

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

2017 / 2018 Touring Season



Sleepless by Jiří Kylián

First North American production!

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet History



PHOTO: ROSALE OCONNOR

Ballet's dynamic story in the American West

In 1996 Aspen Santa Fe Ballet Founder Bebe Schweppe invited Tom Mossbrucker and Jean-Philippe Malaty to create a ballet company in Aspen. A unique multidimensional arts organization developed rapidly from the ballet school Schweppe had established in the Rocky Mountains.

"Bebe's vision for Aspen to have its own ballet company was the project of a lifetime," says Malaty, ASFB's executive director. "We embarked together on a serendipitous adventure. Twenty years later, the connection between the dancers and our two communities is deep and inextricable."

Forging a new frontier

The company began modestly with six dancers. Growth was organic. Friends in the field – Gerald Arpino, Trey McIntyre, Septime Webre, Dwight Rhoden – offered start-up repertoire. Moses Pendleton's highly popular *Noir Blanc* was a seminal event for the young ASFB. It launched a tradition of commissioning new works. An open, exploratory style emerged as Mossbrucker and Malaty tapped the creative scene in Europe where classical ballet was breaking from its boundaries. The athletic and adventurous American dancers found themselves at a crossroads of dance history. The divide between ballet and modern dance was dissolving.

Innovative business model

In 2000 the Aspen, Colorado-based ballet company forged a dual-city relationship with Santa Fe, New Mexico, broadening its scope and lending crucial revenue diversification. Under this hybrid business model, a roster of arts activities takes wing, year-round, in both cities. Performance, education, presentation and community outreach all join in the mix. Within this innovative structure, ASFB approaches its 20th anniversary season in 2015-16.

New commissions

ASFB's mission places highest priority on developing new choreography and nurturing relationships with emerging choreographers. The

company fostered the early careers of now in-demand global dance makers like Nicolo Fonte (nine commissioned Fonte works in the ASFB repertoire), Jorma Elo (three commissioned Elo works), Edwaard Liang, Jacopo Godani, Helen Pickett, Cayetano Soto, Alejandro Cerrudo and others. Works by late 20th century masters – William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Twyla Tharp – round out the repertoire.

"We value building relationships with choreographers who become integral to the company. The natural beauty of our surroundings has a profound impact on creativity and our choreographers find it inspiring to create here," says Mossbrucker, ASFB's artistic director.

National reputation

Based for twenty years in the American West, ASFB now sits at the vanguard of its field, brandishing a strong national reputation. Repeat engagements at the American Dance Festival, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Joyce Theater, The Kennedy Center, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and Wolf Trap testify to the company's popularity and ability to please audiences. Overseas invitations arrived and ASFB embarked on international tours to Brazil, Canada, France, Greece, Guatemala, Israel, Italy and Russia. Premier funders – National Endowment for the Arts, New England Foundation for the Arts / National Dance Project, Joyce Foundation, Shubert Foundation, Wolf Trap Foundation, Jerome Robbins Foundation and Princess Grace Foundation – have supported ASFB's growth.

Accolades into the future

Now celebrating its 20th anniversary, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet enters a third decade with an undiminished creative drive. New dancers, new dance voices, and a solid infrastructure characterize the company. The ever-evolving Aspen Santa Fe Ballet looks to a bright future with energy and optimism.



PHOTO: JANA CRUDER

Dear Presenters,

Greetings from our mountain towns of Aspen and Santa Fe. After a year spent primarily at home creating new work and focusing on our 20th anniversary, we are looking forward with great excitement to the start of our third decade!

With debuts in Miami; Baton Rouge; and Chihuahua, Mexico; as well as return engagements to loyal partners across the states—Dallas, Denver, Palm Desert, Scottsdale, and Houston—our 21st season is off to a robust start. Aspen Santa Fe Ballet will also return to the Joyce Theater for an incredible ninth appearance!

After a year of celebration and reflection, we now look forward with a renewed commitment to actively contributing to the evolution of the art form. The discovery of new choreographic talents remains our focus and we are proud to be one of America's most nimble touring dance companies, sharing our unique brand of contemporary ballet with audiences around the country and abroad.

