

SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

CELIA FUSHILLE / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SMUIN'S ANNUAL GALA CELEBRATES 26TH SEASON WITH HIT VIRTUAL GALA

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (30 March 2020) — Following a landmark year in which **Smuin Contemporary Ballet** officially unveiled its first permanent home, the company launched its first-ever virtual gala. As Smuin's only yearly fundraiser, the company was forced to make a quick decision regarding its gala, originally scheduled for March 15 at The Galleria at the San Francisco Design Center. With patrons' health and safety of paramount concern, **Smuin's Annual Gala** was cancelled and moved online ahead of the county and state Shelter-in-Place announcements. Instead, exclusive ballets to be performed at the gala were recorded and shared with patrons via video recording, and a virtual auction will be held at a later date. Despite offering refunds for ticketholders, a majority of Smuin's generous supporters donated the cost of their seats to the company, raising an impressive grand total of \$267,000. These funds will enable Smuin to continue presenting flawless classical ballets and cutting-edge contemporary dances, enriching the Bay Area's dance scene with works from both established and emerging choreographers.

Smuin's Annual Gala is attended year after year by staunch supporters including political and civic leaders San Francisco Mayor **London Breed**, State Senator **Scott Wiener**, former SF Mayor **Willie Brown**, former State Senator **Mark Leno**, and Commissioners **Debra Walker** and **Kim Brandon**. The 2020 edition was co-chaired by Founding Board President **Patti Hume** and **Jerry Hume**, and **Athena** and **John Konstin**. Exclusive ballets to be performed live at this year's edition of the gala were recorded and shared with patrons via video link following the cancellation. These included fresh new works developed in Smuin's recent Choreography Showcase including "Nocturne" by Brennan Wall, "Mavé" by Cassidy Isaacson, and "In Search

of the Lost Chord” by Maggie Carey, plus excerpts from Amy Seiwert’s “Renaissance” and Michael Smuin’s “Frankie & Johnny.”

Lavish travel and entertainment experiences offered in the virtual auction will include a luxury sun and ski getaway in Whistler, the ultimate Golden State Warriors VIP experience, a world-class Sonoma County private tour and tasting, and a private villa on the Mexican Riviera. Bidding for these items will open once travel and timing factors can be determined, due to the uncertainty of the current landscape. Smuin’s ultimate goal is to prioritize the health and safety of its supporters and will continuously update its community as details are confirmed. A favorite item year after year, Smuin also auctions off delectable cakes baked by its multitalented artists. This season’s offerings will include a mouth-watering caramel cake baked by **Tessa Barbour**, **Tess Lane**’s high tea-inspired macaron tower, **Brennan Wall**’s dark chocolate blackout cake for chocolate lovers, and a decadent lemon layer cake with lemon curd, raspberry jam, and a lemon buttercream baked by **Peter Kurta**. These treats will also be open to bidding once it has been determined safe for dancers to deliver their homemade cakes personally to the winners.

For more than 25 years Smuin has pushed the boundaries of contemporary ballet by presenting works that engage and delight audiences with their 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. Since 2007, Artistic Director Celia Fushille has built on Michael Smuin's legacy by creating her own vision and expanding the company's repertoire. Fushille has invited numerous choreographers to create works that highlight the Smuin artists' extraordinary versatility, presenting pieces that are unique, joyful, athletic and inventive.

Daily Newspaper and Online Media sponsor for Smuin’s 2019/2020 season is the *San Francisco Chronicle* and SFGATE.

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