Backgrounder

History of Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at the Music Center

During its eleven-year history, Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center has become one of the leading presenters of dance on the West Coast. The celebrated series offers significant works by prestigious ballet and contemporary dance artists from around the world. Performances take place throughout The Music Center, from the historic Dorothy Chandler Pavilion to the iconic Walt Disney Concert Hall, providing the ideal setting for distinct and inspiring dance experiences.

The series began in 2003 as Dance at The Music Center. In 2009, the program was renamed Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center in honor of the tremendous endowment gift given by Glorya Kaufman. Kaufman donated $20 million to the Dance at The Music Center program in one of the largest such gifts, according to the Los Angeles Times, ever given to The Music Center or any of its resident companies. It was the largest gift towards a dance-presenting program in the U.S. The series is also a powerful commissioning force through the support of new works and artists-in-residence projects by today’s most influential companies and choreographers.

In the very first season of Dance at The Music Center (2003-2004), the series set the tone for its subsequent history, presenting San Francisco Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, American Ballet Theatre, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and two modern dance companies – Paul Taylor Dance Company celebrating its 50th anniversary season with the Southern California premiere of “Promethian Fire,” and the then three-year old Shen Wei Dance Arts, performing its electrifying production of the Stravinsky “Rite of Spring” to a four-hand piano version recorded by Fazil Say. The New York Times had just raved, “It is hardly a risk to say that one of the most creative highlights of the Lincoln Center Festival 2003 is the program in which Shen Wei Dance Arts triumphed to the sound of roars.”

Many of the most important choreographers, ballets and dance events of this era have been part of this series, including:

- Christopher Wheeldon has been represented by the United States debut of his full evening “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” to music by Jody Talbot by The National Ballet of Canada in 2012. New York City Ballet (2004) performed Wheeldon’s “Carnival of the Animals.” In 2008, Miami City Ballet performed Wheeldon’s “Liturgy” to the music of Arvo Part. His “DGV” and “For 4” were danced by Corella Ballet Castilla y León in 2010 as part of the company’s West Coast debut.
- Alexei Ratmansky has been represented with the West Coast Premiere of his “Romeo and Juliet” (2014), also by The National Ballet of Canada. “Romeo and Juliet” was the second Ratmansky ballet in the series, which presented American Ballet Theatre’s production of Ratmansky’s full evening “The Bright Stream” (2011). Ratmansky originally staged “The Bright Stream” for the Bolshoi Ballet in 2004, leading to his appointment as artistic director there, and then becoming artist-in-residence at American Ballet Theatre (ABT) in 2009. In 2013, The Music Center, as part of a repertory program with ABT, presented Ratmansky’s “Chamber Symphony” to Shostakovich's Chamber Symphony for Strings (Op. 110a).
• Two works by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company were presented and co-commissioned by The Music Center: “Split Sides,” choreographed to a commissioned score by Radiohead and Sigur Rós, created for the company’s 50th anniversary (2005); and the world premiere of the revival of the 1979 “Roaratorio” (2010) one of the most ambitious and large-scale Cunningham / John Cage collaborations. “Roaratorio,” presented in The Music Center’s Walt Disney Concert Hall, was part of the company’s concluding Legacy Tour, a two-year international celebration of Cunningham’s lifetime of artistic achievement.

• In 2012, The Music Center celebrated one of the great milestones of dance history, the 100th anniversary of “Le Sacre du Printemps,” by presenting a festival around this seminal work, which featured performances of the historic Joffrey Ballet reconstruction by Kenneth Archer and Millicent Hodson; an exhibition about Stravinsky and Los Angeles dance; a symposium; student performances; an engagement of American Ballet Theatre in the George Balanchine-Igor Stravinsky “Apollo;” and a co-commission of “Chamber” for Nederlands Dans Theater, a new work inspired by “Le Sacre du Printemps.”

