Dance Me To The End of Love

Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin
Dance me through the panic till I’m gathered safely in
Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove
Dance me to the end of love – LEONARD COHEN

Dance Me is the “biggest, most ambitious creation in the 45-year history of BJM,” says Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal’s Artistic Director Louis Robitaille. “I wanted to go further in mixing disciplines to make this different from anything we’ve done before.”

Featuring 15 of Cohen’s songs including many of the famous ones, but also Cohen’s lesser known works, Dance Me is an acrobatic tour de force that brings to life Cohen’s profound poetry.

“Leonard Cohen insisted we not limit ourselves to his greatest hits or to his first album where you find ‘Suzanne’ and ‘So Long, Marianne,’” explains Robitaille. “We made a point of going through all his albums to get an overall picture.”

Dance Me is not Cohen’s life’s story. Instead of a narrative arc, the Company has created an emotional one with scenes that represent his sensual side, his relation to women and also his thoughts on war, disasters, social issues and religion. Robitaille also took the cyclical theme of the “five seasons of life”, the fifth being “that distinctly Canadian” Indian Summer, emblematic of a passage between life and death, to tie the program together. It was an approach that acquired particular poignancy when Cohen died in November 2016.

“We all have our own unique life journeys with detours and digressions. Each one of us goes through familiar stages or chapters, even if everyone experiences them in their own way. The emotions and feelings are the same,” says Robitaille. dv

WELCOME HOME KENNEDY!
Know who this lovely dancer is? It’s Kennedy Kraeling and she was born in Vancouver, BC! She began her formal training at age 11 at Canada’s National Ballet School as well as at Arts Umbrella. She joined Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal in 2015. We’re looking forward to welcoming her back to B.C.

DID YOU KNOW?
The Company was granted worldwide exclusive dance and circus art rights from Cohen’s team for five years to use his image, name, music/visual/literary works for this show? The blockbuster program is selling out across the globe.
THE CHOREOGRAPHERS
The three internationally renowned choreographers commissioned by Louis Robitaille of Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal to create works for Dance Me:

Andonis Foniadakis

“There are so many layers to Leonard Cohen’s songs,” says the Greek-born Foniadakis, who recalls listening to Cohen as a teenager growing up in Crete. “I’m trying to illuminate layers that perhaps are not immediately evident, embodying his music but not in a literal or decorative way. Ultimately, it’s each choreographer’s personal point of view but, always, it’s about going beyond the steps to something deeper.”

Foniadakis concentrated on creating a musical flow. “Sometimes I treat even his words more like feelings and sensations based on the sound of the voice and how it rhymes, but not in a logical way. Why not give an unexpected point of view to let the audience wonder that maybe there’s a hidden pulse?”

Ihsan Rustem

For Dance Me to the End of Love, Turkish-born Ihsan Rustem created a series of brief romantic duets between a male soloist and several female enchantresses who then abandon him. A male friend consoles him. “I spent a lot of time reading the poetry behind the songs. My biggest challenge had to do more with his poetry than with his music,” he admits.

Annabelle Lopez Ochoa

Many of you will remember Ochoa from the Ballet Hispánico program last year. For Dance Me, the Netherlands-born Ochoa entered the project with a blank slate. Of the three choreographers, Ochoa had the least exposure to Cohen. She made up for it by researching his life thoroughly to understand the imagery he used in his poetry. “I was struck by its profundity,” says Ochoa, “and was inspired to create a physical poem to his music.”
**Nutcracker Story Synopsis**

Christmas 1913, in a large Canadian home: It’s a prosperous time in a prosperous city whose population has swollen with new arrivals.

**OVERTURE**

’Tis the night before Christmas and all through the house, everything and everyone is stirring — even the mice! The people inside are getting ready for the big Christmas party. Outside, boys play hockey on the street. Friends and family start to arrive.

