

BOSTON BALLET

MIKKO NISSINEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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BOSTON BALLET PRESENTS CLASSIC BALANCHINE A PROGRAM OF THE CHOREOGRAPHER'S CAREER HIGHLIGHTS, INCLUDING THE COMPANY PREMIERE OF CHACONNE

April 18, 2018 (BOSTON, MA) – Boston Ballet presents Classic Balanchine, an array of iconic and diverse works by esteemed choreographer George Balanchine. The program opens with Balanchine's allegorical *Prodigal Son*, a powerful tale of sin and redemption, followed by the return of *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, a tribute to his friendship and frequent collaborations with the celebrated composer. The Company premiere of Balanchine's dreamlike *Chaconne* concludes the program. Classic Balanchine runs May 17–June 9, 2018, at the Boston Opera House.

"This program highlights masterpieces spanning Balanchine's career from his earliest works with the Ballets Russes to his later creations of pure classical dance to the innovative modern aesthetic that revolutionized ballet," said Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen. "Because of Balanchine's tremendous and lasting impact on American dance, including his critical role in the founding of Boston Ballet, it is a great honor to add his ballets to our repertoire and share his work with new and returning audiences."

Prodigal Son

Prodigal Son, one of Balanchine's earliest and most celebrated works, returns to Boston Ballet for the first time since 2009. Premiering in 1929, *Prodigal Son* was the last of Balanchine's works for the Ballets Russes and his first to achieve international acclaim. It has been in Boston Ballet's repertoire since the early days of the Company's founding in the 1960s. *Prodigal Son* is set to *Le Fils Prodigue*, Op. 46, a commissioned score by Sergei Prokofiev, with costumes and sets based on sketches by French artist Georges Rouault.

Based on the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*, the ballet depicts the Prodigal Son's sinful downfall and his return home for redemption. The dramatic title role has been danced by the likes of Jerome Robbins, Edward Villella, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Serge Lifar. Learning the role at Boston Ballet include Principal Dancer John Lam; Soloists Isaac Akiba, Derek Dunn, and Irlan Silva; and Artist Patric Palkens.

Stravinsky Violin Concerto

Balanchine choreographed *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* in honor of his longtime friend and frequent collaborator, and it was a highlight of the Stravinsky Festival at the New York State

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Theater when it premiered in June 1972. The ballet is set to Stravinsky's *Concerto in D for Violin and Orchestra*, to which Balanchine had previously choreographed a ballet by another name, *Balustrade*, for the Ballets Russes in 1941. Balanchine approached the concerto anew in 1972, creating an intricately designed work for 20 dancers with two of his most famous and contrasting pas de deux. *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* had a successful premiere at Boston Ballet in May 2017, with critics praising it as "first-rate Balanchine from the company" (Jeffrey Gantz, *The Boston Globe*).

Chaconne

Making its Company premiere, Balanchine's *Chaconne* is by turns courtly and heavenly. A chaconne is a dance built on a short phrase in the bass that was often used by composers of the 17th and 18th centuries to end an opera in a festive mood. Balanchine's *Chaconne* was first choreographed in 1963 for the Hamburg State Opera's production of Christoph Willibald von Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and was slightly revised for the ballet's premiere in 1976. While its origins lie in opera, *Chaconne* is a work of pure dance for 27 dancers, opening with an elegant pas de deux, followed by ethereal corps de ballet sections that are both lyrical and flowing, and concluding with stately divertissements and bravura roles for the principal dancers.

George Balanchine (1904–1983) was one of the 20th century's most prolific choreographers. He created more than 400 works throughout his career and is celebrated widely for his signature "neoclassical style" that transformed the ballet world. Born in St. Petersburg, Balanchine came to the United States in 1933 and went on to establish the School of American Ballet and ultimately New York City Ballet, where he was Ballet Master and Principal Choreographer.

Balanchine also played a vital role in establishing Boston Ballet, serving as artistic advisor to the Company in the early 1960s. Boston Ballet founder E. Virginia Williams frequently traveled to New York to study his teaching methods and incorporated many of his works into the young Company's repertoire. Thanks to Balanchine's recommendation, Boston Ballet received a Ford Foundation grant in 1963, which made the establishment of the professional company possible. Many of his works are considered masterpieces and are performed by Boston Ballet and companies around the world to this day.

All performances of Classic Balanchine take place at the Boston Opera House (539 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111):

Thursday, May 17 at 7:30 pm
Friday, May 18 at 7:30 pm
Saturday, May 19 at 7:30 pm*

Sunday, May 20 at 1:30 pm
Saturday, May 26 at 7:30 pm
Sunday, May 27 at 1:30 pm

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Thursday, May 31 at 7:30 pm
Friday, June 8 at 7:30 pm

Saturday, June 9 at 1:30 pm

**Indicates post-show talk*

Tickets start at \$35. For more information, visit bostonballet.org or call 617.695.6955.

Classic Balanchine is approximately 2 hours long with two intermissions.

Conducted by Beatrice Jona Affron

Prodigal Son

Music: Sergei Prokofiev, *Le Fils Prodigue*, Op. 46

Choreography: George Balanchine

Scenic and Costume Design: Georges Rouault

Lighting Design: John Cuff

Stravinsky Violin Concerto

Music: Igor Stravinsky, *Violin Concerto in D Major*

Choreography: George Balanchine

Lighting Design: John Cuff

Chaconne

Music: Christoph Willibald von Gluck, from the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*

Choreography: George Balanchine

Costume Design: Barbara Karinska

Lighting Design: John Cuff

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About Boston Ballet

Since 1963, Boston Ballet's internationally acclaimed performances of classical, neo-classical, and contemporary ballets, combined with a dedication to world-class dance education and community initiative programs, have made the institution a leader in its field, with a 54-year history of promoting excellence and access to dance.

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen and Executive Director Meredith Max Hodges, the Company maintains a diverse repertoire, ranging from full-length ballets to new works by some of today's finest choreographers. Boston Ballet's second company, Boston Ballet II, is comprised of dancers who gain experience by performing with the Company and independently, presenting special programs to audiences throughout the Northeast.

Boston Ballet School, the official school of Boston Ballet, has a long-standing dedication to providing exceptional dance education and ballet training to students across three studios in Boston, Newton, and the North Shore. Led

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by Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen and Director Margaret Tracey, the School reaches more than 5,000 students (toddler to adult) each year through its four core programs: Children's Program, Classical Ballet Program, Adult Dance Program, and Pre-Professional Program.

Boston Ballet's Department of Education and Community Initiatives (ECI) provides programming, events, and activities that connect the community to dance. ECI reaches more than 4,000 individuals in Boston, North Shore, and the surrounding communities each year through Citydance, ECI on Location, Adaptive Dance, and other community programs.

For more information, please visit bostonballet.org.

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The Boston Foundation
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