



For Immediate Release: December 8, 2023

[Cal Performances Press Room](#)



Images of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo are available for download from the Cal Performances [Press Room](#).

A video excerpt of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo performing *Paquita* can be found on [YouTube](#).

A video of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo discussing “What It Takes To Be a Ballerina in Drag” is also available on [YouTube](#).

**CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS  
LES BALLETS TROCKADERO DE MONTE CARLO,  
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JANUARY 27–28  
AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**The all-male comic drag ballet company celebrates  
50 years together this season, having first performed at Cal Performances  
in 1976, only two years after the company’s founding**

**Berkeley, December 8, 2023**—Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, the world’s foremost all-male comic drag ballet company and a frequent guest at Cal Performances, returns to Zellerbach Hall on Saturday, January 27 and Sunday, January 28. In honor of the company’s landmark 50th

anniversary season, the program features diverse and iconic works from across the company's groundbreaking repertoire: *Swan Lake* (Act II); *Yes, Virginia, Another Piano Ballet*; *Paquita*; and more.

*Swan Lake* (Act II) is the company's signature work, with music by Tchaikovsky and choreography that affectionately satirizes Lev Ivanov's 1895 staging for the Mariinsky Ballet. Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo's version features expert mime choreography, a corps of swans with hairy chests visible above their tutus, and a healthy dose of slapstick. *Yes, Virginia, Another Piano Ballet*, choreographed by the company's co-founder Peter Anastos, was an early hit of their repertoire and Mikhail Baryshnikov even performed it with them. It was restaged recently for the first time in more than 20 years. Marius Petipa's *Paquita*, with music by Ludwig Minkus, is an example of the French style of ballet as it was exported to Saint Petersburg in the late 19th century. A *pas de deux* or a modern work yet to be announced will round out the program.

Of the company's 50th season, Artistic Director Tory Dobrin shared, "What can anyone say about a 50 year journey? The Trocks have had, and continue to have, an incredible run, the kind that any dance company in the United States would envy—especially one started by gay artists who loved ballet, comedy, and drag, and wanted to pay homage, in the best way they knew how, with the talents at their disposal. Today, we are a group of humans traveling all over the world to celebrate ballet and to make audiences laugh. We love every minute of it; even on the days when planes are canceled, injuries plague us, or our wigs get lost. And we have been able to achieve five decades together in large part due to the support of early presenters, among the most important being Cal Performances which began presenting us in the 1970s."

The Trocks, as they are colloquially known, is widely praised for superb ballet technique that matches their expert comic timing, and for taking ballet history seriously even as they relish mocking the genre's conventions. The 16 male members of the company dance delicate, traditionally female roles *en pointe* and *en travesti*, taking on outrageous faux-Russian stage names and fabricated backstories to match. Dancers include Grunya Protazova, "the featured ballerina at SeaWorld, where her famous autobiographical solo, *Dance of the Lower Orders*, brought several marine biologists to tears"; Ludmila Beulemova, former prima ballerina of the Grand Ole Opry; Holly Dey-Abroad, who lacks the talent and intelligence required to be good at dancing; and Chip Pididoua, who brings "his athleticism and special brand of *je ne sais quoi pas*" to the Trocks.

Beyond their clever stage names, the Trocks' comedy is achieved by exaggerating the foibles, accidents, and underlying incongruities of serious dance. The fact that men dance all the parts— heavy bodies delicately balancing on toes as swans, sylphs, water sprites, romantic princesses— enhances, rather than mocks, the spirit of dance as an art form. But a performance by the Trocks is not merely broad humor. "The comedy works because the dancers' technical prowess goes far beyond what the conceit of guys-in-tutus might initially suggest," says the *Minneapolis Star Ledger*. "These are artists who can toss off a dozen rapid-fire *fouettés* in their size-13 pointe shoes without turning a hair on their bun-headed wigs."

Founded in 1974 by a group of ballet enthusiasts for the purpose of presenting a playful view of classical ballet in parody form and *en travesti*, Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo first performed in the late-late shows in Off-Off Broadway lofts. By mid 1975, the troupe had garnered praise from prestigious publications like the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and the *Village Voice*. Cal Performances first presented Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo in 1976. The company credits Betty Connors, Cal Performances' then director, as the first important presenter to launch the ballet troupe's touring career. And now, 50 years later, the troupe has established itself as a major dance phenomenon throughout the world, appearing in more than 40 countries and 600 cities worldwide. The Trocks are the subject of the 2017 documentary *Rebels on Pointe*, tracing the company's founding following the Stonewall Riots of 1969 to modern day. Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo remains steadfast in its mission to bring the joy of dance to as many people as possible, humorously breaking boundaries and defying conventions in the world of ballet.

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**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS:**

**Saturday, January 27 at 8pm**

**Sunday, January 28 at 3pm**

**Zellerbach Hall  
Bancroft Way at Dana Street,  
UC Berkeley campus**

***Dance***

**Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo**

**Program:**

*Swan Lake*, Act II (choreography after Ivanov; music by Tchaikovsky)

*Pas de deux* or modern work to be announced

*Yes, Virginia, Another Piano Ballet* (choreography by Peter Anastos; music by Chopin)

*Paquita* (choreography after Petipa; music by Minkus)

The comedic all-male drag ballet company Les Ballets Trockadero De Monte Carlo returns to Cal Performances as part of the company's 50th-anniversary season. The 16 male members of "The Trocks" dance delicate, traditionally female roles *en pointe* and *en travesti*, taking on outrageous faux-Russian stage names and fabricated backstories to match. The company, which made its debut at Cal Performances in 1976, was groundbreaking at its founding in New York City lofts in 1974. Its irreverent, deeply informed romps through the dance world continue to engage aficionados and novices alike.

**Tickets:** \$42–\$109 (prices subject to change). Half-price for UC Berkeley students. Tickets are 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. More information about student tickets and discounts is available at [calperformances.org/ucb-students](http://calperformances.org/ucb-students). For information about other discounts, visit [calperformances.org/discounts](http://calperformances.org/discounts).

**Live Audio Description:**

A live audio description and a pre-performance haptic tour for blind and visually impaired audience members are available for the Saturday, January 27 performance. To reserve a headset and a place on the tour for this performance contact the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or [tickets@calperformances.org](mailto:tickets@calperformances.org). Additional information about services available for patrons with disabilities can be found at [calperformances.org/accessibility](http://calperformances.org/accessibility).

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