THE NATIONAL Ballet OF CANADA

Karen Kain
Artistic Director

Barry Hughson
Executive Director

On Stage
Four Seasons Centre
for the Performing Arts

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2017/18 Roster

Celia Franca, C.C.
Founder

George Crum
Music Director Emeritus

Karen Kain, C.C.
Artistic Director

Barry Hughson
Executive Director

David Briskin
Music Director and Principal Conductor

Christopher Stowell
Associate Artistic Director

Magdalena Popa
Principal Artistic Coach

Lindsay Fischer
Artistic Director, YOU dance / Principal Ballet Master

Rex Harrington, O.C.
Artist-in-Residence

Peter Ottmann
Senior Ballet Master

Mandy-Jayne Richardson
Senior Ballet Mistress

Guillaume Côté, Jurgita Dronina, Naoya Ebe, Greta Hodgkinson, Harrison James, Elena Lobsanova, Svetlana Lunkina, Evan McKie, Heather Ogden, Sonia Rodriguez, Piotr Stanczyk, Jillian Vanstone, Xiao Nan Yu

Lorna Geddes, Stephanie Hutchison, Etienne Lavigne, Alejandra Perez-Gomez, Jonathan Renna, Rebekah Rimsay, Tomas Schramek, Hazaros Surmeyan

Skylar Campbell, Jordana Daumec, Hannah Fischer, Francesco Gabriele Frola, Emma Hawes, Tanya Howard, Alexandra MacDonald, Chelsy Meiss, Tina Pereira, Jenna Savella, Brendan Saye, Robert Stephen, Dylan Tedaldi

Jack Bertinshaw, Kathryn Hosier, Rui Huang, Tiffany Mosher, Félix Paquet, Brent Parolin, Ben Rudisin, Donald Thom

Jimmy Coleman, Trygve Cumpston, Erika Delponte, Giorgio Galli, Christopher Gerty, Selene Guerrero-Trujillo, Spencer Hack, Jeannine Haller, Peng-Fei Jiang, Soo Ah Kang, Larissa Khotchenkova, Miyoko Koyasu, Antonella Martinelli, Mallory Mehaffey, DaeHan Na, Siphesihle November, Jaclyn Oakley, Andreea Olteanu, Clare Peterson, Meghan Pugh, Kota Sato, Calley Skalnik, Laurynas Vejalis, Nan Wang, Ethan Watts, Chae Eun Yang

RBC Apprentice Programme / YOU dance: Heather Capen, Brenna Flaherty, Hannah Galway, Alexandra Hall, Nico Janssen, Minkyung Lee, George Liang, Larkin Miller, Teagan Richman-Taylor, Alexander Skinner

Robert Binet
Guillaume Côté
Choreographic Associates

Jeff Morris
Liliane Stilwell
Stage Manager

Lorna Geddes
Pointe Shoe Manager / Assistant Ballet Mistress

Joysanne Sidimus
Guest Balanchine Répétitieur

THE NATIONAL Ballet OF CANADA

Karen Kain
Artistic Director

2017/18

Media Release

The Winter's Tale "A Spectacular Work"

Opens 2017/18 Season

Debuts by Harrison James, Greta Hodgkinson and Tina Pereira

October 17, 2017… **Karen Kain**, Artistic Director of The National Ballet of Canada today announced the principal casting for *The Winter's Tale* by **Christopher Wheeldon**. A co-production with **The Royal Ballet** (UK), *The Winter's Tale* opens the National Ballet's 2017/18 season on November 10, 2017 at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto.

