

JOFFREY ★ BALLET

CHICAGO

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THE JOFFREY BALLET ANNOUNCES AWARD-WINNING CREATIVE TEAM FOR THE WORLD PREMIERE OF CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON'S **THE NUTCRACKER**

Creative team joining Tony Award®-winning choreographer **CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON** includes Tony Award®-nominated set and costume designer **JULIAN CROUCH**; Caldecott Medal Award-winning author **BRIAN SELZNICK**; Obie and Drama Desk Award-winning puppeteer **BASIL TWIST**; five-time Tony Award®-winning lighting designer **NATASHA KATZ** and Tony Award®-winning projection designer **BEN PEARCY**

April 11, 2016 (CHICAGO)—**The Joffrey Ballet**, led by Artistic Director **Ashley Wheater** and Executive Director **Greg Cameron**, proudly announces the creative team for the highly anticipated world premiere production of *The Nutcracker* by **Christopher Wheeldon**, winner of the 2015 Tony Award® for Best Choreography for the Broadway hit, *An American in Paris*. *The Nutcracker* will be presented at the Joffrey's home venue, the historic Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, in downtown Chicago at 50 East Congress Parkway, in 27 performances, December 10-30, 2016.

Wheeldon's *Nutcracker* will come to life with an award-winning team comprised of creatives in the tops of their fields including: Tony Award®-nominated set and costume designer **Julian Crouch** (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *Shockheaded Peter*), author and illustrator **Brian Selznick** (Caldecott Medal Award-winning author of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, adapted into the Academy Award-winning film *Hugo*, directed by Martin Scorsese), Obie and Drama Desk award-winning puppeteer and MacArthur Fellowship recipient **Basil Twist** (*The Addams Family*, *The Pee-Wee Herman Show*), five-time Tony Award®-winning lighting designer **Natasha Katz** (*An American in Paris*, *Once*, *Frozen*), and Tony Award®-winning projection designer **Ben Percy** (*An American in Paris*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *Big Fish*).

The announcement was made today at a press conference held on the Landmark Stage of the Auditorium Theatre; among those speaking to a standing room only crowd were Commissioner of the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Michelle Boone, joined by Ashley Wheater, Greg Cameron, Christopher Wheeldon, Brian Selznick, Joffrey Ballet Leading Artist April Daly, and Auditorium Theatre Board Member Linda C. O'Bannon. Creative team members Basil Twist, Natasha Katz, and Ben Percy were also in attendance.

Wheeldon reimagines the beloved holiday classic, *The Nutcracker*, for a new generation, replacing the traditional 19th century setting with Chicago's 1893 World's Fair. Wheeldon's stunning choreography and the artistic team's visionary design will celebrate a turn-of-the-century Chicago as seen through a child's eyes. Set to Tchaikovsky's classic score, **The Chicago Philharmonic** conducted by Scott Speck, Music Director of The Joffrey Ballet, will delight audiences with live music at every performance.

"*The Nutcracker* has remained very close to my heart ever since I danced in the world premiere of Robert Joffrey's production in 1987," said Artistic Director **Ashley Wheater**. "I have danced in many *Nutcrackers* through the years and understand the power of a good story, well told. We tell stories in a different way today. Dancers training and skills are a hybrid of classical technique and contemporary, athletic movement. We benefit from innovative theater technologies. We live in a diverse and rapidly changing world. Our storytelling must recognize these changes. I can think of no one better than Christopher Wheeldon to create our new *Nutcracker*. I have worked with Christopher for many years and discussed this *Nutcracker* for nearly a decade. Great art takes time. Christopher has assembled a magnificent creative team and together they are inventing a magical world amongst the grand concourses of the White City."

"For more than two decades, Robert Joffrey's *The Nutcracker* has touched so many hearts," added Executive Director **Greg Cameron**. "For some, it is their first ballet. For others, an annual family tradition. This December, audiences will be enchanted once again with a stunning new production that pays homage to the amazing City that has remained an indispensable partner to the Joffrey. We're honored to create a *Nutcracker* that is uniquely Chicago and look forward to sharing the magic of dance with children of all ages and their families."

"It was always my wish to create a *Nutcracker* that belongs specifically to The Joffrey Ballet - a version that accurately represents its position as a premiere American ballet company dedicated to presenting unique repertoire and cutting-edge works," said **Christopher Wheeldon**. "This *Nutcracker* will push the boundaries of classical dance and transport audiences to a magical moment when Chicago transformed into a beacon of wonder. I'm honored to partner with the Joffrey once again and bring this vision to life with today's best creative minds."