**ACT I SCENE 1 (CLARA’S BEDROOM)**

Twelve-year-old Clara is dreaming in front of the mirror, practicing her ballet steps. She wants to be perfect when she dances for her Aunt Josephine, a singer who has traveled from Montreal on the train. Mama interrupts. “Where is the bow that I made for your hair?” she demands. “And where is Dieter?” Clara’s younger brother leaps out of a large armoire, brandishing a toy sword. Grandmother Marguerite comes into the bedroom and calms everyone down. Things aren’t the way Mama planned; not even the Christmas tree has been delivered. She runs downstairs while Grandmother shows the children photographs of Christmas past.

**SCENE 2 (THE CHRISTMAS PARTY)**

Mama, Papa and the butler are looking at the space in the living room where the tree should be. Among the guests arriving is Aunt Josephine. Resplendent in furs, she makes her entrance with fiancé, Edouard, dashing in his uniform. At last! Mr. Drosselmeier carries in a tree. Clara is introduced to his grandnephew, Julien. In no time at all, the tree is decorated and Clara puts the star on the very top. Suddenly, the first-ever electric Christmas lights illuminate the tree! Mr. Drosselmeier hands out presents. Dieter’s army of toy soldiers is augmented by Mounted Police. Mr. Drosselmeier’s masterpiece goes to Clara - a beautifully hand-crafted Nutcracker. During Christmas dinner, Clara slips away to admire her Nutcracker and imagines that he comes alive to dance with her. The doorbell rings and a bear scurries in, admires the tree and dances happily with the Christmas toys. The party breaks up in a flurry of dancing.

**SCENE 3 (BEDTIME)**

Clara falls asleep but is soon awakened by the terrifying Mouse King who is about to steal her beloved Nutcracker. The clock strikes midnight.

**THE VERY FIRST NUTCRACKER**

The first performance of the Christmas ballet was held as a double premiere with Tchaikovsky’s last opera, Iolanta, around the Christmas holiday season on December 18 [O.S. December 6] 1892, at the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia. Lev Ivanov, Second Balletmaster to the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres, worked closely with Marius Petipa, widely regarded as the Father of Russian Ballet.

Tchaikovsky accepted the commission from director of Moscow’s Imperial Theatres, Ivan Vsevolozhsky, to compose music for the charming Christmas story. Tchaikovsky is said to have argued with a friend who wagered that the composer could not write a melody based on the notes of the octave in sequence. Tchaikovsky asked if it mattered whether the notes were in ascending or descending order, and was assured it did not. This resulted in the Grand Adage from the Grand Pas de Deux of the second act where Clara/Masha dances with her magical Christmas present, the Nutcracker Prince. Among other things, the score of Nutcracker is noted for its use of the celesta, an instrument that the composer had already employed in his much lesser known symphonic ballad, The Voyevoda (premiere 1891).
SCENE 4 (THE LIVING ROOM)
Suddenly the room starts to shift into something strange and new. Mr. Drosselmeier assures Clara she has nothing to fear. Yet, before her eyes, the Christmas tree begins to grow. Clara, surrounded by scurrying mice, tries to save her Nutcracker. The Nutcracker comes alive and chases the mice away. Dieter’s squadron of toy soldiers and Mounted Police spring to life and battle the mice with cannons and swords. The battle takes a turn for the worse. Mouse King shoots the Nutcracker.

SCENE 5 (A MAGICAL FOREST)
Clara defeats the Mouse King and begs Mr. Drosselmeier to help her wounded Nutcracker. It’s only after Clara professes her love for Nutcracker that Mr. Drosselmeier can bring him to life again. The Nutcracker was Julien all along and he is now a handsome prince. They walk hand in hand into a magical pine forest, dancing under a sky filled with the Northern Lights. Snow begins to fall.