> "It takes us on a great arc of emotion and experience, capturing the play's themes of death and regeneration, hostility and reconciliation" The New York Times
>
> "Fantastic production" New York Magazine
>
> "★★★★/4 An operatically epic Shakespearean ballet… a spectacular work that will stand the test of time… packed with inventive steps and spectacular scenic effects" Toronto Star
>
> "*The Winter's Tale* dazzles with its visual drama, choreography" The Washington Post
>
> "Christopher Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* is that rare accomplishment: a brand new story ballet that speaks to today's audience." Dance Magazine

The opening night cast will feature Principal Dancer **Piotr Stanczyk** and First Soloist **Hannah Fischer** who reprise the lead roles of Leontes and Hermione. Performing the roles of Perdita and Florizel will be Principal Dancers **Jillian Vanstone** and **Naoya Ebe**. Principal Dancers **Harrison James** and **Xiao Nan Yu** will dance the roles of Polixenes and Paulina.

Reprising the role of Leontes will be Principal Dancers **Guillaume Côté** and **Evan McKie**, with Mr. James making his debut. Principal Dancers **Jurgita Dronina, Heather Ogden and Sonia Rodriguez** will dance the role of Hermione.

The role of Perdita will also be performed by Principal Dancer **Elena Lobsanova** and Second Soloist **Rui Huang**, with First Soloist **Tina Pereira** making her debut in the role. First Soloists **Skylar Campbell**, **Francesco Gabriele Frola** and **Dylan Tedaldi** will dance the role of Florizel. First Soloist **Brendan Saye** and Second Soloist **Félix Paquet** will perform the role of Polixenes. Principal Dancer **Svetlana Lunkina** and First Soloist **Tanya Howard** will dance the role of Paulina and Principal Dancer **Greta Hodgkinson** will make her debut in the role.

The National Ballet of Canada's most recent collaboration with The Royal Ballet saw dancers from each company perform *The Dreamers Ever Leave* You by Choreographic Associate **Robert Binet** to sold-out audiences at The Printworks, Canada Water in London, October 12 – 13, 2017. *The Winter's Tale* is the second co-production between the National Ballet and The Royal Ballet, the first being the smash hit *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Based on the play by Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale* is a story of loss and redemption, a meditation on love, jealousy and the nature of family. Combining elements of fairy tale, comedy, tragedy and fantasy, *The Winter's Tale*, by renowned British choreographer **Christopher Wheeldon**, features an original score by **Joby Talbot**, designs by **Bob Crowley** and lighting by **Natasha Katz**.

Casting

Leontes
Piotr Stanczyk (November 10, 15 at 7:30 pm/November 18 at 2:00 pm)
Evan McKie (November 11, 17 at 7:30 pm/November 16 at 2:00 pm)
Guillaume Côté (November 12 at 2:00 pm/November 18 At 7:30 pm)
Harrison James* (November 16 at 7:30 pm/November 19 at 2:00 pm)

Hermione
Hannah Fischer (November 10, 15 at 7:30 pm/November 18 at 2:00 pm)
Jurgita Dronina (November 11, 17 at 7:30 pm/November 16 at 2:00 pm)
Heather Ogden (November 12 at 2:00 pm/November 18 at 7:30 pm)
Sonia Rodriguez (November 16 at 7:30 pm/November 19 at 2:00 pm)

Perdita
Jillian Vanstone (November 10, 15 at 7:30 pm/November 18 at 2:00 pm)
Elena Lobsanova (November 11, 17 at 7:30 pm/November 16 at 2:00 pm)
Rui Huang (November 12 at 2:00 pm/November 18 at 7:30 pm)
Tina Pereira* (November 16 at 7:30 pm/November 19 at 2:00 pm)

Florizel
Naoya Ebe (November 10, 15 at 7:30 pm/November 18 at 2:00 pm)
Francesco Gabriele Frola (November 11, 17 at 7:30 pm/November 16 at 2:00 pm)
Skylar Campbell (November 12 at 2:00 pm/November 18 at 7:30 pm)
Dylan Tedaldi (November 16 at 7:30 pm/November 19 at 2:00 pm)

Polixenes
Harrison James (November 10, 15 at 7:30 pm/November 18 at 2:00 pm)
Brendan Saye (November 11, 17, 18 at 7:30 pm/November 12, 16 at 2:00 pm)
Félix Paquet (November 16 at 7:30 pm/November 19 at 2:00 pm)

Paulina
Xiao Nan Yu (November 10, 15 at 7:30 pm/November 18 at 2:00 pm)
Svetlana Lunkina (November 11, 17 at 7:30 pm/November 16 at 2:00 pm)
Greta Hodgkinson* (November 12 at 2:00 pm/November 18 at 7:30 pm)
Tanya Howard (November 16 at 7:30 pm/November 19 at 2:00 pm)

*Debut

Casting subject to change.

