

SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

CELIA FUSHILLE / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SMUIN CLOSES 29TH SEASON WITH DANCE SERIES 2 WORLD PREMIERE SET TO PINK MARTINI, COMPANY PREMIERE, MORE

Shows in Walnut Creek, San Francisco, and Mountain View
April 28 – May 28, 2023

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (17 April 2023) — **Smuin Contemporary Ballet**'s season finale is headlined by soaring works that highlight the company's artistry and depth of talent, including *French Kiss*, the latest world premiere from acclaimed choreographer Amy Seiwert. Set to the eclectic tunes of Pink Martini, this new ballet will feature chansons by the iconic orchestra, including collaborations with post-modern cabaret artist Meow Meow, and more. Also on the bill is the company premiere of *Sextette* by Kate Skarpetowska, and Michael Smuin's stirring *Dream*, seen on stage for the first time in two decades. Val Caniparoli's *Swipe*, set to the pulsing score of "String Quartet No. 2" remixed by Gabriel Prokofiev, closes this impressive mixed repertory program. **Smuin's Dance Series 2** will tour the Bay Area, beginning with shows in Walnut Creek (April 28-29), continuing in San Francisco (May 5-14), and wrapping up with Mountain View (May 25-28). Tickets (\$25-\$99) are available by calling the individual venues (*see below for details*) or visiting www.smuinballet.org.

Smuin will unveil the world premiere of *French Kiss* by **Amy Seiwert** set to the irresistible music of the world's most iconic cross-genre group, Pink Martini. The Portland-based band blurs the boundaries of modern pop, jazz, baroque, pop, and classical music, in addition to crossing linguistic borders. Seiwert's striking new ballet takes a gallic turn, showcasing dynamic choreography and the signature showmanship of Smuin's multitalented artists against an eclectic selection of Pink Martini's French tracks. Featured singers include "queen of chanson" and cabaret star Meow Meow's aching torch song, "Mon homme marié," from the album "Hotel Amour," a collaboration

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with Pink Martini founder and bandleader Thomas Lauderdale. Seiwert will also set a section of her ballet to “La premier bonheur du jour,” recorded with Sofia, Melanie, Amanda, and August von Trapp. The song is taken from the hit collaborative studio album recorded by Pink Martini with the four sensational singing great-grandchildren of Baron and Maria von Trapp — the family made famous by the Broadway musical and subsequent blockbuster film, “The Sound of Music.” Music phenom Jimmie Herrod, who rose to fame on “America’s Got Talent,” is also featured in “Que tout recommence.” After wowing Sofia Vergara during his *AGT* audition in season 16, the rising star—whose voice has been called “a beacon of hope” by the *Seattle Times*—began touring worldwide with Pink Martini. Herrod recorded his first single with the group in 2018, eventually performing the lead vocals on “Tomorrow,” a five-song EP that includes “Que tout recommence,” a haunting tune from the French production of the Andrew Lloyd Webber/Tim Rice musical, “Jesus Christ Superstar.” Another notable track is “Ma solitude” featuring vocals by internationally acclaimed Egyptian-French singer-songwriter Georges Moustaki, who recorded with Pink Martini shortly before his death in 2013. Seiwert’s ballet will also feature movement set to Pink Martini’s ever-popular “Où est ma tête?” and the jazzy “Dansez-vous,” plus “Autrefois,” which mixes piano with an unexpectedly funky beat, and “Fini la Musique,” an anthemic lament originally written for legendary French actress Isabelle Huppert to sing in her film, “Souvenir.” Seiwert was mentored as a choreographer by Michael Smuin for eight of her nine years as a dancer at the company, with Artistic Director Celia Fushille naming her Smuin’s first Choreographer-in-Residence in 2008. Most recently, she was named Smuin’s Associate Artistic Director beginning its 2023-24 season. Seiwert has captured a reputation for pushing the boundaries of dance, collaborating with artists of other disciplines and experimenting with dance in all of its various forms and expressions from a classical base, making her an invaluable voice in the Bay Area dance community. Her signature choreography has been described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as “keeping founder Michael Smuin’s legacy of unabashed showmanship alive!”

