

JOFFREY ★ BALLET

CHICAGO

ASHLEY WHEATER MBE
THE MARY B. GALVIN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

CELEBRATING
10 YEARS
OF MAGIC

THE
NUTCRACKER

DECEMBER 5-28 | 2025

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JOFFREY ★ BALLET

CHICAGO

ASHLEY WHEATER MBE
THE MARY B. GALVIN
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

GREG CAMERON
PRESIDENT
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JAMES D. MCDONOUGH
BOARD
CHAIR

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THE NUTCRACKER

2025–2026 SEASON

ASHLEY



Welcome to the tenth anniversary celebration of Christopher Wheeldon's magical retelling of this beloved story. It is hard to believe that ten years have passed since the creation of our *Nutcracker*. Since that time, this uniquely Chicago story has only grown deeper into the Joffrey's DNA. Many in our audience return year after year.

For all of us at the Joffrey, *Nutcracker* holds a very important place: bringing together our Company artists, Academy and Community Engagement students. As the world spins faster and faster, it is good to be reminded of the value of family and community. Beneath the towering structures of the Chicago World's Fair, we find a place to be inspired. Around a family table, we remember the joy of gathering with those we love.

We thank Christopher Wheeldon and his incredible team of talented artists. They created a *Nutcracker* with heart and magic! We are grateful to the fabulous Lyric Opera Orchestra, who bring Tchaikovsky's glorious score to its full realization.

In the spirit of the holidays, we hope you will embrace each other as family, and recognize the things we share as a part of this vibrant, dynamic community.

With thanks to each of you...Happy Holidays

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley".

Ashley Wheeler MBE
The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director
The Joffrey Ballet

JIM & GREG



Chicago has always been a city of wonder.

In 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition transformed the lakefront into a playground of innovation. Twenty-seven million visitors arrived in search of spectacle, and the city revealed itself as a place of possibility.

Among the fair's many marvels, a few humble delights made their debut: Cracker Jack, Juicy Fruit, and the first brownie — sweet ideas with staying power. More than a century later, Christopher Wheeldon tapped into that same spirit of imagination for *The Nutcracker*, inviting us to revisit the iconic era...with a hint of magic.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of this uniquely Chicago production, we partnered with Oberweis Dairy to introduce The Nutcracker Peppermint Swirl: a limited-edition ice cream served here at the Lyric Opera House, as well as Oberweis scoop shops and grocery retailers through December. A joyful nod to the fair's legacy of flavorful "firsts."

With gratitude to Oberweis and their talented team, who made this festive collaboration possible, and thank you to *The Nutcracker* Presenting Sponsor, Guarantee Trust Life Company, our Production Sponsors, and *The Nutcracker* Maintenance Fund Sponsors, whose support keeps our holiday classic shining bright.

Here's to the traditions that make our city, and the season, a little sweeter.

James

James D. McDonough
Board Chair
The Joffrey Ballet

Greg

Greg Cameron
President and CEO
The Joffrey Ballet

JOFFREY ★

FARISSA



Every artistic journey begins with a defining moment.

Mine was in New York, at my very first performance of *The Nutcracker*. I remember sitting in the audience as a young girl, swept up in the music, and realizing that creativity was part of who I am. In that instant, my world expanded.

I didn't grow up taking ballet classes or spending weekends at the theater, but as soon as I could create that opportunity for myself, I did. And like all things we love, that passion grew. First, it reached my children, who discovered ballet through the Joffrey's production of *The Nutcracker*. Then it extended to organizations like the Joffrey and its Women's Board, who broaden the pathways into dance.

For so many, *The Nutcracker* is an entry point. As President of the Joffrey Women's Board, I'm proud to help open that door even wider by welcoming new audiences, advancing arts education, and supporting Community Engagement initiatives that bring dance into schools and neighborhoods across Chicago.

I often think about the moment creativity found me, and how, each year, *The Nutcracker* taps someone new on the shoulder. The circle continues — one experience inspiring the next.

Thank you for helping us keep the magic within reach.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Farissa".

Farissa Knox
Women's Board President
The Joffrey Ballet

THE JOFFREY BALLET

ASHLEY WHEATER MBE
The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director

GREG CAMERON
President and CEO

JAMES D. MCDONOUGH
Board Chair

ROBERT JOFFREY
Founder

GERALD ARPINO
Founder

COMPANY ADMINISTRATION AND PRODUCTION STAFF

CODY CHEN
General Manager

CATHERINE EBY
Company Manager

AMANDA HEUERMANN
Stage Manager

CHRIS MARAVICH
Lighting Supervisor

EMMY MASTELLER
**Artistic Administrator and
Assistant to the Artistic Director**

KATHERINE SELIG
Principal Stage Manager

JOSHUA STENGER
Artistic and Production Fellow

SHANDEE VAUGHAN
Production Manager

SCOTT WOLFSON
Technical Supervisor

ARTISTIC AND MUSIC STAFF

NICOLAS BLANC
Rehearsal Director

ADAM BLYDE
Rehearsal Director

JORGE IVARS and
JARED WRIGHT
Company Pianists

CHRISTINE ROCAS
Rehearsal Director

SCOTT SPECK
**Music Director and
Principal Conductor**

Patrons are requested to turn off pagers, cellular phones, and signal watches during performances. The taking of photographs and the use of recording devices are not allowed in this auditorium. Program and artists subject to change.

ARTISTS OF THE COMPANY



Coco Alvarez-Mena
Miami, Florida



Amanda Assucena*
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Edson Barbosa
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Evan Boersma*
Chicago, Illinois



Dayla Bowman*
Youngtown, Australia



Anais Bueno
Córdoba, Mexico



Guillem Cabrera Espinach*
Manresa, Spain



Lucia Connolly
Los Angeles, California



Tenley Connors
Hutchinson, Kansas



José Pablo Castro Cuevas*
Queretaro, Mexico



Maxwell Dawe*
Dorset, United Kingdom



Anabelle de la Nuez
Cincinnati, Ohio



Jonathan Dole*
Sacramento, California



Derek Drilon*
Vancouver, Washington



Fernando Duarte*
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Olivia Duryea*
Haslett, Michigan



Stefan Gonçalves
São Paulo, Brazil



Dylan Gutierrez
Los Angeles, California



Reed Henry
Princeton, New Jersey



Dara Holmes*
Wilmington, North Carolina



Amanda Illuminati*
Monterrey, Mexico



Victoria Jaiani
Tbilisi, Rep. Of Georgia



Hansol Jeong
Namyangju, South Korea



Gayeon Jung
Seoul, South Korea

ARTISTS OF THE COMPANY



Yumi Kanazawa
Los Angeles, California



Blake Kessler
Jacksonville, Florida



Minjoo Kim
Incheon, South Korea



Seehyun Kim*
Siheung-si, South Korea



Hyuma Kiyosawa
Nagano, Japan



Nae Kojima*
Gold Coast, Australia



Laila Madison*
Los Angeles, California



Zachary Manske
St. Paul, Minnesota



Jeraldine Mendoza
San Francisco, California



Lindy Mesmer
Blacksburg, Virginia



Jackson Miles
Denver, Colorado



Valentino Moneglia Zamora*
Murcia, Spain



Xavier Núñez
Caguas, Puerto Rico



Davide Oldano*
Turin, Italy



Wictor Hugo Pedroso
Uberlândia, Brazil



Lauren Quinn*
Fort Wayne, Indiana



Paolo Randon
Valdagno, Italy



Scott Reed
Marietta, Georgia



Aaron Renteria
Corona, California



Basia Rhoden
Fresno, California



Julia Rust
Noblesville, Indiana



Natali Taht
Tallinn, Estonia



Alberto Velazquez
Havana, Cuba



Ao Wang
Beijing, China

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DANCERS, VISIT: [JOFFREY.ORG/ARTISTS](https://www.joffrey.org/artists)



CHILDREN'S CAST

GINGERBREAD CAST

Franz

Jaziel Peralta

Ragamuffins/Rats

Harlow Chatys
Cora Hakim
Erika Hasbun
Madeline Maine
Madeline Penkrot
Solomon Rosenthal

Worker Girls

Aracelie Aguilar
Lyla Sears
Kiara Szajda
Amaliah Guerrero
Ella Koenig
Elin Kranz

Teen Worker Girls

Emily Jakola
Emily Mraz

Soldier/Nutcracker

Violet Stach
Jordan Roloff
Ava Rosas
Sarelle Yang
Emmy Kao
Nina Madeja

Cavalry/Dragons

Isabelle Chen
Scarlett Slavik
Adeline Slavik
Hailey Ong

Walnuts

Aracelie Aguilar
Lyla Sears
Amaliah Guerrero
Kiara Szajda
Elin Kranz
Madeline Penkrot

Waves/Dragons

Emily Jakola
Emily Mraz

Junior Snowflakes

Mae Fuller
Amelia Slavik
Lula Beukenkamp
Brielle Ribble

Snowflakes

Alara Carter
Aurora Dobleman
Callen Hardy
Francesca Cardella
Bella Batista
Isadora Klonsky
Kamila Murillo
Brink Aufman
Olivia Maldonado
Doris Ruan
Elizabeth Asnis
Beatrice Kawashima

CANDY CANE CAST

Franz

Alan Ruesch

Ragamuffins/Rats

Lily Burch
Hiram Raigoza
Olivia Christopherson
Daisy Polo
Mairah Lopez
Jalissa Almonte

Worker Girls

Norah Cuevas
Mckenzie Martin
Delilah Gulbrandsen
Kaylie Yong
Lulu Verma
Mabel Baker

Teen Worker Girls

Gia Perona
Nanaka Wada

Soldier/Nutcracker

Lyla Foster
Madeleine Leonard
Josephine Wolski
Cadence Ostrowski
Olivia Torres
Alisha Hopkins

