



For Immediate Release



Photo by Rosalie O'Connor

**BALLET ARIZONA MAKES NEW YORK CITY DEBUT
AT JOYCE THEATER, FEBRUARY 22-26
WITH NYC PREMIERE OF IB ANDERSEN'S "PLAY"**

One of Arizona's best kept secrets is Ballet Arizona, whose Artistic Director Ib Andersen was critically celebrated and won legions of fans during his decade of performing as a principal dancer with New York City Ballet. The Phoenix-based company makes its long-awaited New York City debut, February 22-26, at The Joyce Theater, where it will present the New York premiere of Andersen's "Play."

Using a cast of 28 dancers, "Play" is about play, *play* of all kinds, in all senses and all meanings of the word. With its witty look at the classical ballet vocabulary, the 90-

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minute dance offers suggestions of ballet school experiences (Andersen began classes at the School of the Royal Danish Ballet at age seven), a play of emotions, and a child's joy of discovery, which Andersen considers no different from the open spirit and playfulness demanded for artistic creation. The first act is set to Mozart, Schubert, Britten, and Avro Pärt, and the second to Stravinsky.

Resulting from the merger of three separate Arizona ballet companies, Ballet Arizona was created in 1986 and co-directed by Jean-Paul Comelin and Malcolm Burn until 1992, when Michael Uthoff was named artistic director. During his tenure, Uthoff expanded the company's repertoire by commissioning works from contemporary choreographers such as Peter Pucci, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Neta Pulvermacher and Moses Pendleton, among others. Financial difficulties forced a separation of the school and the company in the late 1990's.

In 2000, the Board of Directors appointed Ib Andersen as Artistic Director. Andersen set about reshaping the company by creating a demanding repertory of classical and contemporary ballets, including world premieres of his own pieces. Four years later, the school merged with the company.

Ballet Arizona will move to new and expanded headquarters in Phoenix this spring. The new facility's larger space will allow it to further develop the school, and have a black box theater in which it can present showcases and more experimental work.

In 2006, "The Arizona Republic" called Ballet Arizona, "probably the most consistently excellent arts organization in the state," saying "This is why Ballet Arizona is such a treasure for Phoenix." In 2007, "The Republic" stated, "Under Director Ib Andersen, Ballet Arizona has achieved ever new heights of finish and professionalism."

The Artistic Director of Ballet Arizona since 2000, Ib Andersen has had a major international career as a dancer, choreographer and ballet master. Born in Copenhagen, he began his dance training at the School of the Royal Danish Ballet when he was seven years old. He joined the Royal Danish Ballet at 16, and at age 20 became the youngest principal dancer in the company's 250 year history.

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He was invited to join New York City Ballet in 1980, where he learned an astonishing 35 new ballets in his first three months with the company. In addition to performing in a wide range of the NYCB repertory, Balanchine created principal roles for him in "Ballade," "Davidsbundlertanze," and "Mozartiana."

While Andersen was still at City Ballet, the Royal Danish Ballet offered him his first choreographic commission for which he created "1-2-3—1-2." After leaving City Ballet in 1990, Andersen served as guest ballet master for companies around the world and staged ballets by August Bournonville, Michel Fokine, Jerome Robbins and George Balanchine, among others. In addition to choreographing over a dozen ballets for Ballet Arizona, he has made works for companies in Slovenia, Belgium, Norway, Japan, Canada and the U.S.

In May, Ballet Arizona will present the world premiere of Andersen's "Topia," a site-specific work that will be performed outdoors in the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix.

In addition to his distinguished career in ballet, Andersen continues his work as a visual artist in Phoenix, where there will be a gallery showing of his paintings this spring.

The evening curtains for Ballet Arizona's Joyce Theater season are February 22 at 7:30pm, and February 23, 24, and 25 at 8pm. There are 2pm matinees on February 25 and 26. A post-performance "Dance Chat" will take place Thursday, February 23.

Tickets are \$59, \$35 and \$19 and can be purchased online at www.joyce.org, by calling 212-242-0800, or at The Joyce Theater box office located at 175 Eighth Avenue at 19th Street. A limited number of \$10 tickets are available by calling 212-242-0800.

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