



SAN FRANCISCO BALLET ANNOUNCES DIGITAL SEASON IN 2021

SF Ballet's digital season includes world premieres of three new works by choreographers Cathy Marston, Danielle Rowe, and Myles Thatcher

New digitally conceived *Swan Lake* based on Helgi Tomasson's original choreography, as well as a new film capture of George Balanchine's *Emeralds*

Digital season opens on January 21 with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which closed the 2020 Season after one performance before city-wide shutdown due to COVID-19

Premium Plus Digital Package includes streaming access to all seven programs in the Season, plus exclusive behind-the-scenes content and discounted *Nutcracker* access

Holiday *Nutcracker* tradition returns with full-production film and interactive digital family experience November 27–December 31

Leap into the New Year virtual benefit on January 14 features one-night-only virtual performance and dinner with San Francisco Ballet dancers

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (October 27, 2020) – Artistic Director and Principal Choreographer Helgi Tomasson today announced plans to present a streamed, all-digital 2021 Season. With the continuing health pandemic placing restrictions on large public in-person gatherings, Tomasson curated a reimagined season that includes three world premieres by Cathy Marston, Danielle Rowe, and Myles Thatcher fully conceived for film; three story ballets including George Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which had only one performance before the city-wide shut down due to COVID-19; Helgi Tomasson's *Romeo & Juliet* and a new digitally conceived film

version of *Swan Lake*; and George Balanchine's *Jewels* with a newly filmed version of *Emeralds*. See below for full program descriptions.

[2021 DIGITAL SEASON TRAILER VIDEO](#)

“The launch of a digital season has taken monumental effort from every artist and administrator in our organization, and for that I am very proud of the work we’ve done,” says Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson. “For the dancers, it has meant a new level of commitment to keep up with their dancing physicality and has also required paramount discipline with regard to social distancing in order to rehearse according to health guidelines. The choreographers I’ve engaged this season have also been extraordinarily creative and adaptable, from changing rehearsal configurations, to working with film directors to present their work in a different format. I am excited for us to be able to reach those across the world to whom we've not been previously accessible. For our devoted audiences, watching a story ballet captured on film will be a unique experience, as one can really see the emotions displayed by the dancers. Having said all this, I yearn for the days when we can all be together in the Opera House, but until then, I hope people will find themselves with SF Ballet from wherever they are in 2021.”

“The decision to present a digital season was not made lightly,” says Executive Director Kelly Tweeddale. “We wanted to ensure the health and safety of our audience and artists while reimagining what creativity and reinvention of ballet looks like in a digital world. A digital season allows us to expand on our commitment to access, not just here at home, but around the world. After months of extensive research, we will be streaming our digital season on the Vimeo OTT platform, an industry leader in providing a user-friendly interface and high definition streaming quality. The platform allows for live behind-the-scenes content as well as curated performances, and can be experienced on smart TVs or mobile devices including iOS, Android, Android TV, Apple TV, Roku and Amazon Fire TV.”

San Francisco Ballet’s Reinvention Campaign was launched in September to support the creative, resilient, and adaptive work our artists are doing in the digital world. Donors and subscribers who donate back their tickets receive reimaged virtual benefits that provide immersive behind-the-scenes access to the digital season. Visit give.sfballet.org/reinvent to learn more.

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION PACKAGES

The Premium Plus Digital Package with VIP bonus content will go on sale starting November 17. The price is \$289, and offers the following features:

- Three-week access to each program stream from the comfort of home with a Smart TV, computer, or mobile device.
- Exclusive behind-the-scenes bonus content including Meet the Artist interviews, To the Pointe program notes, and other exclusive access to the artistic process.
- A full color Season Guide mailed to your home.
- 20% discount to *Nutcracker Online*.

Single program streams go on sale January 21, 2021 and will be priced at \$29 plus a \$5 fee for 24-hour access.