Preview performances of Wheeldon's *The Nutcracker* will take place at The University of Iowa's brand new Hancher Auditorium, December 1–4, 2016. A longstanding artistic and creative partner to the Joffrey, Hancher Auditorium originally commissioned Robert Joffrey's *The Nutcracker* in 1987 as well as the critically acclaimed *Billboards* – America's first full-length rock ballet in 1993. Hancher's steadfast and ongoing support helped The Joffrey Ballet gain major national attention and ensured Robert Joffrey's dream of creating a distinctly American *Nutcracker* was realized before his death in 1988. Since the Joffrey's first tour in 1974, the Company has performed more than 100 performances at Hancher Auditorium, which remains a strong partner in Joffrey's commitment to creating groundbreaking new work.

About *The Nutcracker* Creative Team



Christopher Wheeldon (Choreographer) trained at The Royal Ballet School and joined The Royal Ballet in 1991. In 1993, he joined New York City Ballet (NYCB) and was promoted to Soloist in 1998. He served as NYCB's first-ever Artist in Residence in 2000/01 and was named NYCB's first Resident Choreographer in July 2001.

Wheeldon has created productions for all the world's major ballet companies including: New York City Ballet, The Royal Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, Royal Swedish Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet and National Ballet of Canada. In 2007, Wheeldon founded Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company and was appointed an *Associate Artist* for Sadler's Wells Theatre in London.

For the Metropolitan Opera, he choreographed *Dance of the Hours* for *La Gioconda* (2006) and Richard Eyre's production of *Carmen* (2012), as well as ballet sequences for the feature film *Center Stage* (2000) and *Sweet Smell of Success* on Broadway (2002).

In 2014, Wheeldon directed and choreographed the musical version of *An American In Paris* which premiered in Paris in 2014 at the Théâtre Châtelet. The Broadway production premiered at the Palace

Theatre on April 12, 2015 and won him the 2015 Tony Award® for Best Choreography and *Outer Critics Award* for Best Choreography and Direction.

His awards also include the Martin E. Segal Award from Lincoln Center, the American Choreography Award, a *Dance Magazine* Award, the London Critic's Circle Award for best new ballet for *Polyphonia*. In 2013 and 2015, his productions of *Cinderella* and *The Winter's Tale* won the Benois De La Danse. Wheeldon is also an Olivier award-winner for *Aeternum* and *The Winter's Tale*, winner of the 2014 Leonard Massine Prize for choreography and was awarded an OBE in the 2016 New Year Honours.

In February 2016, The Royal Ballet premiered an All-Wheeldon triple bill including the world premiere of *Strapless*, based on the scandal surrounding the Anthony Sargent portrait of *Madam X*. In April 2016, Wheeldon will serve as the Artistic Director for Les Arts Decoratif's *Fashion Forward* exhibit in Paris and in August the National Tour of *An American In Paris* production will launch. Learn more about Christopher Wheeldon, [here](#).



Julian Crouch (Scenic and Costume Designer) Originally from the UK, Crouch is a Brooklyn-based theatre practitioner, artist and musician, known for his groundbreaking production of *Shockheaded Peter*, *Satyagraha* at the Met Opera, and the Tony Award®-nominated Broadway set of *Hedwig and The Angry Inch*. A co-founder and former artistic director of Improbable, a UK based theatre company, Crouch's shows have been seen throughout the world. He is particularly known for his incorporation of large scale, live animation within his productions and has worked extensively at the Met Opera and on Broadway in addition to a myriad of more unusual locations.

Crouch is currently designing and directing the Berlin Staatsoper's production of *King Arthur*, and the Metropolitan Opera's 50th year Gala. He is designing the set and costumes for Christopher Wheeldon's *The Nutcracker* at The Joffrey Ballet. In the near future, Crouch will be designing *Hansel and Gretel* for La Scala, in Milan Italy. Together with Saskia Lane he is internationally touring *Birdheart* - an intimate chamber piece of animated theatre. Learn more about Julian Crouch, [here](#).



Brian Selznick (Author) is the author and illustrator of many books for children, including *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, winner of the Caldecott Medal and the basis for the Oscar-winning movie *Hugo*, directed by Martin Scorsese. He's also the author and illustrator of *Wonderstruck* (soon to be a major motion picture directed by Todd Haynes), as well as his newest book, *The Marvels*. Selznick lives with his husband Dr. David Serlin in San Diego, California and Brooklyn, New York. Learn more about Brian Selznick, [here](#)