• The World Premiere of the Archer-Hodson reconstruction was held 25 years earlier, during the 10-year Music Center residency by The Joffrey Ballet from 1983 to 1991 (The Joffrey Ballet made its first Los Angeles appearance in 1969 hosted by The Music Center). During its earlier residency, The Joffrey Ballet made dance history with its full evening productions of the John Cranko “Romeo and Juliet,” a series of revivals of works by Sir Frederick Ashton including the full evening “La Fille Mal Gardée,” the full evening “Billboards” to music by Prince; and dozens of ballets by the company’s resident choreographer Gerald Arpino, including the popular “Light Rain,” “Round of Angels,” and “Suite Saint Saëns” and Robert Joffrey’s own “The Nutcracker,” which the company still performs today.

• The Joffrey Ballet was also home to some of the most creative and important choreographers of that era. It performed works by Twyla Tharp, William Forsythe, Paul Taylor, Laura Dean and presented revivals and reconstructions of important work from the Ballet Russes and others. Since the completion of the residency, the company has had eight additional appearances at The Music Center including performances of Sir Frederick Ashton’s “Cinderella” (2010), Stanton Welch’s “Son of Chamber Symphony” (2012), Christopher Wheeldon's “After the Rain” (2012), William Forsythe's “In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated” and Edwaard Liang’s “Age of Innocence” (2012). In 2007, The Music Center hosted Joffrey performances during the company’s 50th anniversary celebration with programs including works of Leonide Massine (Les Présages”), George Balanchine (“Apollo”), Kurt Jooss (“The Green Table”), Twyla Tharp (“Deuce Coupe”), Laura Dean (“Sometimes It Snows in April”) and the West Coast premiere of “Motown Suite” by Donald Byrd.

• In 2012, L.A. Dance Project, under the artistic direction of Benjamin Millepied, made its debut at The Music Center’s Walt Disney Concert Hall, performing its inaugural program commissioned by The Music Center. The previous year, under the Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at the Music Center (KDMC) series, Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève received its West Coast premiere, performing the North American premieres of “Les Sylphides” and “Spectre de la Rose” as well as “Amoveo,” first created for the Paris Opera Ballet, all choreographed by Millepied.
• The Music Center commissioned Nederlands Dans Theater’s (NDT) “Chamber” (2013) choreographed by Mehdi Walerski during NDT’s second visit. In 2011 Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT) performed “The Second Person,” choreographed by Crystal Pite and “Silent Screen,” with choreography by Paul Lightfoot and Sol León and music by Philip Glass.


• Nacho Duato’s classic “Remansos” and “Gnawa,” a Company U.S. premiere and “Rassemblement” “Compañía Nacional de Danza 2,” at that time under the direction of Founder and Co-Artistic Director Nacho Duato and Co-Artistic Director Tony Fabre (2007).

• Eifman Ballet performing Boris Eifman’s “Anna Karenina” (2005).


• Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company’s “The Phantom Project: Still/Here Looking On,” a re-examination of the 1994 “Still Here,” was presented during their 20th anniversary season (2005).

• Alonzo King’s “AZIMITH” (Southern California premiere), danced by the combined forces of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and Alonzo King LINES Ballet (2013). Hubbard Street was also presented in (2010) performing the West Coast premiere of Jiri Kylián’s “27’52,” Johan Inger’s “Walking Mad,” and Ohad Naharin’s “Tabula Rasa,” music by Arvo Pärt.

• Lar Lubovitch “Recordare” and “Suite from a Choreographic Offering” and “Missa Brevis” choreographed by Jose Limón by Limón Dance Company (2006). “Missa Brevis” included several local dancers and dance students from CalArts following a three-week residency.

• Mark Morris Dance Company “Mozart Dances” with pianists Garrick Ohlsson and Yoko Nozaki conducted by Jane Glover (2007); “L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato,” in collaboration with the LA Opera Orchestra and Vocalists (2011).

• Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center was the co-commissioner of Angelin Preljocaj’s “Les Nuits” for Ballet Preljocaj (2014); in 2012, Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center presented the Southern California Premiere of Ballet Preljocaj’s “Snow White.”