Intermission

ACT II SCENE 1 (THE KINGDOM)
The Nutcracker Prince and Clara travel to the Sugar Plum Fairy’s kingdom, where angels help Mr. Drosselmeier with the preparations for their arrival. The Sugar Plum Fairy gives Clara and Prince Julien a warm welcome and a ceremony ensues to honour them. Wonderful dances from different lands are performed, reminding Clara of the many people arriving every day to their country. In a beautiful pas de deux, the prince has the honour of dancing with Clara. In a farewell gesture, all the inhabitants of the magical land gather to bid Clara a happy journey home.

SCENE 2 (EARLY MORNING)
When Clara awakes, she is happy to be in her bedroom. The Nutcracker stands proudly next to her. Remembering her dream, she’s relieved to see her big brother striding into the room, alive and well, and announcing, “It’s snowing!” They bundle up, go outside and watch the snow fluttering down.
What It Means to Be a Man

Presented in collaboration with the CODA Oslo International Dance Festival, The National Touring Company and the Canada Council for the Arts.

What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be a man? How do we find balance in our personal universe through an inner dialogue? These are some of the complex questions at the heart of MAN, a work by Norwegian choreographer Sølvi Edvardsen. Edvardsen chose the title MAN for its double meaning of a male person and humanity in general. At the heart of the work is her exploration of how we put limits on ourselves - draw lines and boundaries - based on our life experiences, especially if you have a bicultural identity.

In MAN, Edvardsen plays with the concept of “maximal use of simple means.” With only a small sitting stool as a partner, dancer Sudesh Adhana is left with a prop of great symbolic value. Adhana explains, “The stool is sometimes a toy, a person, a companion. To begin with, it is a little too small, but then we use it in a way that is grows into my body, or my body adjusts and melts into it. It is sometimes very modern and other times very ancient. From prison to temple, materialism and spirituality, body and soul.”

Edvardsen and Adhana met under unique circumstances. She came from modern-day Norway looking for the classical Indian dance tradition, a source of inspiration in her art practice, a gateway to philosophical and meditative search. Adhana was doing the opposite: leaving India where he trained in the traditional Indian dance forms Chhau and Kathakali, but was seeking new contemporary dance challenges, first with a major project with Edvardsen in 2002, which brought him to Norway.

Edvardsen calls herself a “composer of movement.” Comfortable creating for both dance and theatre, she designs her own sets and costumes, and is the first choreographer to be awarded the Norwegian Critics Prize.

MAN plays for one night only at the McPherson Playhouse during Dance Days.

SUDESH ADHANA (DANCER)

“This working process has been very special for me. Sølvi Edvardsen shows that she understands and has concern for the male condition. I saw how she longs for a more humane man, but at the same time she manages to see the man behind the tough, rigid and brutal surface.

In MAN, she is concerned with portraying the softer qualities of man, rather than portraying masculinity as a longing for power and a tool for dominance. I hope and believe that it is possible for men to be more humane in the real world as well. The way I see it, Edvardsen, in a way, asks the man to consider – who is he? Where does he come from?” – SUDESH ADHANA
An American Pioneer
in the World of Dance

Ballet is slower to change than most art forms, but with Adam Sklute as its CEO and Artistic Director, Ballet West has achieved an unprecedented varied repertoire that honours historical masterpieces and celebrates new works by international choreographers.

Sklute has introduced repertoire from the great Ballets Russes of the early 20th Century and continues to preserve Ballet West’s classical legacy with celebrated choreographers such as Balanchine, Petipa and Ashton, something that Ballet West Founder William F. Christensen worked diligently to develop during his leadership.

Sklute, a former dancer, Ballet Master and Associate Director of The Joffrey Ballet, has further energized Ballet West’s remarkable repertoire with groundbreaking creations by Africa Guzmán, Nicolo Fonte, Jessica Lang and Val Caniparoli, to name a few. The company’s annual National Choreographic Festival continues to be an outlet for new works that Sklute hopes will become for dance what The Sundance Film Festival is for film, growing Utah’s reputation as a hub for art of all kinds.