Nutcracker Online—A filmed full production and interactive journey this holiday season

SF Ballet and Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson are also pleased to announce that *Nutcracker*, [which was previously announced not to be presented live in the War Memorial Opera House in 2020](#), will return this season as an interactive, virtual experience for friends and family from the comfort of their homes. Starting November 27, *Nutcracker Online* will be released in an immersive digital world designed by local event design and production specialists Blueprint Studios to reflect the innovation of the Bay Area community. **Featuring the high definition stream of the 2008 San Francisco Ballet and KQED Public Television in association with Thirteen/WNET New York's co-production of Helgi Tomasson's critical acclaimed *Nutcracker***, the stream was captured at the War Memorial Opera House in December 2007 and features Yuan Yuan Tan as the Snow Queen, Pierre-François Vilanoba as the Snow King, Vanessa Zahorian as the Sugar Plum Fairy, and Elizabeth Powell as Clara, with the grand pas de deux danced by Maria Kochetkova and Davit Karapetyan. In addition to the stream access, ticket holders are invited to guide themselves through an immersive digital journey through the War Memorial Opera House full of interactive activities, fun videos, the ability to visit the SF Ballet Shop, and much more.

San Francisco Ballet presented America's first complete performance of *Nutcracker* in 1944. And today, SF Ballet's *Nutcracker* is enjoyed by over 75,000 people each December. Every dancer in the Company dances in this production, along with 160 students from SF Ballet School who perform roles as Clara, Fritz, snowflakes, waltzing flowers, mice, and more. **This season, due to the generosity of San Francisco Ballet donors, thousands of community members, including students from the San Francisco Unified School District partner schools and patients in local hospitals, will enjoy free access to SF Ballet's *Nutcracker*.** Additionally, more than 500 local youth from Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco will attend *Nutcracker*-themed viewing parties with crafts and treats at their Clubhouses.

The expansive 2020 digital experience will be available from November 27–December 31, 2020. Admission to *Nutcracker Online* is available for purchase starting November 17 and is priced at \$49 for 48-hour access.

Three world premieres



The 2021 Season includes three world premiere works on film by Danielle Rowe and Myles Thatcher, as well as *Mrs. Robinson* by Cathy Marston, which was originally programmed for the 2020 Season. **Myles Thatcher's premiere** appears on Program 2 (February 11– March 3) and is set to Steve Reich's *Variations for Vibes, Pianos, and Strings*. The ballet will be filmed at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the War Memorial Opera House with direction by Ezra Hurwitz, costume design by Susan Roemer, and lighting design by Jim French. About the changing landscape of dance, Thatcher says, "As a choreographer, I'm constantly evaluating how we can do better to invite more people, voices, and communities into the world of ballet. There's no doubt that these unprecedented times are pushing artists to conceive, create, and connect with our audiences in a way we've never had to before. We may not be able to access the physical spaces that hold our art form, but we are discovering that these might not need to be the only spaces we inhabit. This is what intrigues me the most: the opportunity to invite people into our world in a new way and, perhaps, reach those who might not have been able to access these physical spaces to begin with."

Danielle Rowe's *Wooden Dimes* appears on Program 3 (March 4–24). Set in the roaring 1920s, *Wooden Dimes* will be a highly stylized film that follows a couple who develop a simple love that becomes jeopardized as one of them soars to stardom. "There are many parallels between building a piece for stage and creating a film," says Rowe. "What I love about film is that we can amplify and finesse in ways that we can't on stage, directing the audience's eye in a much more specific way, enriching an already established atmosphere, providing varying perspectives—the possibilities are vast. I welcome the opportunity to explore this beautiful medium and to pivot my first main stage piece for SF Ballet into a dance film." *Wooden Dimes* includes an original composition by James M. Stephenson, costume design by Emma Kingsbury, lighting design by Jim French, and film direction by Rowe, with a director of photography to be announced.

In addition, **Cathy Marston's *Mrs. Robinson*** premieres after its postponed [debut in the 2020 Season](#). *Mrs. Robinson* will premiere on Program 5 (April 22–May 12) in a multi-camera capture filmed on stage at the War Memorial Opera House with a promotional short film captured at the iconic San Francisco Fairmont Hotel's Tony Bennett Suite. "Back in March 2020, I landed at the San Francisco airport; it was with quiet excitement about the fortnight ahead that I thought about the final touches I would soon add to my ballet, *Mrs. Robinson*. Little did I know that only a few days later I'd be heading back home to Europe, for what has now become months of uncertainty as the world faces the challenge of the pandemic," says Marston, whose ballet is inspired by the

story of *The Graduate* from the perspective of her titular character. “Throughout the period of lockdown, the dancers and I have kept in touch. Ultimately, this period of enforced separation—from those we love and what we love—will make our art even brighter, deeper, and stronger when we return.”

