

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

2018 / 2019 Touring Season



Aspen Santa Fe Ballet History



PHOTO: ROSALE O'CONNOR

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 seven 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 celebrated its 20th anniversary season in 2016.

New commissions

ASFB's mission places the 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 (four 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 over 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, ASFB has 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

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet enters its 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,

Now in its third decade, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet remains at the forefront of American dance because of your loyal support and partnership. We are grateful for the long history we have with so many of you, and we are excited to share all that lies ahead.

As we enter our 22nd season, we look forward to debuts in Victoria, British Columbia, and Carmel, Indiana; and return engagements in New Orleans, Germantown, and the newly-renamed Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts in Northridge, California.

With several new commissions and important acquisitions lined up, this year will be one of our most prolific seasons to date.

A dazzling collaboration with **acclaimed pianist Joyce Yang** spawned the development of an entire program performed to live accompaniment. This curated evening features Jiří Kylián's poetic *Return to a Strange Land* (danced en pointe), Nicolo Fonte's exhilarating *Where We Left Off*, and a brand-new commission by Boston Ballet's choreographer-in-residence, Jorma Elo. This program will be available for limited touring in the fall of 2018.

In addition, we are proud to announce the acquisition of **Alexander Ekman's *Tuplet***. A swift, pulsating, 18-minute, tour-de-force for six dancers, *Tuplet* utilizes a score created in collaboration with the dancer's own rhythmic impulses, employing their bodies as percussive instruments to explore the question: what is rhythm?

Joining a long list of choreographers discovered by Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, **newcomer Bryan Arias** will create his first work for ASFB. This innovative choreographer was recently awarded the prestigious Princess Grace Award for choreographic promise.

Cornerstone works remain available for touring, most notably the new blockbuster *Dream Play* by Fernando Melo. This poetic work, danced to the music of Erik Satie and Frédéric Chopin, is thrilling audiences with its unique shift of perspective and arresting visual images. Additional works available for the 2018-19 season showcase ASFB's illustrious roster of choreographers that includes Cherice Barton, Cayetano Soto, Alejandro Cerrudo, and others.

We thank you for embracing our forward-looking vision and bringing ASFB to your community. 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

Living Art: In the Studio with Choreographer Jorma Elo & Pianist Joyce Yang

by Jessica Cabe

When audiences settle into their seats for Aspen Santa Fe Ballet's 2018 winter season, they'll experience a first in the company's 21-year history: an entire evening performed to live piano music brought to life by world-renowned pianist Joyce Yang, a Van Cliburn International Piano Competition silver medalist and Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient.

While ASFB has occasionally hired a pianist when called for in past performances, there has not yet been a full evening of live music. ASFB Executive Director Jean-Philippe Malaty looks forward to this development: "This is the ideal condition, having a musician playing live. To have that collaboration and both arts being created at the same time, that's very inspiring."

What's more, the centerpiece of the program will be the premiere of a new ballet by renowned choreographer and ASFB regular Jorma Elo, who has collaborated with Yang on a new ballet set to Robert Schumann's *Carnaval*. In addition to the new work being choreographed by Elo, Yang will also play the music of Leoš Janáček for Jiří Kylián's *Return to a Strange Land* and Philip Glass in Nicolo Fonte's *Where We Left Off*.

The seeds of the Elo/Yang project were first planted about four years ago, when Yang saw ASFB perform at the Joyce Theatre in New York City. The performance inspired her to think about what a collaboration with dance might look like for her. "I've always imagined things when I practice and perform," says Yang. "It's all about colors and shapes, and when I realized that I can actually have that, not just in my imagination but happening before my eyes, it was like being able to see for the first time."

Yang approached Asadour Santourian, the Aspen Music Festival and School's (AMFS) vice president for artistic administration, about her idea of a dance collaboration. A former student of the AMFS and now a fixture of the summer festival, Santourian says she often uses him as a springboard for her ideas: "Joyce has a very active and curious imagination

about involving art forms and music. She came to me and said, 'I have this idea, but you're going to think I'm crazy.'"

