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**Experience BalletX's Spring  
Series 2024 Featuring  
Three Groundbreaking  
Choreographers**

*Creative brilliance, innovation, and  
empowerment in contemporary dance on full  
display at Spring Series.*

**PHILADELPHIA (February 13, 2024) –** [BalletX](#), Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet company, presents its Spring Series from **March 6 to 10, 2024** at **The Wilma Theater**, 265 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia. BalletX shines a spotlight on the exceptional talents of three phenomenal female choreographers, featuring a world premiere by the renowned Jennifer Archibald, a world premiere entitled *Two People in Love Never Shake Hands* by 2024 Choreographic Fellow Nicola Wills, and the highly anticipated return of Jodie Gates's *Beautiful Once* (2017).

Tickets are now available to the public at [BalletX.org](https://BalletX.org).

“This series celebrates the extraordinary creativity and vision of three remarkable choreographers who are a force of nature in and out of the studio,” stated **Christine Cox, Co-Founder, Artistic & Executive Director of BalletX**. “What I love about this program is that we are building partnerships with incredible artists, all of whom happen to be women. The fact that this is Women’s History Month adds to the significance. This demonstrates progress. The program wasn’t designed to spotlight women; it was meant to showcase exceptional choreographers in the field. It’s fitting that we debut this series in March, when our nation commemorates the many contributions women have made in our society, including dance. As a female-led dance company, BalletX is thrilled to amplify and celebrate their works, which not only showcase the power and diversity of contemporary ballet but also exemplify the profound impact women have in shaping the future of dance.”

Nicola Wills, hailing from Adelaide, South Australia, is BalletX’s 2024 Choreographic Fellow, selected out of a competitive pool of over 55 international applicants. Having completed her training at Terry Simpsons Dance Studios, Nicola brings a wealth of talent and dedication to her role. Under the mentorship of Jennifer Archiblad, an established choreographer, Nicola embarks on a

transformative journey of artistic development. Nicola is presented with a distinctive chance to refine her skills and contribute significantly to contemporary ballet choreography through the prestigious BalletX Choreographic Fellowship, renowned for its ballet-centric focus and supported by the Wyncote Foundation at the recommendation of David Haas.

“Through *Two People in Love Never Shake Hands*, I aimed to craft a choreographic narrative that delves into the intricate tapestry of love's journey, exploring how fate intertwines the lives of two individuals, only to unravel them apart. Inspired by Yoko Ono's *Lumière de L'aube* exhibition and its profound themes of wistful hope and regrets, this piece is a homage to the bittersweet essence of past loves,” stated **BalletX Choreographic Fellow Nicola Wills**. “Set against the backdrop of old Hollywood nostalgia, our dancers embody the social intricacies of love, lust, longing, and rejection, inviting the audience to witness the perpetual dance of chance that dictates our romantic destinies. With a stirring musical score by Adam Vincent Clarke and Joep Beving and exquisite costume designs by Christine Darch, *Two People in Love Never Shake Hands* transports viewers into a cinematic realm where laughter and tears intermingle, evoking a visceral journey through the highs and lows of human connection.”

Jodie Gates boasts a rich career as an artistic director, choreographer, arts educator, stager, and former dancer. She has graced prestigious stages as a principal ballerina with renowned companies such as the Joffrey Ballet, Philadelphia Ballet, Frankfurt Ballet, and Complexions Contemporary Ballet, in addition to her roles as an international guest artist. Her work *Beautiful Once* features an original score by Ryan Lott of Son Lux fame, whose exceptional talent earned him an Oscar nomination for his score in the film "Everything Everywhere All at Once." The performance showcases a seamless blend of captivating choreography and evocative music.

*“Beautiful Once* with BalletX holds a special place in my heart, and revisiting the ballet seven years after its birth has been incredibly rewarding,” **stated Choreographer Jodie Gates.** “The ballet in an abstract form is about community, about our relationships over time, and what it means to experience loss and receive a warm hug from a loved one at times that seem hopeless. Collaborating and creating with BalletX in Philadelphia since 2009 has been such a thrill. The integrity, dedication, fearless qualities and welcoming spirit from company leadership, the staff and dancers have been such a terrific influence during the course in my choreographic career. I look forward to further collaborations in our future together.”

