



SAN FRANCISCO BALLET
HELGI TOMASSON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Press Release: 13 March 2012 SFB

HOST OF UK PREMIERES FOR FIRST LONDON SEASON IN EIGHT YEARS

14-23 SEPTEMBER 2012

“no other American company covers an equal range of international ballet styles... [can]surpass it for overall elegance and finesse of execution; [or] has a greater number of ballerinas worthy of the leading roles of its repertory.” New York Times

True to style, **San Francisco Ballet Artistic Director & Principal Choreographer Helgi Tomasson** is showcasing his dancers in a highly varied programme of ten short works - no fewer than *nine* of them UK premieres – for their long-awaited return to the London stage. Waving its banner of versatility and innovation, SF Ballet - America’s oldest professional dance company – will perform new, specially-commissioned dance pieces by **Edwaard Liang, Mark Morris, Ashley Page, Yuri Possokhov, Helgi Tomasson** and **Christopher Wheeldon**. The historic jewel will be **George Balanchine’s *Divertimento No 15***.

“London is a favorite tour destination for our Company and we’re delighted to be returning after eight years,” said Tomasson, who has directed SF Ballet for over 27 years. “We are privileged to work with some of the best choreographers in the world and some of their new works provide a wonderful showcase for our dancers’ broad ranges and abilities. I think London audiences will enjoy the diverse and exciting works that we’ll be presenting, almost all of which are UK premieres.”

Alistair Spalding, Sadler’s Wells Chief Executive and Artistic Director commented, “I’m delighted to be welcoming San Francisco Ballet back to the Sadler’s Wells stage. Helgi Tomasson has developed an inspired philosophy for his company, of creating new work in ballet with the most

gifted choreographers of our generation. That spirit fits perfectly with Sadler's Wells' mission to present the best contemporary work in all dance genres. These superb dancers will be performing a rich and varied programme of works that will remind UK audiences of the Company's justified stature on the world stage."

For more than a decade, Tomasson has championed the work of British choreographer **Christopher Wheeldon**; he has created seven works expressly for SF Ballet, with eleven of his pieces in the SF Ballet repertory. The Wheeldon ballets selected for the London season will unfurl across the three mixed-bill programmes and were all specially created for SF Ballet. Set to a rhythmic score by contemporary Italian composer Ezio Bosso, ***Within the Golden Hour*** was created for SF Ballet's 75th Anniversary New Works Festival in 2008. Wheeldon's direct inspiration from the music prompted clear visions of place – from the remote Hebrides to an Italian piazza – with hints of charleston, waltz and tango along the way. Wheeldon's ***Ghosts*** (2010) is set to a "silvery" score written for him by C.F. Kip Winger (a former bassist for Alice Cooper) and inspired by poems of Edgar Allen Poe. Wheeldon describes his choreographic vision as "a mass gathering of souls." ***Number Nine*** (2011), for four principal couples and eight corps de ballet couples, is driven along by Michael Torke's energetic score and described by the choreographer himself as "a full-throttle dance with some pretty full-throttle music."

The Company will also unveil the fruits of another Anglo-American choreographic association, with the UK premiere of **Ashley Page's** first work for SF Ballet. ***Guide to Strange Places*** is also the title of the music composed by San Francisco composer John Adams – a highly complex score which Page has been musing on for many years. A large ensemble piece, with four duets for principal couples, Page variously describes the different tones of movement as "searing, earthy, romantic, delicate and sensual."

Mark Morris's love affair with the dancers of SF Ballet continues unabated (he has choreographed more works for SF Ballet than any company other than his own), with a lyrical, witty piece, ***Beaux***, which parades the talents of SF Ballet's strong male dancers in egalitarian

fashion, from principals to corps de ballet members. Set to neo-classical works for harpsichord by 20th century composer Bohuslav Martinů, it represents Morris' eighth work to enter the Company's repertory.

Born in Taiwan and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, choreographer **Edwaard Liang** is less well-known to British audiences than American. ***Symphonic Dances*** is his first commission for SF Ballet and is set to Rachmaninov's last composition of the same name – a massive, structured score that unfolds in an intensely spiritual dance piece for an ensemble of 18 dancers.

Yuri Possokhov's relationship with SF Ballet spans almost two decades, having been a Principal Dancer from 1994-2006. He was named SF Ballet's Choreographer in Residence in 2006 and has created numerous works for the Company, including collaborations with Helgi Tomasson on major full-length productions. Described by the *New York Times* as an "exhilarating and bold display of full-throttle academic pure dance with modern accentuations ...[and] "strokes of wit," ***Classical Symphony*** (2010) is praised by the same critic for its "sheer verve and nerve." In contrast, the fragile beauty of Noh-influenced ***RAKU***, a multimedia dance theatre work, is inspired by the burning of Kyoto's Golden Pavilion in Japan in 1950. The ballet is set to a symphonic score composed by Shinji Eshima, double bassist in the SF Ballet Orchestra.

