

Friday, April 17, 2026, 7pm
Saturday, April 18, 2026, 8pm
Sunday, April 19, 2026, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

The Joffrey Ballet

Midsummer Night's Dream

Ashley Wheater MBE
The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director

Greg Cameron
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Scott Speck, *Music Director & Principal Conductor*
Jared Wright, *Company Pianist*

*Leadership support for these performances is provided by an anonymous donor.
Major support is provided by an anonymous donor (April 17),
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Additional support is provided by the Consulate General of Sweden.*

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Midsummer Night's Dream

Choreography
Alexander Ekman

Music
Mikael Karlsson

Featuring
Anna von Hausswolff

Live Accompaniment
Dovid Friedlander, *violin*
Janis Sakai, *violin*
Beatrice Chen, *viola*
Mara McClain, *cello*
Jorge Ivars, *piano*
Niklas Brommare, *percussion*

Set Design
Alexander Ekman

Costume Design
Bregje van Balen

Original Lighting Design
Linus Fellbom

Lighting Recreation
Chris Maravich

World Premiere:
April 17, 2015, Royal Swedish Opera, Stockholm

Joffrey Premiere:
Wednesday, April 25, 2018, Auditorium Theatre, Chicago, IL

*The Joffrey Ballet's Presenting Sponsor and Set and Costume Build Sponsor
for Midsummer Night's Dream is Lynda Sue Lane, MD.*

*The performance will last approximately two hours and 10 minutes,
including one 20-minute intermission.*

Dreams and Reality

What is *Midsummer* all about? Why do we celebrate it the way we do? I decided to create a ballet about this strange tradition. I began in the summer of 2014, as always, together with the composer Mikael Karlsson in New York. We began to work on the music, and it developed into something incredibly beautiful. Yet again, Mikael has come up with some amazing music, and I'm extremely pleased about the result. How do you create a dream and how do you make it interesting to the au-

dience? Everyone has a crazy dream, in fact, it's the ideal concept for a creative mind—you can do whatever you like!

Everything is possible in a dream ... at the same time, it's extremely hard to finish. Our dreams never end ... so how do you end a theatrical dream?

Raising the curtain to this performance has been a major undertaking. I would like to thank everyone who has helped me make my dream project come true.

—Alexander Ekman

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Celebrating 70 years of artistic excellence and classically trained to the highest standards, **The Joffrey Ballet** expresses an inclusive perspective on dance that reflects the diversity of America through its company artists, extensive repertoire, academy, and community engagement programs.

Considered one of the premier dance companies performing today, the Joffrey plays a vital role in the dance community as one of the largest dance ensembles and dance education providers in Chicago and the greater Midwest region.

The Joffrey Mission

The Joffrey Ballet believes in the positive, transformative power of the arts, and its mission is to promote dance through an unwavering commitment to high-quality performances, education, and innovation.

Values of IDEA—

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access

As a member of Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance, The Joffrey Ballet has adopted Dance/USA's statement on core values of equity and inclusion.



Ashley Wheater
The Mary B. Galvin
Artistic Director

Ashley Wheater has dedicated his life to dance. He was born in Scotland and trained at the Royal Ballet School in England. He worked with Frederick Ashton, Kenneth MacMillan, and Michael Somes in numerous ballets at Covent Garden, including *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle*, *Manon*, *Anastacia*, and *The Dream*. Wheater danced with Rudolf Nureyev in *Nureyev and Friends* at the London Coliseum.

On Nureyev's advice, Wheater joined the London Festival Ballet and danced in his *Romeo and Juliet* and *Sleeping Beauty*. He danced in Glen Tetley's *Sphinx* and *Greening* and in Festival Ballet's large repertoire of classics and new creations. Under the artistic direction of John Field, Wheater was promoted to Principal Dancer at the age of 20.

In 1982, he joined the Australian Ballet, where he continued dancing principal roles in both classical and contemporary work, especially in the John Cranko full-length ballets.

In 1985, at the invitation of Gerald Arpino, Wheater joined The Joffrey Ballet. For the next four years, he performed various works by American choreographers including William Forsythe, Gerald Arpino, Mark Morris, Paul Taylor, and Laura Dean, as well as repertoire by Ashton and Cranko.

Joining the San Francisco Ballet in 1989, he continued his creative career working under Helgi Tomasson, and with choreographers including James Kudelka and David Bintley. In 1997, he retired from dancing and was appointed Ballet Master and, later, Assistant to the Artistic Director, at the San Francisco Ballet.