With this eclectic and ever expanding outlook, Ballet West is truly an American pioneer, opening up the range of movement to new possibilities and pointing the way forward to new modes of expression in contemporary classical ballet. As with tonight’s performances, the dancers may be on pointe, but the partnering and choreography is fresh, innovative and very contemporary, giving audience goers a lot to talk about during intermission and after the show. 

NURTURING NEW CREATIONS

Ballet West’s National Choreographic Festival brings together national dance companies to share the stage with Ballet West to present innovative creations. Works from Within is a touring program that presents exclusively World Premieres by Ballet West Artists.
THE CHOREOGRAPHERS

Africa Guzmán
Africa Guzmán was born in Madrid. She began her training at her mother’s ballet school and at the Escuela del Ballet Nacional de España. In 1988, she joined Ballet del Teatro Lirico Nacional (now Compañía Nacional de Danza) where she danced principal roles in classical and neoclassical repertoire in ballets from Marius Petipa, George Balanchine, Michel Fokine, and more. In 2003 she joined Nederlands Dans Theater until 2005 when she returned to CND. She has worked with numerous choreographers such as Jiří Kylián, William Forsythe, Mats Ek, Ohad Naharin, Jorma Elo, Johan Inger, Nicolo Fonte and Gustavo Ramirez. Africa has danced all around the world and is a frequent guest at international ballet galas throughout Europe, Asia, United States, South America, Australia and New Zealand. She has choreographed several works for the Joffrey Ballet School and the Alvin Ailey School. África is the Artistic Director of Escuela de Ballet África Guzmán, and as a guest teacher has been invited to The Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre in Portland, the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow, the Oklahoma City Ballet in Oklahoma, the Finnish National Ballet in Helsinki, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and the A&A Ballet in Chicago. Recently, she was invited to take part as a teacher and choreographer for the reality show FAME, which is broadcast live on the television network #Cero of Movistar. Her classes are having a great impact on the audience, being the most viewed on both the live broadcast and YouTube.

Adam Sklute
Adam Sklute was named Artistic Director of Ballet West in 2007. Since then he has expanded Ballet West’s repertoire, visibility, and overall outlook with exciting company premieres, increased touring and public exposure, and greater focus on the Ballet West Academy. In his 10 years at Ballet West, he has presented 27 works never before performed by Ballet West by renowned historical choreographers and commissioned 12 world premieres by leading choreographers such as Val Caniporoli, Nicolo Fonte, Jessica Lang, Matthew Neenan, and Helen Pickett. He has conceived and produced critically acclaimed new productions of Swan Lake and The Sleeping Beauty and Giselle. Notably, Sklute developed the Company’s successful annual Innovations program to nurture and present new creations by Ballet West Artists and emerging Utah choreographers.

Nicolo Fonte
Fonte has been Resident Choreographer for Ballet West since the 2012/2013 season. He has created over 40 new works for dance companies spanning the globe, garnering praise and generating excitement for his daring and theatrical approach to dance. The Australian Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet and The Dutch National Ballet, among many others, all have works of his in their repertoire. He is recognized throughout the world as a choreographer equally comfortable with classical and contemporary dance forms.
When Emily Molnar became Artistic Director of Ballet BC, she had a vision for the company: to develop and create new work and reach new audiences. It’s taken a few years, but gradually that vision is being realized.

A former principal dancer, Molnar took over the helm of the Vancouver-based company in 2009 and since then, Ballet BC has become one of Canada’s most sought-after contemporary dance companies.

“Since 2009 we’ve been developing the perspective of the company and questioning what we mean by contemporary,” she explains. “It’s such a loaded word, but our question was ‘what exactly is our responsibility to a contemporary point of view in Canada and in relation to the international dance world?’”

“Inside that vision, I felt that for us to be ambassadors for Canadian work and to have a global conversation, we would need to be able to tour and really extend the work that we are creating to different audiences.”

