

# SMUIN

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

AMY SEIWERT / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## SMUIN CONTEMPORARY BALLET LAUNCHES 31ST SEASON, LED BY NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AMY SEIWERT “DANCE SERIES 1”

FEATURING WORLD PREMIERE OF JENNIFER ARCHIBALD’S  
“BYCHANCE,” COMPANY PREMIERE OF MATTHEW NEENAN’S  
“THE LAST GLASS,” AND RETURN OF AMY SEIWERT’S  
“RENAISSANCE”

**Shows in Mountain View, Walnut Creek, and San Francisco  
September 13 – October 20, 2024**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (31 July 2024) — **Smuin Contemporary Ballet** kicks off its 31st season—its first led by Artistic Director **Amy Seiwert**—with a thrilling program of premieres and celebrated works. In its season opener, Smuin introduces its audiences to two renowned choreographers. Globally in-demand dancemaker **Jennifer Archibald** will create a World Premiere titled *ByCHANCE* in her first project with Smuin, a dynamic new work that will highlight the spectacular versatility of its artists. An exploration of fate, Archibald’s premiere will invite viewers to witness the extraordinary power of chance encounters and serendipitous moments that can bring love, questions, and new possibilities. BalletX co-founder **Matthew Neenan**, who was declared “one of the most appealing and singular choreographic voices in ballet today” by *The New York Times*, will also make his company debut in *Dance Series 1*. A collection of stories set to the liberating street parade sound of indie-rock band Beirut, Neenan’s character-driven *The Last Glass* is a perfect showcase for Smuin’s renowned theatricality. Rounding out the bill is Seiwert’s *Renaissance*, returning to the Bay Area following its New York premiere at the Joyce Theater. Called “the best dance by far” in its program by *The New York Times*, the critical fanfare for Seiwert’s masterful piece bodes well for Smuin’s future, heralding an exciting new era for the company as it transitions from Artistic Director Emerita Celia Fushille’s successful tenure to Seiwert’s new leadership. Smuin’s *Dance Series 1* will tour the Bay Area September 13 – October 20, beginning with shows in Mountain View (September 13-15) and continuing in Walnut Creek (September 27-28), before wrapping up in San Francisco (October 11-20). For tickets (\$25-\$92) or more information, the public may call **415-912-1899** or visit [smuinballet.org](http://smuinballet.org).

Smuin’s 2024/25 season opener will feature the World Premiere of *ByCHANCE* by Toronto-born dancemaker **Jennifer Archibald**. This new work will examine the ways fate can change the

course of one's life in profound and beautiful ways. Known for exploring movement styles across genres, Archibald aims to create a piece that will resonate with audiences through an investigation of the emotional sensations of time and space. "My movement is powerful in action and in effect, ferocious, and vulnerable," said Archibald. "I want to expose the deeply complicated conversations of our bodies. I want my audience to cry, laugh, remember, and recognize." The music she has selected for *ByCHANCE* includes classical, contemporary, and experimental blends of chamber and orchestral music with electronics from an eclectic mix of composers worldwide. Archibald's works have been described as "dance's equivalent to angels on the wing" (*Critical Dance*) that have "brought the audience to their feet with shouts of bravo" (*LA Dance Chronicle*). The founder and Artistic Director of the Arch Dance Company and Program Director of ArchCore40 Dance Intensives, Archibald is a trailblazing choreographer known for her innovative approach to storytelling, and fusion of classical ballet movement with contemporary urban dance styles. Her premiere for Smuin will highlight the spectacular versatility of its artists, who excel in non-traditional partnering and movement styles across genres. The first female resident choreographer appointed in Cincinnati Ballet's 40-year history, Archibald's career has spanned across the realms of ballet, contemporary dance, and commercial projects. She has worked commercially with NIKE, MAC Cosmetics, Tommy Hilfiger, and the New York Knicks, and created works on Atlanta Ballet, Ailey II, Ballet Memphis, Ballet West, BalletX, Kansas City Ballet, Nashville Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Ballet, Sacramento Ballet, Stockholm's Balletakademien, and Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre, among others. Archibald was also awarded a Choreographic Fellow for Ailey's New Directions Choreography Lab and is a recipient of the Joffrey Ballet Winning Works Choreographic Competition and the City of New York Dance Initiative. She is currently an acting lecturer at the Yale School of Drama and was appointed as a guest faculty lecturer to develop the Hip Hop dance curriculum at Columbia/Barnard College.