Cavalry/Dragons

Ruri Kishi
Maelyn Stoner
Ariana Monserrat Rivera
Sophia Sobek

Walnuts

Norah Cuevas
Mckenzie Martin
Kaylie Yong
Lulu Verma
Mabel Baker
Mairah Lopez

Waves/Dragons

Gia Perona
Nanaka Wada

Junior Snowflakes

Hailey Grace Ocampo
Tala Dresser
Coco Garcia
Camila Arellano

Snowflakes

Anne Bieselin
Greta Gonzalez
Victoria Wong
Ana Sofia Calucin
Caroline Roccasalva
DeJong Valerie Lin
Jimmy Gershenson
Mia Roman
Sofia Amara
Grace Rule
Adelina Amineva
Emma Didricksen



NUTCRACKER CHOIRS

Providence St. Mel Choir
Pro Musica Youth Chorus
Lincoln Park High School Chamber Singers
Voices in Your Head

Spirito Singers
The Madrigal Choir of Grace Episcopal Church (Oak Park)
Lake Forest Madrigals



KEEPING THE MAGIC ALIVE

CELEBRATING
10 YEARS
OF MAGIC

When Christopher Wheeldon's *Nutcracker* premiered in 2015, the atmosphere in the theater was electric. Set amid the grandeur of Chicago's 1893 World's Fair, this reimagined holiday classic quickly became the city's most cherished seasonal tradition. Now, ten years and more than 200 performances later, *The Nutcracker* remains a cornerstone of Chicago's cultural landscape and an incomparable work of art that continues to enchant audiences of all ages.

But even magic needs a little care.

To mark this milestone season, The Joffrey Ballet partnered with Scenic Studios for a meticulous restoration, an effort that honors Wheeldon's original vision while preserving the extraordinary craftsmanship that defines this production. Every enhancement was made with reverence for the past and an eye toward the future, ensuring that the brilliance of *The Nutcracker* continues to shine for generations.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY REFRESH

★ THE GOLDEN STATUE REBORN

The iconic World's Fair centerpiece gleams anew, fully transformed into a three-dimensional sculpture. Her radiant presence is made possible by a generous gift to *The Nutcracker* Maintenance Fund, given in memory of Richard H. Driehaus.

★ BATTLE SCENE PORTALS AND SET PIECES CRAFTED ANEW

The hand-painted portals and set pieces framing the epic Battle and Snow Scenes have been faithfully recreated, adding new vibrancy, dimension, and theatrical impact to Wheeldon's dreamlike world.

WITH GRATITUDE

Each revitalization breathes fresh life into this beloved production, rekindling the magic that has captivated Chicago since its premiere. We invite devoted audiences and newcomers alike to fall in love with the story, the city, and the timeless wonder of *The Nutcracker*.

Thank you to *The Nutcracker* Maintenance Fund Sponsors Anne L. Kaplan, Michael and Jennifer Larsen, A gift made in memory of the late Richard H. Driehaus, Daniel and Pamella DeVos Foundation, Roderick Branch, Jeffrey C. Rubenstein, Richard and Martha Melman Foundation, Patti S. Eylar and Charles R. Gardner, and Sandi and Barry Hartstein.



Artist Sarah Lewis sculpting the new Golden Statue. Photos by Carolyn McCabe.

NUTCRACKER BELIEVERS

The Nutcracker is, at its heart, a story of discovery and transformation. At The Joffrey Ballet, we choose to tell stories like *The Nutcracker* because we believe that stories connect us to our humanity and bring us closer together.

Ten years ago, over 100 people and organizations chose to believe with us, and contributed financially to make this production of *The Nutcracker* possible. On the 10th Anniversary of bringing Christopher Wheeldon's production to the stage, we renew our gratitude for their support and again share their stories.

CELEBRATING
10 YEARS
OF MAGIC



PRODUCING SPONSORS

★ MARGOT AND JOSEF LAKONISHOK



Margot and Josef Lakonishok became “believers” on a sunny day in Brooklyn at the studio of Julian Crouch, the scenic and costume designer for The Joffrey Ballet’s *Nutcracker*.

Margot and Josef Lakonishok became “believers” on a sunny day in Brooklyn at the studio of Julian Crouch, the scenic and costume designer for The Joffrey Ballet’s *Nutcracker*. The studio was alive with magical creatures, fantastic masks, and puppets of all sizes and shapes lining the walls and inhabiting the rafters in the ceiling. Margot’s eyes lit up and she began asking detailed questions. Shortly thereafter, Josef asked how they could help bring *The Nutcracker* to Chicago’s stage. The CEO of LSV Asset Management, Josef Lakonishok is a Trustee of the Chicago Symphony and Lyric Opera of Chicago, where he and Margot have underwritten numerous productions. At the Joffrey, the couple has supported full length story ballets through a major gift to the Rudolf Nureyev Fund and sponsorships of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Don Quixote*, *Anna Karenina*, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Cinderella*, *Sylvia*, *Swan Lake*,

and *La Bayadere*. Margot said, “Christopher Wheeldon’s creativity inspired our gift for *The Nutcracker* but it is Ashley Wheeler’s artistic leadership that has cemented our family’s commitment to the Joffrey.” Their son, Guy Lakonishok, serves on the Joffrey’s Board of Directors.

“As a family, we invest in the arts because it is necessary. These great arts organizations tell powerful stories and bring so much to our community. The Symphony, the Opera, the Ballet — have always been made possible through patronage. We feel a responsibility to do what we can to secure the future of the performing arts in Chicago.”
— Josef Lakonishok

The Joffrey Ballet extends tremendous gratitude to Margot, Josef, and the entire Lakonishok Family.

PRODUCING SPONSORS

★ THE SEARLE FUNDS AT THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST





For decades, the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust have made a significant impact on the cultural landscape in and around Chicago.

"We are pleased to support a great Chicago institution, the Joffrey Ballet. Through performance and education programming, the Joffrey's new production of *The Nutcracker* will impact thousands of young people, encouraging them to see the world as a place of possibilities," says Nydia Searle, consultant to the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust.

The Joffrey Ballet is honored and grateful for this generous support.



PRODUCING SPONSORS

★ HANCHER AUDITORIUM, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

For more than fifty years Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa has encouraged and supported The Joffrey Ballet by commissioning new works, providing much sought-after rehearsal space, and the financial resources to build the organization into the world-class company it is today.

On December 10, 1987, Robert Joffrey's *The Nutcracker* premiered on stage at Hancher Auditorium thanks to the generosity of the Iowa City community. Twenty-nine years later, the Joffrey's extended family in Iowa made possible another world premiere *Nutcracker* by Tony Award®-winning choreographer Christopher Wheeldon.

The Joffrey thanks Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa for their sustained partnership and generosity and looks forward to returning to Iowa City in March 2026 to perform.



NUTCRACKER SPONSORS



SANDY AND ROGER DEROMEDI

The Joffrey Ballet is often called the “Company of Firsts,” and Sandy and Roger Deromedi earned a similar premier distinction in May 2014 when they were the first donors to commit a leadership gift for the commission of a new *Nutcracker* for the Joffrey. Roger, a Joffrey Board Director since 2007, has been a thought leader in the Joffrey’s marketing and financial evolution. Sandy and Roger recognized early on that *The Nutcracker* was vital to the Joffrey’s fiscal health, and they were delighted to host the first fundraising event for the new production by Tony Award®-winning choreographer Christopher Wheeldon. “Giving to *The Nutcracker* not only satisfies our love of dance but also helps ensure the Joffrey’s future as a sustainable and relevant ballet company.” Since 2018, Sandy and Roger have also been major champions of Joffrey’s Live Music so that every performance is elevated by the beauty and power of a live orchestra.



MARY JO AND DOUG BASLER

When Mary Jo Basler first read the story Brian Selznick and Christopher Wheeldon dreamed of telling on stage through movement and music, she knew that the Basler and Masterson Families needed to be a part of the Joffrey’s reimagined *Nutcracker*. “As the daughter of an immigrant who grew up in Chicago surrounded by relatives, friends, and neighbors — an extended family of sorts — I felt a profound connection to this story and knew many others would feel the same.” Mary Jo, a Joffrey Director, has committed her life to bringing people together to build stronger communities. The Joffrey Ballet gratefully acknowledges Mary Jo and Doug for their generous support and for opening their home and hearts to the artistic team during the creation of this *Nutcracker* and throughout the years.





DANIEL AND PAMELLA DEVOS FOUNDATION

Pamella Roland DeVos, fashion designer, philanthropist, and Joffrey Director, fell in love with dance when she was a young girl in Western Michigan. Together with her husband Dan, they have supported organizations all over the country, providing resources for artists to create, perform, and entertain. Pamella and Dan decided to support the commission of a new *Nutcracker* because of the opportunities it would give to the young artists in the Grainger Academy and Company, and this year they made a commitment to reinvest in *The Nutcracker* to ensure the longevity of this holiday tradition. Pamella says she and Dan “are proud to support Ashley’s artistic vision for the Joffrey because we know he cares about the art form and the artists as much as we do.” The Joffrey salutes the DeVos Family for their generous support.



ROSEMARIE AND DEAN BUNTROCK

Rosemarie, a former Joffrey Director, and Dean have enthusiastically supported the Joffrey for over thirty years. When they learned there would be a new *Nutcracker* based in Chicago at the time of the 1893 World’s Fair and that Christopher Wheeldon would lead the creative team, Rosemarie and Dean knew they wanted to be a part of this special gift to Chicago. Dean, retired Chairman and CEO of Waste Management, Inc., commented “Chicago is a world-class city and it deserves a world-class dance company. The Joffrey has helped to put Chicago on the map as a cultural destination. We applaud Greg Cameron and Ashley Wheater for their leadership.”



