

SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

CELIA FUSHILLE / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SMUIN'S ANNUAL GALA CELEBRATES 29TH SEASON EVENT RAISES \$438,000 TO SUPPORT ORGANIZATION

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (7 March 2023) — Arts, community, and civic leaders came together to celebrate **Smuin Contemporary Ballet** at its **Annual Gala**, hosted by co-chairs and Smuin trustees **John Konstin** and **Lee D. Baxter**, along with fellow Board of Trustee members and the Friends of Smuin committee. Held Sunday, March 5 at The Galleria at the San Francisco Design Center, the evening dazzled partygoers with captivating performances by company dancers, a rollicking live auction featuring one-of-kind experiences, and more. Smuin's Annual Gala raised a total of \$438,000, funds that will enable the innovative company to continue presenting the best of classical ballet and contemporary work as it celebrates nearly three decades of success.

The evening began with a cocktail hour reception on the second floor of The Galleria, where Smuin Artistic Director **Celia Fushille** and company artists mingled with esteemed guests such as San Francisco Mayor **London Breed**, former San Francisco Mayor **Willie Brown**, State Senator **Scott Wiener**, Assistant US Attorney (and former SF Supervisor) **Annemarie Conroy**, and San Francisco Police Commissioner **Debra Walker**. Attendees were then seated at beautifully decorated tables on The Galleria's main floor and welcomed warmly by Fushille. "This is a special night," she declared. "Community is so important to Smuin. It's such a joy to have all of you here together. We can't do what we do without you, and we're so grateful for your support!" Smuin dancers then took the stage, performing five short ballets including the impassioned "Nem as Paredes Confesso" duet from Michael Smuin's *Tango Palace*, a moving solo to Linda's Ronstadt's "When You Wish Upon a Star" from Michael Smuin's *Dances with Songs*, and dancer-created pieces from the company's most recent Choreography Showcase: Brennan Wall's playful *Cry to Me*, Maggie Carey's *Much More Than This*, and Tessa Barbour's electrifying *Gotcha*. Among those applauding: San Francisco Supervisor **Rafael Mandelman**, Assistant SFPD Chief **David Lazar**, and Smuin Board of Trustees members **Trisha Mount**

(Vice President), **Karen Kadushin** (Secretary), **Bob Challey**, **Hal Louchheim**, **Linda Membreño**, **John Schlag**, **Randy Soso**, and **Susie Stitt**, among many other enthusiastic Smuin fans.

The evening continued with a thrilling live auction hosted by auctioneer **Trent August**, who first offered a trio of delectable cakes baked by Smuin artists. Company dancers **Tessa Barbour**, **Brandon Alexander**, and **Brennan Wall** presented mouth-watering homemade confections including a chocolate cake with peanut butter frosting, a Neapolitan-inspired cake with a fresh strawberry center, and Wall's "Great Grandmother's Carrot Cake"—which set a record by selling for \$5,300—and were auctioned off to three tables of delighted guests to raise an astonishing \$12,500 for the company. Other one-of-a-kind gifts and experiences included a VIP trip to the Utah Arts Festival, an opportunity to get close to the action at a Golden State Warriors game, and a special 30th Anniversary package featuring dinner with Fushille and an exclusive first look at "Break Fake Rules," an upcoming documentary short about the legacy of Michael Smuin. A special walk-on appearance in Smuin's annual *The Christmas Ballet* spectacular also sold for \$4,800, giving the winning bidder a private studio rehearsal and a cameo appearance on stage with the Smuin dancers. The company also raised an incredible \$205,000 in its "Fund a Need" campaign, with proceeds going towards anything from costume creation to securing music rights, and dancer physical therapy to commissioning world-class choreographers. The spectacular dinner served by McCalls was complemented by wines generously donated by Napa Valley's Grgich Hills Estate.

Smuin also presented a pre-event **After Hours** party for Bay Area young professionals who share an interest in ballet. Hosted by company dancers at the Smuin Center for Dance on Saturday, March 4, guests enjoyed small bites from Media Noche and Doodlecakes Bakery while indulging in craft libations from the open bar hosted by Stookey's Club Moderne, before hitting the dance floor to a playlist curated by Smuin's dancers.

Funds raised at **Smuin's Annual Gala** will support the Company in staging its innovative productions around the Bay Area, ensuring the company's productions maintain the signature Smuin sparkle audiences know and love as the company continues to excel in combining

classical ballet artistry with the athleticism of contemporary dance.

Sponsors of Smuin's Annual Gala included Grgich Hills Estate and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

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 2022/2023 season is the *San Francisco Chronicle*

-30-

PRESS: Contact Steph Keay, Carla Befera & Co.
(650) 687-7830 | steph@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Media may download high-res photos at:
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/smuingala2023>