Since his appointment in 2007 as artistic director of The Joffrey Ballet, Wheater's passion and commitment to the Joffrey have been evident in the quality that he has brought to the dancing and to the repertoire. He has invited world-renowned choreographers, as well as fresh young talent, to create new work for the company. Wheater has added new full-length works to the Joffrey's repertoire, including Lar Lubovitch's groundbreaking *Othello*, Ronald Hynd's *The Merry Widow*, and Yuri Possokhov's *Don Quixote*.

In 2008, Wheater was the recipient of the Boeing Game-Changer Award in recognition of his commitment to community engagement in Chicago and to the celebration of diversity through dance. He sits on the Advisory Board for *Dance Magazine*, serves as the Artistic Advisor for ChiArts, and is the Advisor to the Arts for the Lincoln Academy of Illinois. In 2010, Wheater, representing The Joffrey Ballet, was named Lincoln Academy Laureate, the highest honor presented by the State of Illinois, and in 2013, the *Chicago Tribune* named him "Chicagoan of the Year". In 2015, Wheater received the University of Chicago Rosenberger Medal for Outstanding Achievement in the Creative and Performing Arts. In December 2019, he

was appointed a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



Greg Cameron
President and Chief Executive Officer

Driven by his lifelong love for the arts, for his hometown, and for connecting with people from every background, Greg Cameron leads The Joffrey Ballet as President & CEO, responsible for organization-wide administration and strategy. Under his partnership with the Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director Ashley Wheater MBE, the Joffrey has set new records at the box office and built the strongest financial foundation in its history.

Cameron's 2013 appointment was the culmination of three decades of work in arts administration and philanthropy. "I always loved art, but I wasn't a great artist," he says. "I could paint by numbers, or I could connect the dots. I realized early on I was a good dot connector. I could connect people to each other and help them get involved with the things they believe in."

As a child in suburban Chicago, Cameron ran a makeshift theater out of his garage and sold more mints than anyone else for his local YMCA. And as an adult, he turned those passions into a career, raising funds for the cultural organizations he loves. At the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art, where he rose to the role of Deputy Director and Chief Development Officer; and WTTW/WFMT, where he served as COO, Cameron dedicated himself to supporting art and artists and to creating meaningful experiences for others.

“The Joffrey brings it all together for me,” he says. “It’s about collaboration, partnership with the community, honoring and supporting artists, and telling stories that truly move people.”

Today, Cameron leads the Joffrey’s efforts to support unforgettable productions and new commissions, reach out to organizations and communities across Chicago, and open up world-class ballet for audiences from all backgrounds. Throughout the span of his 40-year career as an arts administrator in Chicago, Cameron has volunteered for a wide range of nonprofit organizations and civic committees. He currently serves on the Facing History and Ourselves Chicago Advisory Board, the Driehaus Museum Board, and the State Street SSA Commission. Cameron was recently honored by the Association of Fundraising Professionals Chicago Chapter with their Benjamin Franklin Award, in recognition of the significant achievements throughout his long career, serving as a role model for his profession.



Alexander Ekman
Choreographer

Alexander Ekman is an international choreographer/director creating dance pieces for opera houses, theaters, and museums. He also directs films

and music videos as well as live performances in pop-up locations.

Ekman is known for his fast-paced timing, witty humor, and clever transitions. He aims to create work with which the majority can relate and connect. Since 2006, he has devoted his time to creating pieces that both entertain and question the observer. He aims to transform the atmosphere in the performance hall and to always surprise the audience.

Around 50 dance companies worldwide have performed works by Ekman. A few of them are the Royal Swedish Ballet, Cullberg Ballet, Compañía Nacional de Danza, Göteborg Ballet, Iceland Dance Company, Bern Ballet, Ballet de l’Opéra National du Rhin, Norwegian National Ballet, Boston Ballet, Royal Ballet of Flanders, Sydney Dance Company, Royal Danish Ballet, and Vienna Ballet. He has also created for festivals such as the French Europa Danse and the Athens International Dance Festival.

His work *Cacti* has become a worldwide hit and has been performed by 18 dance companies. *Cacti* was nominated for the 2010 Dutch dance prize Zwaan, for the 2012 National Dance Award (UK), and for the 2013 Olivier Award (UK). *Cacti* continues to entertain audiences around the world with its important message.