• In 2007, Dance at The Music Center inaugurated dance performances in its Walt Disney Concert Hall with Shen Wei’s “Connect Transfer” accompanied by the FLUX Quartet and pianist Gloria Cheng. In the piece, the dancers created a painting applying paint with their feet with the dance floor serving as the canvas, illuminating the connections between bodies, movement, visual art, music and audience.

• A new full-evening dance piece built around the Godfather of Soul: “James Brown: Get on the Good Foot, a Celebration in Dance” was commissioned in 2014 in partnership with The Apollo Theater; in 2011 “Transit Space” was co-commissioned and created as part of The Music Center’s first Artists in Residence program with Diavolo Dance Theatre, a Los Angeles based internationally renowned company led by Artistic Director Jacques Heim. “Transit Space” was inspired by skateboard culture, a sport and an art form invented in Southern California in the 1950s.
Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center was also the first to co-commission “Slow Dancing” (2008), an outdoor installation of larger-than-life, hyper-slow-motion video portraits of extraordinary dance artists and choreographers from around the world. This performance featured high-speed (3,000 frames per second) and high-definition sequences with major dance figures including Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones, Elizabeth Streb, William Forsythe, Shen Wei, Wendy Whelan, Eiko and Koma, Allegra Kent, and Judith Jamison, as well as dancers who are considered national treasures from Southeast Asia, the Pacific Rim and Africa, all presented in its West Coast premiere on The Music Center Plaza.

Since The Music Center’s founding, many legendary dancers and world-renowned companies have appeared on its stages with presentations by The Music Center’s Associated Presentations and long-time distinguished arts presenter James A. Doolittle.


On several occasions The Music Center also presented Los Angeles’ most renowned ensembles, Bella Lewitsky Dance Company (1976, 1979, and 1982) and the AMAN Folk Ensemble (seven years between 1971 and 1981).

During the 1970s, The Music Center hosted well-respected folklorico companies of Mexico including Ballet Folklórico de Mexico, Ballet Aztlán de Mexico and Danza Folklórico Mexicana de Graciela Tapia. American Ballet Theatre and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater deserve special mention.

From 1969 to the present, American Ballet Theatre made 19 visits to The Music Center. From 1969 to 1980, the company brought a broad selection of its vast repertoire and many ballet luminaries to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Mikhail Baryshnikov danced at The Music Center in several ABT engagements, in works that included “The Nutcracker,” “Giselle,” Twyla Tharp’s “Push Comes to Shove,” and two Balanchine works, “Prodigal Son” and “La Sonnambula.” Baryshnikov also appeared with his own White Oak Dance Project in 1991 and 1993.

The company, as part of Dance at The Music Center inaugural season, performed Kenneth McMillan’s “Romeo and Juliet” in 2004. Since then the company has performed Kevin McKenzie’s productions of “Giselle,” and “Swan Lake,” “The Sleeping Beauty,” Anna-Marie Holmes staging of “Le Corsaire,” the Lar Lubovich “Othello,” and the West Coast premiere of “The Bright Stream” by Alexei Ratmansky, ABT’s then new artist-in-residence. In 2013, The Music Center also presented ABT in a repertory performance of Ratmansky’s “Chamber Symphony” set to Shostakovich's Chamber Symphony for Strings (Op. 110a).

During the many ABT engagements celebrated soloists and principal dancers performing included Stella Abrera, Maxim Belotserkovsky, Isabella Boylston, Jose Manuel Carreño, Angel Corella, Herman Cornejo, Irina Dvorovenko, Alexandra Ferri, Marcelo Gomes, Alexandre Hammoudi, David Hallberg, Paloma Herrera, Julie Kent, Amanda McKerrow, Gillian Murphy, Veronika Part, Xiomara Reyes, Daniil Simkin, Cory Stearns, Ethan Stiefel, Rasta Thomas, Ivan Vasiliev and Michele Wiles.
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater first came to The Music Center in 1997. The success of the company, especially in its ability to attract large audiences, was part of the impetus to create the Dance at The Music Center series.

