

# SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

CELIA FUSHILLE / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SMUIN ANNOUNCES THE RETURN OF LADY CAMDEN IN  
“THE CHRISTMAS BALLET”  
CELEBRATING LGBTQ+ NIGHT  
AN EVENING BENEFITING PROJECT OPEN HAND

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco  
7:30pm, Tuesday, December 21, 2021

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (22 November 2021) — **Smuin Contemporary Ballet** announces the return of **LGBTQ+ Night** during the San Francisco run of *The Christmas Ballet*, featuring a twist on the annual holiday tradition with one-night-only performances by special guest **Lady Camden**. The San Francisco drag queen extraordinaire—and alter ego of former Smuin artist Rex Wheeler—will host the evening as well as step into the red-hot heels of “Santa Baby” featuring “the world’s longest feather boa,” the iconic role originated by Smuin Artistic Director Celia Fushille. The **LGBTQ+ Night** performance of Smuin’s irreplaceable holiday classic is filled with everything from tap and jazz, to swing and sock-hopping, plus delightful surprises that add camp, culture, and miles of cheer to *The Christmas Ballet*. Every ticket purchased will provide a donation to Project Open Hand, a nonprofit organization that serves life-saving, medically tailored nutrition to community members experiencing critical health conditions including HIV/AIDS, diabetes, cancer, and heart disease in San Francisco and Alameda counties. An afterparty hosted by Lady Camden will follow the performance. Lady Camden’s “Santa Baby” performance headlines Smuin’s **LGBTQ+ Night** performance of *The Christmas Ballet* (7:30pm, Tuesday, December 21) at the Blue Shield of California Theater at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (700 Howard St, San Francisco). The full run of Smuin’s *The Christmas Ballet* tours the Bay Area with shows in Walnut Creek (November 19-20), Mountain View (December 2-5), Carmel (Dec 10-11), and San Francisco (December 16-26). Tickets (\$25-\$99) and information available by calling **415-912-1899** or visiting [smuinballet.org/lgbtq+](http://smuinballet.org/lgbtq+). Tickets for the afterparty will be announced online at a later date.

## THE CHRISTMAS BALLET 2021 EDITION

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San Francisco drag queen **Lady Camden** is the alter ego of London-born Rex Wheeler, a dancer, actor, and choreographer who performed with the Smuin company for three seasons. Wheeler attended the Royal Ballet School, performed for the Royal Family on several occasions, and devoted his early career to mastering classical repertoire. Since leaving Smuin, Wheeler has been focusing on his choreography (he also contributes one new piece to this year's *The Christmas Ballet*, a new trio set to "Gloria in excelsis deo" by Vivaldi) and performs as Lady Camden around San Francisco.

*The Christmas Ballet* is a longtime Bay Area favorite heralding the holidays. Offering something for everyone, the joyous program features two acts packed to the brim with breathtaking classical ballet and festive contemporary numbers, set to holiday tunes and incorporating ballet, tap, jazz, and swing. Time-honored favorites will return, along with the unveiling of two new surprises choreographed by Smuin alumni Rex Wheeler and Emmy-winning dancemaker Ben Needham-Wood. The first act, Classical Christmas, features dancers costumed in snow-white ensembles performing flawless ballets celebrating the season. The Cool Christmas second act brings a red-hot costume change along with a medley of lively modern numbers, including the iconic "Santa Baby" featuring a 42-foot-long feather boa.

Smuin's LGBTQ+ Night performance of *The Christmas Ballet* will benefit **Project Open Hand**, a nonprofit organization that seeks to improve health outcomes and quality of life by providing nutritious meals and groceries to vulnerable populations in San Francisco and Alameda counties. Founded in 1985 to provide nutritious meals to people with HIV/AIDS, the organization has since expanded to serve older adults and people fighting other illnesses, helping them to recover, get stronger, and lead healthier lives. Every day, Project Open Hand prepares over 2,500 nutritious meals and provides more than 200 bags of groceries to help sustain clients as they battle serious illnesses, isolation, or the health challenges of aging. "We are humbled and truly honored that Smuin is donating a portion of the proceeds from The Christmas Ballet LGBTQ+ Night to Project Open Hand," said Project Open Hand CEO Paul Hepfer. "Not only is Smuin at the forefront of contemporary ballet, but they are also at the forefront of supporting and helping their community members in need."

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## COVID-19 POLICY

All individuals ages 12+ will be required to provide proof of full COVID-19 vaccination to enter the venue. Fully vaccinated means at least 14 days following the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or the single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Each person aged 18+ must also provide a personal ID. Masks are required for everyone ages 2+ regardless of vaccination status. Valid forms of proof of vaccination include: the original, copy, or electronic photo of the CDC vaccination card (or similar documentation issued by another foreign governmental jurisdiction); documentation from a healthcare provider; a personal digital COVID-19 vaccine record issued by the State of California; a personal digital COVID-19 vaccine record issued by governmental jurisdictions including state, local, or foreign; and a personal digital COVID-19 vaccine record on the Bindle app.

## ABOUT SMUIN

For more than 25 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. Artistic Director since 2007, Celia Fushille has celebrated 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 sponsor for Smuin's 2021/2022 season is the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

## For Calendar Editors:

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**WHEN:** 7:30pm, Tuesday, December 21, 2022

**WHERE:** Blue Shield of California Theater, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (700 Howard Street, San Francisco)

**TICKETS:** For tickets (\$25-\$99) or more information, the public may call **(415) 912-1899** or visit [smuinballet.org/lgbtq+](http://smuinballet.org/lgbtq+). Discounts available for students and groups of 10 or more.

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**PHOTOS:** Media may download high-res photos at <http://cbpr.co/press/smuinxmas21>