

SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

CELIA FUSHILLE / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SMUIN ANNOUNCES FREE STREAMING OF SHOWCASE PIECES CHOREOGRAPHED BY DANCERS AS NEXT “HUMP DAY BALLET” OFFERING

Wednesday, June 3 – Friday, June 5

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (1 June 2020) — **Smuin Contemporary Ballet** announces a special presentation of two short works choreographed by company dancers for the next installment of its popular **Hump Day Ballets** series. Smuin artist **Brennan Wall**'s *Nocturne* will make its first-ever appearance since its premiere during Smuin's sold-out Choreography Showcase earlier this year. Smuin will also present former Smuin artist **Rex Wheeler**'s *Sinfonietta*, developed in Smuin's Choreography Showcase and then premiered on its mainstage in 2018. Smuin's *Hump Day Ballets* aim to brighten mid-week spirits with free video streaming of works from the company's archives. *Nocturne* and *Sinfonietta* will be offered beginning **Wednesday, June 3, 2020**, accompanied by a video introduction with both Wheeler and Wall. The recorded performances will be available for 48 hours only, with streaming instructions announced through Smuin's email list (sign up at smuinballet.org), or via Smuin's Facebook (facebook.com/SmuinBallet) and Instagram (instagram.com/smuinballet). For more information the public may visit smuinballet.org.

Smuin's **Choreography Showcase** program has continued founder Michael Smuin's tradition of encouraging company artists to develop their choreographic voices. Dancers have the opportunity and resources to create new works on their peers, in a safe space where they can experiment with everything from movement to leadership style. The dancers who choose to choreograph are also involved with the production, costuming, and lighting.

Nocturne is a contemporary piece set to Frédéric Chopin’s “Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2.” Wall’s choreography is inspired by the music—dictating both the movement and emotion portrayed. *Nocturne* attempts to tell a story of passion: how it can sweep people up in extreme and overwhelming ways, and how often the result of losing oneself to such an emotion can be a moment of complete embarrassment and vulnerability. “The opportunity Smuin provides their dancers through this experience is one that is rare and valuable to find in professional companies,” said Wall. “I’m grateful that I was pushed out of my comfort zone to take advantage of that opportunity.” Originally from Nashville, Tennessee, Wall studied at Los Angeles Ballet Academy. She danced with Silicon Valley Ballet (previously Ballet San Jose) as a trainee before joining The New Ballet’s Studio Company. In 2017, Wall joined Ballet de Monterrey under director José Manuel Carreño. She performed in Luis Serrano’s *La Bayadere*, *Swan Lake*, and *Don Quijote*, and danced soloist roles in *The Nutcracker*, Alberto Méndez’s *Phantom of the Opera*, and Diego Landin’s *Shorthand of Emotion*. Wall joined Smuin as a company dancer in 2019.

Rex Wheeler’s *Sinfonietta*, set to Boris Tchaikovsky’s “Sinfonietta for String Orchestra,” is a sprightly take on the classical ballet idiom. Born in London, Wheeler trained at The Royal Ballet School and Elmhurst School for Dance. As a student, he performed with Birmingham Royal Ballet and, on several occasions, for the Royal Family. Wheeler later joined Slovak National Ballet in 2009 followed by the Sacramento Ballet in 2010. As a choreographer, he has created works for organizations across the country, including the Sacramento Ballet, Richmond Ballet, Utah Regional Ballet, Crooked Tree Arts Center, and Ballet Academy East. Wheeler joined Smuin as a dancer in 2015 and has presented several original works during his time with the Company, including festive pieces for Smuin’s annual *The Christmas Ballet* program, and *Take Five*, which premiered in Smuin’s most recent season.

Smuin’s *Hump Day Ballets* series was created to share inspiring art and enable the Company to stay connected with its community during the Shelter-in-Place order. Every Wednesday a different ballet from Smuin’s repertoire, introduced by a current Company dancer or guest artist, is released to the public. The sharing of these productions is made possible by the generous

support of Smuin's partners—the choreographers, unions, designers, and composers providing permission outside of standard contracts to share these creations with the community.

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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