

SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN BALLET
CELIA FUSHILLE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

ANNUAL GALA RAISED FUN AND FUNDS FOR SMUIN BALLET

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (6 March 2018) ô Arts and civic leaders, ballet supporters and fans, eschewed the Oscars on Sunday evening, instead descending on The Galleria in San Francisco for a spectacular celebration of one of the nation's most innovative arts organizations. **Smuin's Annual Gala**, co-chaired by **Patti and Jerry Hume**, and **Athena and John Konstin**, dazzled party-goers with cocktails on the terrace, sizzling performances by Smuin's star dancers, a tasty spring-themed dinner by McCall's Catering complemented by fine wines from Grgich Hills Estate, and a fast-paced live auction, after which guests danced into the night. Held Sunday, March 4 at The Galleria at the San Francisco Design Center, the Smuin Gala raised more than \$400,000 in funds that will enable the acclaimed ballet company to continue presenting the best in contemporary work as it launches its 25th season next Fall.

The evening began with Smuin's stunning dancers mingling with guests on The Galleria's terrace, including SF Port Commissioner **Kim Brandon**, San Francisco 2018 mayoral candidate and San Francisco Board of Supervisors President **London Breed**, 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**. Smuin's dancers took the stage, performing Michael Smuin's *I've Got a Crush On You*, an excerpt from Amy Seiwert's acclaimed *Falling Up*, and four brand new works from Smuin dancers including a rollicking ballet with rolling office chairs by **Ben Needham-Wood**. Among those applauding: Smuin Board of Trustees President **Dell Larcen** and Vice President **Lee D. Baxter**, as well as **Bruce Braden, Karen Kadushin, Madelyn Mallory, Linda Membreno, Trisha Mount, Victor Olivieri, Robert Challey, Sallie and Leon Huntting, Tatum and Alex Getty, Ann Moller Caen, Val Caniparoli, and Art Gensler**, among other Smuin supporters.

Long-time supporter **Bruce Braden** was astonished to be called out by Supervisor **London Breed**, who took the microphone and presented Braden with a special proclamation honoring his long commitment and support of the arts. The very surprised Braden declined to give a speech, but noted briefly, "Ballet is one of my favorite art forms, and to me, Smuin is the absolute best!" The evening continued with a thrilling live auction, conducted by expert auctioneer Devon Bell, who offered one-of-a-kind items and experiences including: the chance to attend a movie screening with acclaimed *San Francisco Chronicle* film critic Mick LaSalle; the ultimate Warriors game-watching experience in William and Margaret Hearst's private suite at the Oracle Arena, a Festival Napa Valley dream vacation, a luxurious five-star weekend with Smuin in Carmel, and exclusive walk-on roles in Smuin's 2018 performances of *The Christmas Ballet* which sold five times for \$6,000 each, setting a record and quickly raising additional welcome funds for the company.

An epicurean feast was served by McCalls Catering & Events, beginning with a bright spring pea tarragon soup, with fennel potato green pea chop salad; a mushroom duxelle crusted filet of beef, and for dessert a Mason jar of whipped cheesecake awaited each patron. Each course was complemented by wines generously donated by Napa Valley's Grgich Hills Estate. This sensational evening was managed by the team at Leftwich Events, and concluded with guests joining Smuin dancers to twirl, whirl, and waltz 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. Smuin is a major supporter of developing new works and local talent, and 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 BiRite Foodservice Distributors, FNB Norcal, First Republic Bank, Moss Adams, *Nob Hill Gazette* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

For more than 20 years, Smuin has pushed the boundaries of contemporary ballet within a distinctly American 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 2017/2018 season is the *San Francisco Chronicle*/SFGate.com.

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PRESS: Contact Steph Keay, Carla Befera & Co.
(650) 327-1200 | steph@cb-pr.com

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