

SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

CELIA FUSHILLE / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SMUIN'S ANNUAL GALA SMASHES RECORDS FOR 25TH ANNIVERSARY

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (7 March 2019) — Leaders in the arts and civic communities came together at The Galleria in San Francisco for the spectacular silver anniversary celebration of **Smuin Contemporary Ballet**, one of the nation's preeminent dance companies. **Smuin's Annual Gala**, co-chaired by Founding Board President **Patti Hume** and **Jerry Hume**, and Smuin Board member **John Konstin** and **Athena Konstin**, dazzled partygoers with unique cocktails, exclusive performances by Smuin's unparalleled artists, and a dinner by McCall's Catering complemented by fine wines from Grgich Hills Estate. A rollicking auction followed, featuring one-of-kind experiences and events, after which guests danced away the night. Held Sunday, March 3 at The Galleria at the San Francisco Design Center, the Smuin Gala raised a record-setting amount of \$641,000, funds that will enable the acclaimed ballet company to continue presenting the best of classical ballet and contemporary work as it celebrates the success of the last 25 years and a beautifully bright future.

The evening began with Smuin's stunning artists mingling with guests inside the iconic Kneedler Fauchère showroom, including California State Senator **Scott Wiener**, Commissioners **Debra Walker** and **Kim Brandon**, and former SF Mayor **Willie Brown**. Attendees were then seated at beautifully decorated tables on The Galleria's main floor and welcomed warmly by Smuin Artistic Director **Celia Fushille**. Next came a surprise announcement by San Francisco Mayor **London Breed**, who took the stage with a special proclamation declaring March 3, 2019 as "Smuin Contemporary Ballet Day" in San Francisco—commending the company for its history of bringing innovative works to the Bay Area's arts landscape.

Smuin's dancers then took the stage, performing Michael Smuin's Beatles tribute "And I Love Her" and his swinging ode to Sinatra, "Fly Me to the Moon, plus Trey McIntyre's "Fool That I Am" and "At Last" set to the soulful vocals of Etta James. Former Smuin dancer Rex Wheeler's delightful "Take Five" brought down the house, featuring fuchsia-clad dancers in a playful dance set to Dave Brubeck's "Blue Rondo à la Turk." Among those applauding: Smuin Board of Trustees President **Dell Larcen** and Vice President **Lee D. Baxter**, as well as trustees **Madeleine Boshart, Bruce Braden, Robert Challey, Evelyn Xinfeng Hu, Karen Kadushin, Hal Louchheim, Madelyn Mallory, Linda Membreno, Trisha Mount, Maria Nazari, Victor Olivieri, Beth Saunders, John Schlag, Randy Soso**, Supervisors **Rafael Mandelman** and **Catherine Stefani**, and **Ann Moller Caen**, among other Smuin supporters.

The evening continued with a thrilling live auction conducted by expert auctioneer Devon Bell, who offered lavish experiences including: a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be among the first in Smuin's new home set to open this year, including a private class for 20 taught by one of Smuin's artists; a Golden State Warriors VIP game-watching experience in William and Margaret Hearst's suite; exclusive walk-on roles in Smuin's 2019 performances of *The Christmas Ballet*; plus a luxurious Mexican Riviera escape—which sold two times for \$14,000 each, quickly raising welcome funds for the company on its way to a record-breaking amount. Smuin dancers Tessa Barbour, Mattia Pallozzi, and Benjamin Warner also joined in the fun, baking a trio of delectable cookie dough, chocolate cherry, and shimmering silver cakes—auctioned off to three tables of delighted guests and raising over \$8,000 for the company.

A spectacular dinner served by McCalls began with a burrata and wild mushroom salad, dressed with truffle vinaigrette; an entrée of grilled fillet of beef and braised short ribs, served with truffled potato purée and a rich red wine sauce; and finished with a luscious apple galette with caramel gelato. Each course was complemented by wines generously donated by Napa Valley's Grgich Hills Estate. This sensational evening concluded with guests joining Smuin artists on the dance floor to twirl the night away.

Funds raised at **Smuin's Annual Gala** will support the company's upcoming productions in the fall, winter, and spring, staged in San Francisco, Walnut Creek, Mountain View, and Carmel. As a major supporter of developing new works and local talent, Smuin is one of the most consistent providers of employment for dancers on an annual basis of any company in the greater Bay Area.

Sponsors of Smuin's Annual Gala included Tri Counties Bank, Moss Adams, Grgich Hills Estate, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

For 25 years Smuin has pushed the boundaries of contemporary ballet with a distinctly athletic and innovative style, engaging and delighting audiences with uncommon physicality and expression. Founded in San Francisco in 1994 by Tony and Emmy award-winning choreographer Michael Smuin, the company is committed to creating work that merges the diverse vocabularies of classical ballet and contemporary dance. As Artistic Director since 2007, Celia Fushille has maintained Michael Smuin's legacy while enriching the company's impressive repertoire by collaborating with inventive choreographers from around the world, commissioning world premieres, and bringing new contemporary choreographic voices to the Smuin stage.

Daily Newspaper and Online Media sponsor for Smuin's 2018/2019 season is the *San Francisco Chronicle* and SFGATE.

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