

PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET

PETER BOAL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LORD, WHAT FOOLS THESE MORTALS BE!

“Mere mortals, yes – but seemingly touched by magic.” –Moirra Macdonald, *The Seattle Times*

PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET PRESENTS

A Midsummer Night's Dream

April 8-17, 2011

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
321 Mercer Street, Seattle Center

April 8-9 at 7:30 pm

April 14-16 at 7:30 pm

April 9 & 16 at 2:00 pm

April 17 at 1:00 pm

“A performance of rare virtues, and a company of rare abilities.” –Clement Crisp, *Financial Times (London)*

SEATTLE, WA - Pacific Northwest Ballet presents George Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* April 8-17 at McCaw Hall. A complete delight for all ages, this full-length ballet is based on William Shakespeare's comedy about the romantic adventures, quarrels and reunions of two pairs of mortal lovers and the king and queen of the fairies. George Balanchine's *Midsummer*, which New York City Ballet premiered in 1962, was the first original evening-length ballet he choreographed in America. Staged by PNB Founding Artistic Director Francia Russell, PNB's production is an enchanted landscape where misunderstandings and mayhem weave tangled paths through the opulent layers of Martin Pakledinaz's designs and Balanchine's marvelously crafted partnerings. All ends well in Act II's wedding festivities with the recognition of ideal love, tenderly portrayed in an exquisite *pas de deux*. Tickets to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* start at \$27 and may be purchased by calling the PNB Box Office at 206. 441.2424, online at pnb.org, or in person at the PNB Box Office at 301 Mercer Street.

“As a child, I remember sitting in the New York City Ballet's audience as George Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* cast its spell,” said Artistic Director Peter Boal. “PNB's signature production with its winning combination of Francia Russell, Martin Pakledinaz and our amazing dancers – not to mention Balanchine and William Shakespeare – promises to once again enchant audiences of all ages.”

PNB's new production premiered in Seattle in 1997 and toured to great acclaim at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1998. In 1999, PNB toured *Midsummer* to England, where the full-length

production was performed and filmed by the BBC in high-definition before a live audience at London's Sadler's Wells Theatre. The DVD is available through PNB's online gift shop at pnb.org/giftshop

PROGRAM NOTES

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Music: Felix Mendelssohn*

Choreography: George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust

Staging: Francia Russell

Scenic and Costume Design: Martin Pakledinaz

Lighting Design: Randall G. Chiarelli

Premiere: January 17, 1962; New York City Ballet

PNB Premiere: May 16, 1985; PNB's new production: May 27, 1997

Balanchine's fondness for Shakespeare's tale of love's delusions and mishaps dated from boyhood when he had performed as an elf in a St. Petersburg production of the play. As an adult he still remembered many lines (in Russian) and loved to quote them, especially those enchanting ones of Oberon that begin, "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows, / Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows ..." But Balanchine's desire to bring this favorite theater piece to the ballet stage waited more than 20 years for fulfillment while he searched for music with which to expand Mendelssohn's original score to suitable length.

Although Balanchine is famous for his rejection of the evening-long story ballet tradition that dominated the 19th century, he was not, in fact, opposed to story ballets per se, only to their excesses. In *Midsummer*, which dance writer Anita Finkel has called "possibly the greatest narrative ballet of all time," he demonstrated brilliantly that the pace of a story ballet can be fleet rather than ponderous, that mime can be delicate and to the point, and that the tale can be told almost entirely through dance.

Perhaps most inspired is Balanchine's sustained employment of ballet's central metaphor of love—the *pas de deux*—to embody the play's subtle insights into the many permutations of the love relationship. The cloying embraces of Hermia and Lysander, the distraught pleadings of Helena with Demetrius, the thrashing resistance of Hermia to Demetrius and of Helena to Lysander—all are distortions of the ideal partnership between lovers, traditionally conveyed by the ballerina and her cavalier. This human game of power is also played out in the fairy realm where, tellingly, the disputing spouses Titania and Oberon never dance together but instead perform self-celebratory solos for their admiring retinues. When Titania does condescend to take a partner, it is either the non-descript cavalier, who functions more as prop than peer, or, in the work's most charming episode, an artless ass. Only in Act II, which is pure dance, do the battles and imbalances, the self-indulgences and self-deceptions give way to a genuine dance partnership. In the magnificent *Divertissement pas de deux* which crowns the wedding festivities, competition has no place, and restraint, mutuality and trust define the mature ideal of love.