As a principal dancer with New York City Ballet, Helgi Tomasson danced and created roles in many of **Balanchine's** ballets. Tomasson has made the brilliance and discipline of Balanchine's work part of the classical bedrock of SF Ballet's training and performance work. Mozart's ***Divertimento No. 15*** in B-flat major engendered an intimate ballet by Balanchine, in which every dancer has the opportunity to shine.

The canon of **Helgi Tomasson's** own works for SF Ballet are choreographed to display the Company's profoundly classical and lyrical talents. ***Trio***, set to Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir de Florence*, was created for the Company's 2011 repertory season. Of *Trio*, the *New York Times* praised the work, noting that it "showcases [the] dancers handsomely."

SF Ballet Music Director and Principal Conductor, **Martin West**, will conduct a symphony orchestra of UK players at each performance.

Further press information: DEBRA BORASTON

T. 020 7483 1950 M. 07989 434388 E. debra@henrymoorestudio.co.uk

Booking: Sadler's Wells Box Office: T. 0844 412 4300

www.sadlerswells.com Booking opens 10am on 15 March 2012

Programme details

Programme A

(Sept. 14,18 at 7:30pm; Sept 23 at 4:00pm)

Divertimento No.15

Choreography: George Balanchine
Music: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Divertimento No 15 in B-flat major
Staged by Elyse Borne
Costume Design: after Karinska
Lighting Design: Mark Stanley

Symphonic Dances

Choreography: Edwaard Liang
Music: Sergei Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances Op. 45
Costume Design: Mark Zappone
Lighting Design: Jack Mehler

Within the Golden Hour

Choreography: Christopher Wheeldon©
Music: Ezio Bosso
Designs: Martin Pakledinaz
Lighting Design: James F. Ingalls

Programme B

(Sept. 15, 21 at 7:30pm; Sept. 16 at 4:00pm)

Ghosts

Choreography: Christopher Wheeldon
Music: C.F. Kip Winger
Scenic Design: Laura Jellinek
Costume Design: Mark Zappone
Lighting Design Mary Louise Geiger

RAKU

Choreography: Yuri Possokhov
Music: Shinji Eshima
Scenic & Projection Design: Alexander V. Nichols
Costume Design: Mark Zappone
Lighting Design: Christopher Dennis

Trio

Choreography: Helgi Tomasson
Music: Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky *Souvenir de Florence*
Scenic Design: Alexander V. Nichols
Costume Design: Mark Zappone
Lighting Design: Christopher Dennis

Programme C

(Sept. 19, 20, 22 at 7:30pm)

Beaux

Choreography: Mark Morris
Music: Bohuslav Martinů *Concerto for Harpsichord and Small Orchestra,*
Two pieces for harpsichord, lento
Scenic and Costume Design: Isaac Mizrahi
Lighting Design: Michael Chybowski

Classical Symphony

Choreography: Yuri Possokhov
Music: Sergei Prokofiev
Costume Design Sandra Woodall
Lighting Design: David Finn
Video Concept: Yuri Zhukov

Guide to Strange Places

Choreography: Ashley Page
Music: John Adams *Guide to Strange Places*
Scenic & Costume Design: Jon Morrell
Lighting Design: David Finn

Number Nine©

Choreography: Christopher Wheeldon
Music: Michael Torke *Ash*
Costume Design: Holly Hynes
Lighting Design: Mary Louise Geiger

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET

As America's oldest professional ballet company, San Francisco Ballet has enjoyed a long and rich tradition of artistic "firsts" since its founding in 1933, including performing the first American productions of *Swan Lake* and *Nutcracker*, as well as the first 20th-century American *Coppélia*. San Francisco Ballet is one of the three largest ballet companies in the United States. Guided in its early years by American dance pioneers and brothers Lew, Willam and Harold Christensen, San Francisco Ballet currently presents more than 100 performances annually, both locally and internationally. Under the direction of Helgi Tomasson for more than two decades, the Company has achieved an international reputation as one of the preeminent ballet companies in the world. In 2005, San Francisco Ballet won the prestigious Laurence Olivier Award in the category of "Outstanding Achievement in Dance" and in 2006, it was the first non-European company elected "Company of the Year" in *Dance Europe* magazine's annual readers' poll. In 2008, the Company marked its 75th anniversary with a host of initiatives including an ambitious New Works Festival. Recent highlights include a tour to the People's Republic of China, the celebration of Artistic Director & Principal Choreographer Helgi Tomasson's 25th anniversary with the Company, and the United States premiere of John Neumeier's *The Little Mermaid*, which was broadcast internationally, as well as nationally on PBS's *Great Performances* "Dance in America" in December 2011. San Francisco Ballet has previously performed in London in 1999, 2001 and 2004.

Further background information: www.sfballet.org