

REQUIEM

EIFMAN BALLET DE SAINT-PÉTERSBOURG

From **FEBRUARY 21 TO 25, 2018**

Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts



PRESS KIT

#requiem

Requiem

Spiritual Masterpieces

Renowned for his flamboyant narrative ballets, fiery Russian choreographer Boris Eifman is back again in Montreal at the invitation of Les Grands Ballets, following the tremendous success of *Anna Karenina* in 2015.

Get ready for an evening of drama and passion. Set to Shostakovich' *String Quartet No. 8*, the program begins with Eifman's *Requiem*, a piece dedicated to the literary monument by the great Russian poet Anna Akhmatova, which tells the poignant story of the victims of Stalin's repression. Next, Eifman interprets another *Requiem*, Mozart's majestic unfinished masterpiece in which listeners seem to hear the "breath of eternity." Group movements pair superbly with the music, celebrating the triumph of the human spirit in an exhilarating finale.

This version of *Requiem* will include additional scenes from the choreographer, set to Rachmaninoff and traditional music.

With solo voices, choirs and Les Grands Ballets Orchestra
Under the direction of : Valery Platonov

Duration 1 H 35 MIN. WITH 20 MIN. INTERMISSION
SALLE WILFRID-PELLETIER, PLACE DES ARTS

A choreography by Boris Eifman

Act I: Dedication à Anna Akhmatova
Music: Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Rachmaninoff, ethnic music

Act II
Music: *Requiem* by W. A. Mozart
Sets: Simon Pastukh, Zinovy Margolin
Costumes: Olga Shaishmelashvili
Light: Boris Eifman

Guest Company

EIFMAN BALLET DE ST-PÉTERSBOURG

St. Petersburg Eifman Ballet was established by Boris Eifman in 1977 (the original name of the company was the Leningrad New Ballet.). The concept of New Ballet was more than innovative for its time: from the first days of its work, it was conceived and developed as a ballet theatre for one choreographer.

Today, St. Petersburg Eifman Ballet is renowned among ballet lovers in Asia, Europe, the Americas and Australia for such ballets as *I, Don Quixote; Red Giselle, Russian Hamlet, Anna Karenina, The Seagull, Eugene Onegin, Rodin, Beyond Sin, Requiem, Up & Down, Tchaikovsky, PRO et CONTRA*. These works were widely well received. Not only did they represent the highest artistic level of achievement of the contemporary Russian ballet, but they also turned the audience to the immortal spiritual heritage of Russian and world culture that inspired the choreographer and his dancers.

Boris Eifman's endeavor to engage his spectators in the infinite world of human passions, to form a spiritual liaison with the audience, to amaze viewers by the brilliance and dynamism of his plastique – all this has ensured a decades-long success of Eifman Ballet's performances at leading venues around the globe.

Boris Eifman is a philosopher choreographer. He is earnestly concerned with the problems of today, with the secrets of creativity. The choreographer speaks openly with his audience about the complicated and dramatic aspects of human life; he defines his genre as "psychological ballet". The New York Times calls Boris Eifman the leader among living choreographers: "The ballet world in search of a major choreographer need search no more. He is Boris Eifman."

Another Eifman-initiated ballet institution is to be built and opened in St. Petersburg in the near future. It is the Boris Eifman Dance Palace, envisioned by Boris Eifman as a new world center of dance arts. Forming an original ballet repertoire of modern Russia based upon the rich traditions of Russian psychological theatre, along with searching for and developing new forms of choreography of the XXIst century, are among the key priorities within the artistic mission of Boris Eifman and his brilliant company.

SYNOPSIS

A word from Boris Eifman

This ballet has a rather long story behind it. In 1991 Boris Eifman staged a one-act *Requiem* ballet to the music of W. A. Mozart; it was a philosophical parable exploring the never-ending mystery of human life.

More than two decades later Eifman – a restless artistic mind, always in search of a new and ever more perfect dance language – reverted to his past production and, proceeding from it, created a full-scale ballet performance. By largely rethinking its choreographic dance score, Eifman has added one more act to the ballet. It was set to the music of Dmitri Shostakovich's *Chamber Symphony* and was dedicated "to the memory of victims of nazism and war", and to Anna Akhmatova, one of the most significant Russian XXth century poetesses, who lived a tragic fate and whose two husbands and son were victims of the Soviet regime's repressions.