During its five subsequent visits, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has become a major and regular fixture of the dance series. During its Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center years, the company celebrated its 50th anniversary; the 50th anniversary of "Revelations;" and a new artistic director Robert Battle, succeeding Judith Jamison, who had presided over the company for three decades.

The many Ailey company performances have included Battle’s “Juba;” “The Hunt” and “Strange Humors;” Jamison’s “Reminscin’” “Forgotten Time;” “Hymn,” and “Love Stories” (Choreographed with Robert Battle and Rennie Harris); Ronald K. Brown’s “Ife/My Heart” and “Grace;” “Heart Song,” choreographed by Alonzo King; "Shining Star" and “Caught” choreographed by David Parsons; “Petite Mort,” the first work by renowned choreographer Jiří Kylián in the Ailey repertory; and Ohad Naharin’s inventive “Minus 16,” “Go in Grace” by Ailey dancer Hope Boykin; “Festarocca” by Mauro Bigonzetti; “Anointed,” choreographed by Christopher L. Huggins; “The Evolution of a Secured Feminine,” choreographed by Camille A. Brown; "Solo," choreographed by Hans van Manen; and “Another Night” by rising young choreographer Kyle Abraham, which fuses the many facets of American dance.

“Revelations” has been joined by some of the great Ailey company classics including, "Vespers," choreographed by Ulysses Dove; “Suite Otis,” George Faison’s tribute to Otis Redding; “Rainbow Round My Shoulder,” choreographed by Donald McKayle; “Treading,” choreographed by Elisa Monte; and Ailey’s own “Night Creature,” “Blues Suite” and “Memoria” (performed with 23 local young dancers) “Three Black Kings;” and “Cry.”

Following the second presentation of the Ailey Company in 1998, The Music Center presented the Bolshoi Ballet’s historic production of Prokofiev’s “Romeo & Juliet” and its new interpretation of “Don Quixote” in 2000; the company returned in 2012 to dance “Swan Lake.”

As with the popularity of the Ailey Company, the success of the 2000 Bolshoi engagement provided the major encouragement to move forward with the Dance at The Music Center series. The Music Center also presented American Ballet Theatre (2002), The Joffrey Ballet (1999), Twyla Tharp Dance (2001), Pilobolus, and Diavolo Dance Theatre (2003), and a company that was just beginning – Complexions Contemporary Ballet, led by Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson, to great success. Complexions returned to the series in 2008.

The series has presented many of the world’s leading ballet and dance companies including:

- Ballet Hispanico (2009), led by Artistic Director Tina Ramirez, performing a program of Pedro Ruiz, Carlos Sierra Lopez, Jean Emile and Ann Reinking.
- Ballet Nacional de Cuba’s “Don Quixote” (2011), choreographed by Alicia Alonso, after Alexander Gorsky and Marius Petipa, with music by Ludwig Minkus, performed live by the LA Opera Orchestra.
- Beijing Modern Dance (2005) “Rear Light” set to the Pink Floyd Album “The Wall,” choreographed by Li Hanzhong, deputy artistic director of the company, and his wife, Ma Bo.
• Corella Ballet, founded by American Ballet Theatre principal dancer, Ángel Corella, which promotes classical ballet in Spain and nurtures Spanish dancers; the company also performed “Bruch Violín Concierto Nº 1” with choreography by Clark Tippet, “Clear” with choreography by Stanton Welch, and Soléá with choreography by María Pagés.

• Dance Theatre of Harlem (2004) performed the West Coast premiere of “Blues Suite” choreographed by Michael Smuin, to music of Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer and Balanchine’s “Serenade.”


• Grupo Corpo (2011), one of Brazil’s most celebrated performing arts companies, which combines classical technique with a contemporary re-reading of popular Brazilian dance forms, incorporating a broad range of elements, from minimalism and rootsy modernity to vigorous pop and urban sounds. The program included “ÎMÅ” and “Parabelo,” with choreography by Rodrigo Pederneiras.