SONIA FLORIAN (IN MEMORIAM)

Sonia Florian’s love of the performing arts was broad and deep. Ashley Wheater (pictured here with Sonia) marvels, “Sonia traveled far and wide to see dance, opera, and theater — she was one of the most fluent arts patrons I ever met because she made a point to see almost everything.” Sonia, a Joffrey Director from 2005 to the time of her death in September 2025, attended and supported the Joffrey for years. Thanks to her generosity each season, the company has developed into a world-class organization with extraordinary talent from fourteen countries. The Joffrey Ballet is immensely grateful for Sonia’s gift to support *The Nutcracker* — a production created to highlight the athleticism and musicality of the Joffrey dancers, and to introduce the next generation of audience members to the beauty of the performing arts.

NUTCRACKER SPONSORS



BILL AND ORLI STALEY (IN MEMORIAM) FOUNDATION

Orli and Bill Staley knew that Christopher Wheeldon's *Nutcracker* was going to be special before a step of choreography was created. As longtime Joffrey subscribers and production sponsors, they traveled to New York to see Wheeldon's *An American in Paris* on Broadway and returned inspired to make a gift supporting the commission. Orli once shared, "The Joffrey's productions are thrilling. I am taken to another place, totally swept up in the movement and music. We are happy to support the new *Nutcracker* so that others can experience that magical feeling." The Joffrey honors the Staley's sustained enthusiasm and support, and celebrates Orli's enduring legacy within Chicago's artistic community.



THE WALTER E. HELLER FOUNDATION

The Walter E. Heller Foundation, under the leadership of the late M. Catherine Ryan, was a consummate patron of arts and culture in the City of Chicago, making gifts to support artists in every discipline. When Cathie learned of the plans to create a *Nutcracker* for Chicago's families she was pleased to advocate for it, remarking, "like the Foundation, the Joffrey has embraced the Chicago community and is constantly striving to move the art form and the city forward. The Walter E. Heller Foundation's gift to support *The Nutcracker* is a gift to the people of Chicago, in loving memory of Alyce H. DeCosta" (pictured at left).





BETTE CERF HILL AND BRUCE SAGAN (IN MEMORIAM)

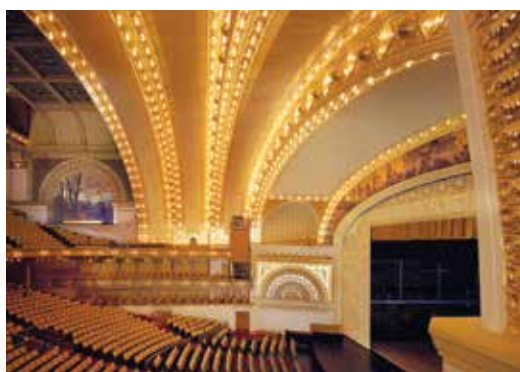
Bruce Sagan once reflected, *"The Joffrey has been one of my great loves since we first presented them at the Harper Theater in Hyde Park in 1965, and it is a thrill to see how much the company has grown under Ashley's artistic leadership."*

The Joffrey is deeply grateful to Bette Cerf Hill and the late Bruce Sagan for a lifetime of generosity and vision. Their investment has made possible Christopher Wheeldon's *Nutcracker* and countless other commissions, but their true legacy lives in their decades of bold leadership — on the Joffrey's Board and across Chicago's cultural landscape. Their commitment helped shape the Joffrey into the organization it is today, and continues through Bette's steadfast support.



WOMEN'S BOARD OF THE JOFFREY BALLET

Costumes for ballet require an intuitive understanding of movement and balance, and preserving their functionality has been a pressing concern for the civic leaders on the Women's Board of The Joffrey Ballet. To safeguard the visual longevity of the production, they collectively supported the "Women's Board *Nutcracker* Costume Initiative" to maintain, clean, and repair the nearly 250 costumes for their lifetime. Patti Eylar, Past Women's Board President, can attest to the power of a well-designed costume, "all dancers have active relationships, strong ideas, and long memories about what they wear. The incredible construction and breathtaking beauty of a costume is significant." The Joffrey is thrilled the Women's Board collectively recognizes and supports the beauty in the small details.



AUDITORIUM THEATRE OF ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

Christopher Wheeldon's *Nutcracker* celebrates the history of Chicago and as one of the city's cultural treasures, the Auditorium Theatre, with its stunning architecture and own storied history, was perfectly suited to host the highly anticipated world premiere in December 2016. Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, innovators in architecture, created a magnificent theater for the people of Chicago. The Joffrey Ballet renews its gratitude to the Auditorium Theatre for supporting the creation of Christopher Wheeldon's *Nutcracker*, a story about and for the people of Chicago.



NUTCRACKER SPONSORS



GUARANTEE TRUST LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

Rick Holson follows his grandfather and father as the third Holson to serve as President and Chairman of Guarantee Trust Life Insurance Company — a 90-year-old Chicago-based company. The key to the company's success, Holson says, "It's all about people...some things are just not that complicated once you get the right people in the right spot." Rick, a Joffrey Director, shared he "feels most fortunate to have been introduced to the Joffrey just as talent, passion, and leadership have converged to create something very special." Guarantee Trust Life's gift to support the creation of a new *Nutcracker* was, and continues to be, a source of pride for its employees. Holson added, "we all feel fortunate that the company is in a position to support such a great cultural institution in our city. This *Nutcracker* is for everyone." The Joffrey Ballet salutes Rick and Guarantee Trust Life for their investment ten years ago and continued support of the production as its annual Presenting Sponsor.



BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF ILLINOIS

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) is committed to the health and well-being of children and families across the state. Through its Healthy Kids, Healthy Families® initiative in 2016, BCBSIL supported programming in the areas of safe environments, nutrition, physical activity, and disease prevention and management. As part of this initiative, BCBSIL was pleased to support providing access to performing arts and arts education as studies have demonstrated the physical and mental well-being benefits of participation and exposure to performing arts. The Joffrey shares BCBSIL's commitment to making Chicago and beyond a better place.



GALLAGHER

Creating a new and reimagined production like *The Nutcracker* required a stellar artistic and production team. The Joffrey was grateful to have sponsors that understand the importance of taking good care of employees. The Joffrey Ballet thanks our sponsors for sharing our passion for teamwork, quality, and innovation. Patrick M. Gallagher, Joffrey Board Director and Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Gallagher shared, "we are proud to celebrate and promote Joffrey, an artistic leader in the Chicago community."

The Joffrey is also grateful for the commissioning support provided by BrickStreet Insurance, now known as Encova Insurance.



CONAGRA BRANDS

Conagra Brands combines a 100-year history of making quality food with agility and a relentless focus on collaboration and innovation. Robert J. Rizzo, Conagra Brands Senior Director of Community Investment, said “Conagra Brands appreciates the bold approach that The Joffrey Ballet took in completely reimagining *The Nutcracker*. We congratulate the Joffrey for ten years of performances of this uniquely Chicago production, brought to life by Christopher Wheeldon and an impressive and innovative design team which set it at the construction of the 1893 World’s Fair.” The Joffrey is pleased to partner with Conagra Brands and applauds its support of Chicago’s strong and vibrant cultural community.

The Joffrey Ballet is grateful to the following donors for their gifts to support the creation of Christopher Wheeldon’s *Nutcracker*.

This project was partially supported by IncentOvate grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.



Additional support provided by

The Ann Barzel & Patrick Henry Arts Fund
Francis Beidler Foundation
Meta S. and Ronald Berger Family Foundation with Rebecca and Jonathan Berger
Joyce and Bruce† Chelberg
Terri and Alfred D’Ancona
Mr. and Mrs. Adam DeWitt
Dr. Jill S. Dodds and Dr. Guriqbal Nandra
Patti S. Eylar and Charles R. Gardner
Ethel and William† Gofen
Suzanne and Albert M. Friedman
Jill Garling and Thomas Wilson
Sabrina and Antonio Gracias
Harris Family Foundation
Sandi and Barry Hartstein
Mr. and Mrs. David H. Hoffmann
Mary Ittelson
Nancy and Sanford† Koltun
Make It Better Media
Coco B. Meers and Ethan Meers
Martha and Rich Melman
Ann and Tom Nash
National Endowment for the Arts
Polk Bros. Foundation
Prince Charitable Trusts
Charles and Joann Raymond
Ms. Courtney C. Shea
Leslie and Robert K. Zentner



† Deceased

THE NUTCRACKER

Casting details
for performances of
The Nutcracker can be
found online at
joffrey.org/nutcrackercast

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT BY LYRIC OPERA ORCHESTRA

The Nutcracker by Christopher Wheeldon

Music Director and Principal Conductor
SCOTT SPECK

Guest Conductors
ROBERT MCCONNELL and TARA SIMONCIC

Choreography © by
CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON

Music by PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Act I Party Scene Music Arranged by LJOVA

Story by BRIAN SELZNICK

Staged by NICOLAS BLANC, ADAM BLYDE,
and CHRISTINE ROCAS

Set, Costume and Mask Design by JULIAN CROUCH

Lighting Design by NATASHA KATZ

Puppetry Design by BASIL TWIST

Puppetry and Effects Construction by
BASIL TWIST and TANDEM OTTER PRODUCTIONS

Projection Design by 59 PRODUCTIONS

Children's Cast Rehearsal Directors
ADAM BLYDE, AMY GIANCARLO,
SUZANNE LOPEZ, and CHRISTINE ROCAS

Associate Scenic Design by FRANK MCCULLOUGH

Assistant Lighting Design by JON GOLDMAN

Lighting Recreation by CHRIS MARAVICH

Projection Programming by TROY FUJIMURA

Nutcracker Maintenance Project Management by
DONNA BACHMAN

World Premiere
The Joffrey Ballet, December 10, 2016, Auditorium Theatre, Chicago, IL

RUN TIME
2 HOURS INCLUDING A 20-MINUTE INTERMISSION





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SYNOPSIS

THE NUTCRACKER

ACT I

It is Christmas Eve in Chicago, 1892. Workers from around the world are constructing the World's Columbian Exposition, which will open in five months. Marie, the daughter of one of the workers, encounters a gang of boys on the construction site who show off things they've stolen. Marie's younger brother Franz steals a small red bundle from a rich boy's sled, and a Rat Catcher terrifies Franz.