We are thrilled to introduce our newest choreographer, Canadian-born Cherice Barton, who will create her first ballet for ASFB this year: a co-commission in partnership with the Valley Performing Art Center in Northridge, CA. After the critical acclaim of newcomer Fernando Melo's first ballet for ASFB—the cinematic *Re:play*—we're excited to welcome the Brazilian choreographer back for a new world premiere.

Works added to repertoire in celebration of our 20th anniversary will still be available for touring in 2017-18 including *Sleepless*, the 2003 masterwork by Jiří Kylián; ASFB is the first company in North America to mount this work. Also touring are *Silent Ghost* and *Little mortal jump* by Alejandro Cerrudo, and the blockbuster hit *Huma Rojo*, our latest work by Cayetano Soto, resplendent in its cherry-red trousers and turtle-necks, and bouncing to the Latin rhythms of Xavier Cugat.

Your loyal support of ASFB's vision over the years and the role many of you have played in the success and sustainability of the organization helps keep us at the forefront of American dance. We are grateful to our stalwart presenting partners, and we look forward to introducing Aspen Santa Fe Ballet to new audiences.

Tom Mossbrucker
Artistic Director

Jean-Philippe Malaty
Executive Director

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Cayetano Soto Builds Another Ballet from Barcelona's Bricks

by Alexandra Villarreal

Imagine: you go for a late-night stroll. It's maybe one or two in the morning. Suddenly, you find yourself in front of a towering edifice of stained glass and tinted tiles — Antoni Gaudí's Casa Batlló. Now only ghosts walk the streets, cleared thanks to the hour, and it's just you and Barcelona melding into one. You gaze up at Gaudí's masterpiece with child-like eyes, wondering at its magnitude.

That is where choreographer Cayetano Soto goes on restless eyes, when he takes the one-minute jaunt from his apartment to Casa Batlló. The building matches his personality: bubbly, bristling with enthusiasm for life. Like an architect, Soto wants to look at what lies around him— really look and see — and discover what he can through his art.

"I am a choreographer because it is just a very important part of me," he said. "Why? I am still trying to answer this question. And this is why I am going again and again to the studio: to try to understand this world, the people, this planet. To try to communicate with dance what I cannot do with my own words. To research my own world."

Originally from Barcelona, Soto trained at the Instituto del Teatro before moving to the Netherlands to study at the Royal Conservatorium in The Hague. He has set repertoire on some of the West's most acclaimed contemporary ballet companies, including Ballet BC in Vancouver, where he's currently resident choreographer. His pieces vary in mood, running the gamut from strange and brooding to sweet like maraschino cherries. After all, to research the world is an expansive project with both blinding light and pitch darkness.

Since 2009, Soto has set four ballets on Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, two of which were commissions. The works have tended toward a hard-edged and aggressive tone, contemplative in their melancholy. However, when ASFB Artistic Director Tom Mossbrucker invited Soto to conceive of a new piece, he wanted "a different approach."

"As a person, he's very playful and very funny," Mossbrucker said of Soto.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASFB

"We commissioned a work in celebration of our 20th anniversary. We really wanted him to be a part of that. So we said, could he switch courses and do something more celebratory, or playful, or maybe witty? I wasn't too specific, but I asked if he could try to keep that in mind as he plans the ballet. Something that would really celebrate all that we've done and be an uplifting experience."

Soto agreed, eager for the challenge. It was not the first time an artistic director requested that he try a more ebullient flavor, and he loved the taste of it. He would create something whimsical, energized like Casa Batlló. The change in pace should offer a nice contrast, as the ballet sits on a February 13th program alongside *Re:play*, a new piece in black and white by Brazilian choreographer Fernando Melo, and Alejandro Cerrudo's meditative *Silent Ghost*.

Before Soto entered the Aspen studio on January 11, he had a selection of 50 upbeat tunes to narrow down to six or seven — everything from Bach to Judy Garland, from the Rat Pack to Perez Prado. Musical choices alone require extensive investment: Soto listened to approximately 300 songs in preparation for the commission. He also has a "picture" in mind, an image that he'll translate into movement once he re-meets the company. But all of these threads must come together when they please, whether on the airplane to Aspen, or once he hits the ground.