Luckily, Santourian did not think she was crazy, instead encouraging Yang to pursue the idea. Yang reached out to John Mangum, president and artistic director of the Philharmonic Society of Orange County—the co-commissioning organization for the Yang/Elo project alongside the AMFS—where she is a frequent guest artist. Santourian also suggested that Mangum and Yang connect with ASFB, a company well-known for its risk-taking abilities. "It's been a really terrific partnership," Mangum says. "To have such generous, open, thoughtful partners who understand the dance world, the choreography, and the time that it takes to prepare the piece properly has been invaluable."

After solidifying the partnership with ASFB, it was now the responsibility of ASFB Artistic Director Tom Mossbrucker to match Yang with the right choreographer. "We wanted somebody who knows the company because, with the added element of live music, it could get complicated," Malaty says. "We also wanted to find a choreographer who really gets inspired by music, so Jorma Elo came to the top of our list."

Currently in residence at Boston Ballet, Elo is a much sought-after choreographer, creating works for major companies all over the world from New York City Ballet to the Bolshoi Ballet. Elo has a long history with ASFB, which boasts four Elo ballets in its repertoire.

Elo (himself a pianist) and Yang met each other for the first time at Steinway Hall in New York City and the two immediately clicked. Yang was intent on selecting a Schumann piece for the new ballet, so she came to the meeting prepared to play a variety of the composer's works and the two eventually agreed on *Carnaval*.

"*Carnaval* was the most challenging because it is the most segmented

and most temperamental," Yang says. "And somehow [Elo] said, 'Okay, let's go for the challenging one.'"

Elo credits Yang's energy and attitude with making him feel comfortable selecting a difficult piece of music: "There's madness in it and there's freedom for me as a choreographer to feel the music in the moment when I'm creating."

It's commonly thought amongst musicians that audiences don't often "get" Schumann because of how his music tends to pull in so many conflicting directions. Yang believed that having dancers perform to such a complex score would help translate the piece more clearly and let audiences in on Schumann's genius.

"Musicians are obsessed with Schumann because of his quirky nature and how he manages to link his multi-personality syndrome into a series of character pieces that actually end up working out musically," Yang explains. "So I thought, if this can be choreographed in a way that can reveal to people what we actually feel as musicians, I think audiences would really get a kick out of it."

Elo has taken this temperamental music and run with it. Some of the choreography is inspired literally by a carnival, but for the most part Elo has latched onto the idea of multiple personalities and conflicting emotions. "Split personalities and things that the composer was dealing with must cause tension and unpleasant feelings," says Elo. "What comes out of the contradiction of these moods? It becomes interesting for me to create; it's layering in a rich way."

Having the luxury of a pianist in the studio while the dance is being created—and a world-class virtuoso at that—brings a whole new energy to the process. Elo is able to ask Yang to hold chords a bit longer, create "hiccups" in the music, and make other slight alterations to accommodate the dancers. These little tweaks and adjustments have shed new light on the music for Yang, who says in many ways she feels she's only truly understanding the piece for the first time because of this experience.

It's not only Yang having a breakthrough in the studio: the dancers are loving it too. "The energy of the room is completely different," says dancer Evan Supple. "There are vibrations with a live musician that aren't there with a CD and a speaker. It also informs your musicality in a more visceral way, which translates noticeably into your movement."

Dancer Seia Rassenti-Watson notes that "Joyce's interpretation varies slightly every time she plays. As a dancer, you really have to be hyper-aware of how she is playing in each moment because it's never going to be the exact same—just like dance. It's exciting and nerve-racking, but I think the results will be magical. It's living art."

Elo can see the difference translated in the dancers' bodies when rehearsing to live versus recorded music. "Dancers are like animals; they don't react, really, to words," says Elo. "They react much more strongly to the musical vibrations that the instrument gives out than to me explaining complex vocabulary verbally. They feel it."