Basil Twist (Puppeteer) Originally from San Francisco, Twist is a third-generation puppeteer and the sole American to graduate from the École Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières, France. Twist's work was first spotlighted in New York by the Henson International Festival of Puppet Theater with his award-winning *The Araneidae Show*. Coupled with the critically praised and award-winning *Symphonie Fantas-tique*, he was revealed as a singular artist of unlimited imagination. Highlights of his subsequent work include *Petrushka* (commissioned by Lincoln Center) and *Dogugaeshi* (The Japan Society), *Behind the Lid* (Silver Whale Gallery) with Lee Nagrin and *Arias with a Twist*, co-created with nightlife icon Joey Arias. His productions have toured throughout the world. On Broadway, he created and staged the puppetry in *The Addams Family*, for

which he won a Drama Desk Award, and staged the puppetry for *The Pee-Wee Herman Show*. In film, he collaborated most notably on *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

Twist's work is deeply musical in nature. He has conceived and directed two successful operas, Respighi's *La Bella Dormiente Nel Bosco* with the Gotham Chamber Opera and Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* for the Houston Grand and Atlanta Operas. Other collaborations include: in dance, *The Winter's Tale* and *Cinderella* with Christopher Wheeldon, *Darkness and Light* with Pilobolus, and *Wonderboy* with the Joe Goode Performance Group; and in drama, Paula Vogel's play *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, *Red Beads*, and *Peter and Wendy*, plus puppetry for the Oskar Eustis-directed *Hamlet* for New York's Shakespeare in the Park. He collaborated with Kate Bush to realize her live concert "Before the Dawn," in London 2014. His original work *Rite of Spring*, commissioned by Carolina Performing Arts/University of North Carolina Chapel Hill premiered in 2013 at Memorial Hall and in 2014 made its New York debut at Lincoln Center's White Light Festival. *Sisters Follies* was created for Abrons Arts Center where it made its world premiere in October of 2015.

Twist has received Obie, Drama Desk, New York Innovative Theatre, and Henry Hewes Design awards, as well as five UNIMA and two Bessie awards. He has also been awarded Guggenheim and USA Artists fellowships, and was awarded an inaugural Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. He was recently honored with a 2015 MacArthur Fellowship. He lives in New York City, where he guides The Dream Music Puppetry Program. Learn more about Basil Twist, [here](#).



Natasha Katz (Lighting Designer) has a long-standing creative relationship with Christopher Wheeldon and, prior to *The Nutcracker*, has collaborated with him on a number of ballets, including *Tryst* (2002), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2011) and *The Winter's Tale* (2014), all of which premiered at The Royal Ballet where he is Artistic Associate. Katz's other collaborations with Wheeldon include *Continuum* (San Francisco Ballet, 2002), *Carnival of the Animals* and *An American in Paris* (New York City Ballet), *Swan Lake* (Pennsylvania Ballet, 2004) and the premiere of *An American in Paris* at Théâtre Châtelet (2014) and on Broadway (2015) for which she won a Tony Award® for Best Lighting Design of a Musical.

Katz's Broadway credits also include *Skylight*, *The Glass Menagerie* (Tony Award®) *Aladdin*, *Once* (Tony Award®), *Motown*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Coast of Utopia: Salvage* (Tony Award®), *A Chorus Line*, *Aida* (Tony Award®), *Sweet Smell of Success*, *Twelfth Night* and *Beauty and the Beast*. In London, she designed *Skylight* (Wyndham's Theatre), *Sister Act* (Palladium), *Buried Child* (National Theatre) and *Cyrano* (The Royal Opera). She has also designed extensively for Off-Broadway and for American regional theatres. Her permanent installations include lighting for the audio-visual shows at Niketown London and New York City, *The Masquerade Village* at the Rio Casino, Las Vegas and *Big Bang* at the Hayden Planetarium in New York City. Katz was also recently named Lighting Designer for Disney's *Frozen the Musical* on Broadway, opening spring of 2018. Learn more about Natasha Katz, [here](#).



Ben Percy (Projection Designer) is the Creative Director of 59 Productions, a creative studio specializing in design for performance, exhibitions and live events. Recent design and video design projects include *An American In Paris* (Tony Award®-winner for Best Scenic Design of a Musical), *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and *Big Fish* on Broadway; *David Bowie is* at the V&A and on a world tour; *Game* at the Almeida; *Little Dancer* at the Kennedy Center, Washington; *The Forbidden Zone* at Salzburg Festival; *Feast* at the Young Vic; *War Horse* in London, New York, China, Toronto, Australia, UK and US tours; *Reise Durch die Nacht* and *Request Programme* at Schauspiel Köln; *Fraulein Julie* at Schaubühne, Berlin; *Black Watch* at National Theatre of Scotland; and *Les Miserables* world tour. For the National Theatre: *Wonder.land*; *Great Britain*; *Emil and the Detectives*; *Beauty and the Beast*; *Really Old, Like 45*; *Mother Courage and Her Children*; *Time and the Conways*; *Waves*; ...some trace of her and *Attempts on Her Life*. Recent