"I have to listen always to my heart, and I do not want to make decisions before my heart speaks to me," he said. "There is always a 'why?' for every single time I make a move."

The costumes will be a smoking red to match Huma Rojo, the name of one of Pedro Almodóvar's protagonists that doubles as a title for Soto's debut. This allusion seems apt given Soto's alleged inspiration: "Strong women. Love them ... I respect and admire them so much."

Soto's respect for strong women — and men — is partly why ASFB was intent on having him return a fifth time for the 20th anniversary season.

According to Mossbrucker, Soto has always "had a really nice rapport with the company."

"He pulls out the strengths of the dancers and challenges them to get better," he continued. "After working with him for four weeks, they were better than they were four weeks ago."

Humbly, Soto explained his philosophy on the dancer-choreographer relationship. Dance aficionados often describe the dancer as the paintbrush, the choreographer as the painter, and the stage as the canvas. However, Soto seems to depart from this hierarchy, imbuing his dancers with importance and individuality.

"In every company I work with, I always try to make an environment where every single dancer will have his or her place, where we all could develop as artists with respect and integrity," he said. "A choreographer without dancers is nothing. They are one of the reasons why I love to create and be in the studio."

Soto also acknowledges ASFB's contribution to his career and the connection that has emerged between him and the ensemble. ASFB was first to feature his work in the United States, and he's confident and comfortable when he walks through its doors.

"I always feel free to create my own personal environment with them," he said. "I always have a carte blanche to do my thing and I am never questioned during my process."

In some ways, this cohesion has allowed the company to become another home for Soto, the constant traveler who finds shelter in his choreographic voice.

"I feel no difference because I'm in another country. I am the same person in Barcelona, or in Aspen, or in Vancouver, or in Den Haag," he said. "Every time I am back in Aspen it feels like we were always together, like the time did not pass by."

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

2016 / 2017 TOUR DATES

September 11

*Shaw Center for the Arts
Baton Rouge, LA*

September 14

*Teatro de la Ciudad
Chihuahua, Mexico*

September 16 - 17

*Dallas City Performance Hall
Dallas, TX*

January 28

*South Miami-Dade Cultural Center
Miami, FL*

February 22

*Vilar Performing Arts Center
Beaver Creek, CO*

February 25 - 26

*Newman Center for the
Performing Arts
Denver, CO*

March 3

*Valley Performing Arts Center
Northridge, CA*

March 7

*McCallum Theatre
Palm Desert, CA*

March 9

*Irvine Barclay Theatre
Irvine, CA*

April 13 & 15

*Scottsdale Center for the
Performing Arts
Scottsdale, AZ*

April 21

*Cullen Theater, Wortham Center
Houston, TX*

April 26 - 30

*The Joyce Theater
New York City, NY*

May 3 - 7

*Prince Theater
Philadelphia, PA*



ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

2017/2018 TOURING REPERTOIRE

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet's repertoire, ranging from accessible to sophisticated, resonates with energy and eclecticism. A house-style emerges across this diverse dance menu, layering American athleticism on a base of European refinement. The company's identity is tethered to its repertoire, which speaks a complex language, challenges audiences, and advances the art form.

Since its inception, ASFB has been deeply committed to commissioning new works. Of the 28 ballets created since 1996, many are by world-

leading choreographers whose important first assignments came from ASFB. Numerous ballets have gone on to grace the repertoires of renowned dance companies. Nurturing lasting relationships with dance makers is a company hallmark. Among the choreographer-collaborators creating multiple works on ASFB are Alejandro Cerrudo, Jorma Elo, Nicolo Fonte, Trey McIntyre, Moses Pendleton, and Cayetano Soto.