More information on *The Winter's Tale* >

-30-

The Winter's Tale presented by Coty Canada.

Lead philanthropic support for *The Winter's Tale* is provided by The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, Richard M. Ivey, C.C., an anonymous friend of the National Ballet and The Producers' Circle.

The Producers' Circle: Gail & Mark Appel, John & Claudine Bailey, Inger Bartlett & Marshal Stearns, David W. Binet, Susanne Boyce & Brendan Mullen, Gail Drummond & Bob Dorrance, Sandra Faire & Ivan Fecan, Kevin & Roger Garland, The William & Nona Heaslip Foundation, Rosamond Ivey, Hal Jackman Foundation, Anna McCowan-Johnson & Donald K. Johnson, O.C., Judy Korthals & Peter Irwin, Judith & Robert Lawrie, Mona & Harvey Levenstein, Jerry & Joan Lozinski, The Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain, C.C., Julie Medland, Sandra Pitblado & Jim Pitblado, C.M., Lynda & Jonas Prince, Susan Scace & Arthur Scace, C.M., Q.C., Gerald Sheff & Shanitha Kachan, Sandra Simpson and Noreen Taylor, C.M. & David Staines, C.M., O.Ont.

The National Ballet of Canada gratefully acknowledges Margaret Fountain, C.M. and David Fountain as our Exclusive Tour Partners.

Lead philanthropic support for *The Dreamers Ever Leave You* is provided by The Volunteer Committee of The National Ballet of Canada and The Producers' Circle.

The initial presentation of *The Dreamers Ever Leave You* in Toronto was supported by Sandra Faire & Ivan Fecan, Joan & Jerry Lozinski and The Honourable Margaret McCain, C.C.

Guillaume Côté is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Emmanuelle Gattuso and Allan Slaight.

Naoya Ebe is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Gretchen Ross.

Harrison James is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Lucy White.

Elena Lobsanova is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Sandra Faire & Ivan Fecan.

Svetlana Lunkina is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Anna McCowan-Johnson & Donald K. Johnson, O.C.

Evan McKie is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Simona Shnaider.

Heather Ogden is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Ira Gluskin & Maxine Granovsky Gluskin.

Jillian Vanstone is sponsored through *Dancers First* by George & Kathy Dembroski.

Skylar Campbell is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Tricia Younger.

Hannah Fischer is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Judy & Bella Matthews.

Francesco Gabriele Frola is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Sherry and Edward Drew.

Tanya Howard is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Nancy Pencer.

Tina Pereira is sponsored through *Dancers First* by The Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain, C.C.

Brendan Saye is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Robin Robinson.

Félix Paquet is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Stephen Delaney & Robyn McCallum.

The National Ballet of Canada gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the Canada Council for the Arts; the Ontario Arts Council; the City of Toronto through the Economic Development & Culture Department; the Government of Canada – Department of Canadian Heritage, through the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages; and the Government of Ontario through the Honourable Eleanor McMahon, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

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Coty Canada presents

The Winter's Tale

Ballet in a Prologue and Three Acts

Choreography: Christopher Wheeldon
Scenario: Chistopher Wheeldon and Joby Talbot
Music: Joby Talbot
Design: Bob Crowley
Lighting Design: Natasha Katz
Projection Design: Daniel Brodie
Silk Effects Design: Basil Twist
Staged by: Jacquelin Barrett

Premiere: The Royal Ballet, Covent Garden, London, UK, April 10, 2014
The National Ballet of Canada Premiere: November 14, 2015

A co-production of The National Ballet of Canada and The Royal Ballet (UK).

