and a Sydney season in November/December.

The Australian Ballet's 2021 activities will also include a range of participatory and informative events and education program that will tour to schools across the country. Storytime Ballet for children will tour across selected cities and the Regional Tour, which will encompass additional community events and engagement, will return to New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

2021 Season Packages for Melbourne and Sydney performances are available to purchase from 2 December 2020, at 12.01am.

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## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

[australianballet.com.au](http://australianballet.com.au)

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