

For Immediate Release: March 18, 2026

[Cal Performances Press Room](#)



Photos of The Joffrey Ballet plus additional performers and creative team members in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* program are available for download from the Cal Performances [Press Room](#).

A video trailer of The Joffrey Ballet performing Alexander Ekman's *Midsummer Night's Dream* is available on [YouTube](#).

**CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS  
THE JOFFREY BALLET  
IN THE WEST COAST PREMIERE OF  
ALEXANDER EKMAN'S  
*MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM***

**FRIDAY–SUNDAY, APRIL 17–19  
AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**INSPIRED BY SCANDINAVIAN FOLK TRADITION,  
SENSUAL AND SURREAL WORK FEATURES SCORE BY  
MIKAEL KARLSSON PLUS LIVE MUSIC AND VOCALS BY SWEDISH  
ROCKER  
ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF**

## OPENING NIGHT PERFORMANCE IS CENTERPIECE OF CAL PERFORMANCES' 2026 GALA

Berkeley, CA, March 18, 2026—Cal Performances at UC Berkeley welcomes back **The Joffrey Ballet**, one of the country's most acclaimed dance companies, for a series of three performances at Zellerbach Hall on Friday, April 17 at 7pm; Saturday, April 18 at 8pm; and Sunday, April 19 at 3pm. In a West Coast premiere, the Joffrey performs renowned Swedish choreographer **Alexander Ekman's *Midsummer Night's Dream***, a mind-bending trip to a realm of unearthly delights, with sets that seem to defy gravity, costumes that flirt with the surreal, and a stage teeming with nearly three dozen dancers reveling alternately in joy and mystery. Drawing its inspiration not from Shakespeare but from the exuberance and sensuality of the traditional Scandinavian summer solstice festival, *Midsummer Night's Dream* is informed by an all-Swedish creative team that includes composer and frequent Ekman collaborator **Mikael Karlsson**, whose original score is performed by a live ensemble fronted by Swedish singer and indie-rock sensation **Anna von Hausswolff**. The Friday performance is the centerpiece of the Cal Performances 2026 Gala.

Describing the work, The Joffrey Ballet says, "Ekman's ode to the longest day of the year follows a traditional Midsommar festival—from a passionate, lively celebration by day to a whirlwind dream by night. Ekman's picturesque fusion of classical and contemporary ballet blurs the line between the real and the imagined, making audiences wonder, 'Was it all just a dream?'"

"Alexander Ekman dares to be bold with *Midsummer Night's Dream*, creating an astonishing dance-theater performance of tremendous theatricality and scale," said the Joffrey's Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director, **Ashley Wheeler MBE**. "Playing to the strengths of Joffrey Company Artists to convey the evolution of our art form, woven together with the trailblazing talents of Ekman's creative team, *Midsummer* gifts audiences with an unforgettable experience."

The Joffrey Ballet has had an ever-evolving creative association with Cal Performances since the 1970s, and the upcoming April performances represent the most recent stage of the current collaboration between company and presenter: an eight-year, four-engagement residency begun in 2024. With such a shared history of artistic exploration, it is fitting that the company's eagerly anticipated return should include a headline performance at the [Cal Performances 2026 Gala](#) on Friday, April 17. The Gala event, ticketed separately, begins at 5:30pm with cocktails in the tent on Lower Sproul Plaza and continues with premium seating for the 7pm performance by The Joffrey

Ballet. It concludes with a 9pm Gala Dinner on stage at Zellerbach Playhouse, featuring a menu designed by Gayle Pirie and John Clark, the chef/owners of San Francisco's Foreign Cinema restaurant, with wine provided by Cakebread Cellars.

During the Gala celebration, the Joffrey's artistic director, Ashley Wheater MBE, will receive the [Cal Performances Award of Distinction in the Performing Arts](#), the organization's highest honor, recognizing an individual or ensemble for exceptional contributions and impact in the performing arts.

### **Artists**

Celebrating 70 years of artistic excellence, **The Joffrey Ballet** is widely considered one of the premier dance companies performing today. Based in Chicago, the Joffrey's commitment to an inclusive perspective on dance is expressed through its company artists, its extensive repertoire, its community engagement programs, and its school and training program, the Grainger Academy of The Joffrey Ballet. The resident dance company at Chicago's Lyric Opera House since the 2021–22 season, the company presents a home performance season and tours nationally and internationally.

The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director of The Joffrey Ballet, **Ashley Wheater MBE** is just the third artistic leader in the company's seven-decade history. Born in Scotland, Wheater trained at The Royal Ballet School in England before going on to dance with the London Festival Ballet, the Australian Ballet, the Joffrey, and San Francisco Ballet. Appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2020 Queen's New Year Honours List for services to the performing arts, he is recognized for his leadership in dance and his work with major companies worldwide. As the Joffrey's artistic director since 2007, he has collaborated with both world-renowned and emerging choreographers to create a host of new works for the company. For his achievements on behalf of The Joffrey Ballet, in 2010, Wheater was named Lincoln Academy Laureate, the highest honor presented by the State of Illinois, and in 2013, he was proclaimed "Chicagoan of the Year" by the *Chicago Tribune*.

Swedish choreographer **Alexander Ekman** trained at the Royal Swedish Ballet school in Stockholm and, while still in his teens, danced with both the Royal Swedish Ballet and Nederlands Dance Theater (NDT) before becoming a full-time choreographer at age 21. He has created some 50 works for dance companies worldwide, including the Joffrey, NDT, Cedar Lake Contemporary Dance, the Royal Swedish Ballet, and the Norwegian National Ballet.