A Midsummer Night's Dream has been in Pacific Northwest Ballet's repertory since 1985. In 1997, with the approval of The George Balanchine Trust, PNB commissioned set and costume designer Martin Pakledinaz to re-design the entire production—a "first" for a Balanchine story ballet. Staged by PNB Founding Artistic Director Francia Russell, with every step, movement and gesture as Balanchine intended, this freshly-designed *Midsummer* brings the choreographer's dramatic ideas to life scenically as never before.

[Program Notes by Jeanie Thomas, 1997]

*Music details: Overture and incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 21 and 61, 1826, 1843; Overtures to *Athalie*, Op. 74, 1845; and *The Fair Melusine*, Op. 32, 1833; *The First Walpurgis Night*, Op. 60; *Symphony No. 9 for Strings* [first three movements], 1823; Overture to *Son and Stranger*, Op. 89, 1829

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, **George Balanchine** (1904-1983) is regarded as the foremost contemporary choreographer in the world of ballet. He came to the United States in late 1933, at the age of 29, accepting the invitation of the young American arts patron Lincoln Kirstein (1907-96), whose great passions included the dream of creating a ballet company in America. At Balanchine's behest, Kirstein was also prepared to support the formation of an American academy of ballet that would eventually rival the long-established schools of Europe.

This was the School of American Ballet, founded in 1934, the first product of the Balanchine-Kirstein collaboration. Several ballet companies directed by the two were created and dissolved in the years that followed, while Balanchine found other outlets for his choreography. Eventually, with a performance on October 11, 1948, the New York City Ballet was born. Balanchine served as its ballet master and principal choreographer from 1948 until his death in 1983.

Balanchine's more than 400 dance works include *Serenade* (1934), *Concerto Barocco* (1941), *Le Palais de Cristal*, later renamed *Symphony in C* (1947), *Orpheus* (1948), *The Nutcracker* (1954), *Agon* (1957), *Symphony in Three Movements* (1972), *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* (1972), *Vienna Waltzes* (1977), *Ballo della Regina* (1978), and *Mozartiana* (1981). His final ballet, a new version of Stravinsky's *Variations for Orchestra*, was created in 1982.

He also choreographed for films, operas, revues, and musicals. Among his best-known dances for the stage is *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, originally created for Broadway's *On Your Toes* (1936). The musical was later made into a movie.

A major artistic figure of the twentieth century, Balanchine revolutionized the look of classical ballet. Taking classicism as his base, he heightened, quickened, expanded, streamlined, and even inverted the fundamentals of the 400-year-old language of academic dance. This had an inestimable influence on the growth of dance in America. Although at first his style seemed particularly suited to the energy and speed of American dancers, especially those he trained, his ballets are now performed by all the major classical ballet companies throughout the world.

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Francia Russell served Pacific Northwest Ballet as Artistic Director and Director of the School from 1977 until her retirement in June, 2005. She is responsible for the addition to the Company's repertory of many works of George Balanchine. Born in Los Angeles, Ms. Russell grew up in San Francisco, London, Nice and New York. Her teachers included Felia Doubrovska, Antonina Tumkovsky, Vera Volkova, Robert Joffrey and George Balanchine. In 1956, Ms. Russell joined New York City Ballet, where she was promoted to soloist in 1959 and appointed Ballet Mistress in 1964. She was also a member of the faculty of the School of American Ballet and performed with Jerome Robbins' Ballets U.S.A. From 1975 to 1977, Ms. Russell and Kent Stowell were Co-Artistic Directors of Frankfurt Ballet. Ms. Russell was one of the first ballet masters chosen by George Balanchine to stage his works and has staged over one hundred productions of Balanchine ballets throughout North America and Europe. In 1987, she staged the first Balanchine ballet in the People's Republic of China for the Shanghai Ballet. During the 1988/89 season, she staged the historic first authorized performance of Balanchine's work in his homeland for the Kirov Ballet in St. Petersburg. Ms. Russell's numerous awards include the Washington State Governor's Arts Award, the Dance Magazine Award, an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Seattle University and the Brava Award from Women's University Club of Seattle. In 2004, Ms. Russell received the ArtsFund Lifetime Achievement in the Arts Award, the Seattle Mayor's Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement and the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award and was recognized by the King County Council for her