The Spring Series will also welcome a world premiere by Jennifer Archibald, who returns to BalletX after the huge success of her 2022 premiere, *Exalt*. Archibald's piece will draw inspiration from Nobel laureate British author William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, and the piece is culminating in a full-length ballet next season. Archibald is the founder and Artistic Director of the Arch Dance Company and Program Director of ArchCore40 Dance Intensives, and has made significant contributions to the dance world. Her choreography has graced the stages of esteemed institutions such as the Atlanta Ballet, Ailey II, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Kansas City Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, Grand Rapids Ballet, Ballet West, Sacramento Ballet, and Pittsburgh Ballet. Additionally, she has applied her talents commercially for Tommy Hilfiger, NIKE, MAC Cosmetics, and chart-topping artists.

In addition to the performances, BalletX Spring Series will introduce several special events throughout the series to offer interaction with the artists, as well as opportunities for younger audiences, including young professionals, and families with children. Special happenings include:

- **Pre-Show Q&A on March 6:** Opening Night Pre-show Q&A with the Artists. This intimate, behind-the-scenes conversation features Jodie Gates, Jennifer Archibald and 2024 Choreographic Fellow Nicola Wills,

moderated by BalletX Rehearsal Director & Community Liaison Keelan Whitmore.

- **Young Xers Night on March 8:** Young Xers is a community of young professionals, and arts enthusiasts ages 21-40 who are committed to BalletX's mission of expanding the vocabulary of classical dance for all audiences. Network with friends and peers at a pre-show reception starting at 7:00 pm.
- **Family Matinee on March 9:** Enjoy family-friendly fun including dancing, music, and crafts from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm. This event is recommended for children ages 5-12 and their families. Activities include a performance by BalletX's Dance eXchange Dream Team at 1:30 pm, showcasing an original dance to Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation and led by BalletX teaching artists, Ellicia Clayton and Olivia Brown.

This series is made possible through support from the Wyncote Foundation, at the recommendation of Leonard C. Haas.

BalletX's Spring Series 2024 will run approximately 100 minutes, including one intermission. For

tickets, student discounts, and more information, contact the BalletX Box Office at 215-225-5389 x250 or [boxoffice@balletx.org](mailto:boxoffice@balletx.org). More information is also available at [BalletX.org](http://BalletX.org).

**\*\*Note for media: Covering media interested in attending the Spring Series or advanced interview, please contact: [tday@signature57.com](mailto:tday@signature57.com) \*\***

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**About BalletX**

Based in Philadelphia, BalletX is one of the nation's premier contemporary ballet companies, known for commissioning 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" producing over 120 world premiere ballets and films by more than 70 choreographers in its 18-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 inspire human connection through dance. To learn more about BalletX's programming and dancers, visit BalletX.org and follow the company on social media.

### **About Jennifer Archibald**

Jennifer Archibald is the founder and Artistic Director of the Arch Dance Company and Program Director of ArchCore40 Dance Intensives. Archibald has choreographed for the Atlanta Ballet, Ailey II, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Kansas City Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, Grand Rapids Ballet, Ballet West, Sacramento Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet and worked commercially for Tommy Hilfiger, NIKE and MAC Cosmetics as well as chart-listed artists.

This season she will create new works for Richmond Ballet, Ballet Austin, and Ballare Carmel Boston Conservatory, and The Governor's School. Archibald was the acting Movement Director for Michael Kahn's *The Oresteia* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company. As a director she premiered *WeAighT* a film featuring current Ailey Company member James Gilmer and was selected for Best Choreography and Best Male Lead for Mountain View Film Festival. *WeAighT* is an official selection for the San Francisco Film Festival and the Light Moves Festival in Ireland.



Archibald's works have been performed at venues including New York's City Center, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Aaron Davis Hall, Jacob's Pillow Inside|Out Stage and Central Park's Summerstage Mainstage. Archibald was awarded a Choreographic Fellow for Ailey's New Directions Choreography Lab under the direction of Robert Battle. She is a Choreographic Winnings recipient by the Joffrey Ballet. Jennifer choreographed "Seven", a biographical work about Olympian Jackie Joyner-Kersey, which was commissioned by St. Louis based MADCO Dance Company. ArchDance Company's "Chasing Shadows" was remounted for Dallas Black Dance Theater for their 2018/19 season. She was also the 2018-19 recipient's for the CUNY Dance Initiative Residency.