Marie and Franz return to their home, a little shack where their widowed mother, a sculptress, is creating a great golden statue which will preside over the fair.

Workers from the fair and their families soon arrive at the shack with decorations, a small tree, and much food and drink. A wonderful Christmas party begins.

The man who has designed and created the World's Fair, a mysterious figure known as The Great Impresario, surprises everyone and shows up along with his apprentice (the rich boy from whom Franz stole the red bundle earlier). The Great Impresario entertains the workers with an enchanting vision of his fair.

He distributes gifts for everyone, but one is missing. Franz realizes it's the red bundle he'd stolen. The Great Impresario produces it like a magic trick and gives it to Marie. She unwraps it and discovers a beautiful nutcracker inside. Just then, the Rat Catcher frightens Franz, who drops the nutcracker, breaking it. The Great Impresario swiftly fixes it, but the party is now winding to a close, and soon, everyone leaves.

That night, something very strange happens. Marie awakens and is shocked to see rats kidnap Franz! The Great Impresario returns, and with a wave of his hand, the little tree from the party grows until it seems to have taken over the entire world. The Nutcracker, now life-size and alive, appears from within its branches. The Rat King leads a battle against the Nutcracker. Marie distracts the Rat King and the Nutcracker kills him.

Franz is rescued, and the rats carry off their king, vowing revenge. The Nutcracker is transformed into Prince Peter. It begins to snow. A magical gondola comes to take The Great Impresario, the Prince, and Marie off into the night.

ACT II

The gondola delivers The Great Impresario, the Prince, and Marie to the edge of a lake, where they are greeted by the Queen of the Fair, a vision in gold. The Queen grants them a visit to the Dream Fair. They move from pavilion to pavilion, where countries from around the world are represented. Soon, The Great Impresario and the Queen of the Fair have fallen in love, which causes the Dream Fair to explode with light.

Marie wakes up from her dazzling dream. It is Christmas Day.



BALLET NOTES

THE NUTCRACKER

Christopher Wheeldon's *Nutcracker* was conceived specifically for the great city of Chicago. When asked by The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director Ashley Wheater to create a new version of the ballet, they agreed it needed to be set in Chicago, home to the Joffrey since 1995. Re-imagining a story as classic as *The Nutcracker* is always a challenge, but one Wheeldon was eager to take on. Tchaikovsky's beloved score conjures unforgettable images in our minds, and it is almost impossible to imagine a *Nutcracker* without a magical growing Christmas tree or a battle between toys and mice, but Wheeldon knew immediately there was room for his imagination to take over.

The decision was quickly made to place the ballet within the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, which has taken on new life in popular culture as the subject of Eric Larson's brilliant book *The Devil in the White City*. This mysterious, dark and magical moment in Chicago's history seemed the perfect time and place to re-invent *The Nutcracker*, even though the fair only ran from May 1st to October 30th, 1893, which means it had closed by Christmastime. We realized it would be thrilling to set the ballet five months *before* the fair opened, in the winter of 1892, when the fairgrounds were still under construction.

A historic image of a shack on the construction site became central to our new story, and you will see a version of it on stage in the ballet. This photograph also perfectly supported Wheeldon's wish to bring in a new socio-economic plotline for *The Nutcracker*. Instead of the central family being wealthy and privileged, our heroine, Marie, is from a working class, immigrant family. She lives with her younger brother and her widowed mother, a sculptress working on the golden Statue of the Republic. Instead of receiving luxurious and rare presents at a magnificent party in a vast house and then dreaming of even more presents and candy, our story offers a small gathering of immigrant workers coming together to celebrate the holiday with the things they have, filling the air with music and their vivid imaginations. Then, once Marie falls asleep in her shack, she dreams of what the fair will look like when it opens. The fair itself was a kind of dream city, a vision of what could happen when the whole world comes together to show the best side of humanity in all its glorious ingenuity. So Marie's dream coming five months before the fair opens becomes a kind of dream within a dream, which has real consequences for Marie once she wakes up.

For anyone who has visited Epcot Center in Florida, the idea of a World's Fair will be familiar. Countries from around the world set up vast pavilions to celebrate their native foods, arts and sciences. This provides the perfect setting for Marie's journey in Act II as she travels throughout the Dream Fair, which depicts actual pavilions from the fair including Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

The chief architect of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 was a man named Daniel Burnham, and he provided inspiration for the character of The Great Impresario. He is mysterious and magical (like Drosselmeyer in the original), and he not only serves as the imaginative force behind our version of the fair, but also comes to play a real role in Marie's life.

It is this transformation of Marie's life that ultimately became what was most important to this new version of *The Nutcracker*. While being respectful of the source material, we hope that Marie's dream journey through the World's Fair will illuminate what is special about all holiday stories... the value of love, the need for hope and the comfort of family, no matter where you are from, or what type of family you have.

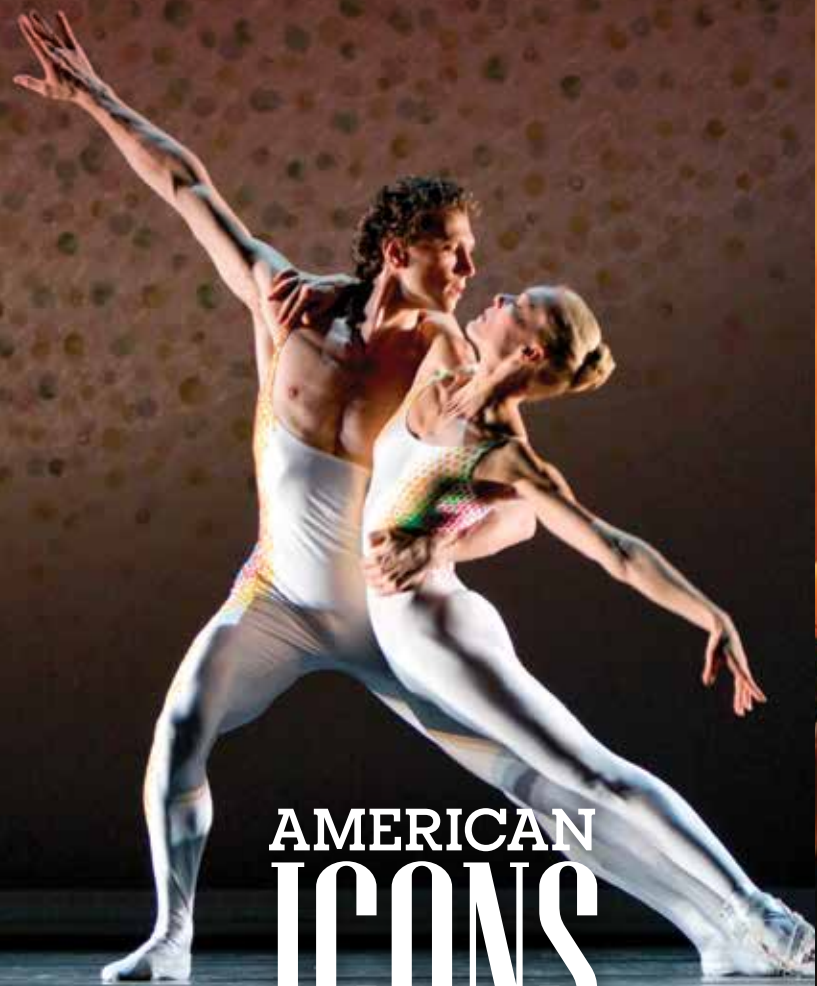
This seems like a dream worth remembering.

— Brian Selznick, Author

JOFFREY ★ BALLET

CHICAGO

ASHLEY WHEATER MBE
THE MARY B. GALVIN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

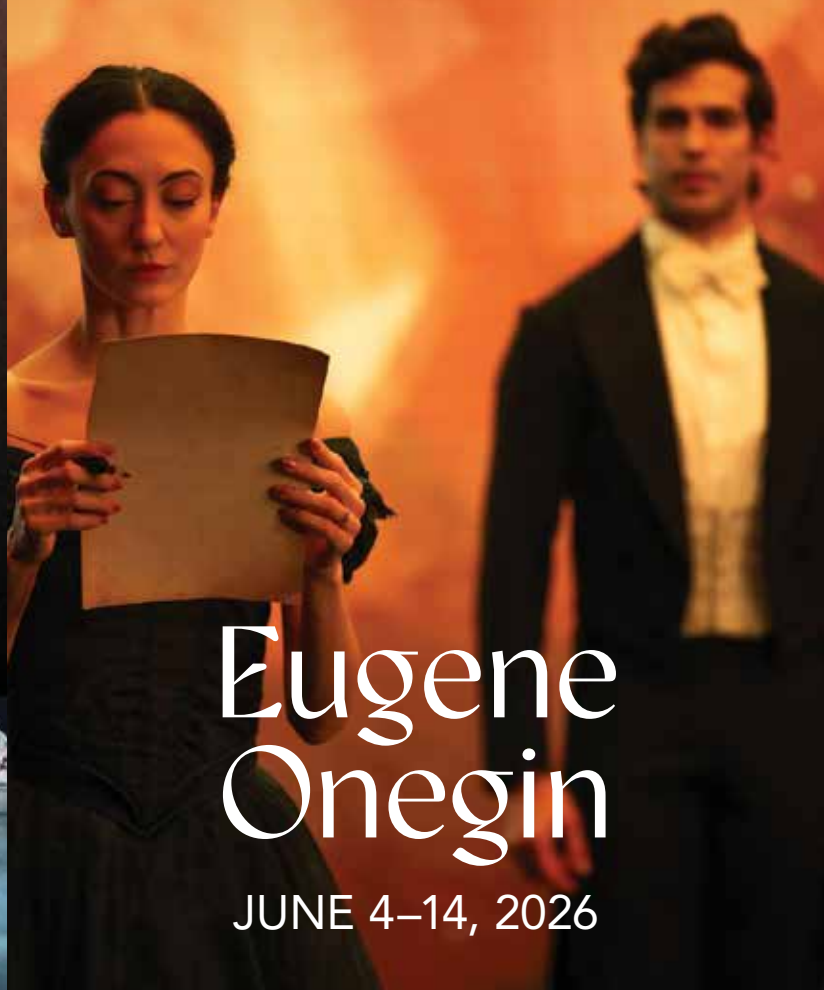


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JOFFREY ★ BALLET

CHICAGO

ASHLEY WHEATER MBE
THE MARY B. GALVIN
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

