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## **BalletX Announces Return to Live Public Performances in June at the Mann**

*The performances will feature three world premiere works June 24-26 outdoors in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park*

**PHILADELPHIA (May 12, 2021)** – BalletX returns to live performances June 24-26 with its debut at TD Pavilion at the Mann, premiering three new works by choreographers Hope Boykin, Matthew Neenan and Dwight Rhoden. Tickets go on sale to the public May 28.

"BalletX being at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts is a dream come true, and an incredible opportunity to reach new audiences and create a safe space for our community to come back to live performances," said Christine Cox, BalletX's Artistic & Executive Director. "This past year has been anything but normal, and as we come out of this with a new appreciation for life and how art brings us together, I think that now more than ever we need to lift each other up and find inspiration for our future."

Boykin, whose piece is called "IN The Distance," describes her work as a walk along the intertwining paths of our individual and collective abstract journeys. It is not where the journey ends, but simply another starting point, a place for us all to begin -- again." It features an original score by jazz composer and Grammy Award-winning master drummer Ali Jackson. Neenan took inspiration for his piece from "the unique rhythms" of adaptations of famous Stephen Sondheim works, such as "Finishing the Hat" by Steve Reich and "That Old Piano Roll" by Wynton Marsalis. And for his work, Rhoden deconstructs and reimagines iconic selections of music from JS Bach and other classical composers with choreography that inspires the BalletX dancers to move with passion, athleticism and contemporary ideals. The focus of the ballet, says Rhoden, is "on the grit and grace that our relationships must endure during times of challenge."

Performances are scheduled for Thursday, June 24 at 7:30pm; Friday, June 25 at 7:30pm; and Saturday, June 26 at 2pm and 7:30pm.

Tickets range from \$35 to \$65, depending on seating preference, and will be available beginning May 28 via [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com), 1-800-982-2787 or the Mann Box Office. A special presale for BalletX and Mann donors and subscribers will run May 20-27.

The Mann has implemented a series of enhanced safety precautions, including mandatory face masks, that will continue to evolve in accordance with state and city public health guidelines.

The performances on the Mann's campus in Philadelphia's historic Fairmount Park are part of BalletX's 15th Anniversary Season. Known for its innovation, community involvement and cutting-edge approach to modern dance, BalletX has produced over 100 world premiere ballets since its inception – a number virtually unheard of for a company its size.

TD Pavilion at the Mann is located at 5201 Parkside Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19131. Parking is free.

## **ABOUT HOPE BOYKIN**

Hope Boykin— educator, creator, mover, and motivator, was born and raised in Durham, North Carolina. She was a three-time recipient of the American Dance Festival's Young Tuition Scholarship and while attending Howard University in Washington, DC, she continued to pursue her desires to dance working with choreographer Lloyd Whitmore and his New World Dance Company. In New York City, Hope studied at The Ailey School and worked as assistant to choreographers Milton Myers and the late Talley Beatty. Hope was an original member of Complexions, and joined PHILADANCO, where she received the acclaimed "Bessie", a New York dance and performance award. Just completing her 20th and final season with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, she continues to build and create work as a 2019-20 Urban Bush Women Choreographic Center Fellow. Hope is also a recipient of and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Bubble Residency Grant for the Boykin Bubble 2021, culminating in a live-stream performance at the Annenberg Center in Philadelphia, PA. She has choreographed for numerous dance company's including Philadanco, Minnesota Dance a Theater, and Dallas Black Dance Theatre. In 2016, Hope presented her third work of choreography for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater called *r-Evolution, Dream., and* most recently, in 2018 for *DEMO*, commissioned by Damian Woetzel and the Kennedy Center, Hope had the honor to choreograph, write, and perform with New York City Ballet Principal dancer Lauren Lovette in MomentsUponMoments which was redesigned for Vail Dance Festival in 2019. Most recently she created a work for BalletX and Guggenheim Works And Process Virtual Commissions program, has her words and work displayed at Kaatsbaan Cultural Park, and has been an annual keynote speaker for Lincoln Center Activate, a national education forum. Serving as Artistic Lead for the Kennedy Center Dance Lab (KCDL), a two-week summer dance program for high school students, Artistic Advisor for Dance Education for the Kennedy Center, Artistic Advisor for the Howard University Dance Department, and Artist-In-Residence at USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance is all confirmation of the mission of *HopeBoykinDance*, which includes leading young and aspiring artists to a secure foundation and a concrete understanding, which develops a confidence and an assurance that will be unmatched.