In 2014, Ekman created his own version of *Swan Lake*, a new take of the most famous ballet of them all. *A Swan Lake* received enormous attention worldwide. Ekman filled the stage with 6,000 liters of water, creating a real lake on stage. *A Swan Lake* is available on DVD, and the documentary *Rare Birds* by T.M. Rives shows the process of how it became possible to create a lake inside an opera house. Ekman has also collaborated closely with top fashion designer Henrik Vibskov, who created the costumes for his *A Swan Lake*. Vibskov then adapted the choreography for his fall collection, which was shown in Paris and Copenhagen during Fashion Week.

In 2015, Ekman created his own version of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Royal Swedish Ballet, which became an instant hit with the audience and critics. He received the Swedish MEDEA Inventor and Renewer Award in September 2015 as well as the Sässtaholm Award and the Birgit Cullberg Scholarship, and in 2016, he received the German Der Faust theater award for his ballet *COW* for the Semperoper Ballet.


Mikael Karlsson
Composer

Mikael Karlsson lives in Harlem, New York City. He moved to New York from Sweden in 2000 and graduated *summa cum laude* with depart-

mental honors with a master's degree in classical composition from the Aaron Copland School of Music in 2005.

Karlsson's music has been performed at Carnegie Hall, Le Poisson Rouge, Lincoln Center, New York City's Museum of Modern Art, Festspielhaus in Baden-Baden, Paris Opera, Oslo Opera House, Royal Swedish Opera House, Semperoper in Dresden, Ingmar Bergman Center at Färö, Joyce Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and at new music festivals and opera houses around the world. He has composed for the International Contemporary Ensemble, the American Contemporary Music Ensemble, Callie Day, Black Sun Productions, Lydia Lunch, Claire Chase, Joshua Rubin, Mivos Quartet, Sirius Quartet, the Dahlkvist Quartet, Niklas Brommare, Blythe Gaissert, John Kelly, Lenart Mårtensson, Abby Fischer, and pop singers Lykke Li, Anna von Hausswolff, and Mariam Wallentin. His first opera, *The Echo Drift*, premiered at the PROTOTYPE Festival in New York City in 2018.

Karlsson enjoys an ongoing working relationship with celebrated choreographer and director Alexander Ekman. Since they first started working together in 2012, the two have presented nine stage works that include *Play* (Paris Opera Ballet, 2018), *Tyll* (Royal Swedish Ballet, 2012; US premiere in 2015 by The Joffrey Ballet), *A Swan Lake* (Norwegian National Ballet, 2014), *Midsummer Night's*

Dream (Royal Swedish Ballet, 2015), *COW* (Dresden Semperoper, 2016), and *Rooms* (Norwegian National Ballet, 2017). Karlsson composed an electronic version of the "Flocking" section from Ekman's *A Swan Lake* for the adventurous fashion designer Henrik Vibskov's SS15 at Paris Fashion Week and at Copenhagen Fashion Week.

In 2014, Karlsson founded his own production company, Rough State Sound. mikaelk.com.


Bregje van Balen
Costume Designer

Bregje van Balen was a prominent dancer for 18 years with the Netherlands Dance Theatre (NDT) I and II. She received her ballet training at the

National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam. While she was dancing, she began a second career as costume designer in 1995, when she created her first costumes for the annual NDT Workshop.

After her dance career, van Balen entered the Baruch Mode Academie to pursue work as a designer. Since then, she has been invited to work for dance companies including NDT 1 and 2, the Norwegian National Ballet, Gothenburg Ballet, Hamburg Ballet, Introdans, Gyori Ballet, Iceland Dance Theatre, Royal Swedish Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Bolshoi Theater, and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. She has worked with choreographers Patrick Delcroix, Jorma Elo, Medhi Walerski, Gustavo Ramirez Sansano, Kaloyan Boyadjiev, Alexander Ekman, Johan Inger, Jo Stromgren, Lukas Timulak, Fernando Hernando Magadan, Eduardo Zuniga, Garrett Smith, and Ina Christel Johannessen.





Linus Fellbom

Lighting Designer

Since his debut 1995, Linus Fellbom has lit around 250 productions worldwide. Recent productions include *Don Giovanni* (Opera di Firenze), *Thaïs* (LA Opera), *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Opera di Roma), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Staatsoper Vienna), *Juliet and Romeo* by Mats Ek (Royal Opera Stockholm), and the world tour with the hard-core band Refused, performing on five continents.

