



**For Immediate Release**

## **BalletX 2019-20 Season Announcement**

*Featuring Eight World Premiere Ballets and Three Original Music Compositions*

**Philadelphia – May 2019** – Christine Cox, Artistic & Executive Director of BalletX, proudly announces eight world premiere ballets for the upcoming 2019-20 Season, increasing the company's total number of premieres to an impressive 82 since its 2005 inception. Choreographers commissioned by Cox for 2019-20 include Rena Butler, Gregory Dawson, John McFall, Matthew Neenan, Caili Quan, Penny Saunders, Jo Strømngren, and a Choreographic Fellow, to be selected from a competitive field of over 50 international applicants. BalletX is thrilled to continue its long-standing residency next season at The Wilma Theater, an intimate 300-seat theater at the center of Philadelphia's bustling Avenue of the Arts on Broad Street. The 2019-20 Season features three series – *Fall Series 2019* (Dec. 4-15), *Spring Series 2020* (Mar. 18-29), and *Summer Series 2020* (Jul. 8-19). Subscriptions go on sale May 23, 2019 and Single Tickets will become available in the fall of 2019.

"The entire company, including the dancers, staff, and board of directors, are incredibly excited for the eight choreographers joining us from around the world next season. We are deeply honored to support their voices as they share their distinct stories with our growing community of BalletX fans. 2019-2020 will be a celebration of our diversity and shared humanity," says Cox.

### **Fall Series 2019**

The season opens with two world premieres by titans of the dance world **Matthew Neenan** and **Jo Strømngren**. Neenan is co-founder of BalletX and has choreographed many of the company's flagship repertory, including blockbusters *Sunset*, *0639 Hours*, *The Last Glass*, and *Increasing*. His 2019-20 season-opening World Premiere will feature the original music of Rosie Langabeer and Tara Middleton, performed live, and representing Neenan and Langabeer's third BalletX collaboration. Premiering during the run-up to the holidays and new year, Neenan's new work promises to capture the beautiful spirit, nostalgia, and mixed emotions of the season, drawing inspiration from Shaun Tan's award-winning children's book *The Red Tree*. His work has been critically acclaimed by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Boston*

*Globe*, with *The New York Times* naming him “one of the most appealing and singular choreographic voices in ballet today.” Neenan most recently premiered works on New York City Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet.

Strømgren is a Choreographer, Theater Director, and Playwright who often incorporates physical humor, language, and puppetry into his work. His upcoming World Premiere is set to the music of composer/saxophonist Mette Henriette, and will explore the questions and mysteries of the universe, with some of the dancers taking on astronaut roles, dressed in spacesuits. His previous work with BalletX is 2017's *The Letter*, a comical account of the urban-rural divide. *The Dance Journal* described the climactic final act as “an irony-free celebration of pure pleasure.” Strømgren has participated in performances in 63 countries, and currently doubles as Artistic Director of Jo Strømgren Kompani, a Norwegian dance theater company, and Associate Choreographer of Norwegian National Ballet.

## Spring Series 2020

*Spring Series* will feature three world premieres by established innovators and Artistic Directors **Gregory Dawson** and **John McFall**, as well as the company's **2020 Choreographic Fellow**. Dawson is Artistic Director of San Francisco's dawsondancesf, a company he founded in 2007, following his 20-year career as a dancer with Alonzo King Lines Ballet. His World Premiere on BalletX will highlight his interest in elevating the creative process of choreography as a collaboration, in which the dancers interpret his movement and contribute their individual voices to the work. He was named “the best choreographer in Denver” by the *Denver Post* in 2011, and was the 2015 recipient of the Isadora Duncan Award. Dawson's company has been recognized for demonstrating “muscular, sinewy, high-impact modern dance inflected and informed by classical ballet” (*San Francisco Chronicle*). He currently teaches and choreographs with Lines Ballet Educational Programs.

McFall was Artistic Director of Atlanta Ballet for 21 years, where he commissioned many world premieres by such renowned choreographers as Twyla Tharp and Wayne McGregor. His premiere on BalletX will draw from his life in the arts, producing a story that is inspired by the dancers' unique relationship to one another. Prior to Atlanta, McFall was Artistic Director of BalletMet, where he hired and directed BalletX's Christine Cox in her first job with a ballet company at the age of seventeen. As a choreographer, McFall has premiered work on National Ballet of Canada, Dance Theater of Harlem, American Ballet Theatre, and San Francisco Ballet. His recent ballet *Three* was called “stunning,” and recognized for “simple gestures, beautifully

performed” by *Backstage Beat*. McFall will additionally serve as mentor to BalletX’s 2020 Choreographic Fellow, who will also create a World Premiere on the company.