Swedish-born, New York City-based composer **Mikael Karlsson** specializes in dramatic music for dance (including numerous collaborations with Alexander Ekman), ballet, theater, and opera and vocal performance (including multiple collaborations with Anna von Hausswolff), and also writes concert music for orchestras, chamber ensembles, and solo instrumentalists. His music has been performed at Carnegie Hall, Oslo Opera House, the Royal Swedish Opera, the International Edinburgh Festival, and many other international opera houses, festivals, and concert venues.

**Anna von Hausswolff** is a Swedish singer and composer whose work conveys a sense of timelessness while remaining resolutely modern. Her soaring vocals and swirling mix of post-rock, pop, minimalism, and more can be heard on critically acclaimed albums like *The Miraculous* (2015), *Dead Magic* (2018), and her latest, *Iconoclasts* (2025). With Mikael Karlsson, she co-composed and performed the music for the Nobel Peace Banquet of 2018. Learn more about Anna von Hausswolff in this [Beyond the Stage Q&A](#) with the artist published by Cal Performances.

Comprising the instrumental ensemble for *Midsummer* are **Niklas Brommare**, a Swedish composer and percussionist; the Spanish-born **Jorge Ivars**, one of two company pianists of The Joffrey Ballet; and a string quartet of violinists **Dovid Friedlander** and **Janis Sakai**, viola player **Beatrice Chen**, and cellist **Mara McClain**.

## Community

UC Berkeley students can enjoy a limited number of \$10 tickets for some of the best seats in the hall for The Joffrey Ballet's Saturday, April 18 performance through the [Golden Bear Circle program](#). (See below for more ticket information.) On the same evening, all UC Berkeley students and their guests in attendance are invited to a complimentary, post-performance [student reception](#) featuring light refreshments.

For blind and visually impaired audience members, Cal Performances offers a live audio description at the 3pm performance on Sunday, April 19. The audio track delivered live by a professional audio describer is intended to provide clear and engaging descriptions of the meaningful visual details of a performance via a wireless headset, and is offered at no extra charge.

###

**CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:**

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS**

Friday, April 17, 7pm  
Saturday, April 18, 8pm  
Sunday, April 19, 3pm

Zellerbach Hall  
Bancroft Way at Dana Street  
UC Berkeley

*Dance*

**The Joffrey Ballet**

*Midsummer Night's Dream*

**Alexander Ekman**, *choreographer*

**Mikael Karlsson**, *composer*

**Anna von Hausswolff**, *vocalist*

**Program:**

The Joffrey Ballet deepens its longstanding relationship with Cal Performances with a signature work, Alexander Ekman's celebration of the traditional Scandinavian summer solstice festival. A trip to a surreal realm of earthly and supernatural delights, *Midsummer Night's Dream* features a musical score by composer Mikael Karlsson performed live by Swedish indie rock sensation Anna von Hausswolff and an on-stage band. Dancers cavort in pastoral revelry as reality and fantasy blur in a joyous ode to the arrival of the summer season.

For blind and visually impaired audience members, live audio descriptions are available at the Sunday, April 19, 3pm performance. Headsets may be reserved at the time of ticket purchase or by contacting the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or [tickets@calperformances.org](mailto:tickets@calperformances.org). More information can be found at [calperformances.org/accessibility](http://calperformances.org/accessibility).

**Tickets:** \$54–\$198 (prices subject to change). Available at [calperformances.org](http://calperformances.org), by phone at (510) 642-9988, or in person at the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, Tuesday–Friday, 12–5:30pm and Saturday–Sunday, 1–5pm.

There is a \$15 per order service charge on ticket purchases made by phone or online that are not part of a subscription package; there is no fee for tickets purchased in person at the Zellerbach Hall Ticket Office. There is a \$20 service charge on all subscription orders.

UC Berkeley students can access exclusive discounts, including half-price tickets in all sections of the theater, and are also eligible to purchase a limited number of \$10 tickets for the best seats in the house for the Saturday, April 18 Joffrey Ballet performance through the [Golden Bear Circle](#) program beginning at noon on Friday, April 3, online only. Information about all UC Berkeley student tickets and discounts is available at [calperformances.org/ucb-students](http://calperformances.org/ucb-students); information about other discounts can be found at [calperformances.org/discounts](http://calperformances.org/discounts).

---

Friday, April 17  
5:30pm Cocktail Reception  
7pm Performance  
9pm Gala Dinner

UC Berkeley Campus

**Cal Performances' 2026 Gala**  
**Featuring The Joffrey Ballet**  
*Midsummer Night's Dream*

**Alexander Ekman**, *choreographer*  
**Mikael Karlsson**, *composer*  
**Anna von Hausswolff**, *vocalist*

Cal Performances hosts a gala evening with all proceeds supporting Cal Performances' artistic initiatives and education programs. The Gala begins with cocktails and continues with the best seats in the house for The Joffrey Ballet performance. It is capped off with a Gala dinner designed by Gayle Pirie and John Clark, the chef/owners of San Francisco's Foreign Cinema restaurant, and wine provided by Cakebread Cellars. During the Gala celebration, The Joffrey Ballet's artistic director, Ashley Wheeler MBE, will receive the Cal Performances Award of Distinction in the Performing Arts. Information is available at [calperformances.org/gala](https://calperformances.org/gala).

**Tickets:** Single Gala tickets: \$1,000, \$2,500; Partial and full tables: from \$15,000 – \$100,000; Cocktail reception only tickets: \$500. Gala tickets include tickets to the performance. Available online at [calperformances.org/gala](https://calperformances.org/gala) or by contacting the Development team at 510.642.8653 or [donate@calperformances.org](mailto:donate@calperformances.org).

###

**PRESS CONTACT**

Louisa Spier  
Cal Performances  
(510) 643-6714  
[lspier@calperformances.org](mailto:lspier@calperformances.org)