video design for opera includes *Morgen und Abend*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Salome* and *The Minotaur* at the Royal Opera House; *Thebans* and *The Pearl Fishers* at the ENO; *The Perfect American* at Teatro Real/ENO; *Messiah* at Opéra de Lyon/ENO; *Al Gran Sole Carico d'Amore* at Salzburg Festival; *Doctor Atomic*, *The Enchanted Island* and *125th Anniversary Gala* at the Metropolitan Opera; *Dark Sisters* at Gotham Chamber Opera/MTG/Opera Philadelphia; *Two Boys*, *Satyagraha* and *Doctor Atomic* at ENO/Met Opera and *After Dido* at ENO/Young Vic. Video design for dance and live music includes *Ceremony of Innocence*, *La Bayadère*, *Invitus Invitam*, *The Goldberg Project* and *Seven Deadly Sins* at The Royal Ballet; *Fink Perfect Darkness* tour for 59/Ninja Tune and *Jónsi -Go Tour* for 59.

59 Productions has also been commissioned to design a number of high profile architectural projection mapping projects around the world including the *United Nations Global Goals Launch* at the UN headquarters in New York, *Deloitte Ignite 2015* at the Royal Opera House, The *Harmonium Project* on the Usher Hall to launch the opening of the 2015 Edinburgh International Festival, *Hampton Court 500 Rewind* for Historic Royal Palaces, *Vivid Live- Lighting the Sails* for Sydney Opera House and the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony. Learn more about 59 Productions, [here](#).



Frank McCullough (Associate Scenic Designer) assisted Julian Crouch and Christopher Wheeldon on their design for *Cinderella* at the Dutch National Ballet. In addition, he worked with Crouch on the Broadway productions of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *The Addams Family*, and *Big Fish*. McCullough is the Associate Scenic Designer for Wheeldon's Broadway production of *An American In Paris*. Some of McCullough's other Broadway credits include: *Once*; *War Horse*; *Book of Mormon*; and *Coast of Utopia*. McCullough is originally from Evansville, IN, and trained at Webster University in St. Louis.



Jacquelin Barrett (Assistant Choreographer) trained at The Royal Ballet School, joined London Festival Ballet (now English National Ballet) and, over a period of eight years, danced soloist and principal roles in the company's repertory. Barrett was the Ballet Mistress for Central School of Ballet, Northern Ballet Theatre and English National Ballet. She is in demand as a guest teacher for many international professional companies and schools. From 1997 to 2008, Barrett taught at The Royal Ballet School, working mainly with the graduate female class. Since 2009, she has been assisting Christopher Wheeldon and staging his works around the world. She is the Associate Director on the musical *An American In Paris*, which is currently running on Broadway. Learn more about Jacquelin Barrett, [here](#).

Tickets and Subscriptions

Single tickets for Christopher Wheeldon's *The Nutcracker* start at \$35 and are now available ([April 11, 2016](#)) and can be purchased at The Joffrey Ballet's official Box Office located in the lobby of 10 East Randolph Street, as well as the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University Box Office, by telephone at 312-386-8905, or online at joffrey.org/nutcracker.

About The Joffrey Ballet

This year, The Joffrey Ballet celebrates its 60th company anniversary. Classically trained to the highest standards, The Joffrey Ballet expresses a unique, inclusive perspective on dance, proudly reflecting the diversity of America with its company, audiences, and repertoire which includes major story ballets, reconstructions of masterpieces and contemporary works.

The Company's commitment to accessibility is met through an extensive touring schedule, an innovative and highly effective education program including the much-lauded Academy of Dance, Official School of The Joffrey Ballet, Community Engagement programs, and collaborations with myriad other visual and performing arts organizations.

Founded by visionary teacher Robert Joffrey in 1956, guided by celebrated choreographer Gerald Arpino from 1988 until 2007, The Joffrey Ballet continues to thrive under internationally renowned Artistic Director Ashley Wheater and Executive Director Greg Cameron. To learn more, visit Joffrey.org.

Commissioning a new *Nutcracker* by the acclaimed Christopher Wheeldon would not have been possible without the generous support of many patrons. Ashley Wheater and Greg Cameron, on behalf of the entire Joffrey team, thank *Nutcracker* Producing Sponsors Margot and Josef Lakonishok and Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa, as well as *Nutcracker* Sponsors Mary Jo and Doug Basler, Rosemarie and Dean Buntrock, Sandy and Roger Deromedi, Pamella Roland DeVos and Daniel DeVos, Bill and Orli Staley Foundation, The Walter E. Heller Foundation, and the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University.

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For more information on The Joffrey Ballet and its programs please visit joffrey.org.

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