Jennifer is currently an Acting Lecturer at the Yale School of Drama and was appointed as Guest Faculty Lecturer to develop the Hip Hop dance curriculum at Columbia/Barnard College. Jennifer is also a guest artist at several universities including Fordham/Ailey, Purchase College, Princeton, Virginia Commonwealth University, University of South Florida, Goucher College, Columbia College Chicago, Miami New World School of the Arts, South Carolina's Governor's School of the Arts, Ailey Fordham, Boston Conservatory, and Point Park

### **About Jodie Gates**

Jodie Gates is an artistic director, a choreographer, arts educator, stager, and former dancer. She was a principal ballerina with the Joffrey Ballet, Philadelphia Ballet, Frankfurt Ballet, and Complexions Contemporary Ballet, as well as an international guest artist. She most recently was Artistic Director of Cincinnati Ballet and is currently Founder and Artistic Director of Laguna Dance Festival based in Laguna Beach California, and Founding Director of the University of Southern California's Gloria Kaufman School of Dance in Los Angeles. Jodie was a tenured Professor at the University of Southern California and University of California, Irvine.

She is an accomplished choreographer, commissioned by several dance companies including Staatsballett Berlin, American Ballet Theatre Studio Company, Ballet West, Colorado Ballet, BalletX, Kansas City Ballet, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, and Vail International Dance Festival, as well as a commissioned choreographer for television commercials, special site-specific events including choreography and direction for singer/songwriter John Legend, and she choreographed a global ad campaign for Los Angeles Tourism.

Jodie is an artistic collaborator with William Forsythe, staging ballets for Forsythe Productions, working with the Paris Opera Ballet, San Francisco

Ballet, Houston Ballet, Scottish Ballet, Teatro alla Scala Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, and Zurich Ballet among others. Ms. Gates' performing career began with the Joffrey Ballet in NYC where she originated many roles and worked with a host of renowned choreographers.

She is featured in several publications and has appeared in numerous television programs and festivals. Her guest appearances include galas at The Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg Russia; dancing Odette/Odile with Fernando Bujones in Swan Lake with Ballet de Monterrey Mexico; Juliet in John Cranko's Romeo & Juliet at Lincoln Center in New York City, The Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and The Music Center in Los Angeles. She appeared at festivals in Spoleto Italy, The Edinburgh Festival, The Nijinsky Festival in Hamburg, Germany, and The Melbourne Festival in Australia.

She has danced at the Bolshoi in Moscow, Bockenheimer Depot in Frankfurt Germany, Theatre du Chatelet and Theatre des Champs-Elysées in Paris, among other established venues in the United States. Ms. Gates received a Psychology of Leadership Certificate from Cornell University SC Johnson College of Business and studied with the Higher Education Leadership Program for Women at Bryn Mawr College. Honors include recognition for Arts Leadership by the American Association of University Women,

Altria/ABT fellowship from American Ballet Theatre, and a recipient of the esteemed Jerome Robbins New Essential Works program.

Most recently, she was awarded the distinguished 2021/2022 Residency Fellowship from The Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University. Her Fellowship acknowledged her most recent work addressing systemic inequities within the culture of ballet.

### **About Nicola Wills**

Nicola Wills comes from Adelaide, South Australia, where she completed her training at Terry Simpsons Dance Studios. In 2009, She graduated from Annesley College with Honors and won the Silver Medal at the RAD Genee competition in Singapore. After completing a two-year traineeship with the Queensland Ballet Professional program, she joined Ballet Dortmund in 2012, before moving to Belgium in 2013 to dance with the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen (FKA: Royal Ballet of Flanders).

Nicola was promoted to demi-soloist in 2017, and during her time in the company has performed pieces by and worked with choreographers such as William Forsythe, Crystal Pite, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Akram Khan, Johan Inger, Alexander Ekman, Pina Bausch, Jiří Kylián, Ohad Naharin and many more. Whilst continuing to dance and make her own work, Nicola is currently studying a

part-time Bachelor's Degree in Psychology at the University of South Australia, to aid her better understanding the human condition as it is her wish to create nuanced work that is socially and emotionally relevant.

During her time in the Ballet van Vlaanderen, she has made 8 stage works and 2 dance films for the company's in-house choreographers' program. In 2021, Her piece 'The Glass Ceiling', won her the National Youth Ballet of Hamburg production prize in the 35th Hannover Choreographic competition, with Gerard Davis highlighting her as a 'New Name to Watch' in the Dance Europe 2021 Critics Choice awards.

In 2023, she will be completing her first full-length production with the Kennesaw State University summer choreographic residency in the US and is commissioned to create work for the Gent Festival program in Belgium. Her duet 'Two People in Love Never Shake Hands' has been selected to compete in the 37th Hannover Choreographic competition and will also be performed in the International Dance Gala in Genoa, Italy.

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