Dance Series 2 will also feature the company premiere of **Katarzyna (Kate) Skarpetowska’s *Sextette***, a soaring work that highlights the company’s artistry and depth of talent. Originally created on Smuin artists for the National Choreographers Initiative in 2021, this whimsical piece is set to Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Violin Concerto No. 1 in A Minor.” A native of Warsaw, Poland,

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Skarpetowska was named one of “25 to Watch” by *Dance* magazine. She received a B.F.A. from The Juilliard School in 1999 and was a member of Parsons Dance (1999 -2006,) and Lar Lubovitch Dance Company (2007 – 2014). Skarpetowska has worked as a répétiteur and assistant choreographer to Lar Lubovitch, David Parsons, and Robert Battle, setting works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Introdans, Oldenburgisches Staatstheater, Ballet Austin, and most recently at the Mikhailovsky Theater in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Her choreography has been performed by Richmond Ballet, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater II, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Parsons Dance, Buglisi Dance Theater, Houston METdance, and The Juilliard School, among others.

Val Caniparoli also returns to Smuin with *Swipe*, a revival of the first work from the acclaimed dancemaker performed by the company. This highly technical piece for four men and three women is set to a remix of “String Quartet No. 2” by Gabriel Prokofiev, grandson of Sergei Prokofiev. A classically trained composer known for electronic and hip-hop music, Prokofiev’s music complements the vibrant energy of Caniparoli’s blend of classical and contemporary movement. Caniparoli began his career at San Francisco Ballet under the co-artistic directorship of Lew Christensen and Michael Smuin, and celebrates his 50th anniversary at the company this season. One of the most performed choreographers in the world, he has contributed to the repertoires of more than 45 dance companies, including San Francisco Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Boston Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Ballet West, Israel Ballet, Singapore Dance Theatre, and State Theatre Ballet of South Africa, among others.

Finally, Michael Smuin’s romantic *Dream*, created on Smuin Artistic Director Celia Fushille and Easton Smith, makes its long-awaited return to the stage. A pas de deux set to “Romanza” from Chopin’s “Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11,” the piece was originally commissioned as an anniversary gift by a devoted Smuin patron in 1999.

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

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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*.

For Calendar Editors

WHAT: **Smuin Contemporary Ballet's** season finale is headlined by soaring works that highlight the company's artistry and depth of talent, including *French Kiss*, the latest world premiere from acclaimed choreographer Amy Seiwert. Set to the eclectic tunes of Pink Martini, this new ballet will feature chansons by the iconic orchestra, including collaborations with post-modern cabaret artist Meow Meow, and more. Also on the bill is the company premiere of *Sextette* by Kate Skarpetowska, and Michael Smuin's stirring *Dream*, seen on stage for the first time in two decades. Val Caniparoli's *Swipe*, set to the pulsing score of "String Quartet No. 2" remixed by Gabriel Prokofiev, closes this impressive mixed repertory program.

SHOWS:

WALNUT CREEK: April 28-29, 2023 7:30pm Fri 2pm Sat	Leshner Center for the Arts 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek (925) 943-7469 or www.smuinballet.org Tickets (\$25-\$79)
SAN FRANCISCO: May 5-14, 2023 7:30pm Fri, May 5 2pm & 7:30pm Sat, May 6 2pm Sun, May 7 7:30pm Thurs, May 11 7:30pm Fri, May 12 2pm & 7:30pm Sat, May 13 2pm Sun, May 14	Yerba Buena Center for the Arts 700 Howard Street (415) 912-1899 or www.smuinballet.org Tickets (\$25-\$84)
MOUNTAIN VIEW: May 25-28, 2023 7:30pm Thurs 7:30pm Fri	Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts 500 Castro Street, Mountain View (650) 903-6000 or www.smuinballet.org Tickets (\$25-\$79)

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2pm & 7:30 pm Sat 2pm Sun	
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Discounts available for students and groups of 10 or more.

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

PHOTOS: Media may download high-res photos at <http://cbpr.co/press/2023danceseries2>