BalletX co-founder and Philadelphia Ballet resident choreographer **Matthew Neenan** makes his company debut with *The Last Glass*. Storylines both playful and passionate unfold in this theatrical work set to eight intensely lyrical songs from American indie-rock band Beirut. *The New York Times'* Alistair Macaulay enthused, "The effect that Mr. Neenan's 'Last Glass' has on its audience is infectious and immediate. It creates a world both social and psychological, public and private, and it connects ballet to the language of today movingly." Smuin artists, renowned for their individuality, will excel at bringing a cast of gripping characters to life through raw emotion and impassioned movement. Neenan performed with Philadelphia Ballet before his appointment as the company's choreographer-in-residence in 2007. He later co-founded BalletX, which had its world premiere at the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival in 2005. Now the resident dance company of the Wilma Theatre, BalletX is considered one of the nation's preeminent contemporary ballet companies. Neenan has received numerous awards and grants for his choreography, including the National Endowment for the Arts, Dance Advance, the Choo San Goh Foundation, the Independence Foundation, and New York City Ballet's Choreographic Institute Fellowship Initiative Award. In 2009, he was the grand-prize winner of Sacramento Ballet's Capital Choreography Competition and the first recipient of the Jerome Robbins NEW Program Fellowship. BalletX has toured and performed Neenan's choreography at the Joyce Theater, NY City Center, Central Park SummerStage, Vail International Dance Festival, Jacob's Pillow, the Cerritos Center, Laguna Dance Festival, Spring to Dance Festival in St. Louis, and internationally in Cali, Colombia and Seoul, Korea. His choreography is also in the repertoire of

Ballet Memphis, Ballet West, BalletMet, Colorado Ballet, Juilliard Dance, Milwaukee Ballet, New York City Ballet's Choreographic Institute, Opera Philadelphia, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Tulsa Ballet, and Washington Ballet, among others.

Smuin Artistic Director **Amy Seiwert**'s stirring *Renaissance* returns to the Bay Area following its New York premiere at the Joyce Theater. The striking work is complemented by an empowering a cappella soundtrack by Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble, the acclaimed Oakland-based group specializing in traditional songs and vocal techniques from Eastern Europe. *The New York Times* raved, "Seiwert's choreography both rides the soaring arcs of the voices and registers the quick, unusual rhythms... [the] dance catches some of the mystery in those otherworldly sounds." Inspired by the 2019 Women's Wall protest in India, one of the largest gender equity protests in history, the piece was also hailed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "Dynamic. Inventive. Sinuous. 'Renaissance' has a certain grave and timeless feel to it." The piece was nominated for an Isadora Duncan Award for "Outstanding Choreography" in 2020. Seiwert took the helm of Smuin as Artistic Director in July 2024, following her appointment as Smuin's Associate Artistic Director in April 2023. A former Smuin dancer, she was named the company's first choreographer-in-residence by Smuin Artistic Director Emerita Celia Fushille in 2008, a post she held for a decade. Seiwert has been recognized by *Dance* magazine as one of "25 to Watch", and her signature choreography has been met with consistent acclaim, described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "keeping founder Michael Smuin's legacy of unabashed showmanship alive." A multiple-time Isadora Duncan Award nominee, her choreographic works have been supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, The Kennedy Center, The Joyce Theater, The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, and others. Seiwert's dances are in the repertoire of companies nationwide including Atlanta Ballet, AXIS Dance, Ballet Austin, BalletMet, BalletX, Cincinnati Ballet, Colorado Ballet, Kansas City Ballet, Oakland Ballet, ODC/Dance, Opera Parallèle, Robert Moses KIN, and Washington Ballet.

