

SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

CELIA FUSHILLE / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SMUIN ANNOUNCES FREE STREAMING OF MA CONG'S "FRENCH TWIST" AS NEXT "HUMP DAY BALLET" OFFERING

Wednesday, June 10 – Friday, June 12

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (4 June 2020) — **Smuin Contemporary Ballet** announces **Ma Cong's** fast and flirtatious *French Twist* as the next installment of its popular **Hump Day Ballets** series, which aims to brighten mid-week spirits with free video streaming of works from the company's archives. Inspired by the American cartoon "Tom and Jerry," *French Twist* uses contemporary movement set to five musical selections by the late French composer Hugues Le Bars. **Ma Cong's** *French Twist* will be offered beginning **Wednesday, June 10, 2020**, accompanied by a video introduction with current company dancer **Mengjun Chen**, who attended Beijing Dance Academy a generation after Cong. The recorded performance 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.

French Twist was originally developed at the National Choreographers Initiative in 2008, where it caught the eye of Smuin Artistic Director Celia Fushille. This led to the world premiere of *French Twist* in spring 2010, when Smuin became the first professional company to perform the energetic and quirky piece. Accented by angular arms and flexed feet, Cong's choreography features dancers sliding across the floor through legs and around chairs in a sultry and mysterious waltz. *French Twist* "showcases the rising talent of Cong," said *San Francisco Examiner*, which continued on to applaud the "agility and precision" of Smuin's dancers in its world premiere performance.

Currently the resident choreographer at Tulsa Ballet, **Ma Cong** studied at the Beijing Dance Academy, where he received a full scholarship and graduated with honors. He is the recipient of several awards, including the Silver Medal at the All China Dance Competition, and was a finalist at the prestigious Paris International Dance Competition as well as the 2000 New York International Ballet Competition. In January 2006, Cong was named one of the “25 to Watch” by Dance Magazine for both his dancing and choreography. As a choreographer, Cong has created numerous works for Tulsa Ballet as well as works for other companies such as Ballet Met Columbus, Ballet Florida, Ballet Nouveau, Richmond Ballet, Houston Ballet, and others.

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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PHOTOS: Media may download high-res photos at:

<http://www.cbpr.co/press/humpdayballets>

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