

English National Ballet's Digital Season

About the choreographers and filmmakers:

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui defies easy description: choreographer, opera director, dancer, composer, artistic director of the Royal Ballet of Flanders as well as of Eastman, his contemporary dance company, and associate artist at Sadler's Wells, London. Cherkaoui may just as easily be found in the Louvre museum choreographing a music video for Beyoncé and Jay-Z (the MTV Music Video Awards-nominated *Apeshit*) as at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, directing a radical version of Jean-Philippe Rameau's baroque opus *Les Indes galantes*. Then again, he could be working in the Shaolin Temple in Song Shan, Henan, alongside a battalion of kung fu warrior monks and sculptor Antony Gormley (*Sutra*). Or creating movement magic at Tokyo's Bunkamura Theatre by transmuting Naoki Urasawa and Takashi Nagasaki's award-winning manga series into a kinetic, high-octane play (*Pluto*).

Awards and honours include two Olivier Awards (*Babel(words)*, co-choreographed with Damien Jalet, and *Puzzle*); a Fred & Adele Astaire Award (Joe Wright's *Anna Karenina*); a Tony Award nomination (*Jagged Little Pill*); three Tanz Awards; the Kairos Prize; an honorary doctorate from the University of Antwerp; the Europe Prize Theatrical Realities; and the title of "Commandeur dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres" from the French Government. Cherkaoui's affinity for ballet has led to some of his most enduring and high-profile works: *In Memoriam*, *Mea Culpa*, and *Memento Mori* for the Ballet of Monte-Carlo; *Loin* for the Grand Théâtre de Genève; *Boléro* for the Paris Opera Ballet with Damien Jalet and Marina Abramović; *Mermaid* for Carlos Acosta; and *Qutb* for Natalia Osipova.

Russell Maliphant trained at The Royal Ballet School and graduated into Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet before choosing to explore a diverse range of movement vocabularies through independent dance. He worked with DV8 Physical Theatre, Michael Clark & Co, Rosemary Butcher and Laurie Booth before starting to create his own works. Between 1991–1994 Maliphant also studied anatomy, physiology and biomechanics, and qualified as a practitioner of the Rolf Method of Structural Integration (or Rolfing) in 1994. He maintained a small private practice for 20 years and these studies inform both his teaching and choreographic work, along with a diverse range of body practices and techniques. From 1994 Maliphant collaborated closely with lighting designer Michael Hulls, evolving a language where movement and light are intimately connected and the meeting point becomes a new language in itself.

He formed Russell Maliphant Company in 1996 and also worked with renowned companies and artists including Sylvie Guillem, Robert Lepage, Isaac Julian, Balletboyz, English National Ballet, Ballet de Lyon and Munich Ballet. Awards include 2 Oliviers, 3 Southbank Show/Sky Arts Awards, 4 Critics' Circle National Dance Awards and an honorary doctorate of arts from Plymouth University. Russell Maliphant became an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells in 2005.

Yuri Possokhov danced for ten years with the Bolshoi Ballet, performing leading roles in almost all of the company's classical and contemporary ballets. While performing, Possokhov studied choreography and the teaching of ballet at Moscow's State College of Theatrical Arts. In 1992 Possokhov joined the Royal Danish Ballet as a principal dancer and performed many leading roles in their diverse repertoire. After having been invited to join San Francisco Ballet by Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson, Possokhov spent the following 12 years as a principal with the company, performing most leading roles during repertory seasons and world tours. During this period, he began his work as a choreographer.