## **ABOUT MATTHEW NEENAN**

Matthew Neenan began his dance training at the Boston Ballet School and with noted teachers Nan C. Keating and Jacqueline Cronsberg. He later attended the LaGuardia High School of Performing Arts and the School of American Ballet in New York. From 1994-2007, Matthew danced with the Pennsylvania Ballet where he danced numerous principal roles in the classical, contemporary and Balanchine repertoire. From 2007-2020, Matthew was named Choreographer in Residence at the Pennsylvania Ballet where he created 20 ballets.

Matthew's choreography has been featured and performed by The New York City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, The Washington Ballet, Ballet West, Ballet Met, Colorado Ballet, Ballet Memphis, Milwaukee Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Tulsa Ballet, OKC Ballet, Kansas City Ballet , BODYTRAFFIC, Juilliard Dance, USC Kaufman School of Dance, among many others. He has received numerous awards and grants for his choreography from the National Endowment of the Arts, Dance Advance funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Choo San Goh Foundation, and the Independence Foundation. In 2006, Matthew received the New York City Ballet's Choreographic Institute's Fellowship Initiative Award. In 2008, he received a fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. This marks his fourth time receiving the PCA fellowship. He was also the first recipient of the Jerome Robbins NEW Program Fellowship for his work *At the border* for Pennsylvania Ballet. In June 2019, he directed the Contemporary Ballet Program at Jacob's Pillow.

In 2005, Matthew co-founded BalletX with fellow dancer Christine Cox. BalletX had its world premiere at the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival in September 2005 and is now the resident dance company at the prestigious Wilma Theatre. BalletX has toured and performed Neenan's choreography in New York City at The Joyce Theater, NY City Center, The Skirball Center, Symphony Space and Central Park Summerstage, Vail International Dance Festival ( where he has had 5 world premieres ), Jacob's Pillow Festival, The Kennedy Center, The Cerritos Center, Laguna Dance Festival, Spring to Dance Festival in St.Louis, and internationally in Cali, Colombia, Seoul, Korea and Belgrade, Serbia. His ballet "The Last Glass" was the New York Times top 10 in 2013.

## **ABOUT DWIGHT RHODEN**

Dwight Rhoden has established a remarkably wide-ranging career, earning distinction from The New York Times as "one of the most sought out choreographers of the day." A native of Dayton, Ohio, who began dancing at age 17, Rhoden has performed with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Les Ballet Jazz De Montreal and as a principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. As a performer, he has appeared in numerous television specials, documentaries and commercials throughout the United States, Canada and Europe and has been a featured performer on many PBS Great Performances specials.

His work has been presented on five continents and in over 20 countries, including the USA, Canada, South America, Mexico, Europe, Asia, Poland, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, The Baltic Region, Egypt, Israel and the Middle East.

In 1994, Rhoden founded Complexions Contemporary Ballet with Desmond Richardson. Together they have brought their unique brand of contemporary dance to the world for almost three decades, with Complexions widely considered "America's Original Multicultural Contemporary Ballet Company." CCB has led the way in Contemporary Ballet in America by removing traditional boundaries, and celebrating the beauty of differences through courageous, innovative and cutting edge programming. Over the years, Complexions has remained consistent in delivering a profound passion for diversity that has framed its vision and become its hallmark.

Rhodens' work has filled some of the most prestigious theaters across the globe, including The Joyce Theater (NYC), The Bolshoi Theater (Moscow), The Marinsky Theater (St Petersburg), Maison De La Danse (Lyon), The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion (Los Angeles), BAM (Brooklyn) Cairo Opera House (Egypt), The Arts Center (Melbourne, Australia), The Auditorium Theater (Chicago), Telaviv Opera House (Israel), The ASB Theater (New Zealand), Holland Dance Festival, Grand Theatre De Geneva (Switzerland), Isle De Dance Festival (Paris) as well as others.