The premiere of the ballet was held on January 27, 2014 at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. In 2017, Boris Eifman enlarged the first act of *Requiem* by adding scenes set to the *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* by Sergei Rachmaninoff and ethnic music. This new version of the ballet will premiere on February 21, 2018, at Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts, Montreal. Accompanying the performance are solo voices, choirs and Les Grands Ballets Orchestra, with Honoured Artist of Russia Valery Platonov at the conductor's desk.

In Boris Eifman's words, "each time I read the *Requiem* I am deeply impressed by the bitterness of the pain that is throbbing in Anna Akhmatova's poetry. The dreadful images of those 'furious years' of Stalinist terror overwhelm my heart over and over again, those long lines of people, buried alive, stayed frozen in waiting in front of prison gates... In Anna Akhmatova's poem, the anguished cry of a woman who has gone through a true ordeal is echoed by the groaning of thousands and thousands of wretched mothers and wives. This symphony of desolation keeps resounding in my mind. The holy pain does not ease."

"The world of human suffering is in truth immeasurable. But the very current of life is underlain by the divine continuity of being that was so brilliantly celebrated by Mozart in his *Requiem*. Listening to it, I can always feel the winds of Eternity. Dismay and fears do vanish, I am imbued with the anticipation of a cosmic mystery."

"Wherefrom have I come? Why is my life? What is I? I turn to my memory. It is the memory which introduces a vulnerable Youth into this world, which revives the hardships of maturity and the frustrations of senility. So much enmity and slander and violence have survived in my memory... And still, so many moments of happiness and love!"

"Distress, despair, hope – all this is inside me, inside all of us. And the mournful threnody blends together with Mozart's hymn to the life."

ANNA AKHMATOVA : POET, MUSE AND WITNESS

Anna Akhmatova is considered to be one of the greatest poets of the Russian canon. Her work, distinguished by its pithy elegance and sober tone, aches with emotional truth to a spiritual register.

Born Anna Gorenko in Odessa, Ukraine, to an aristocratic Russian family, Akhmatova adopted her maternal grandmother's maiden name for a pen name and began writing poetry as a child. By her early twenties, the young woman writer would align herself to the practices of Acmeism in reaction to the vagueness of Symbolist aesthetics, advocating for searing clarity and diligently crafted use of language instead. Upon the acclaim of her first published collection of poetry, *Evening*, in 1912 at the age of 23, she would also begin her career as a target for censorship and defamation.

With the advent of the revolution's more oppressive measures, Nikolay Gumilyov, her first husband, was executed in 1921 for alleged anti-Bolshevik activities. Akhmatova would go on to marry Vladimir Shilejko, and later, art critic, Nikolay Punin, who would be detained by Soviet officials only to perish in the Gulag camps. Famous for her disarming tone and sexual charisma, Akhmatova conducted numerous love affairs throughout the course of her life, often with her eminent contemporaries, such as the likes of Boris Pasternak and Amadeo Modigliani.

The central, unavoidable themes of her extensive body of work center on grief, devotion, fear, vulnerability, and her experience as both survivor of and witness to the atrocities of Stalinist Russia. In 1935, Akhmatova's son Lev was arbitrarily arrested and detained by the state. Standing in the daily queues before the prison gates to visit for news of her son, Akhmatova recognized how her shared suffering with some thousands of other women in grief served as an impetus to document the experience, both for herself and her community of bereaved compatriots, so as to perhaps achieve some sort of reprieve. *Requiem*, a cycle poem that took six years to write and fifteen to finally appear in printed form, became a text of numinous reckoning and a plea for healing, which had only started at first as a few epigrammatic verses, spoken a trusted few who circulated it in secret who learned it by heart. It would become the most devastating literary document of Russia's suffering at the hands of Stalinist terror, the slow end to which she would come to witness before her death in 1965.

Choreographer **BORIS EIFMAN**



Boris Eifman, the founder and creator of his own theatre, his own style, and his own ballet universe, who is called “one of the leading choreographers in the world” and an “amazing magician of the theatre”, was born in 1946 in Siberia. From early childhood, he sought to express his feelings and thoughts through body language, through dance. He would later say, “for me, ballet is more than a profession. It is a means of existence, my mission on this earth. Using its resources, I am compelled to convey what is given to me from up high. Most likely, I would simply suffocate on my emotions if I didn’t have the possibility of expressing them

through art. For me, choreography is art that is deeply religious, in the broadest sense of the word.”