After retiring from dancing in 2006, he joined the Artistic Staff at San Francisco Ballet as the company's Choreographer in Residence. Since then, he has continued creating new works for the company's repertory seasons and dances principal character roles. Possokhov actively works with companies worldwide on new ballet commissions, and he is a frequent guest with companies such as the Bolshoi Ballet, Chicago's Joffrey Ballet and Atlanta Ballet. In 2006, he was invited by the Bolshoi to create a full-length *Cinderella*, and has since returned to stage new full-length works including *Hero of Our Time* and *Nureyev*, both of which premiered to critical acclaim. Further choreographic highlights include *Magritomania*, *Damned*, *Study in Motion*, *Reflections*, *Firebird*, *Fusion*, *Diving into the Lilacs*, *Classical Symphony*, *RAKU*, *Francesca da Rimini*, *Rite of Spring*, *Gabrielle Chanel*, *Swimmer*, *Nutcracker*, *Don Quixote*, and *Anna Karenina*.

Born in Belgium, **Stina Quagebeur** had started dancing and choreographing by the time she was 7. At the age of 11 she came to England to study at the Royal Ballet School where she won several prizes with her pieces at the annual Choreographic competition. She continued her training at the English National Ballet School and subsequently joined the company at 18. Stina continued to choreograph in the company and was asked to create short pieces for various projects.

In 2014 Stina created *Vera*, which was selected to be performed in New York at the Alvin Ailey Citigroup Theatre for the Breaking Glass Project, and was later performed in 2018 in ENB's *Lest We Forget* triple bill at Sadler's Wells. In 2019 Stina created *Nora* for ENB's *She Persisted* Triple Bill, which was nominated for Best Classical Choreography at the Critic's Circle National Dance Awards, where she also won the Emerging Artist Award. Stina created the role of Myrtha in Akram Khan's *Giselle* and was promoted to First Artist in 2016. She was named English National Ballet's Associate Choreographer in 2019. Further creative highlights include choreographing for Lauren Cuthbertson at The Joyce Theatre, New York, choreographing for Sam Brown's opera production of *La Clemenza Di Tito*, directing and choreographing the short film *Design Perspectives*, and creating educational outreach works *Unsilenced* which and *Perfect Disorder*.

Arielle Smith was born in Havana, Cuba, and raised in Camden, London, UK. She trained at the Hammond School, Chester and went on to complete a BA HONS degree at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance. During her training, Arielle performed as a dancer many times with the National Youth Ballet of Great Britain where her first choreographic work was staged at the young age of 14. Arielle went on to choreograph works for the company for several seasons by the invitation of Jill Tookey and Mikah Smillie. She also performed in works by Estella Merlos and Mark Baldwin for Rambert Company.

Upon graduation, Arielle went straight into choreographing professionally and was commissioned to choreograph in a collaborative project between Rambert and The London Symphony Orchestra. She created a work called *Cradle*, which was performed at The Barbican. Arielle has just completed two years working alongside Matthew Bourne as his Young Associate Choreographer for New Adventures' production of *Romeo and Juliet*. This went on a national tour of the country and she had the pleasure of working with six 16-19-year-olds in the 14 venues on the tour alongside Paul Smethurst and Etta Murfitt. Other choreographic highlights include *Athena*, *Particle Fever*, *Storm*, and *Lots.Of.Varied.Expectations*. Arielle is a proud Trustee at New Adventures and a Contemporary Solos tutor at Rambert School.

Amy Becker Burnett is an accomplished and versatile Filmmaker with a diverse stylistic and storytelling range. From re-creating emotive true stories of knife crime for The Home Office, to a graphic, stylised documentary for Nike Tech Pack, capturing innovative young designers in their

prime. A common thread throughout Amy's work lies in her love for connecting with human subjects, delving deep into their stories with an intimate and genuine approach.

Shaun James Grant is an independent Screenwriter, Filmmaker and Photographer originally from Sheffield. As a screenwriter he has a desire to tell stories that observe how the decisions we make in life influence the outcomes of our futures. Channelling a strong sense of empathy, he lives to examine near impossible social questions of his central characters. Considering himself to be nothing more than an observer, recognising the fallibility of human nature without passing judgement. With that said, as a director he lives to tell immersive character driven stories, narratives that feel deeply personal to the central protagonists whilst also relatable to the audience. He strives to create worlds in which people understand and connect to the emotional struggle of life. No matter how abstract the setting. Aside from working in a constant music video and commercial space he has also just completed work on his first major short film *Hope* (*writer, director*) which is slated for the festival circuit in late 2020. Shaun currently resides in London with his infant daughter, whom heavily inspires his work.