The Elo/Yang project will premiere in 2018:

- Aspen, CO - March 24
- Santa Fe, NM - March 31
- Irvine, CA - April 5
- Northridge, CA - April 7

It will also be performed as part of the AMFS's 2018 summer season.

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

2017/2018 WINTER TOUR DATES

October 28
 Germantown Performing
 Arts Center
 Germantown, TN

October 30
 UTC Fine Arts Center
 Chattanooga, TN

November 3
 The Tarkington at the Center for
 the Performing Arts
 Carmel, IN

November 10-11
 NOCCA
 New Orleans, LA

November 14
 Vernon and District Performing
 Arts Centre
 Vernon, BC, Canada

November 17-18
 Royal Theatre
 Victoria, BC, Canada

January 20
 Aspen District Theatre
 Aspen, CO

January 26-27
 Tulsa Performing Arts Center
 Tulsa, OK

March 24
 Aspen District Theatre
 Aspen, CO

March 28
 ENT Center for the Arts
 Colorado Springs, CO

March 31
 Lensic Performing Arts Center
 Santa Fe, NM

April 5
 Irvine Barclay Theater
 Orange County, CA

April 7
 Younes and Soraya Nazarian
 Center for the Performing Arts
 Northridge, CA



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

2018/2019 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: JORDAN CURET

Dream Play

ASFB Commissioned Work
 Choreography: Fernando Melo
 Music: Eric Satie
 Premiere: July 8, 2017
 Underwritten by: Kelley and Mark Purnell

Specialized technical requirements:

Black marley. Venue must be able to fly out an 11ft tall video screen. ASFB to provide projector, screen, video camera, and all required cabling. Touring availability is limited due to cargo truck requirement.
 Run Time: 21 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: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

Return to a Strange Land

Choreography: Jiří Kylián

Music: Leoš Janáček

Underwritten by: Sherry and Eddie Wachs

ASFB Premiere: February 15, 2013

"In the summer of 1973, the former director of the Stuttgart Ballet asked me to create a ballet in John Cranko's memory. The title is a contradiction. How can you return to a land where you have never been before? This ballet is about death and reincarnation: disappearance, reappearance, death and rebirth were its main sources of inspiration. At the end, the sensation is created that something abstract has taken life from inside the bodies. The return, full of yearning for the past, takes us to an apparently well-known place, to an unknown presence. Can it be the premonition of death?"

– Jiří Kylián

Specialized technical requirements:

Black marley, seamless bounce and cyc or RP, scrim

Run Time: 20 mins



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

Where We Left Off

ASFB Commissioned Work

Choreography: Nicolo Fonte

Music: Philip Glass

Underwritten by: Toby Devan Lewis

Premiere: February 11, 2011

Specialized technical requirements:

White cyc, black scrim, overhead and ground row cyc lights. ASFB will provide high-shine marley

Run Time: 23 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

Eudaemonia

ASFB Commissioned Work

Choreography: Cherice Barton

Music: Nick Cave & Warren Ellis, Jimmy Durante, Michael Jurin, Chronomad, Diana Kazakova, David Darling

Premiere: February 18, 2017

Underwritten by: Toni and James Kaplan and Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts

Specialized technical requirements:

Grey marley

Run Time: 22 mins



PHOTO: ROSALIE O'CONNOR

New commissioned work by Jorma Elo

Choreography: Jorma Elo

Music: Robert Schumann

Premiere: March 2018

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



PHOTO: JORDAN CURET



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Dream Play: Fernando Melo's Second Act

by Alexandra Villareal

Last year, when Emily Proctor and Anthony Tiedeman walked into the studio, they might have found assignments scrawled across the mirror. Charts made of patterns, numbers, and formulas signified complicated sequences that they had to construct and tear down with the precision of mad scientists stumbling across their own miracles of invention.

Despite their quantitative exactitude, Proctor and Tiedeman weren't mixing potions in test tubes or conceiving of the next Einstein-esque equation. Instead, they were translating barebones, mathematical etchings into something that resembled art.