UPDATED SEASON PROGRAMMING

See below for complete Season Calendar. Additional updated programming since the [2021 Season Announcement](#) released in June of this year include Mark Morris’ *Sandpaper Ballet* replacing the previously scheduled Morris commission, and Alexei Ratmansky’s *Symphony #9* replacing the Company premiere of *The Seasons*, a co-commission between SF Ballet and American Ballet Theatre.

UPDATED:

[2021 Season Choreographers](#)

[2021 Season Credits](#)

[2021 Season Calendar](#)

SPECIAL EVENTS

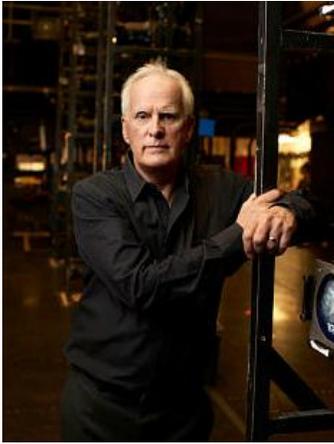
San Francisco Ballet presents its first-ever virtual benefit, Leap into the New Year, on Thursday, January 14, 2021. Curated by SF Ballet’s Artistic Director & Principal Choreographer Helgi Tomasson, the event is designed to be a customized experience for guests, featuring gourmet home-delivered dinners from McCalls Catering & Events, gifts, and wine; a performance on the virtual stage featuring world premieres; private virtual tables for guests with Company member drop-ins; a social wall to share chic photography with other benefit-goers; and more. Artistic Director and Principal level ticketholders will have the option to request an at-home, outdoors, socially distanced photo-op with Drew Altizer Photography. Artistic Director, Principal, and Soloist level ticketholders will enjoy an exclusive showing of an additional ballet on a private virtual stage. The event starts at 6 pm, with a main program, performance, and dinner starting at 7 pm.

Proceeds from the virtual benefit will aid a wide range of SF Ballet artistic initiatives, including new works, scholarships for San Francisco Ballet School students, and community education programs for youth, families, and seniors. Tickets start at \$5,000 for a Virtual Table of ten and will go on sale to the public November 17, 2020. For more information, please email specialevents@sfballet.org or call 415.865.6629.

For photos and other press inquiries, please contact SF Ballet publicity department:
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ABOUT HELGI TOMASSON

Helgi Tomasson, one of the most venerated classical dancers of his generation, embarks on his 36th season with San Francisco Ballet in 2021. Born in Iceland, he danced with Harkness Ballet, The Joffrey Ballet, and New York City Ballet, where he distinguished himself as a dancer of technical purity, musicality, and intelligence. Tomasson assumed leadership of SF Ballet in 1985. Under his direction, SF Ballet has become a company widely recognized as one of the finest in the world. Tomasson has balanced devotion to the classics with an emphasis on new works, cultivating frequent collaborations and commissions with choreographers such as William



Forsythe, Christopher Wheeldon, Alexei Ratmansky, Trey McIntyre, Cathy Marston, and Mark Morris, among many others. He has choreographed more than 50 works for the Company, including full-length productions of *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Romeo & Juliet* (taped for Lincoln Center at the Movies' *Great American Dance*), *Giselle*, and *Nutcracker* (taped for PBS's *Great Performances*). He conceptualized the 1995 UNited We Dance festival, in which SF Ballet hosted 12 international companies; the 2008 New Works Festival, which included 10 world premieres by 10 acclaimed choreographers; and 2018 Unbound: A Festival of New Works. Tomasson has also connected SF Ballet to the world, through co-commissions with American Ballet Theatre, The Royal Ballet, and Dutch National Ballet; and major tours to Paris, London, New York City, China, and his native Iceland. In 2020, Tomasson received the San Francisco Arts

Medallion, created by the Museum of Performance + Design to recognize those individuals whose leadership, action, and generosity have benefited the cultural life of the San Francisco Bay Area.

ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO BALLET

San Francisco Ballet, long recognized for pushing boundaries in dance, has enjoyed a long and rich tradition of artistic “firsts” since its founding in 1933, including performing the first American productions of *Swan Lake* and *Nutcracker*, as well as the first 20th-century American *Coppélia*. SF Ballet is one of the three largest ballet companies in the United States and currently presents more than 100 performances annually, both locally and internationally. The mission of SF Ballet is to share its joy of dance with the widest possible audience—in its community and worldwide—and to provide the highest caliber of dance training in its School. Under the direction of Helgi Tomasson, the Company has achieved an international reputation as one of the preeminent ballet companies in the world.

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