

NEWS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

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The Australian Ballet's Principal Artist, Kevin Jackson. Photo by Justin Ridler

The Australian Ballet partners with Joffrey Ballet to bring Tolstoy's beloved *Anna Karenina* to the world stage

The Australian Ballet is delighted to announce that it has partnered with Chicago's Joffrey Ballet to create a new joint production of Tolstoy's timeless masterpiece, ***Anna Karenina***. In an all-Russian partnership, prolific and award-winning Russian choreographer, **Yuri Possokhov** will collaborate with award-winning Russian composer, **Ilya Demutsky** who has been commissioned to create a new score for this production.

This new production of *Anna Karenina* has been commissioned as a joint initiative of Artistic Directors, **David McAllister** (The Australian Ballet) and **Ashley Wheeler** (Joffrey Ballet). Joffrey Ballet will premiere the production in Chicago in October 2018 and The Australian Ballet will premiere it in its 2020 season in Australia.

Anna Karenina will ignite the passion and tragedy of Tolstoy with state-of-the-art sets and costumes, transporting audiences into a sweeping tale of doomed love. The joint production echoes a love story of its own by uniting two of the world's preeminent ballet companies to transform Tolstoy's iconic novel into a daring, evocative creation.

David McAllister is thrilled to be collaborating with Ashley Wheeler in bringing their shared vision to audiences globally. "Ashley and I performed together on the Australian stage as dancers in the 80s and I have followed his wonderful career as a dancer and now Artistic Director of Joffrey Ballet. Since becoming the Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet we have kept in touch and talked about how we could work together once more. This is the perfect project and I think it will be really exciting to work with Ashley again and stage this exciting co-production for our Australian audiences."

Anna Karenina boasts a world class contingent of artistic and creative talent made possible only through the combined networks and knowledge of the two Artistic

Directors. To tell one of the greatest stories ever written, McAllister and Wheeler sought out one of the greatest balletic storytellers of our time, Yuri Possokhov. McAllister said: "It has been a dream of mine to commission a new work by Possokhov and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to collaborate with such a visionary artist."

Critically acclaimed for his intuitive, affecting style, and himself a veteran principal dancer with Bolshoi Ballet, Possokhov brings together an all-star creative team known around the globe for fearless artistry and theatrical excellence. Among them: composer Ilya Demutsky, recipient of a 2016 Golden Mask Award, Russia's most prestigious theatre honour; Emmy Award-winning designer Tom Pye (*Gloriana*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Top Girls*); and renowned lighting designer David Finn (Cirque de Soleil's *Michael Jackson ONE* and *Zed*).

Commenting on *Anna Karenina*, **Executive Director Libby Christie** said: "This is a joint production of global magnitude in artistry, skill and scale. The Australian Ballet is proud to be working with the esteemed Joffrey Ballet to create this new and important production with this world-class creative team. We are particularly delighted to be able to bring together such world-class creative talent for the benefit of our Australian audiences."

The production partnership with Joffrey Ballet continues The Australian Ballet's recent history of artistic collaborations with leading ballet companies around the world. In addition to *Anna Karenina*, these co-productions include Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in collaboration with The National Ballet of Japan premiering with The Australian Ballet in Melbourne in 2017, a new Stanton Welch production of *Silvia* in collaboration with Houston Ballet for The Australian Ballet's 2019 season and a joint commission with American Ballet Theatre of a new production of *Harlequinade* by Alexei Ratmansky to be performed by The Australian Ballet in its 2020 season.

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About Anna Karenina:

Dostoyevsky declared Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* "flawless" and Faulkner described it as the "best ever written." A story as universal as it is provocative, *Anna Karenina's* tale of forbidden love and domesticity set in Imperial Russia speaks to our turbulent times and offers an emotional and intellectual space to explore the heart's greatest enigmas.

About Yuri Possokhov:

Known for his visceral expressive style, Russian choreographer Yuri Possokhov has created groundbreaking international works and is currently Choreographer in Residence at the San Francisco Ballet. A veteran principal dancer with Bolshoi Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, and San Francisco Ballet, he recently won the 2016 Prix Benois de la Danse, the dance world's highest honour, for his full-length ballet *A Hero of Our Time* at Moscow's Bolshoi.

A frequent Joffrey Ballet guest artist, Possokhov has captivated audiences with his imaginative storytelling in works such as *RAKU* and *Don Quixote*, a breathtaking tour de force the *Chicago Sun-Times* declared "could not possibly be improved upon."

About The Australian Ballet:

The Australian Ballet exists to inspire, delight and challenge audiences through the power of its performances.

The Australian Ballet is one of the world's premier ballet companies and has delivered extraordinary performances for over 50 years. A commitment to artistic excellence, a spirited style and a willingness to take risks have defined the company from its earliest days, both onstage and off.

The company regularly represents Australia on the world stage and has performed to critical acclaim in 87 cities worldwide including New York, Shanghai, Tokyo, London and Paris. Caring for tradition yet daring to be different, The Australian Ballet performs beloved classical ballets and commissions new work annually. The company presents upwards of 250 shows and 1,700 education and audience engagement events each year.

In addition to 80 exceptional dancers, The Australian Ballet employs master craftspeople and leaders in injury prevention, dance education, marketing and philanthropy as well as an orchestra of 62 musicians (Orchestra Victoria).

Moving effortlessly between the great classical ballets and new contemporary commissions, the company has a uniquely Australian style, powered by artistry and athleticism.

About Joffrey Ballet:

Joffrey Ballet has been hailed as "America's Company of Firsts." Its long list of "firsts" includes being the first dance company to perform at the White House at Jacqueline Kennedy's invitation, the first to appear on television, the first classical dance company to go multi-media, the first to commission a rock 'n' roll ballet, the first and only dance company to appear on the cover of *Time* magazine, the first company to have had a major motion picture based on it, Robert Altman's *The Company*, and the first US ballet company to livestream video of a rehearsal on *YouTube*.

For more than a half-century, Joffrey Ballet's commitment to taking world class, artistically vibrant work to a broad and varied audience has created a solid foundation that continues to support the company's unprecedented capacity for achieving important "firsts." Today, the Joffrey, which has been hugely successful in its former residences in New York and Los Angeles, lives permanently in its brilliant new facility, Joffrey Tower, in the heart of America, Chicago, Illinois. The company's commitment to accessibility is met through an extensive touring schedule, an innovative and highly effective education program including the much-lauded Joffrey Academy of Dance, Official School of Joffrey Ballet, and collaborations with myriad other visual and performing arts organisations.

Classically trained to the highest standards, Joffrey Ballet expresses a unique, inclusive perspective on dance, proudly reflecting the diversity of America with its company and audiences and repertoire which includes major story ballets, reconstructions of masterpieces and contemporary works. Founded by visionary teacher Robert Joffrey in 1956, guided by celebrated choreographer Gerald Arpino from 1988 until 2007, Joffrey Ballet continues to thrive under internationally renowned Artistic Director Ashley Wheater. Joffrey Ballet has become one of the most revered and recognizable arts organizations in America and one of the top dance companies in the world.

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