Lead philanthropic support for *The Winter's Tale* is provided by The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, Richard M. Ivey, C.C., an anonymous friend of the National Ballet and The Producers' Circle.

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Performance Dates:
November 10 – 19, 2017
Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts

Shakespeare's fascinating late work *The Winter's Tale* has always defied classification. With elements of tragedy, comedy and romance, it is a story of the deterioration of a marriage and the complex emotions that follow.

Christopher Wheeldon's ballet version of the play embraces the full range of the play's emotional life, featuring some of his most inventive and exuberant choreography to date. With an original score by Joby Talbot, designs by Bob Crowley and lighting by Natasha Katz, the same key creative team who gave us the unforgettable *Alice's Adventures in*

Wonderland, *The Winter's Tale* is a profound and searching drama of love and redemption and the spring that lies beneath even the darkest of days.

In 2014, Mr. Wheeldon was awarded The Critics' Circle Award for Best Classical Choreography for *The Winter's Tale*.

Quotes

"it takes us on a great arc of emotion and experience, capturing the play's themes of death and regeneration, hostility and reconciliation... nothing in Mr. Wheeldon's [*The Winter's Tale*] is unworthy of the great original." The New York Times

"With brutal choreography and dramatic intelligence, Christopher Wheeldon has turned Shakespeare's problem play into a mind-snagging ballet." The New Yorker

"fantastic production" New York Magazine

"Christopher Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* is that rare accomplishment: a brand new story ballet that speaks to today's audience." Dance Magazine

"From the first moment of people rushing onstage for a celebration, Christopher Wheeldon's brilliant choreography and Joby Talbot's enchanting music mesh together with flair… Wheeldon has taken this difficult play and turned it into a beautifully cogent, poignant ballet." Dance Europe

"*The Winter's Tale* dazzles with its visual drama, choreography." The Washington Post

"★★★★/4 An operatically epic Shakespearean ballet… a spectacular work that will stand the test of time" Toronto Star

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Christopher Wheeldon

Choreographer, *The Winter's Tale*

Christopher Wheeldon trained at The Royal Ballet School and danced with The Royal Ballet and New York City Ballet. He served as NYCB's first-ever Artist in Residence and was named NYCB's first Resident Choreographer in July 2001.

Mr. Wheeldon has created productions for all the world's major ballet companies including: New York City Ballet, The Royal Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Het Nationale Ballet, Royal Swedish Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, Joffrey Ballet and The National Ballet of Canada. He has also choreographed for the Metropolitan Opera, created ballet sequences for the feature film *Center Stage* (2000) and *Sweet Smell of Success* on Broadway (2002) and was the Artistic Director for Les Arts Decoratif's *Fashion Forward* exhibit in Paris (2016).

In 2014, Mr. Wheeldon directed and choreographed *An American in Paris* which premiered in Paris in 2014 at the Théâtre du Châtelet. The Broadway production premiered in 2015 and won Mr. Wheeldon the 2015 Tony Award for Best Choreography and Outer Critics Award for Best Choreography and Direction. Other awards include Martin E. Segal Award from Lincoln Center, the American Choreography Award, a Dance Magazine Award, London Critic's Circle Award for Best New Ballet, the OBE, the Prix Benois de la Danse, an Olivier Award and the Leonard Massine Prize for Choreography.

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Joby Talbot

Composer, *The Winter's Tale*

Born in London in 1971, Joby Talbot has a versatile yet distinct musical aesthetic that is equally at home in the concert hall, onstage or screen. Highlights include ballet scores for acclaimed choreographers Christopher Wheeldon (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 2011 and *The Winter's Tale*, 2014) and Wayne McGregor (*Chroma*, 2007 and *Genus*, 2007) with companies such as The Royal Ballet, The National Ballet of Canada and Paris Opéra Ballet; interactive collaborations with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Philharmonia Orchestra (*Worlds, Stars Systems* and *Infinity*, 2012); works for renowned vocal groups (*Path of Miracles*, 2005 and *The Wishing Tree*, 2002); concerti commissioned by international soloists (*Desolation Wilderness* for Alison Balsom, 2006); guitar concerto for Miloš Karadaglić, 2018); major feature film scores (*Sing*, 2016) and a debut opera with one of America's premier companies, The Dallas Opera (*Everest*, 2015). Forthcoming projects include a silent film score for the LA Opera, 2018 and a second opera for The Dallas Opera, 2020.

