

BOSTON BALLET

MIKKO NISSINEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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BOSTON BALLET PRESENTS KYLIÁN/WINGS OF WAX

A TRIPLE BILL OF WORKS BY BALANCHINE, KYLIÁN, AND EKMAN

February 28, 2017 (BOSTON, MA) — Boston Ballet's spring season continues with *Kylián/Wings of Wax*, a trio of ballets by three choreographic masters. The program opens with George Balanchine's charming and spirited *Donizetti Variations* set to excerpts from the composer's final opera *Don Sebastian*, followed by Jiří Kylián's hauntingly beautiful *Wings of Wax* with a score of musical selections by Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, John Cage, Philip Glass, and J.S. Bach. Alexander Ekman's delightful and witty *Cacti* closes the program accompanied by a collage of orchestral music performed by the Boston Ballet Orchestra and a string quartet. *Kylián/Wings of Wax* runs March 23–April 2 at the Boston Opera House.

"This program truly demonstrates the versatility of Boston Ballet, and also the diversity of ballet choreography," said Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen. "Ballet doesn't have to be one certain way—it's dynamic—and with this program, audiences will see how it has evolved, from the neoclassical work of Balanchine to more contemporary choreographers like Kylián and Ekman."

Donizetti Variations

Balanchine's *Donizetti Variations* is an effervescent work for 11 dancers set to Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti's final opera, *Don Sebastian*. Balanchine originally created the ballet for New York City Ballet's 1960 program "Salute to Italy," in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Italy's unification. Boston Ballet first performed *Donizetti Variations* in 1964 at Boston Arts Festival—the Company's professional debut. This lively work of duets and trios is cheerful, yet technically challenging; "the energy is infectious. As you watch, you feel it recharging you" (Alastair Macaulay, *The New York Times*). Donizetti composed more than 65 operas during his lifetime, and was a master of the *bel canto* style (Italian for "beautiful singing"), which was popular during the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries.

George Balanchine (1904–1983) is one of the 20th century's most prolific choreographers. He choreographed 425 works throughout his career and is widely celebrated for his signature "neoclassical style" that transformed the ballet world. Born in St. Petersburg in 1904, Balanchine came to the United States in late 1933 and went on to establish the School of American Ballet and ultimately the New York City Ballet, where he was the Ballet Master and Principal Choreographer. Many of Balanchine's works are considered masterpieces and are performed by ballet companies all over the world.

Wings of Wax

Kylián's fluid ***Wings of Wax*** returns with its hauntingly beautiful score of selections by musical giants Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, John Cage, Philip Glass, and J.S. Bach, with set design by Michael Simon and lighting design by Kees Tjebbes. In Kylián's ballets, "provocative movement is just the beginning" (Karen Campbell, *The Boston Globe*), and *Wings of Wax* is no exception as dancers perform beneath the bare branches of an inverted hanging tree. The title evokes the Greek myth of Icarus, whose father built wings of wax and feathers to help them escape imprisonment. When giving a pair to his son, he cautioned that flying too close to the sun would melt the wax. But Icarus became ecstatic with his new ability to fly and ignored his father's warning. The wings dissolved and Icarus plunged into the ocean. *Wings of Wax* explores the so-called imprisonment dancers experience within their own bodies as they navigate an art form defined by a desire to defy gravity.

Czech choreographer **Jiří Kylián** served as artistic director of Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT) from 1978 to 1999 and resident choreographer until 2009. As resident choreographer, he created 74 ballets, ranging from lyrical works to abstract, often surrealistic ballets. Kylián's "blend of classical lines and contemporary fluidity remains a cornerstone of neoclassical ballet worldwide" (Laura Cappelle, *Dance Magazine*). In the last 10 years, Kylián has directed three dance films: *Car-Men* (2006), *Between Entrance & Exit* (2013), *Schwarzfahrer* (2014), and *Scalamare* (2017).

Cacti

Ekman's acclaimed ***Cacti*** returns set to music by Joseph Haydn, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, Andy Stein, and Gustav Mahler. In addition to the Boston Ballet Orchestra, a string quartet performs onstage, sometimes improvising, while walking amongst the dancers. The dancers are also musicians in this piece; they create rhythms by drumming on their bodies and props, adding a percussive element to the score. *Cacti* was created in 2010 for Nederlands Dans Theater II, and has been hailed as "a delight: witty, effervescent, playful, surreal and joyously physical" (Deborah Jones, *The Australian*). The ballet's satirical commentary on contemporary dance came about when Ekman was being reviewed in public for the first time, and was struggling with the role of art critics in society. *Cacti* is intensely physical—the movement is weighted and earthy—a contrast to the usually light and upright

forms of classical ballet. Sets designed by Tom Visser feature cacti; 16 large, movable square platforms; and a cat that falls unexpectedly from above.

Swedish choreographer **Alexander Ekman** danced at the Royal Opera House in Stockholm for the 2001–2002 season, and joined Netherlands Dans Theater II from 2002 to 2005. Ekman has become known for his fast-paced timing, witty humor, and clever transitions in works that are both relatable and surprising. His work has been commissioned by companies worldwide, including Nederlands Dance Theater, Cullberg Ballet (Sweden), Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet (U.S.), Iceland Dance Company, Bern Ballet (Switzerland), and the Royal Swedish Ballet, among others.

All performances of *Kylián/Wings of Wax* take place at the Boston Opera House (539 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111):

Thursday, March 23 at 7:30 pm
Friday, March 24 at 7:30 pm*
Saturday, March 25 at 1 pm
Saturday, March 25 at 7:30 pm
Sunday, March 26 at 1 pm

Thursday, March 30 at 7:30 pm
Friday, March 31 at 7:30 pm
Saturday, April 1 at 7:30 pm
Sunday, April 2 at 1 pm

*Post-show talk with Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen and artists

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

Kylián/Wings of Wax is approximately two hours with two intermissions.

Donizetti Variations

Choreography: George Balanchine
Music: From *Don Sebastian* (1843) by Gaetano Donizetti
Lighting Design: David Hays
Set Design: David Hays
Costume Design: after Karinska

Wings of Wax

Choreography: Jiří Kylián
Music:
Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber: *Passacaglia for solo violin*
John Cage: *Prelude for Meditation for prepared piano*
Philip Glass: *Movement III from String Quartet No. 5*
Johann Sebastian Bach: *Variation No. 25, Adagio, in G minor*, (arranged for string trio by Dimitri Sitkavetsky) from "Goldberg Variations"
Set Design: Michael Simon
Lighting Design: Michael Simon (original), Kees Tjebbes (Oslo, 2008)
Costume Design: Joke Visser

Cacti

Choreography: Alexander Ekman

Music: Joseph Haydn, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, Andy Stein, Gustav Mahler

Set and Lighting Design: Tom Visser

Costume Design: Alexander Ekman

Text: Spencer Theberge

This revival of Alexander Ekman's Cacti has received support through the Krupp Endowment for Contemporary Dance.

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 53-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 by 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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