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

1st Flash

Choreography: Jorma Elo

Music: Jean Sibelius

Premiere: September 18, 2003, Nederlands Dans Theater

Specialized technical requirements:

Grey marley, haze, flat blackout

Run Time: 19 mins



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

Silent Ghost

ASFB Commissioned Work

Choreography: Alejandro Cerrudo

Music: Dustin Hamman, King Creosote & Jon Hopkins, Ólafur Arnalds, Nils Frahm

Premiere: July 10, 2015

Underwritten by: New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Specialized technical requirements:

4 moving lights with CMY color mixing, shutter capability, and zoom of at least 40deg (Martin Viper Performance or similar), heavy haze, blackout with openings at quarters and center

Run Time: 20 mins



PHOTO: SHAREN BRADFORD

The Heart(s)pace

ASFB Commissioned Work

Choreography: Nicolo Fonte

Music: Ezio Bosso

Premiere: February 14, 2014

Underwritten by: Kelli and Allen Questrom

Specialized technical requirements:

Grey marley, top and bottom pipe (1" and 1 1/2" interior diameter) at an overall length of 23'-6" each for a cyc sidewall (provided by ASFB). 6 of the 8 side booms (wings 2-4) to be at least 16' tall. Up to three flymen may be required depending on house labor rules.

Run Time: 24 mins



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

Little mortal jump

Choreography: Alejandro Cerrudo

Music: Various Artists

Premiere: March 15, 2012, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago

ASFB Premiere: July 2016

Specialized technical requirements:

Grey marley. Minimum performance space of 40' wide by 33' deep. Ability to open/lower orchestra pit. 2 spotlights. Set must travel via truck or freight shipment.

Run Time: 20 mins



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

Sleepless

Choreography: Jiří Kylián

Music: Dirk Haubrich, composition based on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Glass Harmonica + Quartet, Adagio K 617

Premiere: November 11, 2004, Nederlands Dans Theater II

ASFB Premiere: August 16, 2016 – First North American production.

Specialized technical requirements:

Grey marley. Load bearing grid with the ability to rig up to 10 chain motors. This will be used to construct the hanging wall and the German masking, provided by ASFB. Touring availability is limited due to cargo truck requirement.

Run Time: 26 mins



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

Huma Rojo

ASFB Commissioned Work

Choreography: Cayetano Soto

Music: Ray Barretto, Nat "King" Cole, Xavier Cugat and His Orchestra, Abbe Lane, Pérez Prado and His Orchestra

Premiere: February 13, 2016

Underwritten by: Grinspoon / Troderman family, in honor of Harold Grinspoon, and Jacob's Pillow Dance.

Specialized technical requirements:

Grey marley

Run Time: 18 mins



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

New Commission by Cherice Barton

Premiere: February 2017



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

New Commission by Fernando Melo

Premiere: July 2017

For further information regarding technical requirements for these pieces, as well as other general company information, please see our tech rider at www.aspensantafeballet.com



ASFB in Alejandro Cerrudo's *Little mortal jump*

PHOTO: ROSALE O'CONNOR

Fine Collectors:

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet Expands Its Sterling Repertoire in Year 20

by Matt de la Peña

Tom Mossbrucker recalls coming of age in New York City's West Village. Aspen Santa Fe Ballet's artistic director had just been promoted to principal dancer for the Joffrey Ballet when Robert Joffrey, then the company's leader, began seeking repertoire from the venerable Frederick Ashton—works that required dogged hours of rehearsal time. It turned out that Joffrey had the tougher task. Several overtures later, he was able to convince Ashton that his young, vivacious company had the right mix of balance and personality to reconstruct his artistic puzzles. Countless persuasive hours paid off, as Joffrey eventually acquired the largest collection of Ashton works outside of the Royal Ballet.

"Every hair had to be in place, everything had to be right," says Mossbrucker, who remembers a particular Ashton rehearsal in which Joffrey's demeanor was markedly different from the effusive charm that defined his leadership. "Everything rests on the shoulders of the artistic director. I remember seeing him and absorbing that sense of urgency."

Urgency is one of the qualities that has helped Mossbrucker and Aspen Santa Fe Ballet go from asking small favors to fielding groundbreaking opportunities over the last 20 years. After inviting a handful of close friends to create original work for ASFB back in the early days of its inception, the company has grown to feature more than 30 commissioned works and 47 acquisitions in two short decades. Since its founding in 1996, the company has re-staged pieces by the crème de la crème of living choreographers including William Forsythe, Jorma Elo, Twyla Tharp, and Jiří Kylián, among others. The list grows this summer when the company presents Kylián's *Sleepless* and Alejandro Cerrudo's *Little mortal jump*, both debut works for local audiences.