The innate sense of movement and the “instinct to compose” brought him to the Leningrad Conservatory, where he studied in the Choreography Department, and then to the Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet, where he worked for ten years as a choreographer, composing new works for student performances. Finally, in 1977, he formed his own ballet ensemble. This is the moment when the Eifman story began, as, with his talent, with his blood and sweat, with his energy, dedicating himself a full twenty four hours a day, he began to create his own theatre.

Eifman brilliantly combined cutting-edge achievements in the world of ballet with what he learned in the academic school of classical Russian choreography, to which he traces his roots. “What I do can be called the dance of emotions, free dance, a new language, in which classical ballet, modern dance, ecstatic impulses and many other things are interwoven,” he said at the time. His dancers, who had an exclusively academic grounding, had to acquire a new vocabulary of body movement. It was a completely different kind of choreography, whose fundamental principle came into being as the troupe was formed by Eifman.

Chef de chœur **JEAN-SÉBASTIEN ALLAIRE**

Choral conductor and music pedagogue, Jean-Sébastien Allaire was a chorister with Les Petits Chanteurs de Trois-Rivières and studied violin for nearly ten years before turning his attention to vocal training. Graduate from l’Université de Montréal in voice performance, he has performed with renowned ensembles such as the Studio de Musique Ancienne de Montréal (SMAM), the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and Les Violons du Roy. He has toured in Canada, the United States, France and Mexico. His first conducting appearance with Les Grands Ballets was in the production *Falling Angels* in 2017.

Choir Members

Solos

Solo soprano : Andréanne Brisson-Paquin

Solo alto : Josée Lalonde

Solo ténor : Nils Brown

Solo basse : Normand Richard

Altos

Marie-Annick

Stéphanie Pothier

Nicholas Burns

Charlotte Cumberbirch

Katrin Welte

Ghislaine Deschambault

Marie-Josée Goyette

Tenors

Marcel de Hêtre

Bernard Cayouette

Arthur Tanguay-Labrosse

Jean-Sébastien Allaire

Jacques-Olivier Chartier

Kerry Bursey

Jean-François Daignault

Sopranos

Cynthia Gates

Marie Magistry

Stephanie Manias

Dorothea Ventura

Angèle Trudeau

Catherine St-Arnaud

Rebecca Dowd

Carole Therrien

Bass

Alain Duguay

William Kraushaar

Yves St-Amant

Emanuel Lebel

Clayton Kennedy

Simon Chaussé

Philippe Martel

LES GRANDS BALLETS

Danseurs CAST

Requiem

Act 1



Mother

International Ballet Competitions Laureate - Golden Mask Award Laureate

Golden Soffit Award Laureate

Maria Abashova – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)

Alina Petrovskaya – 24, 25 (matinees)

Father

Golden Soffit Award Laureate

Oleg Markov – 24, 25 (matinees)

Laureate of the President's Prize

Sergey Volobuev – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)

Son

Laureate of the President's Prize - Golden Soffit Award Laureate

Dmitry Fisher – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)

Dmitry Savinov – 24, 25 (matinees)

Wife

Golden Mask Award Laureate - Golden Soffit Award Laureate

Lyubov Andreyeva – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)

Marianna Chebykina – 24, 25 (matinees)

Husband

Honoured Artist of Russia - Laureate of the President's Prize

Golden Mask Award Laureate - Golden Soffit Award Laureate

Oleg Gabyshev – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)

Igor Subbotin – 24, 25 (matinees)

LES GRANDSBALLETS

Acte 2

Mother

International Ballet Competitions Laureate - Golden Mask Award Laureate
Golden Soffit Award Laureate
Maria Abashova – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)
Alina Petrovskaya – 24, 25 (matinees)

Youth

Daniel Rubin – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)
Dmitry Savinov – 24, 25 (matinees)

Man

Oleg Gabyshev – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)
Sergey Volobuev – 24, 25 (matinees)

Woman

Lyubov Andreyeva – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)
International Ballet Competition Laureate
Daria Reznik – 24, 25 (matinees)

Old Man

Dmitry Fisher – 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (evenings)
Oleg Markov – 24, 25 (matinees)

Requiem
Eifman Ballet de St-Pétersbourg
February 21 to 25, 2018 (including two matinees)
Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts

Thank you to :

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and Finezza, evening partner.