In 2005, Fellbom debuted as a stage director and he has since directed many operas and plays, the latest being the new opera *Dracula* at the Royal Opera Stockholm. He also directed the divertissements at the 2016 Nobel Banquette in Stockholm City Hall.



Chris Maravich

Lighting Recreation

Chris Maravich is a Chicago based lighting designer for opera, theater, and dance. He has spent most of his career on the West Coast, where he served as Lighting Director of San Francisco Opera as well as designed lighting for various companies in California. During his 14 years with the San Francisco Opera, he worked on more than 150 different productions. Maravich's design work has included *Cyrano de Bergerac* directed by Petrika Ionesco, *Idomeneo* with John Copley, *Don Giovanni*, *Il Trittico*, *Simon Boccanegra*, and many others. Worldwide credits include *Tannhäuser* for the Greek National Opera in Athens, and *The Makropoulos Case* for the Finnish National Opera. Other credits include designs of *Salome* for San Diego Opera, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Cenerentola*, all for Opera Colorado.

MUSICIANS



Anna von Hausswolff

Vocalist

Anna von Hausswolff is a singer, pianist, organist, and songwriter from Gothenburg, Sweden known for her indie rock, art pop, drone music. Hausswolff is noted for her expressive voice and live performances. Her experimental rock music has created a new sound for the pipe organ and has shown that there is a point at which the paths of doom metal, experimental pop music, and progressive rock meet.

Hausswolff released her debut single, "Track of Time," in 2010, followed by the debut album *Singing from the Grave*. She has played several major festivals in Sweden, including Peace and Love, Storsjöyan, Way Out West, Arvika, and the Made Festival. In 2013, her second album, *Ceremony*, was released in North America by Other Music Recording Co., and Hausswolff played her debut US show at Glasslands Gallery in Brooklyn. The album received strong support from National Public Radio's Bob Boilen, who said "von Hausswolff's voice possesses the power to soar with those mighty pipes and still hold tight to delicate, personal emotions." Hausswolff's third album, *The Miraculous*, was released in 2015. Her most recent album, *Dead Magic*, was released in 2018 and was described by *City Slang* as "a dark crystal that encapsulates the most intimate and extreme human passions."

Anna von Hausswolff's performance is generously sponsored by Marc DeMoss.



Dovid Friedlander
Violin

Dovid Friedlander spent 16 years as Associate Concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, following positions with the Columbus Symphony and as Assistant Concertmaster of the San Antonio Symphony. His orchestral work includes performances with the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood under Seiji Ozawa and Claudio Abbado, and with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Mariss Jansons. As a soloist, he has performed with the North Carolina and Winston-Salem Symphonies and served as Guest Concertmaster with the symphony orchestras of Fort Worth and Indianapolis. A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music and Eastman School of Music, Friedlander is also a regular performer at the Northern Lights Music Festival in Ajijic, Mexico. He now lives in Mexico with his wife and daughter, where he runs the Violin Gym—an online violin training program built around the techniques he developed across a career at the highest level.



Janis Sakai
Violin

Japanese-Korean-American violinist Janis Sakai began studying violin at the age of 5 and has established a diverse career as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral player. She has been an acting member of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra for the 2024–26 seasons. From 2012–15, she was a violinist with the Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra in Japan; she now

performs regularly with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, The Joffrey Ballet, and the Colorado Symphony. Sakai has also showcased her versatility in a range of unique performances, including Netflix's *Bridgerton Experience* in Chicago, Candlelight Concerts throughout the United States, and performing at Wrigley Field on electric violin. She holds degrees from the University of Denver and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where her primary teachers were Yumi-Hwang Williams and Detlef Hahn. When she's not performing Sakai enjoys running, traveling, and spending time with her Shiba Inu, Oberon.

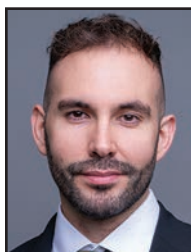


Beatrice Chen
Viola

Beatrice Chen is a violist/violinist from Chicago and a member of the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra. As a violist, she has played most recently with ensembles including the Lyric Opera of Chicago/Joffrey Ballet, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Chicago Symphony Orchestra. She is also a frequent guest performer at Bargemusic in Brooklyn, NY. During the early years of the Covid-19 pandemic, she presented more than 100 virtual concerts with her family string quartet. As a Baroque violinist/violist, she has performed with Bach in the City, Bella Voce Sinfonia, and the Philadelphia Bach Collegium. Chen is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, where she obtained a bachelor's degree in viola performance studying with HsinYun Huang and Ed Gazouleas; as well as a Certificate in Historical Performance. Additional significant mentors include Victoria Chiang and Cynthia Roberts.


