



# CHOREOGRAPHERS

Neoclassical choreographer **GEORGE BALANCHINE** (1904–83) (Program 01: *Symphony in C*) is one of the 20th century's most influential and innovative artists. Born in St. Petersburg, he trained at the Imperial Ballet School and joined the Mariinsky Ballet before leaving Russia to become ballet master for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris. There, Balanchine choreographed several ballets, including *Prodigal Son* and *Apollon Musagète* (later renamed *Apollo*). After Diaghilev's death, Balanchine worked in Europe until arts patron Lincoln Kirstein invited him to start a company in the U.S. "But first a school," was Balanchine's famous reply, and he founded the School of American Ballet in 1934. In 1946, he and Kirstein started Ballet Society, which later became New York City Ballet. As ballet master and principal choreographer, Balanchine created more than 400 dance works, many of which are in the repertory of SF Ballet.

**AUGUST BOURNONVILLE** (1805–79) (Program 04: *La Sylphide*) was a Danish dancer, choreographer, ballet master, and director of the Royal Danish Ballet from 1848–77. After training in Copenhagen with his father and choreographer Vincenzo Galeotti at the Royal Ballet School and in Paris with dancer Auguste Vestris, he joined the Royal Danish Ballet as a soloist. In 1830, he shifted his attention to choreography, creating a unique style that emphasized lightness, beauty, quick footwork, and expressive mime work. At a time when European ballet favored female dancers, Bournonville's ballets gave equal weight to male and female roles. Only a few of his ballets have survived, including *La Sylphide* (1836), *Napoli* (1842), and *The Kermesse in Bruges* (1851).

For a half century, choreographer **WILLIAM FORSYTHE** (Program 02: *Blake Works I* SF Ballet Premiere) has explored the boundaries of classical and contemporary movement, collaborating with dancers, musicians, designers, and other artists to create some of the most innovative work in contemporary performance. Born in New York, Forsythe danced with The Joffrey Ballet before joining Stuttgart Ballet, where he was appointed resident choreographer in 1976. Over the next seven years, he created new works for the Stuttgart ensemble and ballet companies in Munich, The Hague, London, Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris, New York, and San Francisco. In 1984, he began a 20-year tenure as director of Frankfurt Ballet, where he created works such as *Artifact*, *Impressing the Czar*, and *Eidos:Telos*. His early choreography extended and accelerated traditional ballet movement, an electrifying leap forward that had a profound and lasting impact on contemporary ballet. Forsythe's works have been performed by ballet companies around the world. After the closure of Frankfurt

Ballet in 2004, he established The Forsythe Company, running that company until 2015. He is currently a professor at the University of Southern California's newly created Gloria Kaufman School of Dance.

**CATHY MARSTON** (Program 01: *Mrs. Robinson world premiere*) is a choreographer, artistic director, and Clore Cultural Leadership Fellow. She spent two years at The Royal Ballet School before launching an international career as a choreographer, working with companies such as The Royal Ballet, SF Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, The Joffrey Ballet, Danish Royal Ballet, Ballet Black, and Northern Ballet. Marston's great gift is to join artistic dots, creating movement and form to communicate stories, emotions, and ideas. As Associate Artist of The Royal Opera House (2002–07), director of Bern Ballett (2007–13), and founder of The Cathy Marston Project and Companie La Ronde, she has developed an artistic signature that fuses British and European theatrical approaches as well as classical and contemporary dance techniques. She lends new perspectives to old narratives in literary works like *Jane Eyre*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Snowblind*, and *Dangerous Liaisons* and in biographically inspired works such as *The Cellist* and *Witch-hunt*. She recently won the UK National Dance Award for *The Suit*, the South Bank Sky Arts Award for Dance for *Victoria*, and the International Institute for Dance and Theatre's Excellence in International Dance Award.

Known for his thoughtful and wide-ranging choreography, beautiful dancing, and strong partnering skills, Russian-born **YURI POSSOKHOV** (Program 03: *Don Quixote* and Program 05: *Magritomania*) is choreographer in residence for San Francisco Ballet. After training at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy, he danced with the Bolshoi Ballet and Royal Danish Ballet before joining SF Ballet as a principal dancer in 1994. Over the next 12 years, he performed leading roles while also beginning to choreograph. When Possokhov retired from the stage, he was named SF Ballet's choreographer in residence. He has created 14 ballets for SF Ballet, including *Magritomania* (Isadora Duncan Dance Award for Outstanding Choreography), *RAKU*, and *Swimmer*. His full-length ballet *A Hero of Our Time* debuted at the Bolshoi Ballet in 2015 and was awarded a Benois de la Danse Award for choreography. Possokhov's *Nutcracker* for Atlanta Ballet premiered in December 2018. His most recent full-length production, *Anna Karenina*, was commissioned by Chicago's Joffrey Ballet and premiered in February 2019.