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Bob Crowley

Set, Costume and Properties Designer, *The Winter's Tale*

Bob Crowley's designs for the National Theatre include *Collaborators*, *Travelling Light*, *The Habit of Art*, *The Power of Yes*, *Phèdre*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, *Gethsemane*, *Fram* (also co-directed), *The History Boys* (also Broadway, Tony Award) and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. For the Royal Shakespeare Company, more than 25 productions including *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and *The Plantagenets* (Olivier Award); and for Broadway *The Glass Menagerie* (and West End), *Carousel* (Tony Award), *The Capeman*, *Sweet Smell of Success*, Disney's *Aladdin* (West End, Broadway), *Aida* (Tony Award), *Tarzan* (also directed), *Mary Poppins* (Tony Award), *The Year of Magical Thinking*, *Coast of Utopia* (Tony Award) and *Once* (Tony Award). Other designs include *An American in Paris* (Théâtre du Châtelet, Broadway – Tony Award), *The Audience* (West End, Broadway), *Skylight* (West End, Broadway), *Great Scott* (The Dallas Opera), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Strapless* (The Royal Ballet), *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Le Châtelet), *Don Carlo* and *La traviata* (Royal Opera). Film credits include *Othello*, *Tales from Hollywood*, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *The Crucible* (costumes). He received the Royal Designer for Industry Award and the Robert L.B. Tobin Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatrical Design.

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Natasha Katz

Lighting Designer, *The Winter's Tale*

American lighting designer Natasha Katz has a strong creative relationship with The Royal Ballet Artistic Associate Christopher Wheeldon and has collaborated with him and the company on *Tryst* (2002), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2011) and *The Winter's Tale* (2014). Ms. Katz's other collaborations with Mr. Wheeldon include *Continuum* (San Francisco Ballet, 2002), *Carnival of the Animals* (New York City Ballet, 2003), *Swan Lake* (Pennsylvania Ballet, 2004) *Cinderella* (Het Nationale Ballet, 2012), *The Nutcracker* (Joffrey Ballet, 2016) and the premiere of *An American in Paris* (The New York City Ballet, 2005; Théâtre Châtelet, 2014; Broadway, 2015 and the West End, 2017), for which she won a Tony.

Ms. Katz is a six-time Tony Award winner whose career has led her to design for all aspects of entertainment around the world including dance, opera, concerts, international theatres, regional theatres, off-Broadway, Las Vegas, television and permanent lighting installations. Her Broadway credits include: *Frozen*; *Springsteen on Broadway; Hello, Dolly!* (starring Bette Midler); *Cats*; *Long Day's Journey Into Night*; *School of Rock*; *An American in Paris*; *Aladdin; The Glass Menagerie* (Olivier nomination, 2017); *Once*; *The Coast of Utopia: Salvage; Aida*; and *Beauty and the Beast.*

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Daniel Brodie

Projection Design, *The Winter's Tale*

Daniel Brodie was born in Las Vegas and now lives in Brooklyn. He graduated with a degree in theatre and media design from the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. He designed the projections for Christopher Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* (The Royal Ballet and The National Ballet of Canada) and *Cinderella* (Het Nationale Ballet and San Francisco Ballet). He has worked regularly with puppeteer Basil Twist, both on *The Winter's Tale* and *Cinderella* and on Mr. Twist's *Behind the Lid*, *Arias with a Twist* and *The Rite of Spring*. Mr. Brodie's Broadway credits have included *Motown the Musical, Jekyll & Hyde* and Disney's *Aladdin*. He has also created large-scale video designs for Kanye West, Mariah Carey and for the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival. Mr. Brodie's awards include the United States Institute of Theatre Technology's Rising Star Award (2011) and he has also worked as a guest lecturer at Yale University and New York University.