Although Ballet BC has been touring for some time, its reach was relatively close to home. For Molnar, touring to the UK was key and a very important platform for dance in the world today producing and presenting cutting-edge work. The company made its British debut at the International Dance Festival Birmingham 2016 and then did a full UK tour in March 2018 taking in London’s Sadler’s Wells and theatres from Brighton to Newcastle with a triple bill by three female choreographers: Terrace, BC-born Crystal Pite; Israeli choreographer Sharon Eyal; and Emily’s own work 16+ a room.

The gender of the creators was not the main attraction for Molnar, but she does note: “In Canada a lot of our project-based companies are directed by women. Dance is a heavily female-dominated profession so I think there is an enormous amount of talent out there. Talent is not the issue. The issue is whether women are getting opportunities to choreograph. And that comes back to whether we, as directors of companies, make sure they have the opportunities.”

[Some excerpts from DanceTabs by Diane Parkes]
Narratives Connecting Humanity Through Time and Space

Looking at Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC) today as it celebrates its fifth decade, it’s difficult to remember its humble beginnings when Lou Conte gathered an ensemble of four dancers to perform in senior centers across Chicago. Now in its 41st season, Hubbard Street continues to be an innovative force, supporting emerging creative talent and continuing its commitment of taking an in-depth look at the work of individual choreographers.

The company’s beloved and critically acclaimed Resident Choreographer Alejandro Cerrudo has helped shape the aesthetic of the company for a decade now. Many of you will remember his work, Silent Ghost, performed by Aspen Santa Fe Ballet in Dance Victoria’s 2017/18 Season. It was the “talk of the town” following the performances. He has created over 15 works for the company including collaborations with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Nederlands Dans Theater. Additional commissions and touring engagements have brought his work to international companies throughout Europe and the United States.

In an interview with Dance Magazine in 2012, Cerrudo suggested that few choreographers have really reinvented themselves and that he wanted to be one of them. We think it’s safe to say that he has.

West coaster Crystal Pite makes a perfect pairing with Cerrudo for Hubbard’s program. Glenn Edgerton, Artistic Director of HSDC says, “Crystal Pite is a visionary and someone who I expect will continue to be part of the fabric of Hubbard Street moving forward. Her sense of creativity lends itself to progressive, thought provoking imagery and a new way of looking at dance.”

THE DANCES

**A Picture of You Falling** – Crystal Pite

*A Picture of You Falling* first premiered at the Canada Dance Festival in 2008, performed with the choreographer’s dance company, Kidd Pivot. It is like a detective story, with a voice-over dropping clues about a previous encounter. Some clues are obscure and describe the dance itself (“This is you reaching back.”); others establish a concrete setting, describing a room with a bed, a window. The duet is full of push and pull that asks the audience to see themselves in the dancers.

**Lickety Split & PACOPEPEPLUTO** – Alejandro Cerrudo

Two works that showcase the versatility of Cerrudo. PACOPEPEPLUTO is rich with humour and charm while Lickety Split, danced to the emotional music of Devendra Banhart, are vignettes examining the interdependence between female and male dancers, the body of one partner becoming a point of equilibrium and catalyst for the other partner’s motion.

**Cloudline** – Robyn Mineko Williams

Visually stunning, *Cloudline* is evocative of many danced relationships using the full-stage expanse of gray silk to create a billowy cloud, an ocean of waves, ripples, and swells through which the dancers move, swim, disappear and reappear.