achievements in the arts. On June 12, 2010, Ms. Russell was awarded an honorary Doctor of Arts from the University of Washington.

Martin Pakledinaz is an award-winning costume designer for stage, television, and film. He won Tony Awards for *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and the 2000 revival of *Kiss Me Kate*, which also earned him the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Costume Design. His extensive Broadway credits include *Grease*, *The Pirate Queen*, *The Pajama Game*, *The Trip to Bountiful*, *Wonderful Town*, *The Boys From Syracuse*, *The Diary Of Anne Frank*, *A Year With Frog And Toad*, *The Life, Anna Christie*, *The Father*, *Golden Child*, and the current production of *Anything Goes*. His off-Broadway work includes *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Andrew Lippa's *The Wild Party*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, *Give Me Your Answer Do*, *Juvenalia*, *The Misanthrope*, Kevin Kline's *Hamlet*, *Twelve Dreams*, *Waste*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. He has designed for leading regional theaters in the United States and for the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden. His designs for opera include works at the New York Metropolitan Opera and the New York City Opera, as well as opera houses in Seattle, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Sante Fe, Houston, Toronto, Salzburg, Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, Helsinki, and Gothenburg, among others.

Mr. Pakledinaz's dance credits include a long collaboration with Mark Morris, and dances for such diverse choreographers as George Balanchine, Eliot Feld, Deborah Hay, Daniel Pelzig, Helgi Tomasson, and Lila York. Since designing the costumes for Kent Stowell's *Cinderella* in 1994, he has had an excellent creative relationship with Pacific Northwest Ballet. In 1995, he designed new costumes for Mr. Stowell's *Zirkus Weill*. In 1997, with the approval of The George Balanchine Trust, PNB commissioned Mr. Pakledinaz to re-design the entire production of George Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—a “first” for a Balanchine story ballet.

TICKETS & SHOWTIME INFORMATION

A Midsummer Night's Dream runs April 8-17 at McCaw Hall, 321 Mercer Street. Showtimes are 7:30 pm April 8, 9, 14, 15 and 16, with 2:00 pm matinees on April 9 and 16, and a 1:00 pm matinee on April 17.

Ticket (\$27 to \$165 in advance) may be purchased through the PNB Box Office:

- Phone: 206. 441.2424 (Mon.-Fri. 9am-6pm; Sat. 10am-5pm)
- In person: 301 Mercer St. (Mon.-Fri. 10am-6pm; Sat. 10am-5pm)
- Online: www.pnb.org (24/7)

Subject to availability, tickets are also available 90 minutes prior to each performance at McCaw Hall, located at 321 Mercer Street.

SPECIAL EVENTS & OFFERS

FUN FOR FAMILIES

Special activities for children and families – including crafts and dance classes – begin one hour before all matinee performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

STUDENT AND SENIOR RUSH TICKETS

Subject to availability, half-price rush tickets for students and senior citizens (65+) with valid ID may be purchased in-person, beginning 90 minutes prior to show time at the McCaw Hall box office.

\$15 TICKETS FOR AGE 25 & UNDER

Thursday and Friday performances: April 8, 14 and 15 at 7:30 pm

One ticket for \$15 or two for \$25 for patrons 25 years and younger! To purchase tickets, contact the PNB Box Office at 206.441.2424 or visit 301 Mercer Street. This offer is good for April 8, 14 and 15 performances only. Offer is subject to availability and not valid on previously purchased tickets. Each attendee must present valid I.D. upon ticket retrieval.