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Basil Twist

Silk Effects Design, *The Winter's Tale*

A native of San Francisco, Basil Twist is a third-generation puppeteer and a graduate from the École Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mezieres, France. Highlights of Mr. Twist's work include the multiple award-winning *Symphonie Fantastiqu, Petrushka* (commissioned by Lincoln Center), *Dogugaeshi* (The Japan Society), *Behind the Lid* (Silver Whale Gallery), *Sister Follies, Seafoam Sleepwalk, The Rite of Spring* and *Arias with a Twist* (HERE). On Broadway, Mr. Twist created and staged the puppetry in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Oh Hello, The Addams Family* and *The Pee-Wee Herman Show*. Mr. Twist made his debut at La Comédie-Francaise as designer and co-director of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. His work in dance includes Christopher Wheeldon's *Cinderella* for Het Nationale Ballet, The National Ballet of Cananda and San Francisco Ballet, Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* for The Royal Ballet and The National Ballet of Canada and *The Nutcracker* for The Joffrey Ballet. Mr. Twist has been honoured with an Obie Award, a Drama Desk Award, five UNIMA Awards, two Bessie Awards, a New York Innovative Theatre Award, a Henry Hewes Design Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a United States Artists Fellowship and a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. He is currently Artistic Director of HERE Art Center's Dream Music Puppetry Program, one of the few programs in the country to develop and commission contemporary, adult puppet works.

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Jacquelin Barrett

Staging, *The Winter's Tale*

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. Ms. 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, Ms. 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. Ms. Barrett is the Associate Director on the musical *An American in Paris* which is currently running on Broadway.

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Artistic Director

The Winter's Tale

Synopsis

Prologue

Two kings separated as children are reunited in adulthood. One king, Leontes of Sicilia, marries Hermione, giving her a beautiful emerald. They have a son, Mamilllius, and are blissfully happy. The other king, Polixenes of Bohemia, visits the court of Leontes. He is delighted to be reunited with his old friend and stays for nine months. By the time of his departure, Hermione is about to give birth to her second child.

Act I

The court of Sicilia

It is the day of Polixenes' departure. The Bohemian court say goodbye to their Sicilian friends. At Hermione's request, Polixenes agrees to stay on another week. In a flash of jealousy, Leontes becomes convinced that his wife has been unfaithful and is carrying Polixenes' child. Jealousy turns to rage and he attacks Polixenes, who flees back to Bohemia. Leontes publicly accuses Hermione of adultery and treason, then has her arrested. This so distresses Mamillius that he falls seriously ill. In prison, Hermione has given birth to a daughter. The head of her household, Paulina, brings the newborn to Leontes, hoping to convince him that the baby is his daughter. Instead, Leontes violently rejects the child, then orders Paulina's husband Antigonus to abandon the baby in a remote place. Antigonus sets sail into a brewing storm with the baby and some treasure, including the emerald once given to Hermione by Leontes. Hermione is brought to trial and pleads her innocence. Leontes, now quite mad, refuses to believe her. Dazed and feverish, Mamillius enters the courtroom and, upon witnessing the unfolding tragedy, he collapses and dies from distress. Seeing the death of her child, Hermione too collapses dead and is taken away. Only now does Leontes realize the disastrous consequences of his terrible mistake.

The shores of Bohemia

Battling the storm, Antigonus struggles ashore to abandon the baby princess. As he leaves, he is pursued and killed by a wild bear. His ship, waiting at sea, is smashed to pieces on the rocks. As day breaks, a shepherd and his son Clown discover the baby girl and the treasure.

Act II

A hillside in Bohemia. Sixteen years later.