• Miami City Ballet under the direction of Edward Villella presented “Fancy Free,” choreographed by Jerome Robbins; “Nine Sinatra Songs” choreographed by Twyla Tharp; “Stravinsky Violin Concerto,” choreographed by George Balanchine; Jerome Robbins’ “Dances at a Gathering;” and Balanchine’s “Western Symphony” (2006). On a second visit (2008), the company held the West Coast premiere of Twyla Tharp’s “Nightspot,” to the music of Elvis Costello with costumes by Isaac Mizrahi, on a program with Balanchine’s “Symphony in Three Movements” and “Tarantella” and Wheeldon's “Liturgy” to the music of Arvo Part.

• New York City Ballet (2004), which celebrated the 100th anniversary of George Balanchine’s birth, performed seven of his works in repertory with Christopher Wheeldon’s “Carnival of the Animals,” by New York City Ballet’s resident choreographer and with a narration written and performed by John Lithgow, Peter Martins’ “Hallelujah Junction”; and Jerome Robbins’ “I’m Old Fashioned.”

• The West Coast premiere of Nuevo Ballet Espanol, a contemporary Flamenco company from Spain.

• Pilobolus (2009) performing “Redline,” “Rushes,” “Gnomen” and “Day Two.”

• The North American debut of Royal New Zealand Ballet’s “Giselle” (2013) choreographed by Royal New Zealand Ballet Artistic Director Ethan Stiefel and Johan Kobborg (after Marius Petipa) in 2014. Principal casting included Gillian Murphy and Qi Huan, who danced the roles of Giselle and Albrecht in the 2013 feature film of this production, directed by Toa Fraser, and selected for screening in the NZ International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival.

• San Francisco Ballet, under Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson, opened the Dance at the Music Center series (2003) with its “Don Quixote” and a mixed bill of Balanchine, Tomasson, MacMillan, and Christopher Wheeldon.

• Scottish Ballet, Scotland’s national dance company, appeared in 2011, the first time in more than 20 years that the company had performed in the United States, with a program consisting of “Song of the Earth,” choreographed by Sir Kenneth MacMillan with music by Gustav Mahler, and “Kings 2 Ends” choreographed by Jorma Elo, with music by Mozart and Steve Reich.

There are some specialty performances – David Hallberg, Nikolay Tsiskaridze, Guillaume Côté, José Manuel Carreño, Joaquin DeLuz, Denis Matvienko, and Marcelo Gomes, and by Desmond Richardson, which came together for an exclusive version of “Kings of the Dance.” In addition, New York City’s
most acclaimed and groundbreaking circus, “TRACES,” created by the Montreal-based troupe 7 Fingers, strips away everything you thought you knew about the Big Top and fuses the traditions of circus with the energy of street performance to create an explosive display of emotion and physicality set to the music of Radiohead, VAST, Blackalicious, and more. The company was part of the Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center season in 2013.

The Music Center is one of the largest and most highly regarded performing arts centers in the country. For 50 years, The Music Center has served as a cultural hub that is central to LA’s status as “the creative capital” of the world. It is home to four world-class resident companies—Center Theatre Group, LA Opera, LA Phil and the Los Angeles Master Chorale—and is recognized for its illustrious dance programming, Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center.

The Music Center’s 22-acre campus includes four iconic venues: The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Mark Taper Forum and the Ahmanson Theater, as well as The Music Center Plaza and the newly opened Grand Park. Each year, more than two million people enjoy live performances and free community arts events at The Music Center.

In its effort to extend the reach and accessibility of the performing arts, The Music Center is a national model for arts experiences in which people participate directly through its Active Arts® programming. In addition, The Music Center presents special productions, events and festivals for children and families, including World City™, which takes place in the Keck Amphitheatre at Walt Disney Concert Hall.

The Music Center is nationally recognized as a leader in arts education, providing resources to students and teachers in schools and community centers throughout the region. The Music Center was developed as a public-private partnership with Los Angeles County and through the support of the Board of Supervisors, plays an important role in the successful operation of The Music Center.

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