GREG CAMERON
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This winter, The Joffrey Ballet invites you to **bring the magic to life!** *The Nutcracker* is a cherished holiday tradition that sparks joy and delight in audiences of all ages.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Christopher Wheeldon's Chicago-inspired production, we're refreshing costumes, set pieces, and special effects to make the magic even more dazzling. **With your support, every child, family, and first-time attendee can experience the full enchantment.**

Your gift to the Annual Campaign helps create a world of wonder, where snowflakes dance, dreams come alive, and the magic of the season shines. **Donate by December 31 for a chance to receive a special piece of *The Nutcracker* magic!**

Warmest wishes for a joyful season,



Ashley Wheeler MBE
The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director



Greg Cameron
President and CEO

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Ashley Wheeler MBE, The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director
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Joffrey Artist Laila Madison. Photo by Evan Jenkins.

BIOS



ASHLEY WHEATER MBE The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director

Ashley Wheeler has dedicated his life to dance. He was born in Scotland and trained at The Royal Ballet School in England. He worked with Frederick Ashton, Kenneth MacMillan, and Michael Somes in numerous ballets at Covent Garden, including *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle*, *Manon*, *Anastacia*, and *The Dream*. Wheeler danced with Rudolf Nureyev in *Nureyev and Friends* at the London Coliseum.

On Nureyev's advice, Wheeler joined the London Festival Ballet and danced in his *Romeo and Juliet* and *Sleeping Beauty*. He danced in Glen Tetley's *Sphinx and Greening* and in Festival Ballet's large repertoire of classics and new creations. Under the artistic direction of John Field, he was promoted to Principal Dancer at the age of 20.

In 1982, he joined the Australian Ballet where he continued dancing principal roles in both classical and contemporary work, especially in the John Cranko full-length ballets.

In 1985, at the invitation of Gerald Arpino, Wheeler joined The Joffrey Ballet. For the next four years, he performed various works by American choreographers including William Forsythe, Gerald Arpino, Mark Morris, Paul Taylor, and Laura Dean, as well as repertoire by Ashton and Cranko.

Joining the San Francisco Ballet in 1989, he continued his creative career working under Helgi Tomasson, and with choreographers James Kudelka, David Bintley, and many more. In 1997, he retired from dancing and was appointed Ballet Master and, later, Assistant to the Artistic Director at the San Francisco Ballet.

Since his appointment in 2007 as artistic director of The Joffrey Ballet, his passion and commitment to the Joffrey have been evident in the quality that he has brought to the dancing and to the repertoire. He has invited world-renowned choreographers, as well as fresh young talent, to create new work for the company. Wheeler has added new full-length works to the Joffrey's repertoire, including Lar Lubovitch's groundbreaking *Othello*, Ronald Hynd's *The Merry Widow*, and Yuri Possokhov's *Don Quixote*.

In 2008, Wheeler was the recipient of the Boeing Game-Changer Award in recognition of his commitment to community engagement in Chicago and to the celebration of diversity through dance. He sits on the Advisory Board for *Dance Magazine*, serves as the Artistic Advisor for ChiArts, and is the Advisor to the Arts for the Lincoln Academy of Illinois. In 2010, Wheeler, representing The Joffrey Ballet, was named Lincoln Academy Laureate, the highest honor presented by the State of Illinois, and in 2013 the *Chicago Tribune* named him "Chicagoan of the Year." In 2015, Wheeler received the University of Chicago Rosenberger Medal for Outstanding Achievement in the Creative and Performing Arts. In December 2019, he was appointed to be a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

BIOS



GREG CAMERON President and Chief Executive Officer

Driven by his lifelong love for the arts, for his hometown, and for connecting with people from every background, Greg Cameron leads The Joffrey Ballet as President & CEO, responsible for organization-wide administration and strategy. Under Greg's partnership with The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director Ashley Wheeler MBE, the Joffrey has set new records at the box office and built the strongest financial foundation in its history.

His 2013 appointment was the culmination of three decades of work in arts administration and philanthropy. "I always loved art, but I wasn't a great artist," he says. "I could paint by numbers, or I could connect the dots. I realized early on I was a good dot connector. I could connect people to each other and help them get involved with the things they believe in."

As a child in suburban Chicago, Greg ran a makeshift theater out of his garage and sold more mints than anyone else for his local YMCA. And as an adult, he turned those passions into a career raising funds for the cultural organizations he loves. At the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art, where he rose to the role of Deputy Director and Chief Development Officer; and WTTW/WFMT, where he served as COO, Greg dedicated himself to supporting art and artists and to creating meaningful experiences for others.

"The Joffrey brings it all together for me," he says. "It's about collaboration, partnership with the community, honoring and supporting artists, and telling stories that truly move people."

Today, Greg leads the Joffrey's efforts to support unforgettable productions and new commissions, reach out to organizations and communities across Chicago, and open up world-class ballet for audiences from all backgrounds. Throughout the span of his 40-year career as an arts administrator in Chicago, Greg has volunteered for a wide range of nonprofit organizations and civic committees. He currently serves on the Facing History and Ourselves Chicago Advisory Board and the State Street SSA Commission. Greg was recently honored by the Association of Fundraising Professionals Chicago Chapter with their Benjamin Franklin Award, in recognition of the significant achievements throughout his long career, serving as a role model for his profession.

BIOS



SCOTT SPECK Music Director & Principal Conductor

With recent performances in London, Paris, Moscow, Beijing, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Washington, Scott Speck has inspired international acclaim as a conductor of passion, intelligence and winning personality.

Scott Speck is one of the most active conductors on Chicago's cultural scene. In addition to his many Joffrey performances, he is Artistic Director of the Chicago Philharmonic, and he has become a frequent guest for the Chicago Symphony's family concerts. He is currently the Illinois Council of Orchestras' Conductor of the Year.

Speck's concerts with the Moscow RTV Symphony Orchestra in Tchaikovsky Hall garnered unanimous praise. His gala performances with Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Renée Fleming, Midori, Evelyn Glennie, and Olga Kern have highlighted his recent seasons as Music Director of the Mobile Symphony. He has collaborated with Carnegie Hall as Music Director of the West Michigan Symphony. He was invited to the White House as former Music Director of The Washington Ballet.

In recent seasons, Speck has conducted at London's Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, New York's Lincoln Center, Washington's Kennedy Center, Chicago's Lyric Opera House, San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House, and the Los Angeles Music Center. He has led numerous performances with the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Houston, Chicago, Paris, Moscow, Shanghai, Beijing, Vancouver, Romania, and Slovakia, among many others.

Previously, he held positions as Conductor of the San Francisco Ballet; Music Advisor and Conductor of the Honolulu Symphony; and Associate Conductor of the Los Angeles Opera. During a tour of Asia, he was named Principal Guest Conductor of the China Film Philharmonic in Beijing.

Speck is the co-author of two of the world's best-selling books on classical music for a popular audience, *Classical Music for Dummies* and *Opera for Dummies*. These books have received stellar reviews in the international press and have garnered enthusiastic endorsements from major American orchestras. They have been translated into twenty languages and are available around the world. His third book in the series, *Ballet for Dummies*, was released to great acclaim as well.

Speck has been a regular commentator on National Public Radio, the BBC, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and Voice of Russia, broadcast throughout the world. His writing has been featured in numerous magazines and journals.

Born in Boston, Speck graduated *summa cum laude* from Yale University. There he founded and directed the Berkeley Chamber Orchestra, which continues to perform to this day. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Berlin, received his Master's Degree with highest honors from the University of Southern California, served as a Conducting Fellow at the Aspen School of Music, and studied at the Tanglewood Music Center.

Scott Speck can be reached at scottspeck.org, and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @ScottSpeckMusic.

BIOS



ROBERT MCCONNELL Guest Conductor

Robert McConnell has built a dynamic career as a conductor, composer, and organist, and is thrilled to return to the Joffrey Ballet as a guest conductor for Christopher Wheeldon and Joby Talbot's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. McConnell has previously appeared with the Joffrey as a guest conductor for Cathy Marston and Laura Rossi's *Atonement* (2024), Cathy Marston and Philip Feeney's *Jane Eyre* (2019), and Christopher Wheeldon's *Nutcracker* (2016–19). McConnell has conducted Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* with the Peoria Ballet, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Calyx Vocal Ensemble, the *St. John Passion* with the Oregon Bach Festival, and has appeared as a guest conductor with Lyric Opera of Chicago's Opera in the Neighborhoods Program, Door County's Peninsula Music Festival, the Skokie Valley Symphony, the DePaul School of Music Opera Theater, and the Northwestern Opera Theater.

