

The Washington Ballet Concludes its 2021/22 "Season of Gratitude" with *NEXTsteps*, a Program Featuring Three World Premieres, June 22-26

South African choreographer and Olivier Awardwinner Mthuthuzeli November makes his U.S. debut in program that also features new works by Brett Ishida and Jessica Lang

Washington, D.C. – The Washington Ballet concludes its 2021/22 "Season of Gratitude" with *NEXTsteps*, its annual series dedicated to new works by contemporary choreographers. The program runs in six performances, **June 22-26** at **Sidney Harman Hall**, and features new works by **Brett Ishida** (company debut), **Jessica Lang**, and **Mthuthuzeli November** (U.S. debut).

***Beethoven Serenade* | Choreographer: Jessica Lang**

Music: Beethoven's Serenade in D Major

Musicians: Ko Sugiyama, violin; Allyson Goodman, viola; Charlie Powers, cello

Costumes: Jillian Lewis

Lighting: Brian Jones

Beethoven Serenade is New York-based choreographer Jessica Lang's fourth work for The Washington Ballet, adding to the more than 100 works she's created for companies including American Ballet Theater and Alvin Ailey.

Of her newest creation for TWB, Lang writes: "The creative plans for this ballet were made in early 2021 when COVID restrictions were still very much in place, which meant following the rules of working with two pods of seven dancers, never touching unless cohabitating. But I wanted to create a work that didn't make these rules obvious and searched for music that supported this purposeful structural design. Beethoven's Serenade provided the perfect musical canvas to support the practicality needed while simultaneously inspiring freedom within the dynamics of the movements. The ballet offers audiences beautifully spirited elegance that is often associated with classical ballet and breaks from its traditions in most meaningful ways. On the first day of creation with the dancers at The Washington Ballet all COVID restrictions were lifted and, as a result, there is a happy mixing of the pods."

***home-coming* | Choreographer: Brett Ishida**

Music: Nicholas Britell – excerpts from soundtracks of *Moonlight* and *The King*)

Michael Nyman – The Piano Concerto (1993)

Costumes: Judith Hansen

Lighting: Brian Jones

Brett Ishida is a dancer and choreographer based in Texas and serves as the Artistic Director of ISHIDA. Ishida has danced for several companies, including the School of American Ballet, Boston Ballet and Oregon Ballet Theater, and toured internationally with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, where she both danced principal roles and helped choreograph.

Ishida's debut commission, *home-coming*, is inspired by her 100-year-old 'Granny' and the aftermath of losing her husband of 60 years. The work fuses the story of her Japanese-American grandparents, held in an internment camp during World War II, with shared experiences of love, loss, and the emotional release that follows.

***Where Do We Go Now* | Choreographer: Mthuthuzeli November**

Music arranged and created by Mthuthuzeli November

Costumes: Concept by Mthuthuzeli November, build by All-Stitch

Lighting: Brian Jones

South African born, London based choreographer Mthuthuzeli November makes his U.S. debut with his piece *Where Do We Go Now*. November received the prestigious Laurence Olivier Award (UK) for his 2020 dance production with Ballet Black.

November worked collaboratively with TWB artists to create the work, creating "living, breathing music" that was recorded in-studio with TWB dancers. He writes, "What happens on the other side? What happens to those left behind? These were the first questions I had in the beginning of the process. What would it feel like to enter the gates of Heaven, to come face to face with my ancestors? I still have no idea but I believe we should celebrate the life we have now."

PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Washington Ballet Presents NEXTsteps/New Works

Sidney Harman Hall (The Shakespeare Theatre) | 610 F Street, NW Washington, DC

Wednesday, June 22 at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 23 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, June 24 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 25 at 1:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 25 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 26 at 1:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 - \$100 and may be purchased online at

www.washingtonballet.org/events/nextsteps-2022.

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