Perdita, the abandoned daughter of King Leontes and Queen Hermione, has been raised by the shepherd who found her. She dances beneath the great tree with her love, Prince Florizel, the son of Polixenes, whom the other villagers know only as a shepherd boy. The villagers arrive for the annual springtime festival. King Polixenes, who has heard that his son has been cavorting with a shepherdess, sends his steward to spy on the young prince. When the steward confirms his suspicions, Polixenes is enraged, and demands to see for himself. At the festival, Perdita is to be crowned May Queen. In honour of the occasion,

Father Shepherd presents her with the emerald necklace he found with her on the beach. Polixenes and his steward arrive in disguise, keen to see what Florizel is up to. On witnessing Florizel's engagement to a mere shepherdess, Polixenes reveals himself. He is furious with Florizel, and condemns Perdita and her family to death. They all flee by boat to Sicilia, pursued by Polixenes.

Act III

A clifftop in Sicilia

King Leontes mourns by the clifftop graves of his wife and son, watched over by Paulina. Perdita and Florizel's ship approaches Sicilia.

The palace in Sicilia

Perdita and Florizel appeal to Leontes to allow their union, and to intercede with the enraged Polixenes on their behalf. Leontes is taken with the likeness of Florizel to Polixenes. He agrees to help the young couple, who remind him of his lost children. Polixenes arrives and Leontes tries to reason with him, but he violently handles Perdita, revealing the emerald. The long lost Princess of Sicilia is miraculously alive and the two kings are reunited. The Palace celebrates the wedding of Florizel and Perdita. As the festivities die down, Leontes is led by Paulina to see a new statue of Hermione. Deeply remorseful, he kneels at its base. Suddenly, the statue comes to life – it is Hermione, who is alive and has been kept in hiding by Paulina for 16 years. She embraces Leontes, and the family is reunited.

THE NATIONAL Ballet OF CANADA

Karen Kain
Artistic Director

The Winter's Tale: A Tale of Two Kingdoms

By Mark Monahan

Between rehearsals for the premiere of *The Winter's Tale,* Mark Monahan talked to Christopher Wheeldon about the creation of his second full-length narrative ballet for the Royal Opera House main stage.

It could be argued that taking the framework of a Shakespeare play but ditching the words – as choreographers inevitably must – is a little like buying a 1945 Mouton-Rothschild, tipping the contents down the sink, and keeping the bottle. What, then, is the irresistible lure of Shakespeare for creators of dance?

[laughs] Well, he wrote good stories! Of course, the beauty of the language is what draws people to want to stage them and read them, but he also wrote terrific plot lines – that's why I chose *The Winter's Tale*. There are some really strong characters in there, and the situations are operatic in scale. Operatic situations and emotions, and good physical characters, lend themselves very well to story ballet.

And yet, amid the panoply of past Shakespeare adaptations, no choreographer, to my knowledge, has ever attempted *The Winter's Tale*. Is that correct?

I think so. Although it wouldn't have mattered to me if someone had adapted it before, just out of interest I went online and looked at various sources, and no – no one wants to do the bear, I think…

So how are you tackling Shakespeare's most famous stage direction – 'Exit pursued by a bear' – referring to the hapless, about-to-be-eaten Antigonus?

I can't give that away!

But why do you really think no one has previously attempted to turn this play into dance?

It's often called a 'problem play', and, although I could be shooting myself in the foot by saying this, it's actually easier to watch the story unfold than have to explain it.
Of course, I've worked a lot on the synopsis of the actual show, and have thinned out the secondary characters and some of the side plots. Also, this was one of Shakespeare's last plays, and according to Nick Hytner [Director of the National Theatre], who's been a fantastic help in pointing me in the right directions, the writing is fairly jumbled.
Nick believes that Shakespeare had got a little bit lazy by the time he wrote *The Winter's Tale*; it's not as well constructed as many of his other plays, which makes it quite complex to read.

But Nick told me: don't worry about that, don't get caught up in the minutiae of trying to understand every word.