BIOS



TARA SIMONCIC Guest Conductor

Groundbreaking conductor, Tara Simoncic, was the first woman to conduct the prestigious American Ballet Theatre in the company's 85-year history. She is known for her unique connection with musicians and audience members, bringing passion, warmth, and clarity to every performance. A recent review from La Jornada stated, "Tara Simoncic rose to greatness on the podium. She demonstrated why she is one of the most sought-after orchestral conductors of her generation." Comfortable in all genres, she works with prominent ballet and opera companies and symphony orchestras worldwide.

Ms. Simoncic is one of the top ballet conductors regularly appearing with the world's most renowned companies. In 2016, she made her debut with the New York City Ballet conducting Balanchine's *Nutcracker*. Since then, she stepped in at the last minute to conduct the world premiere of *Standard Deviation* at Lincoln Center in 2023. She also toured twice with the NYC Ballet to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Last season, she conducted performances of *The Four Temperaments*, *Ballo della Regina*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Jewels*.

She has been the conductor of the Flexible Orchestra, a contemporary ensemble in New York City, since 2003 where she works closely with composers to champion new works specifically written for the group. She has recently guest conducted the Portland Symphony, the Bridge Musik Chamber Orchestra, Camerata Nova at The Manhattan School of Music, and Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México.

Some highlights of her career include conducting an innovative and interactive production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at SNG Maribor and *Don Giovanni* at the Castello di San Giusto with the Piccolo Festival del Friuli Venezia Giulia. In her role as Music Director of the Louisville Ballet, she worked on a joint project with the Kentucky Opera and the ballet to bring Gounod's *Faust* to the stage in a provocative new production.

Ms. Simoncic is currently in her sixth season as Music Director of the Louisville Ballet. This fall will mark her third season conducting one of New York City's most beloved modern dance companies, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, with the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Lincoln Center. She has served as Music Director of Ballet West in Salt Lake City, Utah and has been a recurring guest conductor with the New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Teatro Colón's Ballet Estable, Cincinnati Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, and the Compañía Nacional de Danza in Madrid.

This season, she is thrilled to make debuts with the Joffrey Ballet, Orquestra Jovem do Estado of São Paulo, and the Houston Ballet.

Ms. Simoncic has a Bachelor's degree in Trumpet Performance from the New England Conservatory, a Master's of Music in Orchestral Conducting from Northwestern University, and a Professional Studies Diploma in Orchestral Conducting from the Manhattan School of Music. In 2011, she received the Bruno Walter Scholarship Award to study with Marin Alsop at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. Her teachers include Victor Yampolsky, Zdenek Macal, George Hurst, and Iloh Yang.

BIOS



CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON, OBE Director & Choreographer

Christopher Wheeldon, OBE trained at The Royal Ballet School and joined The Royal Ballet in 1991. In 1993, he joined New York City Ballet (NYCB) and was promoted to Soloist in 1998. He was named NYCB's first Resident Choreographer in July 2001. Since then, Mr. Wheeldon has created and staged productions for many of the world's major ballet companies.

Mr. Wheeldon serves as Artistic Associate of The Royal Ballet. He has created many works for the company, including the full-length *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Winter's Tale*, both of which were co-productions with The National Ballet of Canada. All are currently being performed worldwide. In 2012, his ballet *Cinderella* premiered at Het Nationale Ballet. For the Metropolitan Opera, he choreographed *Dance of the Hours* for Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* (2006) and Richard Eyre's production of *Carmen* (2012) as well as ballet sequences for the feature film *Center Stage* (2000) and the musical *Sweet Smell of Success* on Broadway (2002).

Mr. Wheeldon created a special excerpt for the Closing Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics, and in April 2016, he was the Artistic Director for the *Fashion Forward* exhibition in Paris at La Musee Arts et Decoratif.

In 2014, Mr. Wheeldon directed and choreographed the Broadway musical version of *An American in Paris*, which had productions in Paris, New York, and London and toured extensively through America, China, Japan and Australia.

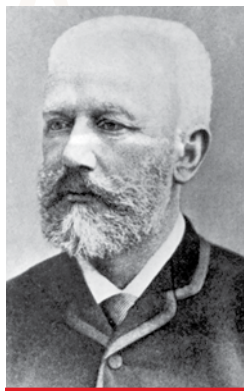
Among other career highlights; 2016 The Joffrey Ballet presented the world premiere of *The Nutcracker* reimagined by Mr. Wheeldon, 2017 he directed and choreographed Lerner & Loewe's *Brigadoon* starring Kelli O'Hara and Patrick Wilson at New York City Center, 2019 was the premiere of *Corybantic Games* at The Royal Ballet and a re-staged version of *Cinderella* for the English National Ballet at Royal Albert Hall, 2022 *Like Water for Chocolate* premiered for The Royal Ballet and in 2023 had its American premiere with American Ballet Theater. *Oscar*® is his latest full-length ballet for The Australian Ballet premiering in 2024.

Most recently he directed and choreographed *MJ The Musical* (2022), winning four Tony Awards, including Best Choreography. It is currently touring in America, in London's West End, in Hamburg, and is opening in Sydney in March 2025.

Among Mr. Wheeldon's other awards are another Tony Award for Best Choreography for *An American in Paris*, two Tony Nominations for Best Director, an Outer Critics Award for Best Choreography and Direction for *An American in Paris*, the Martin E. Segal Award from Lincoln Center, the American Choreography Award, the Dance Magazine Award, South Bank Show Award, multiple London Critics' Circle Awards, and the Léonide Massine Prize for new choreography. Mr. Wheeldon's productions of *Cinderella* and *The Winter's Tale* received the Benois de la Danse, and he is an Olivier Award winner for his ballets *Aeternum* and *Polyphonia*.

In 2016, Mr. Wheeldon was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and was an Honorary Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Christopher is a dual citizen of the United States and the United Kingdom and resides in New York City.

BIOS



PYOTR (PETER) ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Composer

Pyotr (Peter) Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) composed some of the most beloved themes in all of classical music. Tchaikovsky started piano lessons at age four and showed remarkable talent, eventually surpassing his own teacher's abilities. At age ten, he was sent to St. Petersburg to study at the School of Jurisprudence. In 1859, he took a position as a civil servant in the Ministry of Justice, but longed for a career in music, attending concerts and operas at every opportunity. He finally began study in harmony at age 21, and enrolled at the St. Petersburg Conservatory the following year, eventually studying with the illustrious composer and pianist Anton Rubinstein. In Moscow, Tchaikovsky became associated with the Bolshoi Theatre, and there he composed his first ballet, *Swan Lake*, in 1875. Within a few years Tchaikovsky was an established composer, beloved throughout Russia.

BIOS



BRIAN SELZNICK

Story Adaptation

Brian Selznick is the author and illustrator of many books for children, including *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, winner of the Caldecott medal and the basis for the Oscar-winning movie *Hugo*, directed by Martin Scorsese. His best-selling book *Wonderstruck* was recently made into a movie directed by Todd Haynes (with a screenplay by Selznick), starring Julianne Moore. His newest book, *Live Oak, With Moss* with poetry by Walt Whitman, is his first book for an adult audience. Other books include the *New York Times* best-seller *Baby Monkey*, *Private Eye*, written by his husband Dr. David Serlin, and illustrations for *Frindle* by Andrew Clements. Selznick is also a puppeteer, having performed in the original casts of Basil Twist's *Symphonie Fantastique* and *Petrushka*. He recently illustrated new covers to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling. He lives with his husband in San Diego, California and Brooklyn, New York. Find more information at thebrianselznick.com.



JULIAN CROUCH

Set & Costume Designer

Originally from the UK, Julian Crouch is a Brooklyn-based theatre practitioner, artist, musician, known for his groundbreaking production of *Shockheaded Peter*, *Satyagraha* at the Met Opera, and the Tony nominated set of *Hedwig and The Angry Inch*. A co-founder and former artistic director of Improbable, a UK-based theatre company, his shows have been seen throughout the world. He is particularly known for his incorporation of large scale, live animation within his productions. He has worked extensively at the Met Opera and on Broadway in addition to a myriad of more unusual locations. He previously designed set and costumes for Christopher Wheeldon's *Cinderella* for the Dutch National Ballet and San Francisco Ballet.

Crouch directed and designed the Metropolitan Opera's 50th Anniversary Gala, designed *Hansel and Gretel* for La Scala, Milan, *King Arthur* for the Berlin Staatsoper, *Marnie* for the ENO and the Met Opera, *Barber Of Seville* for the Dutch National Opera, and *Ernani* for La Scala, Milan. Together with Saskia Lane, he internationally toured *Birdheart* — an intimate chamber piece of animated theatre, which played in Taiwan and in Brussels for the Dalai Lama. He has illustrated two books — *Jedermann* and *Maggot Moon*.

BIOS



NATASHA KATZ

Lighting Designer

Natasha Katz has a long-standing creative relationship with Christopher Wheeldon and, prior to *The Nutcracker*, has collaborated with him on a number of ballets, including *Tryst* (2002), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2011) and *The Winter's Tale* (2014) all of which premiered at The Royal Ballet where he is Artistic Associate. Other collaborations with Wheeldon include *Continuum* (2002), *Carnival of the Animals* (2003), *Swan Lake* (2004), *Cinderella* (2012), *The Nutcracker* (2016), and the premiere of *An American in Paris* at the New York City Ballet (2005), Théâtre Châtelet (2014), and on Broadway (2015) for which she won a Tony Award.® Katz is a six-time Tony Award® winner whose Broadway credits include: *Frozen*, *Springsteen on Broadway*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *School of Rock*, *An American in Paris*, *Aladdin*, *Skylight*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Once*, *Motown*, *Follies*, *The Coast of Utopia: Salvage*, *Aida*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. In London, she designed *The Glass Menagerie* (Olivier nomination 2017), *Motown*, *An American in Paris*, *School of Rock*, *Aladdin*, *Once*, *Skylight*, *Sister Act*, *Buried Child*, and *Cyrano*. Katz has also designed extensively for Off-Broadway and for American regional theatres. Her permanent installations include lighting for the audio-visual shows at Niketown London and New York City, *The Masquerade Village* at the Rio Casino, Las Vegas and *Big Bang* at the Hayden Planetarium in New York City.