"It is our job to remember dance phrases and sequences, but it took some time," Proctor said. In 10 years at Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, she had never experienced a choreographic process quite like the one Fernando Melo used to strategically unspool an image in *Re:play*.

After an acclaimed ASFB debut in February 2016, Melo returned to Aspen in July, 2017 to create *Dream Play*, a brand new premiere that "tricks the eye of the audience and invites the observer to experience a constant shift of perception," Melo said. Aided by video projections, he turned six company members into an illusion that challenges the bounds of reality.

In its early stages of conception, the newly commissioned piece had yet to adopt a concrete, stable form. Melo's choreographic method requires bodies and brains as engines for his ideas so he can see them propelled into action. Until he visited Aspen in June, he only had outlines of his final draft — mental bullet points that he then fleshed out into articulated poetry with the aid of dancer-muses.

Melo said that the success of his endeavor hinges on the company members' "generosity of spirit, open-mindedness, and commitment to the work" — qualities endemic to the "young versatile group of dancers" he discovered at ASFB, who look forward to a next test.

"Any chance to push yourself and push your boundaries of what you think dance should be — it's a great opportunity," Proctor said.

She and her colleague, Tiedeman, who both filled leading roles in *Re:play*,

spoke to the concentration that Melo's methodical approach requires. Proctor remembered the tediousness of memorizing 38 sequences that were assigned letters and numbers, conjoined like puzzle pieces in an eloquent final tableau that ignored the toil of its manipulators.

"It was complex, and then the finishing product looks, to the audience's eye, so simple," Tiedeman said.

He recalled how, even during tech rehearsals just before the show's opening, he and Proctor would hide notes and glance at cheat sheets in the wings. Their memories worked overtime and there was still the task of performing, of enveloping an audience with the kind of mystique that makes them want to watch.

"If you're not a hundred percent focused and if you don't have intention behind what you're doing...then it just loses its magic," Tiedeman said.

When Melo exhumes a new ballet from his mind's archive, he hopes to "stimulate [the public's] imagination and countless interpretations." For *Re:play*, Melo's goal reached beyond the proscenium seats encased in darkness and onto the stage, where Proctor devised her own narrative about who she was and what her movements meant. Even the most discreet motion — a few steps that collapsed into a kneel — had to have purpose.

"In this pedestrian, mathematical ballet, I came up with an idea for the role of it in a way that I hadn't done before, or had the opportunity to do before," Proctor said. "It really sharpened my focus."

As the dancers transcended the formulaic base on which *Re:play*'s choreography had been founded to develop their characters, they excavated Melo's immediate, universal message.

"There's a weird pedestrian, human aspect that he wanted us to embody, and that's what the physical challenge was — to not make it look like dance," Tiedeman said. "He wanted it to be a person reaching for another person."

Melo's work is not always so grounded in the everyday. From operas, to contemporary ballets, to pieces set in tennis shoes, he can run with nearly

any idea and put his stamp on it. He said that he wanted to challenge ASFB's dancers in a new way this time around, providing them with yet another frontier to explore.

"Every concept asks for a different kind of physical vocabulary," he said. "The range can be from extremely physical to completely static."

But though his oeuvre is diverse, it does have one unifying principle. A brain that employs equations to draw moving pictures like the ones that flashed in *Re:play* is one driven by structure. So that it looks like an art and not a science, this order can unravel, but it must exist in the first place.

"Choreography is, for me, about organization: organizing the bodies in space in an organized environment; organizing the stage elements — light, sound, energy, movement," Melo said.

"From my perspective, there is much more to dance as an art form than simply setting dance steps to a musical score," he added.

While Melo corresponded with Jerome Delbey to come up with costumes and collaborated with his assistants to hammer out his visions into physical realities, the dancers at ASFB had to wait until his arrival in June to learn what he had planned for them.

"Knowing that he always has these remarkable ideas brewing, I'm excited to see what the next challenge is going to be — because I know it's going to be a challenge," said Tiedeman.

Alexandra Villareal is a freelance writer and contributor to the Huffington Post

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET

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