Smuin will offer pre-show talks at 1:15pm prior to Saturday matinees at each venue. Led by the company's artistic staff, audiences will enjoy insights into the program and creative process behind the featured ballets. Smuin will also provide accessibility offerings for *Dance Series 1* including an ASL-interpreted performance (7:30pm, Friday, October 18), a pre-show haptic tour (12:45-1pm, Sunday, October 20), and performance with audio description (2pm, Sunday, October 20). For more information, visit [smuinballet.org](http://smuinballet.org).

### **ABOUT SMUIN**

For more than 30 years, Smuin has pushed the boundaries of contemporary ballet within a distinctly modern style, combining classical ballet training, technique, and artistry 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. From 2007-2024, Artistic Director Emerita Celia Fushille celebrated Michael Smuin's legacy while enriching the company's repertoire by collaborating with choreographers from around the world, commissioning world premieres, and bringing new choreographic voices to the Smuin stage. Now at the helm, Artistic Director Amy Seiwert will continue leading Smuin in bold and creative ways.

## FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

**WHAT:** **Smuin Contemporary Ballet** kicks off its 31st season—its first led by Artistic Director **Amy Seiwert**—with a thrilling program of premieres and celebrated works. In its season opener, Smuin introduces its audiences to two renowned choreographers. Globally in-demand dancemaker **Jennifer Archibald** will create a World Premiere titled **ByCHANCE** in her first project with Smuin. An exploration of fate, Archibald’s premiere will invite viewers to witness the extraordinary power of chance encounters and serendipitous moments that can bring love, questions, and new possibilities. BalletX co-founder **Matthew Neenan**, who was declared “one of the most appealing and singular choreographic voices in ballet today” by *The New York Times*, will also make his company debut in **Dance Series 1**. A collection of stories set to the liberating street parade sound of indie-rock band Beirut, Neenan’s character-driven **The Last Glass** is a perfect showcase for Smuin’s renowned theatricality. Rounding out the bill is Seiwert’s **Renaissance**, returning to the Bay Area following its New York premiere at the Joyce Theater. Called “the best dance by far” by *The New York Times*, the critical fanfare for Seiwert’s masterful piece bodes well for Smuin’s future, heralding an exciting new era for the company as it transitions from Artistic Director Emerita Celia Fushille’s tenure to Seiwert’s leadership.

**TICKETS:** For tickets (\$25-\$92) or more information, the public may call 415-912-1899 or visit [smuinballet.org](http://smuinballet.org).

### DATES & LOCATIONS:

<b>MOUNTAIN VIEW:</b> <b>September 13-15, 2024</b> 7:30pm Fri, Sept. 13 2pm & 7:30pm Sat, Sept. 14 2pm Sun, Sept. 15	Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts 500 Castro Street, Mountain View (650) 903-6000 or <a href="http://www.smuinballet.org">www.smuinballet.org</a> Tickets (\$33-\$92)
<b>WALNUT CREEK:</b> <b>September 27-28, 2024</b> 7:30pm Fri, Sept. 27 2pm Sat, Sept. 28	Leshner Center for the Arts 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek (925) 943-7469 or <a href="http://www.smuinballet.org">www.smuinballet.org</a> Tickets (\$36-\$87)
<b>SAN FRANCISCO:</b> <b>October 11-20, 2024</b> 7:30pm Fri, Oct. 11 7:30pm Sat, Oct. 12 7:30pm Thurs, Oct. 17 7:30pm Fri, Oct. 18 2pm & 7:30pm Sat, Oct. 19 2pm Sun, Oct. 20	Cowell Theater 2 Marina Blvd, San Francisco (415) 912-1899 or <a href="http://www.smuinballet.org">www.smuinballet.org</a> Tickets (\$25-\$89)

Discounts available for students and groups of 10 or more.

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**PRESS:** Contact Steph Keay, Carla Befera & Co.  
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**PHOTOS:** Media may download high-res photos at <https://cbpr.co/press/2024danceseries1/>