BASIL TWIST

Puppetry & Effects Designer

Basil Twist is proud to return to The Joffrey Ballet. Previous collaborations with Christopher Wheeldon include *The Winter's Tale* and *Cinderella*. Work previously seen in Chicago includes Twist's Drama Desk Award-winning work in *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory* and *The Addams Family* and his original creations the multi award-winning *Symphonie Fantastique*, as well as *Petrushka* and *Master Peter's Puppet Show*, all at The Ravinia Festival. Twist's wide-ranging work is revitalizing puppetry as a serious and sophisticated stand-alone art form and establishing it as an integral element in contemporary theater, dance, and music. Other Credits: on Broadway; *The Pee Wee Herman Show*, *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*. Original creations include; *La Bella Dormiente Nel Bosco*, *Dogugaeshi*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Behind The Lid*, *Arias with a Twist*, *Seafoam Sleepwalk*, *The Rite of Spring*, and *Sisters Follies*. Awards include; The Rome Prize, Obie, Drama Desk, New York Innovative Theatre, Henry Hewes, UNIMA, Bessies, Guggenheim, USA Artist, Doris Duke Performing Artist and a MacArthur Fellow. He lives in New York City, where he leads The Dream Music Puppetry Program.

BIOS



59 PRODUCTIONS

Video & Projection Design

59 Productions is a multi-award-winning design studio and production company based in London and New York. Their current work includes *Invisible Cities*. Opera designs include *Satyagraha*, *Marnie*, *Candide*, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, *Brigadoon*, *Pearl Fishers*, Metropolitan Opera 50th Anniversary Gala, *Two Boys*, and *The Enchanted Island*, *Sukanya*, *Morgen und Abend*, and *Eugene Onegin*, *The Shining*, *Satyagraha* and *Al gran sole carico d'amore*. Designs for theatre and events include *Apollo 50: Go For The Moon*, *West Side Story*, *Junk*, *An American in Paris*, *Oslo*, *The Last Ship*, *Reflections: Guggenheim Bilbao 20th Anniversary*, *A Perfect Harmony*, Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, *Wonder.land*, *David Bowie Is*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *Big Fish*, *Bloom*, *The Forbidden Zone*, *War Horse*, *Les Misérables* world tour and the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony.



JACQUELIN BARRETT

Assistant to the Choreographer

Jacquelin Barrett trained at The Royal Ballet School, joined London Festival Ballet (now English National Ballet) and, over a period of eight years, danced soloist and principal roles in the company's repertory. Barrett was the Ballet Mistress for Central School of Ballet, Northern Ballet Theatre and English National Ballet. She is in demand as a guest teacher for many international professional companies and schools. From 1997 to 2008, Barrett taught at The Royal Ballet School, working mainly with the graduate female class. Since 2009, she has been assisting Christopher Wheeldon and staging his works around the world. She is the Associate Director on the musical *An American in Paris*.



ADAM BLYDE

Rehearsal Director and Children's Cast Rehearsal Director

Adam Blyde trained at The Royal Ballet School before joining Scottish Ballet in 2003, where he was promoted to Principal in 2008. He joined Rambert Dance Company in 2013. Throughout his career he danced in various works by George Balanchine, Kenneth MacMillan, William Forsythe, Frederick Ashton, Hans Van Manen, Krzysztof Pastor, Ashley Page, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, and Stephen Petronio, among others. Blyde joined The Joffrey Ballet as Rehearsal director in 2016.

BIOS



AMY GIANCARLO

Head of Children's Program and Children's Cast Rehearsal Director

Before joining the Grainger Academy, Amy taught at the Royal Ballet School on both the Associate and Primary Steps Programs. She trained at the Royal Academy of Dance and later completed the Diploma of Dance Teaching at The Royal Ballet School. Amy also serves as a Trustee of the RAD, elected by teaching members worldwide, and is a certified STOTT Pilates instructor.

Amy brings a wealth of teaching experience from leading organizations in the UK, including Rambert, Central School of Ballet, Trinity Laban, Tring Park, the Royal Opera House, and BalletBoyz. She also led the Dance Department at Thomas's London Day Schools, best known as the former school of Prince George and Princess Charlotte. In addition to her work with young dancers, Amy has mentored trainee teachers at both the RAD and the Royal Ballet School.



SUZANNE LOPEZ

Abbott Academy Director and Children's Cast Rehearsal Director

Suzanne Lopez was born and raised in Summit, New Jersey, to Cuban parents. She first began training at the Garden State Ballet School under Fred Danieli and later studied at the New Jersey School of Ballet. Her introduction to the Joffrey Ballet started at age 12 when she attended her first summer intensive audition taught by Robert Joffrey. From that moment on, her training was steeped in his founding traditions and methodology taught to her by Robert Joffrey himself and his team of former Joffrey dancers, who became his protégés and her mentors.

After starting her professional career for a year and a half with the Joffrey II Dancers, Lopez joined The Joffrey as a Company Artist in 1991 and moved to Chicago with the company in 1995. During her nineteen-year career, Lopez danced principal roles in ballets by such choreographers as Robert Joffrey, Gerald Arpino, George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Alonzo King, John Cranko, José Limón, Antony Tudor, Twyla Tharp, Lar Lubovitch, and Sir Frederick Ashton. She was featured on the cover of *Pointe* magazine as the Sugarplum Fairy in Robert Joffrey's *The Nutcracker*. In addition to dancing, Lopez assisted Gerald Arpino in rehearsals for his ballets. She taught classes for the Arpino Apprentice Program and was one of the first instructors to begin teaching at the inception of the Joffrey Academy of Dance, Official School of The Joffrey Ballet.

After retiring from dancing in 2010, Lopez continued teaching and coaching at the Joffrey Academy, among other Chicago-area schools. In 2016, she was thrilled to return to The Joffrey as a Rehearsal Director, where she worked on a diverse repertoire, including new creations with John Neumeier, Yuri Possokhov, and Christopher Wheeldon. She has also been a guest teacher, répétiteur, and coach at schools and companies worldwide. As the Abbott Academy Director, Lopez embraces all her experiences as a student, dancer, educator, and rehearsal director and imbues Robert Joffrey's vision into every facet of the Academy's specialized curriculum. With her unique lineage and perspective, Lopez sets a firm foundation for the next generations of dancers.

BIOS



CHRISTINE ROCAS

Rehearsal Director and Children's Cast Rehearsal Director

Christine Rocas was born in San Diego, California, and grew up in the Philippines. She performed with Ballet Manilla from 1998 to 2005, dancing principal (or lead, leading) roles in ballet including *The Nutcracker*, *Le Corsaire*, *La Bayadère*, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Don Quixote*. In 2005, she was a silver medalist at the New York International Ballet Competition where she received the Arpino Award, garnering her a one-year contract with The Joffrey Ballet.

During her Joffrey career, Christine danced leading roles in ballets by Gerald Arpino (*Light Rain*, *Reflections*, *Round of Angels*, *Sea Shadow*, *The Nutcracker*); Sir Frederick Ashton (*Cinderella*, *The Dream*); George Balanchine (*Apollo*, *Prodigal Son*, *The Four Temperaments*, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*); William Forsythe (*In the Middle*, *Somewhat Elevated*); Ronald Hynd (*The Merry Widow*); Kurt Jooss (*The Green Table*); Cathy Marston (*Jane Eyre*); Wayne McGregor (*INFRA*); Krzysztof Pastor (*Romeo & Juliet*); John Neumeier (*Sylvia*); Marius Petipa, staged by Lola D'Avila (*Giselle*); Justin Peck (*In Creases*, *The Times Are Racing*, *Year of the Rabbit*); and Jerome Robbins (*In the Night*, *Interplay*).

Christine originated roles in world premiere works from Nicolas Blanc (*Beyond the Shore*, *Evenfall*, *Under the Trees' Voices*); Val Caniparoli (*Incantations*); James Kudelka (*Pretty BALLET*); Jessica Lang (*Crossed*); Edwaard Liang (*Age of Innocence*, *Woven Dreams*); Annabelle Lopez-Ochoa (*Mammatus*); Ashley Page (*Tipping Point*); Yuri Possokhov (*Anna Karenina*, *Bells*, *Don Quixote*); Stanton Welch (*Son of Chamber Symphony*); and Christopher Wheeldon (*The Nutcracker*). Other notable roles include *Romeo and Juliet* balcony pas de deux by Augustus Damian III, a world premiere by Martin Lawrence, and an originating role in the ballet/opera *Orphée and Eurydice* by John Neumeier. She was also featured in the short film *Bertha* choreographed by Cathy Marston, and two music videos (*Red Violin Caprices*, *Valse Triste*) with internationally acclaimed violinist Philippe Quint.

BIOS



NICOLAS BLANC

Stager

Nicolas Blanc started his dance training in Montauban, France, continuing at the Academie de Danse Classique Princesse Grace in Monte-Carlo. After winning a scholarship in the 1994 Prix de Lausanne, he completed his education at the Paris Opera Ballet School.