That sounds like good advice.

Absolutely – but then, when you're making a ballet, you can never get too caught up in the text. You look for clues and for poetic moments that will translate well physically. You have to boil it down to story and characters.

A particularly vital question when adapting *The Winter's Tale* in any form is: comic or serious? The play is essentially three acts of high drama, and then two infinitely lighter acts, which can prove a jolt for audiences. How have you approached this?

There are a lot of characters in *The Winter's Tale*, and you have to choose whose story you're telling – in my case, it's that of Leontes [King of Sicilia]. It's impossible to avoid the tragic circumstances of Act I, and a further challenge of doing this story in dance is that in the play, Shakespeare solves a lot of problems by having things happen offstage – but you can't do that in a ballet, unless you want to rely heavily on your programme notes. That said, this is a ballet where I think it's better if people watch the ballet having read their programme, or at least have some idea of the story.

And how does your production progress after the dramatic first act?

Well, we've done the whole thing in three acts. Act II offers us a great opportunity for dance, more of a 'pure dance' act, and [composer] Joby [Talbot] and I have invented our own kind of folk music and movement language. I think part of the poetry of this story is the contrasting worlds, and that's where dramatic stagings often fall a bit flat. But our Act II is the moment for the corps de ballet to soar. It's light and open and beautiful, and we need that. We need to breathe after the opening tragedy.

So, your Act I takes place in Sicilia, and Act II in Bohemia?

That's right – and then it's back to Sicilia for Act III. The challenge is obviously balancing the tragedy and the comedy in the first two acts, and then bringing them together in harmony in the last one, where the two worlds of Sicilia and Bohemia collide.

Your breakthrough piece back in 2001 was *Polyphonia*, and it was with that sort of abstraction that you made your name. But *The Winter's Tale* is your second full-evening narrative ballet at Covent Garden in only three years, following *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 2011. You're clearly getting a taste for it.

Yes. Yes I am, though narrative sets its own challenges, and a story can at times feel restricting, because with the abstract world you get to go wherever your imagination takes you. Also, I work very much in the spur of the moment – I'm not a big planner.

I remember you saying previously that you prefer to create your steps in the studio, with dancers.

I do. I like working with the dancers. Obviously, something like *The Winter's Tale* has taken a great deal of planning, but there's been flexibility within that. Joby writes for the dramatic moments that we've pinpointed in our structure, but then I often veer off and move things around. It can be terrifying at times, because I don't go into the room with everything planned out, and so when things aren't flowing freely, it can send me into a bit of a tailspin.

Similarly, what's surely harder for you here than for choreographers adapting an established classic – but also, perhaps, potentially even more rewarding – is that the score is being built from scratch as you go along.

Yes, it's brand-new. No one's done it before, no one's ever choreographed to this music – it's our creation. And I do feel like the whole production belongs to us: Joby and Bob [Crowley] and I, and Natasha [Katz] as well.

They were your composer/designer/lighting team on *Alice*, weren't they?

Yes – we are very much a team.

And where did the idea for this show first come from?

It actually came from a conversation I had with Nick [Hytner] around the time of *Alice* – I was saying I'd love to tackle Shakespeare, and he asked if I'd ever thought of *The Winter's Tale*. I'd already seen it live once, and remember being bored out of my mind – it wasn't a particularly vibrant production. But I went back and read it, and saw several better versions both live and recorded, and, after submerging myself in the story for a bit, I thought, yes, why not give it a whirl?

Finally, the body of work you've created over the past dozen years is not only very large, but also remarkably varied. Is there nevertheless something that you would say links all your pieces, from those shorter abstract ones to *The Winter's Tale*?

There are some artists who approach their work from a very personal standpoint, meaning that they don't really care what anyone else thinks. It's about what they need to express, and I don't think I'm like that. I think a lot about the audience – I love to make work for other people to look at. I approach each work thinking: ok, this is the company I'm going to make it for, this is the kind of audience that's going to be seeing it. What do I think would work for them?

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