

BOSTON BALLET

MIKKO NISSINEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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BOSTON BALLET OPENS 2016–2017 SEASON WITH NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF IVAN LIŠKA'S *LE CORSAIRE*

BALLET RECONSTRUCTED FROM ORIGINAL CHOREOGRAPHIC NOTATION HOUSED IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

September 12, 2016 (BOSTON, MA)—Boston Ballet's 53rd season begins with the **North American premiere** of Ivan Liška's adventure and romance-filled *Le Corsaire*, with music by Adolphe Adam, Léo Delibes, Cesare Pugni, Riccardo Drigo, and Prinz von Oldenburg, performed by the Boston Ballet Orchestra. The narrative follows a beautiful maiden, a wealthy aristocrat determined to add her to his harem, and a dashing pirate even more resolved to save her. Based on Marius Petipa's 19th-century classic, Liška's version of *Le Corsaire* was created for the Bavarian State Ballet in 2007. Liška enlisted the assistance of dance historian Doug Fullington to decipher the choreography from its original Stepanov dance notation, which is housed in Harvard University Library's Theatre Collection. *Le Corsaire* will run from October 27 to November 6, 2016 at the Boston Opera House.

"*Le Corsaire* hails from the golden era of classical ballet, and it hasn't been in our repertoire for several years," said Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen. "Liška's production is magnificent, with opportunities for spectacular, virtuoso dancing; technically challenging roles for both men and women; and brilliant corps de ballet scenes with stylish costumes and sets."

French for "The Pirate," *Le Corsaire* follows the noble pirate Conrad on his quest to rescue his beloved Medora from the Pasha's harem. After battling the stormy seas, Conrad, his friend Birbanto, and their fellow corsairs arrive at the market of Andrinople. Medora, the beautiful foster daughter of the merchant Lankodem, spots Conrad from her terrace and immediately falls in love. She throws him a bouquet of flowers, each with a special meaning, and Conrad, understanding the symbolism, falls in love just as quickly. When the Pasha arrives at the marketplace, he is immediately entranced by Medora and buys her from Lankodem. Medora implores Conrad to rescue her, and they escape to a grotto on the pirate island with the corsairs and a group of slave girls. Conrad is later betrayed by Birbanto and poisoned, causing him to fall into a deep sleep, and allowing Lankodem to steal Medora and return her to the Pasha. When Conrad awakens, he and the corsairs sneak into the harem and free Medora from the Pasha.

Choreographic highlights from *Le Corsaire* include the pas de deux with Medora and Conrad in Act II and the elegant pas de trios des Odalisques in Act III, some of the most widely recognized and commonly performed excerpts of classical ballet. Act III is "like that special box of chocolates, lots of mouth-watering

flavors and textures to suit every palate” (Alison Kent, *Dance Europe*), a highlight being the renowned *Jardin Animé* scene. This magnificent showcase of the corps de ballet also includes more than 20 Boston Ballet School students, giving young students a unique opportunity to perform with professional Company dancers.

Since its original premiere in 1856, *Le Corsaire* has undergone numerous revisions and additions to its musical score. It was the last ballet by Adolphe Adam, composer of 16 ballets and 46 operas and operettas. Jules Perrot later added music by Cesare Pugni, and Petipa’s first contribution was the well-known *pas d’esclave* in Act I with music by Prinz von Oldenburg. In the late 1860s, Petipa incorporated music by Leo Delibes, a student of Adam’s, for *Jardin Animé*, which became both a musical and choreographic highlight of *Le Corsaire*.

Le Corsaire is loosely based on Romantic poet Lord Byron’s verse tale, *The Corsair*, which sold 10,000 copies on its first day of publication in 1814 and prompted several stage adaptations, including an opera by Verdi and numerous ballets. Its best-known version, with choreography by Marius Petipa, premiered in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1863 by the Imperial Ballet. In 1997, Boston Ballet became the first non-Russian ballet company to present the full-length ballet (*The Pirate*) *Le Corsaire*, with choreography by Konstantin Sergeyev (after Petipa). To recreate the version being presented this year, Liška and Fullington revived the 19th century choreography from the Mariinsky Theatre by deciphering its original Stepanov notation, a method of choreographic notation developed in the 1890s by Mariinsky dancer Vladimir Stepanov. This system was based on the Western musical notation system and used staves and notes to denote timing and placement of the body, as well as details regarding mime conversations, formations for dancers, and other production details. The Stepanov notation for *Le Corsaire* is part of the Sergeev Collection, currently housed in the Harvard University Library, and includes choreographic notations, libretti, full scores, printed programs, photographs, and drawings. Stager Gregory Mislin, a Benesh notator, is currently working with Liška to notate and preserve Liška’s version of *Le Corsaire*.

Ivan Liška was a principal dancer with Hamburg Ballet and later served as Artistic Director of the Bavarian State Ballet from 1998 to 2016. He increased the company’s repertoire, adding classical works like *Raymonda* and his productions of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Le Corsaire*, as well as neoclassical and contemporary works by George Balanchine, Jiří Kylián, John Neumeier, Jerome Robbins, and William Forsythe, among others. Liška was honored with the German Dance Prize for his career as a dancer and his work as artistic director of the Bavarian State Opera Ballet, and in 2012 he received The Maximilian Order for outstanding achievements in arts and sciences, the highest honor of Bavaria.

All performances of *Le Corsaire* take place at the Boston Opera House (529 Washington Street, Boston MA 02111):

Thursday, Oct 27 at 7:30 pm
Friday, Oct 28 at 7:30 pm
Saturday, Oct 29 at 1 pm
Saturday, Oct 29 at 7:30 pm
Sunday, Oct 30 at 1 pm
Wednesday, Nov 2 at 7:30 pm

Thursday, Nov 3 at 7:30 pm
Friday, Nov 4 at 7:30 pm
Saturday, Nov 5 at 1 pm
Saturday, Nov 5 at 7:30 pm
Sunday, Nov 6 at 1 pm

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

Le Corsaire is approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes with 1 intermission.

Le Corsaire

Music: Adolphe Adam, Léo Delibes, Cesare Pugni, Riccardo Drigo, and Prinz von Oldenburg

Choreography: Ivan Liška after Marius Petipa

Reconstruction of choreography by Marius Petipa: Doug Fullington

Staging: Ivan Liška, Colleen Scott, and Gregory Mislin*

Set and Costume Design: Roger Kirk

Lighting Design: John Cuff

Musical Arrangement and Dramaturgy: Maria Babanina

**by Benesh Movement Notation*

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 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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