Mara McClain
Cello

Mara McClain is a freelance musician in the Chicago area. She currently performs with the Lyric Opera Orchestra, The Joffrey Ballet Orchestra, the Grant Park Festival Orchestra, Music of the Baroque, and Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and she frequently serves as principal cellist with the Chicago Philharmonic. McClain also performs chamber music throughout the city with the Candlelight music series through Fever, and during the summers in Door County Wisconsin as part of the Midsummer Music chamber music festival. Before her move to Chicago, she was a member of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, in Birmingham AL, from 2006–18. Prior to her position with the Alabama Symphony, McClain served as principal cellist of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and attended the Cleveland Institute of Music in both the pre-college Young Artists Program and for her bachelor's degree in music studies. Her teachers were Richard Aaron and Merry Peckham. McClain has participated in many summer festivals, including those of the Aspen School of Music, Spoleto Festival USA, and the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan.


Jorge Ivars
Piano

“A pianist with an unusual, hypnotic sound and rare tenderness” (*EL Levante, EMV*), Jorge Ivars was born in 1992 in Valencia, Spain, and began expressing his interest in music at the age of 10 by playing the piano by ear. He did

not begin serious piano training until age 17, but this did not stop him from winning 10 first prizes in national and international piano competitions. Ivars holds a bachelor's degree in music and a master's in piano performance from Valencian International University, both earned with honors. In 2016, he moved to the United States to study at Penn State University, where he earned the Professional Performance Diploma (2016) and a DMA degree with honors (2020). During his stay at Penn State, he worked as a piano teaching assistant and as a rehearsal pianist for both opera and musical theater on-campus productions. Ivars has concertized extensively in his native Spain, Europe and the United States, and has received instruction from world-class pianists such as Julian Martin (Julliard School of Music), José Méndez (Northwestern Bienen School of Music), Yon Hi-Moon (Peabody Institute of Music), Pavel Nersessian (Moscow Conservatory), Andreas Frölich (Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln), Antonio Pompa-Baldi (Cleveland Institute of Music), Alexander Korsantia (New England Conservatory), and Eugen Indjic (Schola Cantorum of Paris).


Niklas Brommare
Percussionist

Niklas Brommare is one of Sweden's most sought after and renowned percussion soloists. He has performed with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien, and IRCAM Paris under the direction of conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Daniel Harding, Peter Eötvös, and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

He has also worked in close collaboration with leading Swedish composers including

ARTISTS OF THE COMPANY



Coco Alvarez-Mena



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Edson Barbosa



Evan Boersma



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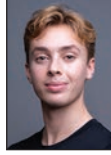
Lucia Connolly



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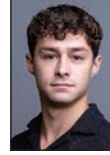
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Aaron Renteria



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Natali Taht



Alberto Velázquez



Ao Wang



Valentino Monegria
Zamora

Anders Hillborg and Sven-David Sandström who composed percussion concertos for him, and with Mikael Karlsson for this production of *Midsummer Night Dream* choreographed by Alexander Ekman.

He is also a composer with commissions from the Swedish Royal Opera and the Stockholm City Theatre.

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GALA 2026

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Renée Fleming, *soprano* Inon Barnatan, *piano*

Among the most celebrated singers of our time, 2023 Kennedy Center Honoree and five-time Grammy winner Renée Fleming captivates with her sumptuous voice, consummate artistry, and riveting stage presence. A restless and innately collaborative creative spirit, Fleming's recent work has found her on stage for the world premiere of Kevin Puts' *The Hours* at the Metropolitan Opera, and on screen in a new series of IMAX films, *Renée Fleming's Cities That Sing*. In this special recital, Fleming joins with star pianist Inon Barnatan for a program of beloved songs, arias, and piano showpieces.

"Each part [of her range] has its own distinctive colour, like a river that gleams differently when the sun catches different parts of it."

—Sydney Morning Herald

May 3
ZELLERBACH HALL

Support for the presentation of Israeli artists is provided by The Sir Jack Lyons Charitable Trust.

This performance is made possible in part by Michael A. Harrison and Susan Graham Harrison.