Thomas James is an award winning Writer, Director & Artist originally hailing from Wolverhampton. He graduated from Chelsea College of art in 2010, winning The Times G100 Art & Design graduate of the year.

His work often toys with notions of horror and the sublime, the poetic and the grotesque. A keen sense of magical realism, the surreal and mind bending trips into the unknown, often underpin his cinematic and refined aesthetic approach.

In 2017 he won the UKMVA Indie video of the year for HoneyBlood - Ready for the Magic, was nominated for the UKMVA Best Rock video, and was also the runner up in the Homespun Yarns short film competition. In 2018 he was nominated for Best New Director of the Year at the UKMVAs.

He runs his own creative studio; operating across multiple platforms. He has created films for a range of musicians, including Young Fathers, Paloma Faith, Bring Me The Horizon, Fat White Family, Sam Fender, Nothing But Thieves and Ghostpoet. He has also had narrative works commissioned by Jonas Akerlund and The Museum of Witchcraft.

He has exhibited works across the UK, including shows at the V&A, The Chopping Block Gallery, and most recently was asked to create a film for the Rebels exhibition at the Oxo Tower alongside Nick Knight & James Lavelle. He has guest lectured at St. Martins, Chelsea College of Art and UCA in film and visual culture.

Thomas is represented by 42 Management (Worldwide) for long form works, and OB Management (UK) for short form pieces.

Michael Nunn and William Trevitt met as students at the Royal Ballet School. After graduating into the Royal Ballet Company and performing many leading roles for 12 years, they founded their own dance company BalletBoyz in 2000. For the first decade, they created and performed a variety of works with choreographers including William Forsythe, Michael Clark, Akram Khan, Liv Lorent, Matthew Bourne and Christopher Wheeldon.

Following Michael and Billy's retirement from the stage in 2009 they reinvented BalletBoyz, bringing young dancers together to create an all-male dance company that has grown into an award-winning group. Working with various choreographers, including Liam Scarlett, Alexander

Whitley, Paul Roberts, Fernanda Lippi and Javier de Frutos, they have added dozens of work to the repertoire which tours nationally and internationally to great acclaim.

Michael and Billy discovered a shared interesting in film and photography while at the Royal Ballet School and their fascination with the twin strands of stage and screen has continued throughout their career, playing an integral part in their creations and work. Their film work started with a four-part series for Channel 4, titled *BalletBoyz*, which revealed their lives as 'ordinary' ballet dancers. Since then, they have created numerous arts documentaries and dance films to popular and critical acclaim, including *Rise and Fall* – featuring the work of Russell Maliphant, and *Strictly Bolshoi*, which followed Christopher Wheeldon as he became the first Englishman to choreograph for the Bolshoi Ballet, and which won the prestigious Rose d'Or award and an International Emmy. This was followed by a film about The Royal Ballet's first visit to Cuba, and a specially commissioned *The Rite of Spring* which won the Golden Prague Grand Prix award. Film production continued with *The Next Generation*, a film about the new line-up of their; *Kama Sutra* for SkyArts; and 40+ short films for Channel 4. In 2014 they commissioned *Young Men*, choreographed by Iván Pérez. Based on themes of war and soldiering, it became the foundation for their first movie, a unique combination of film-making and story-telling through the language of dance. *Young Men* premiered on BBC2 on Armistice Day 2016 and won several awards. Most recently, Michael and Billy made the Rose d'Or nominated feature film *Romeo and Juliet: Beyond Words* featuring dancers from the Royal Ballet.

Michael and Billy are Associate Artists at Sadler's Wells and were made OBEs in 2012.

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