

## White Stripes ballet to premiere in Toronto

### CBC News



*Greta Hodgkinson is shown with artists of the National Ballet in Cinderella. (Cylla von Tiedemann/National Ballet)*

The National Ballet of Canada is to perform contemporary works by some of the world's most prominent international choreographers in its 2010-11 season, including a ballet danced to music by the White Stripes.

National Ballet artistic director Karen Kain announced a season with an emphasis on new and innovative works Monday in a media conference.

The works to premiere include:

- *Russian Seasons* by Russia's Alexei Ratmansky.
- *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Britain's Christopher Wheeldon.
- *Chroma* by Britain's Wayne McGregor.

McGregor was hailed as a breath of fresh air in dance circles with *Chroma*, a piece for five couples in flesh-coloured dancewear set to music by the White Stripes.



*Edward Watson and Alina Cojocaru of Royal Ballet star in Chroma, which is set to music by the White Stripes. (Johann Persson/National Ballet)*

The dance was a major hit for the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden in London, packing the seats with a younger audience. McGregor has his own company, Random Dance, and was appointed youth dance champion by the British government in 2008.

"He's not a classical dancer, he's a contemporary dancer and he never had any classical training but he did this incredible piece for these classical dancers," Kain told CBC News.

"It caused a sensation so I was reading about it constantly and seeing pictures of it and getting really excited about it," Kain said. "And then I called him and he said 'Karen, you know I never do my pieces they just stay with one company, I don't re-create them.' So I just kept working on him and he finally said yes."

In Toronto for the media conference, McGregor said he was looking forward to casting National Ballet dancers in *Chroma*.

Kain said White Stripes singer Jack White has been invited to the North American premiere of the ballet in Toronto.

She said she has been slowly introducing National Ballet audiences to contemporary work set to modern music in her past few years as artistic director.

"I think if you keep exposing them to how the art form is growing and how it is moving into our time that they come along with you, and they have been coming along with us," she said. "I think they will be as excited about seeing *Chroma* as I am."

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a new classical ballet by one of Britain's most recognized choreographers. Wheeldon is creating the ballet on a commission for the Royal Ballet and the National Ballet.

### **Fantasy elements**

He has promised it will explore the dark side of Lewis Carroll's classic story, as well as the fantasy elements. It will premiere in London in February 2011 and then head to Toronto.

Ratmansky, artistic director of Russia's Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow and artist-in-residence at the American Ballet Theatre in New York, premiered *Russian Seasons* in New York in 2006. The National Ballet's performance in March 2011 will mark its Canadian premiere.

Set to new classical music by Lenoid Desyatnikov, his ballet is part of a series featuring Russian music and dance planned for the 2010-11 season, Kain said.

Also in that program are two works by Russian-born George Balanchine — *Apollo* with music by Igor Stravinsky's music and a program called *Theme and Variations* based on the music of Tschaikovsky.

Another new work features the choreography of one of Canada's up-and-coming dance stars, Crystal Pite. Vancouver-based Pite has created *Emergence*, with an original score by Owen Belton, for the National Ballet.

*Emergence* will be performed with Marie Chouinard's *24 Preludes by Chopin* in Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City, where the National Ballet will take part in the Danse Danse festival.

The 2010-11 season will also have performances of:

- *Cinderella.*
- *Don Quixote.*
- *The Nutcracker.*
- *Mozartium.*
- *In the Upper Room.*
- *Song of a Wayfarer.*