**ALEXEI RATMANSKY** (Program 04: *The Seasons SF Ballet Premiere*), artist in residence at American Ballet Theatre, is an internationally acclaimed Russian choreographer. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, he trained at the Bolshoi Ballet School and performed as a principal dancer with Ukrainian National Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and Royal Danish Ballet. While serving as artistic director of the Bolshoi Ballet (2004–08), Ratmansky remounted several Soviet-era ballets, most notably *The Bright Stream* (UK Critics' Circle National Dance Award) and the Bolshoi was twice named "Best Foreign Company" by The Critics' Circle. SF Ballet commissioned Ratmansky's first American premiere, *Le Carnaval des Animaux* (2003), and has since acquired seven additional works. Named a 2013 MacArthur Foundation Fellow, Ratmansky served as a choreographic mentor

to SF Ballet Soloist Myles Thatcher through the Rolex Mentor & Protégé Arts Initiative. In 2014 and 2020 respectively, Ratmansky won his second Benois de la Danse and Critics' Circle National Dance awards for *Shostakovich Trilogy*.

Founding artistic director and resident choreographer of Complexions Contemporary Ballet, **DWIGHT RHODEN** (Program 06: **World Premiere**) performed with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Les Ballets Jazz De Montréal, and as a principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He has choreographed for New York City Ballet, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, BalletMet, Colorado Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, The Joffrey Ballet, Miami City Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Philadanco, The Washington Ballet, Ballet Nice Méditerranée, and Rome Opera Ballet, among others. Rhoden has directed and choreographed for television, film, and theater, including *So You Think You Can Dance*, Cirque Du Soleil, world tours for Prince and Lenny Kravitz, and the film *One Last Dance*. Honors include a New York Foundation for the Arts award, a Benois de la Danse Award nomination for *The Great Gatsby* (the Mariinsky Ballet), induction into the NYFA Hall of Fame, the Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography, and an Honorary Doctorate from Boston Conservatory. Rhoden created *LET'S BEGIN AT THE END*, his first work for SF Ballet, for Unbound: A Festival of New Works in 2018.

**JEROME ROBBINS** (1918–89) (Program 02: **In the Night**) was an American choreographer, director, dancer, and theater producer. He joined Ballet Theatre (which would become American Ballet Theatre) and choreographed his first work for the company—*Fancy Free*—in 1944. Robbins later expanded it to launch his Broadway career with *On the Town*. In 1949, Robbins joined New York City Ballet as a dancer and associate artistic director, where he created major ballets including *Afternoon of a Faun*, *The Concert*, *Dances at a Gathering*, *In the Night*, *In G Major*, *Glass Pieces*, and *Ives, Songs*. He also choreographed for American Ballet Theatre, his own company Ballets U.S.A. (1958–62), and other international companies. Robbins' Broadway shows include *Billion Dollar Baby*, *High Button Shoes*, *West Side Story*, *The King and I*, *Gypsy*, *Peter Pan*, *Miss Liberty*, *Call Me Madam*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, which won six Tony Awards including Best Musical and Best Director. In addition to two Academy Awards for *West Side Story*, Robbins received four Tony Awards, five Donaldson Awards, two Emmy Awards, the Screen Directors' Guild Award, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Robbins was a 1981 Kennedy Center Honors recipient and was awarded the French Chevalier dans l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur.

**HELGI TOMASSON** (Program 01: **Trio**, Program 02: **Caprice**, Program 03: **Don Quixote**, Program 05: **The Fifth Season**, Program 06: **Prism**, and Program 07: **Swan Lake**), one of the most venerated classical dancers of his generation, embarks on his 37th season with San Francisco Ballet in 2022. 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.

**CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON**, OBE (Program 06: **World Premiere**) trained at The Royal Ballet School and danced with The Royal Ballet and New York City Ballet (NYCB). Wheeldon was named NYCB's first resident choreographer in 2001 and now serves as artistic associate of The Royal Ballet, where his choreography credits include *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Winter's Tale*. He choreographed *Dance of the Hours* for Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, Richard Eyre's *Carmen* (the Metropolitan Opera), an excerpt for the London 2012 Olympics Closing Ceremony, ballet sequences for the film *Center Stage*, and the Broadway musicals *Sweet Smell of Success* and *An American in Paris*, for which he won the 2014 Tony Award for Best Choreography and Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Choreography and Direction. Other recent credits include a reimagination of *The Nutcracker* (The Joffrey Ballet), a gala presentation of Lerner & Loewe's *Brigadoon* starring Kelli O'Hara and Patrick Wilson (New York City Center), *Corybantic Games* (The Royal Ballet), as well as productions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Tokyo), *The Winter's Tale* (The Bolshoi Ballet), and *Cinderella* (English National Ballet). Among Wheeldon's awards are two Olivier awards (*Aeternum* and *Polyphonia*) and two Benois de la Danse awards (*Cinderella* and *The Winter's Tale*), as well as the Martin E. Segal Award, American Choreography Award, a Dance Magazine Award, multiple London Critics' Circle Awards, and the Léonide Massine Prize for new choreography. In 2016, Wheeldon was named an OBE and made an Honorary Fellow of American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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