He has created more than 80 ballets for companies around the world, such Ballet Arizona, The Aspen Santa Fe Ballet Company, BalletMet, The Dance Theater of Harlem, The Joffrey Ballet, Miami City Ballet, New York City Ballet, The Pennsylvania Ballet, Philadanco, Marinsky Ballet, Minneapolis Dance Theater, Phoenix Dance Company, Sacramento Ballet, Oakland Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater and the Western Australian Ballet. Rhoden has also directed and choreographed for TV, film, theater and live performances, including "So You Think You Can Dance," E! Entertainment's "Tribute to Style" and Cirque Du Soleil's "Zumanity." He appeared in the feature film "One Last Dance" and has worked with and/or created works for artists Prince, Lenny Kravitz, Kelly Clarkson, ELEW, David Rozenblatt, Nicholas Payton, The Drifters, Paul Simon, Billy Strayhorn, Nina Simone, Marvin Gaye, U2, The Turtle Creek Chorus and Patrick Swayze.

Rhoden was also commissioned to create a work for the centennial celebration of renowned collage artist Romare Bearden. He has also choreographed a ballet for Diana Vishneva's Beauty In Motion and has Directed and Choreographed The Great Gatsby Ballet for soloists of The Marinsky, Ukrainian National Ballet, and soloists from The United States.

Rhoden is a beneficiary of various honors and awards, from the New York Foundation for the Arts Award, and subsequent induction into the NYFA Hall of Fame, The Choo San Goh Award for Choreography and The Alvin Ailey Apex Award. Rhoden was nominated for a Benois De La Dance award for his libretto for "Gatsby The Ballet" and received an Honorary Doctorate degree from The Boston Conservatory in recognition of his extensive contributions to the field of dance. His 2004 Racial Reconciliation Project was credited as a catalyst for dialogue in a community that had been historically divided.

"Rhoden's work is post-Balanchinean choreography, a new aesthetic in movement, stage, picture and performance concepts reflecting a post-modern, techno-savvy worldview" according to Dance Magazine.

### **ABOUT THE MANN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**

As one of the foremost outdoor music centers in the country, the Mann Center for the Performing Arts, a leading non-profit organization, has a historical legacy of artistic excellence as a world-class entertainment destination presenting premier artists, now in association with Live Nation Entertainment. Each summer season, renowned symphony orchestras, iconic rock stars and the latest touring artists in indie rock, hip hop, R&B and pop take the stage here. The Mann is the summer home of The Philadelphia Orchestra and has presented critically acclaimed performers in every decade since the 1930s. Located in the heart of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, the Mann hosts more than 200,000 visitors annually. Signature concert experiences are surrounded by Philadelphia's stunning skyline and include seats in the Mann's acoustically acclaimed TD Pavilion; picnics, blankets and music under the stars on its Great Lawn or at the top of the hill at the Skyline Stage; and dining in Crescendo, the venue's spectacular tented restaurant. In addition, the Mann's Education & Community Engagement Program reaches tens of thousands of young people annually through free programming and educational initiatives as well as its virtual Mann Music Room. For more information, visit [www.manncenter.org](http://www.manncenter.org).

### **ABOUT BALLETX**

[BalletX](#), celebrating its 15th Anniversary Season as Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet, commissions choreographers from around the world to create new ballets that are "fresh, inclusive, and connect to what people want" (*Philadelphia Citizen*). Led by Artistic & Executive Director Christine Cox, BalletX has been recognized by *The New Yorker* as a "place of choreographic innovation" for producing nearly 100 world premiere ballets by more than 50 choreographers in its 15-year history. In addition to virtual works, main-stage performances, and international touring, the company offers free community pop ups, dance classes, artist Q&As, open rehearsals, and in-school dance education, designed to bring its audiences and the nation closer to dance. Among its many accolades and honors, BalletX was featured on the cover of *Dance Magazine's* October 2019 issue under the headline "BalletX is Taking All the Right Risks." To learn more about BalletX's programming and dancers, please visit [www.BalletX.org](http://www.BalletX.org) and follow the company on social media.

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Select video and photography, including headshots and social media artwork, are available for publication at [BalletX.org/pressroom](http://BalletX.org/pressroom)
2. BalletX is [@BalletX.Official](#) on Instagram. Helpful hashtags are #BalletX #BalletX15 #ModernDance #ModernBallet #ContemporaryBallet #WorldPremiere #WhyILovePhilly #VisitPhilly
3. Local tourism and COVID-related safe travel hashtags are #PhillyIsOpen #UnstoppablePHL #DiscoverPHL #PHLHealthPledge #ReadySetPhilly #SafeTravelStamp #TravelSafe