PUSHING THE ART FORWARD

While many contemporary dance peers are single choreographer organizations, Hubbard Street has always presented fresh, bold new works that evoke inspiration, thought and conversation to continually push the art of dance forward. When Executive Producer Stephen White and General Manager Bernard Sauvé were putting together the 18/19 Season, they looked no further than Hubbard Street Dance Chicago whose repertory included works by Alejandro Cerrudo and Crystal Pite — two favourites who continue to surprise and delight international audiences.
THE CHOREOGRAPHERS

Alejandro Cerrudo

Alejandro Cerrudo was born in Madrid, Spain and trained at the Real Conservatorio Profesional de Danza de Madrid. His professional career began in 1998 and includes work with Victor Ullate Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater 2. Cerrudo joined Hubbard Street Dance Chicago in 2005, was named Choreographic Fellow in 2008 and became the company’s first Resident Choreographer in 2009. Fifteen works choreographed to date for Hubbard Street include collaborations with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Nederlands Dans Theater. These pieces and additional commissions are in the repertory at companies around the U.S. as well as in Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands; touring engagements have brought his work still further abroad, to audiences in Algeria, Canada, Morocco and Spain. In March 2012, Pacific Northwest Ballet invited Cerrudo to choreograph his first work for the company, Memory Glow, upon receiving the Joyce Theater Foundation’s second Rudolf Nureyev Prize for New Dance. Additional honours include an award from the Boomerang Fund for Artists (1998), and a Prince Prize for Commissioning Original Work from the Prince Charitable Trusts (2012) for his acclaimed, first evening-length work, One Thousand Pieces. Cerrudo is one of four choreographers invited by New York City Ballet principal Wendy Whelan to create and perform original duets for Restless Creature, and he was a recipient of the 2014 USA Donnelley Fellowship by United States Artists.

Crystal Pite

Born in Terrace, British Columbia and raised on the Canadian west coast, choreographer and performer Crystal Pite is a former company member of Ballet British Columbia and William Forsythe’s Ballet Frankfurt. Pite’s professional choreographic debut was in 1990 at Ballet British Columbia; since then, she has created more than 40 works for companies such as Nederlands Dans Theater, Cullberg Ballet, Ballett Frankfurt, the National Ballet of Canada, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Ballet British Columbia, The Royal Ballet, The Royal Swedish Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet and Louise Lecavalier / Fou Glorieux, plus collaborations with the Electric Company Theatre and acclaimed director Robert Lepage. In 2002, Pite formed the company Kidd Pivot, which integrates movement, original music, text and rich visual design, balancing sharp exactitude with irreverence and risk. Kidd Pivot tours nationally and internationally, performing critically acclaimed works including Dark Matters, Lost Action, The You Show and The Tempest Replica. Pite is the recipient of the Banff Centre’s Clifford E. Lee Award (1995), the Bonnie Bird North American Choreography Award (2004), the Isadora Award (2005), two Dora Mavor Moore Awards (2009 and 2012), a Jessie Richardson Theatre Award (2006) and the Governor General of Canada’s Performing Arts Award, Mentorship Program (2008). Pite also received the 2011 Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award, the inaugural Lola Award in 2012, and the Canada Council’s 2012 Jacqueline Lemieux Prize. Visit kiddpivot.org to learn more.

Robyn Mineko Williams

Robyn Mineko Williams is a dancer and choreographer from Chicago. She was a member of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago for 12 seasons. She began making her own work in 2001 through Hubbard Street’s Inside/Out Choreographic Workshop. She has since created multiple premieres for Hubbard Street including the Art of Falling, a critically acclaimed, full evening production by the artists of The Second City and Hubbard Street and has made work for Charlotte Ballet, Grand Rapids Ballet, Groundworks Dance Theatre, Thodos Dance Chicago, Visceral Dance Chicago and The Nexus Project.

Named one of Dance Magazine’s “25 to Watch” for 2014, Williams was one of Northwest Dance Project’s 2012 International Choreography Competition winners, received a 2013 Princess Grace Choreographic Fellowship and was selected as an E-choreographer for Springboard Danse Montréal the same year. Williams was named 2016 Best of Chicago - Best Choreographer by Chicago Mag and selected as one of NewCity’s Players: 50 People Who Really Perform for Chicago in 2016 and 2018.
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