Acquiring existing works from established choreographers is nothing new for ASFB. Lesser known is the process that company directors, choreographers, and dancers endure to bring them to regional stages. Unlike a commissioned project, the task of staging a pre-existing work is like culling together an assortment of exquisite paintings—not everyone has the resources to get them. And like many collections, obtaining rare gems is not without obstacles: artistic licensing, choreographic approval,



ASFB in Jiří Kylián's *Sleepless*

PHOTO: ROSALE O'CONNOR

scheduling, and perhaps most importantly, whether it's the right fit for the dancers and the audience.

"A lot of times people tell us the works we perform look alike," explains Mossbrucker, noting that original projects tend to favor the sensibility of ASFB. One of the challenges of re-staging existing vocabulary is maintaining artistic integrity by staying true to the choreographer's original intentions, which, ironically, has greater potential for inspiring variety. When newly-appointed Alvin Ailey artistic director Robert Battle acquired Kylián's perennially popular *Petite Mort* in 2012 as part of a campaign to introduce Ailey patrons to new works by existing choreographers, the famously modern-based company was perceived as taking an artistic leap in favor of a style that some considered outside the Ailey brand. The bet paid off and *Petite Mort*—same steps and all—was seen in a fresh light.

Like Ailey, ASFB is giving its dancers (and its audience) an opportunity to expand their range while adding to the company's sprawling collection of prestigious titles, investing in works with marquee potential. "One of the things we try to do," Mossbrucker continues, "is differentiate ourselves by tackling works created on other companies, works that open up our repertoire and give us a chance to explore different possibilities."

In acquiring both *Sleepless* and *Little mortal jump*, Mossbrucker chose to rely on familiar sources: Kylián, whose repertoire has been featured in ASFB playbills (*Return to a Strange Land* and *Sechs Tanze*), and Cerrudo, a Mossbrucker favorite who has already produced two premieres for ASFB (*Last* and *Silent Ghost*). In *Sleepless*, a work for six dancers that Kylián has described as "moving—and being moved," the challenge will be to faithfully carry out the choreography with ASFB character. Cerrudo's *Little mortal jump*—a rich, enigmatic ensemble piece brimming with magical realism—will require ASFB to tap the wells of their thespian skills with no two actors (or dancers, in this case) being the same.

Adding yet another wrinkle to the fold, Cerrudo and Kylián (who no longer travels to re-stage his work) will be spending their days away from the studio, sending proxies to carry out their respective objectives. Enter

former Hubbard Street dancer Pablo Piantino and Kylián confidante Urtzi Aranburu, who describes the task of re-staging existing works as a matter of discipline and amendment.

"I believe when you work with a dancer, you are not only teaching steps. You also learn how to treat and deal with each person," says Aranburu, a former company member with Nederlands Dans Theater. "They, we, everybody is different. Some are faster, some slower, tough, fragile. All those things can surprise you and you have to learn to work with them. It's a very interesting process."

For his part, Aranburu says Kylián requires a company to meet certain technical conditions before acquiring his works. When a director gets an existing ballet from Jiří Kylián, adds Aranburu, "it's an achievement and a gift for the dancers, the company, and the audience."

That gift is part blessing and adventure, says Cerrudo, who remembers one instance in which he was forced to relay his choreographic observations via Skype. Even in situations where Cerrudo has been present, he notes, the key has been to strike a careful balance between what the original cast creates and how others dancers choose to interpret it.

"One of the main things you have to do as a choreographer is let go," Cerrudo says, now in his seventh season as Hubbard Street's resident choreographer. "I need to stay true to the essence of the steps, but be open to a new personality. It might bring something different that wasn't there originally. I don't put my choreography above all else."

Luckily, he declares, there's nothing unfamiliar about ASFB and its pedigree. The acclaimed choreographer is confident that both *Sleepless* and *Little mortal jump* are poised to be the newest crown jewels of an enviable collection of artistic gems.

"You know who the dancers are, you know how they work, what they're capable of," Cerrudo says. "It's just fun. You're going to see something with a different life, a different soul. And that's wonderful."

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