He went on to dance for Nice Opera Ballet, Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Dusseldorf, Zurich Ballet and San Francisco Ballet, where he was made Principal Dancer in 2004. His repertoire included lead roles in Balanchine's *Jewels*, *Square Dance*, *Divertimento No. 15*, *The Four Temperaments*, and *Tarantella pas de deux*. He also danced the leads in Robbins' *Dybbuk* and Mats Ek's *Carmen*, Benvolio and Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Cavalier in *The Nutcracker*, and danced in various ballets by Mark Morris.

Blanc originated roles in Wheeldon's *Rush and Quaternary*; Welch's *Falling and Naked*, Possokov's *Study in Motion and Reflections*; and Tomasson's *7 for Eight* and *Blue Rose*. In 2006 and 2007, he created two pieces for San Francisco Ballet School. He also created *After Having Been* for the International Ballet Competition (IBC) in Jackson, MS.

Blanc was awarded a special prize in performing arts by the city of Dusseldorf in 1998, and a special award of recognition by his hometown in 2004 (and 2013), and he was named one of the "25 to Watch" by Dance Magazine. In 2010, he was nominated with Tina LeBlanc for an Isadora Duncan Dance Award (Best Ensemble in Wheeldon's *Within The Golden Hour*). He joined Scottish Ballet as Ballet Master in 2009. In his time with the company, he coached Page's *Nutcracker*, *Cinderella*, *Alice*, *Fearful Symmetries*, Pastor's *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as Ashton's *Scenes de Ballet*, and Balanchine's *Rubies*. In 2010, he was the personal assistant of Val Caniparoli for the world premiere of *Still Life*.

Recently, he has created *Purple*, *Memories of The Future*, *Unveiled*, *The Spell*, and *Encounter* for the annual fundraiser for Embarc, a Chicago organization dedicated to supporting low-income high school students in their training. In July 2014, Blanc received the choreographic award at the IBC in Jackson, Mississippi, for his duet *Rendez-Vous*. In 2015, his ballet *Evenfall* made its US debut on The Joffrey Ballet's spring program.

Blanc was selected to participate in the 2015 National Choreographers Initiative (NCI) and created *Orphee*, which was presented at the Barclay Theater in Irvine, CA. He was also chosen to participate in New York City Ballet's New York Choreographic Institute where he created *Mothership*, which premiered in New York City Ballet's 2016 gala. In 2018, he created *Beyond the Shore* for The Joffrey Ballet, with designs by Katrin Schnabl and music composed by Mason Bates. This commission was supported by the New York Choreographic Institute and Cal Performances in Berkeley, CA. In 2019, Blanc created *Desert Transport*, also set to music by Bates, for Barak Ballet.

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Marlene A. Van Skike
Stephen and Leslie Warner
Ron and Ann Waters
Magnes Welsh
Susan L. Welsh
Diana and Stuart Widman
Amanda Williamson and
Matthew Johnson
Shannon Stone-Winding and
Derrick Winding
Andrea and Rich Winship
Laurie Wood
Patrick and Patrice Wooldridge
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THE JOFFREY BALLE

STAR

SOCIETY

LEGACY GIFTS TO THE JOFFREY BALLE

The Joffrey Ballet is incredibly grateful for the following legacy gifts received within the past three years. These individuals are remembered for their remarkable generosity and commitment to the Joffrey's mission.

Audre D. Carlin
Christine DuBoulay Ellis
James D. Drury
Sonia Florian
Georgia Lee Funsten
Barbara Henigbaum Papp
Marti and Gary Kruse
Richard Schieler
Elaine Soter
Susan T. Strauss

[†] Deceased

OCTOBER 3 – DECEMBER 20, 2025



The Joffrey + Ballet in the U.S.



New York Public
Library for the
Performing Arts

This exhibition is organized by The New York Public Library
for the Performing Arts and curated by Dr. Julia Foulkes
with assistance from Nicole Duffy.

Scott Burton: Shape Shift

Pulitzer
Arts
Foundation

This exhibition is organized by the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis,
and curated by Jess Wilcox, independent curator, and Heather A. Smith,
Assistant Curator, Pulitzer Arts Foundation.



Ellen Altfest: Forever

Frist Art
Museum

This exhibition is organized by the Frist Art Museum,
Nashville, Tennessee, where it premiered earlier this year,
and is curated by Mark Scala, Chief Curator, Frist Art Museum.

wrightwood659.org | 773.437.6601 |  
advance ticket purchase required

IMAGE CREDITS: (TOP) The Joffrey at Wolftrap, Virginia, c. 1970s. Photograph by Herbert Migdoll © Joffrey Ballet. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. (CENTER) Installation view of Scott Burton: *Shape Shift* at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, September 6, 2024–February 2, 2025. © 2024 Estate of Scott Burton/Artists Rights Society (ARS), photograph by Alise O'Brien Photography. © Pulitzer Arts Foundation and Alise O'Brien Photography. (BOTTOM) Ellen Altfest, *Rock, Foot, Plant*, 2009, oil on canvas. Photographer: Todd-White Art Photography. Courtesy White Cube.

The Joffrey + Ballet in the U.S. and
Scott Burton: Shape Shift are presented at
Wrightwood 659 by Alphawood Exhibitions.

Ellen Altfest: Forever is presented at
Wrightwood 659 by Halsted A&A Foundation.

WRIGHTWOOD
659
CHICAGO

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Rehearsal Director

Adam Blyde

Rehearsal Director

Jorge Ivars

Company Pianist

Christine Rocas

Rehearsal Director

Scott Speck

Music Director & Principal Conductor

Jared Wright

Company Pianist

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Gregg Benkovich

Shoe Manager

Matthew Carney

Head Electrician

Ellie Cotey

Costume Manager

Catherine Eby

Company Manager

Amanda Heuermann

Stage Manager

Jerica Huckle

Draper

Barbara Luchsinger

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Chris Maravich

Lighting and Video Supervisor

Emmy Masteller

Artistic Administrator and Assistant to the Artistic Director

Alyssa Pietrzyk

Stitcher

Finlay Ross

Audio Engineer

Bridget Rzymiski

Head of Hair and Makeup

Katherine Selig

Principal Stage Manager

Joshua Stenger

Artistic and Production Fellow

Adam Todd

Head Carpenter

Joshua Townsend

Carpenter/Flyperson

Shandee Vaughan

Production Manager

Cassandra Westover

Head Props

John Wilson

Assistant Electrician/Programmer

Scott Wolfson

Technical Supervisor

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Program Coordinator

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IT Technician

Stephanie Valls-Yanez

Payroll and Accounting Coordinator

Sarah Venuti Yates

Director of Human Resources

Lyric

THE NUTCRACKER

Scott Speck
Principal Conductor

Robert McConnell
Tara Simoncic
Guest Conductors

VIOLIN I

Robert Hanford
Concertmaster

Heather Wittels
Assistant Concertmaster

Eleanor Bartsch
Alexander Belavsky
Kathleen Brauer
Cristina Buciu
Jennifer Cappelli
Lisa Fako
Renee Gauthier
Sheila Hanford
Laura Miller
Rika Seko
Bing Jing Yu

VIOLIN II

David Volfe
Principal Second Violin

Irene Radetzky
Assistant Principal

Kate Carter
Injoo Choi
Carmen Kassinger
Olga Kossovich
Erik Liljenberg
Ann Palen

VIOLA

Carol Cook
Terri Van Valkinburgh
Principal

Amy Hess
Terri Van Valkinburgh
Assistant Principal

Beatrice Chen
Kunjing Dai
Melissa Trier Kirk
Rebecca Swan
Bruno Vaz da Silva

CELLO

Ana Kim
Principal

Walter Preucil
Assistant Principal

William Cernota
Mara McClain
Hope Shepherd
Nomin Zolzaya

BASS

Samuel Shuhan
Principal

Collins Trier
Assistant Principal

Andrew L. W. Anderson
Jeremy Attanaseo
Isaac Polinsky

FLUTE

Marie Tachouet
Principal

Jennifer Clippert
Janice MacDonald
Dionne Jackson
Jungah Yoon

PICCOLO

Jennifer Clippert
Dionne Jackson
Alyce Johnson

OBOE

Paul Lueders
Principal

Adèle-Marie Buis
Judith Zunamon Lewis

CLARINET

Heesoo Kim
Principal

Trevor O’Riordan

BASS CLARINET

Trevor O’Riordan

BASSOON

Preman Tilson
Principal

Nicholas Ritter
Hanna Sterba

HORN

Abigail Black
Neil Kimel
Robert Johnson
Co-Principals

Matthew Oliphant

TRUMPET

Dave Inmon
Rebecca Oliverio
Co-Principals

Mike Brozick
Diana Lopez

TROMBONE

Jeremy Moeller
Principal

Will Baker
Mark Fisher
Mark Fry

TUBA

Ben Poirot
Principal

TIMPANI

Edward Harrison
Principal

PERCUSSION

Douglas Waddell
Principal

Rich Janicki

HARP

Lynn Williams
Ben Melsky
Principal

CELESTE

Jorge Ivars
Kung-Hao Huang
Principal

ON STAGE TRIO

Kathleen Brauer, violin
Renée-Paule Gauthier,
violin
Elizandro Garcia
Montoya, clarinet
Susan Warner, clarinet
Hope Arthur, accordion
Ronnie Kuller, accordion

LIBRARIAN

Crozet Duplantier

ORCHESTRA

PERSONNEL MANAGER
Christine Janicki



JOFFREY ★ BALLET
CHICAGO

JOFFREY TOWER | 10 EAST RANDOLPH STREET | CHICAGO, IL 60601 | JOFFREY.ORG

Joffrey Company Artists Jeraldine Mendoza and Dylan Gutierrez. Photo by Katie Miller.