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BalletX *Summer Series 2017* at the Prince Theater, July 12-16 Featuring World Premieres by Matthew Neenan and Jodie Gates and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Castrati* (2011)

WHAT: On July 12-16, BalletX, Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet, presents six performances of *Summer Series 2017* at the Prince Theater. With 61 world premieres and counting in the company's repertory, *The Dance Journal* writes that critics and audiences have come to look forward to what Christine Cox, Co-Founder, Artistic & Executive Director, has "dreamed up next." This July, dancegoers can expect two world premieres by Matthew Neenan and Jodie Gates, as well as the return of Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Castrati*, which the company originally premiered in 2011 to rave reviews. *Summer Series 2017* also marks BalletX's first-ever performances at Philadelphia's exciting Prince Theater, as the company awaits the completion of major renovations at its resident venue, The Wilma Theater.

"I'm especially excited because the program reflects my interest in building long-term relationships with artists who are curious about the development of new ballet. These three exceptional choreographers exemplify that exploration, and have all made a significant impact on BalletX over the years," says Cox.

Matthew Neenan, Co-Founder of BalletX, returns this summer for a highly anticipated world premiere on the company. Hailed by *The New York Times* as one of the "strange originals of American Ballet," Neenan has created work on such prestigious companies as Pennsylvania Ballet, Ballet West, Oregon Ballet Theatre, and Washington Ballet. His 2014 BalletX masterpiece, *Sunset, 0639 Hours*, has toured to venues across the country, including Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Vail International Dance Festival, and The Joyce Theater. Neenan's most recent BalletX premiere, *Credo*, was described by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* as having "layers of breath work, pantomime, group dances, poses that look like Indian statues and paintings, and dancers wrapped in colorful sari-like costumes." For his *Summer Series 2017* premiere Neenan says, "I'd like to utilize the Prince Theater stage in a unique way for dramatic effect. My last few premieres with BalletX have been fairly conceptual. For this work, I will be more focused on exploring the theater space itself, and pure movement with the dancers."

BalletX also welcomes Jodie Gates, Director and Vice Dean of USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance and former Principal Dancer with Joffrey Ballet and Pennsylvania Ballet, for her third world premiere on the company. Gates has published more than 60 original dance works, and is a frequent collaborator of legendary choreographer William Forsythe. Her previous work with BalletX includes *Le Baiser Inévitable* (2009), which *The Philadelphia Inquirer* called "visually compelling, powerful, beautiful," and *Delicate Balance* (2012), a ballet the *Chicago Tribune* described as "expertly constructed" with "expressive dancing." Her new ballet this summer features an original music composition by Ryan Lott, lead singer of indie-rock band Son Lux. She looks forward to showcasing the women dancers of BalletX, exploring their sense of agency and power while deploying some of her signature looping gestures and circular movement to emphasize equal footing between the partners. "This won't be women being lifted around; let's think about partnering, so the audience can relate to each dancer as individuals, as well as in pairs," says Gates.

Completing the program is Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Castrati* (2011), which contemplates the phenomenon of castrated singers during the 16th-18th century in Spain and Italy. Fascinated by the lives of these men, who were maimed in the name of art, Ochoa explores the relationship between performers and their audience, and the role that suffering and adulation play in the creative process. The work is set to the music of Nicola Antonio

Porpora, Friedrich Handel, and contemporary Belgian composer David van Bouwel, and features costumes designed by Aviad Arik Herman, a dancer with Gothenburg Opera Ballet. When BalletX first premiered *Castrati* in 2011, *The Broad Street Review* described the work as “a tour de force contribution... a rare blend of theater and dance.” And, when BalletX revived an excerpt of *Castrati* for its 10th Anniversary Retrospective last spring, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* called it “morbidly sad, yet freakishly beautiful,” and *The Dance Journal* described it as “part Commedia dell’arte, part Rocky Horror.” Ochoa’s other previous premieres with BalletX include 2008’s *Still@Life*, 2011’s *Bare*, and most recently 2016’s *Bonzi*, a collaborative effort with experiential art shop, Klip Collective.

For a closer look at the *Summer Series 2017* production, BalletX invites audiences to various audience engagement programming events, known as *The X-Process*. Starting with a pre-show *Conversations with the Artists* on opening night, audiences are also welcome to attend a *Post-Show Q&A* with the artists after the Thursday, July 13 evening performance.

BalletX will also hold a Young Xers Night for Gen X and Millennial (21+) professionals, students, artists, and culture seekers at the Prince Theater July 13. Use code: YOUNGXER for \$30 tickets to the performance, including complimentary pre-show small bites.

Tickets to *Summer Series 2017* at the Prince Theater are available online at www.balletx.org, by phone at [\(215\) 422-4580](tel:2154224580), or in person at the Prince box office at 1412 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

VISUALS: Contemporary ballet, music, costumes, stage production

WHO: Christine Cox, Tara Keating, BalletX dancers, Matthew Neenan, Jodie Gates, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Ryan Lott of the indie band Son Lux

WHERE and WHEN: The Prince Theater, 1412 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Wednesday, July 12 at 8:00 PM

- Pre-Show Conversations with the Artists, 7:00pm

Thursday July 13 at 8:00 PM

- Young Xers Night, 7:00pm
- Post-Show Q&A with the Artists

Friday, July 14 at 8:00 PM

Saturday, July 15 at 2:00 PM

Saturday, July 15 at 8:00 PM

Sunday, July 16 at 2:00 PM

ABOUT: BalletX, Philadelphia’s premier contemporary ballet, unites distinguished choreographers with an outstanding company of world-class dancers to forge new works of athleticism, emotion, and grace. Founded in 2005 by Christine Cox and Matthew Neenan, and now under the direction of Cox as Artistic & Executive Director, BalletX challenges the boundaries of classical ballet by encouraging formal experimentation while preserving rigorous technique. The company is committed to producing new works of the highest quality and integrity that bring the combined visions of choreographers and dancers to life and cultivate in audiences a collective appetite for bold, new dance. For more information, visit www.balletx.org.