*The BalletX Choreographic Fellowship is generously supported by the Wyncote Foundation. Going into its 5th year, the Fellowship is an opportunity for emerging artists to expand their experience and further develop their unique voices under the mentorship and guidance of established choreographers.*

## Summer Series 2020

Concluding the season, BalletX presents a program of world premieres by three choreographers: **Rena Butler**, **Caili Quan**, and **Penny Saunders**. Butler’s choreography has been presented at The New Orleans Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with Grammy award-winning jazz composer Terrence Blanchard, the Young Choreographer’s Festival in NYC, and CHTV Stories television series in Switzerland. She currently dances with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and has a distinct movement vocabulary. For her World Premiere with BalletX, Butler will explore the parallels between the Underground Railroad and the various forms of present-day oppression around the world. The work will feature the original score of Bronx-based instrumentalist Darryl Joseph, with whom Butler collaborated on her recent work *III. Third. Seeing Chicago Dance* called *III. Third* “a raucous, entirely fun and choreographically clever panorama of melting-pot street dance, hip-hop, get-down attitude, and pure funk.” She currently serves on The Consortium for Chicago Dancemakers Forum, as a panel member for Black Girls Dance, and was named Hubbard Street Dance Chicago’s Choreographic Fellow in March 2018.

Quan is a BalletX dancer and emerging choreographer with a promising movement style, rooted in her unique vision and voice. She holds the distinction of being the first BalletX dancer to debut a choreographic work on the full company while still dancing in the company. With her World Premiere she seeks to uncover the meaning of “home,” inspired by memories of her native Guam. Her duet *Fancy Me*, which she choreographed and dances with fellow company dancer Roderick Phifer, was performed at the Vail Dance Festival in 2018. She has also had the pleasure to choreograph on CelloPointe, Columbia Ballet Collaborative, St. Paul’s School, and Konverjdans. Quan has been a dancer with BalletX since 2013.

Saunders launched her choreographic career in 2011 when she won a residency through Hubbard Street Dance Chicago’s International Commissioning Project. With her World Premiere she will address important current events, advancing the idea that physical language is sometimes a clearer method of communication than words, which so often divide us. The ballet will feature original music by Michael Wall, composer and creator of soundFORMovement.com, a website dedicated to producing music made specifically for dance. Saunders has created work on The Royal New Zealand Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance, and Whim W’Him, winning the Princess

Grace Choreographic Fellowship in 2016. In July 2018, she premiered her first work on BalletX, a collaboration with composer Rosie Langabeer, entitled *Rock-a-Bye*. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* described Saunders' piece as "the reason to see this program," and *The New York Times* wrote "[Saunders] is a remarkably fresh mind, with talents for suspense and surrealism." She is currently the Resident Choreographer at The Grand Rapids Ballet.

### **BalletX 2019-2020 Season Performance Dates & Times**

<b>Fall Series 2019</b>	<b>Spring Series 2020</b>	<b>Summer Series 2020</b>
Wed, December 4 at 8pm	Wed, March 18 at 8pm	Wed, July 8 at 8pm
Thurs, December 5 at 8pm	Thurs, March 19 at 8pm	Thurs, July 9 at 8pm
Fri, December 6 at 8pm	Fri, March 20 at 8pm	Fri, July 10 at 8pm
Sat, December 7 at 2pm	Sat, March 21 at 2pm	Sat, July 11 at 2pm
Sat, December 7 at 8pm	Sat, March 21 at 8pm	Sat, July 11 at 8pm
Sun, December 8 at 2pm	Sun, March 22 at 2pm	Sun, July 12 at 2pm
Wed, December 11 at 8pm	Wed, March 25 at 8pm	Wed, July 15 at 8pm
Thurs, December 12 at 8pm	Thurs, March 26 at 8pm	Thurs, July 16 at 8pm
Fri, December 13 at 8pm	Fri, March 27 at 8pm	Fri, July 17 at 8pm
Sat, December 14 at 2pm	Sat, March 28 at 2pm	Sat, July 18 at 2pm
Sat, December 14 at 8pm	Sat, March 28 at 8pm	Sat, July 18 at 8pm
Sun, December 15 at 2pm	Sun, March 29 at 2pm	Sun, July 19 at 2pm
Sun, December 15 at 7pm	Sun, March 29 at 7pm	Sun, July 19 at 7pm

## **Tickets & Subscriptions**

**Online:** [BalletX.org](https://BalletX.org) | **Phone:** 215-546-7824 | **In-person:** 265 S. Broad Street. Phila, PA

*Subscriptions go on sale to the general public May 23. Single Tickets will be available in the fall.*

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### **For more information, press only:**

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