TEEN TIX

PNB is a proud participant of Seattle Center's **Teen Tix** program. Young people 13 to 19 years old can purchase tickets to PNB performances and other music, dance, theater, and arts events for only \$5. To join Teen Tix or view a list of participating organizations, visit Seattle Center's Teen Tix webpage at seattlecenter.com/teentix.

GROUP SALES

Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. For group tickets, please call 206.441.2416, email juliej@pnb.org or use PNB's Online Group Builder at pnb.org. (PNB's Online Group Builder is available for audience members to gather friends, family and co-workers to see any performance and save.)

FRIDAY PREVIEWS

Friday, April 1, 6:00 pm

The Phelps Center, 301 Mercer Street, Seattle

Join us for an hour-long dance preview led by Artistic Director Peter Boal and featuring PNB dancers performing excerpts from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. PNB Friday Previews offer an upbeat and up-close view of the Company preparing to put dance on stage. Tickets, \$10 each, may be purchased by calling the PNB Box Office at 206.441.2424, online at pnb.org, or in person at the PNB Box Office. (These events usually sell out in advance.) Friday Previews are sponsored by U.S. Bank.

CONVERSATIONS WITH PNB – FREE

Sunday, April 3, 2:00

Elliott Bay Book Company, 1521 10th Avenue on Capitol Hill, Seattle

PNB's Sunday afternoon series features an hour-long discussion about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with principal dancer Carrie Imler, soloist Benjamin Griffiths, and corps de ballet dancer Kiyon Gaines in the casual atmosphere of the Elliott Bay reading room. All *Conversations with PNB* are **FREE** of charge.

BALLET PREVIEW – FREE

Tuesday, April 5, 12:00 noon

Central Seattle Public Library, 1000 Fourth Avenue, Seattle

Join PNB for a free lunch-hour preview lecture at the Central Seattle Public Library. Education Programs Manager Doug Fullington will offer insights about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, complete with video excerpts. **FREE** of charge.

PNB LECTURE SERIES & DRESS REHEARSAL

Thursday, April 7

Lecture 6:00 pm, *Nesholm Family Lecture Hall at McCaw Hall*

Dress Rehearsal 7:00 pm, *McCaw Hall*

During the hour preceding the dress rehearsal Marjorie Thompson and Bruce Wells, former dancers with New York City Ballet and current PNB School faculty, will discuss working with Balanchine and their experiences with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Attend the lecture only or stay for the dress rehearsal. Tickets are \$12 for the lecture, or \$25 for the lecture and dress rehearsal. Tickets may be purchased by calling the PNB Box Office at 206.441.2424, online at pnb.org or in person at the PNB Box Office at 301 Mercer St. General admission seating is restricted and subject to availability.

PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES

Nesholm Family Lecture Hall at McCaw Hall

Join Education Programs Manager Doug Fullington for a 30-minute introduction to each performance, including discussions of choreography, music, history, design and the process of bringing ballet to the stage. One hour before performances. **FREE** for ticketholders.

POST-PERFORMANCE Q&A

Norcliffe Room at McCaw Hall

Skip the post-show traffic and enjoy a post-performance Q&A with Artistic Director Peter Boal and PNB dancers. Immediately following each performance. **FREE** for ticketholders.

LISTEN TO THE BALLET!

PNB partners with **98.1 Classical KING FM** to bring listeners some of the world's most popular ballet scores, featuring the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra direct from McCaw Hall. Tune in to **KING FM** for an opening weekend performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on Saturday, April 9 at 7:30 pm. Only on 98.1 fm or online at king.org/listen

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PNB's 1997 redesign of George Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was made possible by PONCHO, Susan & Jeffrey Brotman, Kreielsheimer Foundation, The Ackerley Group, The Allen Foundation for the Arts, SAFECO, Kayla Skinner, Mr. & Mrs. Roland M. Trafton, and Arlene A. Wright.

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Schedule and programming subject to change. For further information, please visit pnb.org.

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