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American Ballet Theatre

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RELEASE DATE

For Immediate Release

**Segerstrom Center for the Arts
Announces the North American Premiere of**

**American Ballet Theatre's *Like Water for Chocolate*,
Christopher Wheeldon's latest full-length ballet**

Music Performed Live by Pacific Symphony

**March 29-April 2 in Segerstrom Hall
Tickets are on sale now at scfta.org**

American Ballet Theatre is the Official Dance Company of Segerstrom Center for the Arts

Costa Mesa, CA – Segerstrom Center for the Arts presents the North American Premiere of Christopher Wheeldon's latest ballet *Like Water for Chocolate* from American Ballet Theatre for six performances from Wednesday, March 29 through Sunday, April 2. Center audiences will be the first in the country to experience this magical Mexican love story with the stellar dancers of ABT translating this richly layered story.

Co-presented by the Center and ABT, led by Artistic Director Susan Jaffe, this three-act work is set to an original score by Joby Talbot and inspired by Laura Esquivel's captivating and best-selling novel of the same name. This family saga set in 19th-century Mexico tells the story of Tita, a young Mexican woman who is overwhelmed by a sense of duty and family tradition, unable to marry until her mother dies.

In the novel, Esquivel writes, "For Tita, the joy of living was wrapped up in the delights of food." Emotion runs deep, her only form of expression spilling out from the kitchen— influencing everyone around her in startling and dramatic ways. Her life takes an unexpected turn when she falls in forbidden love with her wealthy neighbor Pedro. Their hidden passion has far-reaching— and devastating—consequences.

Esquivel's original novel has sold more than 4.5 million copies around the world and has been translated into more than 30 languages, while the memorable film adaptation won ten Ariel Awards (Mexico's highest film honor) including Best Picture and, at the time of its release in 1992, was the highest-grossing foreign film in the United States and Canada.

Esquivel said, "Having Christopher and his team transform my story into a ballet is truly magical for me. It was a great pleasure to have them visit Mexico for extensive research and to develop the scenario together. I am amazed at how Christopher can translate deep emotions into movement, and I can't wait to see this wonderful creative adventure unfold."

Like Water for Chocolate received its World Premiere from The Royal Ballet on June 2, 2022, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London. Following the North American Premiere engagement at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, the New York Premiere will take place Thursday evening, June 22 at 6:30 P.M. at the Metropolitan Opera House, through Saturday, July 1 during ABT's Summer season at Lincoln Center.

Lindsay Winship said in *The Guardian*, "Not all choreographers are good directors, but Christopher Wheeldon is ... Expertly crafted ensemble scenes are full of buoyant energy, action, and rhythmic dancing. And the pas de deux are playful, with inventive imagery. The solidity of the production and the imagination of Esquivel's world keep this ballet an engrossing, propulsive, fulfilling watch."

Roslyn Sulcas said in *The New York Times*, "It's testament to his skills and his team of regular collaborators that Christopher Wheeldon has succeeded in creating a big-spectacle ballet. Joby Talbot's commissioned score (impressively conducted by Alondra de la Parra, who served as music consultant) is serviceably lush, making use of guitar, varied percussion, and Mexican instruments like the ocarina. Crowley's décor, influenced by the Mexican architect Luis Barragán, is spare and ingenious; Natasha Katz's lighting adroitly suggests changes in time and place."

Judy Morr, Executive Vice President for Segerstrom Center for the Arts, shares, "Nothing could be sweeter than hosting the North American Premiere of *Like Water for Chocolate* for American Ballet Theatre's Spring engagement at Segerstrom Center for the Arts. To give our patrons and ballet aficionados the unique opportunity of being the first audience in the country to see this magical Mexican love story come to life by the extraordinary and talented ABT dancers is exciting."

Susan Jaffe, Artistic Director of American Ballet Theatre, commented, "Putting together a production the size and caliber of *Like Water for Chocolate* have been both an exciting and challenging process. The dancers are working so hard and so beautifully to bring this deep, moving ballet to life on stage. ABT thanks Laura for sharing her story with us and Christopher for his creativity and partnership during this process."

Like Water for Chocolate is a co-production between The Royal Ballet and American Ballet Theatre and is Christopher Wheeldon's latest full-length ballet, marking a reunion of the creative team who delivered the critically acclaimed Royal Ballet productions *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2011) and *The Winter's Tale* (2014). Wheeldon is celebrated for his expressive

choreography and theatricality and has worked extensively with the world's leading dance companies. In 2014, he directed and choreographed the stage version of the musical *An American in Paris* and recently directed and choreographed *MJ The Musical*, winning the Tony Award for Best Choreography.

Wheeldon worked closely with Esquivel to reshape her story of magical realism into an entertaining and engrossing new ballet with a newly commissioned score by Joby Talbot and designs by Bob Crowley. Mexican conductor Alondra de la Parra will lead Pacific Symphony with the addition of featured Mexican musician Tomás Barreiro on solo guitar. Lighting is by Natasha Katz and video design is by Luke Halls.

Single tickets for American Ballet Theatre's *Like Water for Chocolate* start at \$29 and are available online at SCFTA.org, at the Box Office at 600 Town Center Drive in Costa Mesa, or by calling (714) 556-2787. For inquiries about group ticket discounts for 10 or more, call the Group Services offices at (714)755-0236.

Seegerstrom Center for the Arts applauds Kaiser Permanente, its Official Health Care Partner. Riviera Magazine is the official media partner for the 22/23 Dance Series. The Center's International Dance Series is made possible by Audrey Steele Burnand Endowed Fund for International Dance and the Seegerstrom Foundation Endowment for Great Performances.

The Center especially recognizes co-lead production support from Elizabeth Seegerstrom and the Spenuzza Velastegui Family Foundation with additional support by Mr. and Mrs. Eyal Aronoff, Mary and Richard Cramer, Kling Family Foundation and Jackie Glass, Lana and Walter Parsadayan, Michelle Rohé, Mr. and Mrs. George Schreyer, Stewart R. Smith and Robin A. Ferracone, and Tammy and Samuel Tang.

Book Discussion Series Engages Orange County Community

Seegerstrom Center for the Arts, in partnership with the Orange County Public Library, is offering a book discussion series with curated chapter readings to bring greater awareness of the novel and the new ballet production to the Orange County community. Guests who attend the book readings will receive copies of Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*.

The first book discussion was held on January 24, 2023, featuring award-winning author Lilliam Rivera. The next book discussion will take place February 23 at 6:00 P.M. at Cypress Library, where OC Poet Laureate Natalie J. Graham and Cynthia A. Briano will share an interactive, multi-sensory journey into writing as a recipe and incantation, using *Like Water for Chocolate* as inspiration for infusing magic into a narrative or poem. Lastly, author Marytza K. Rubio, nominated for a 2022 National Book Award for her debut collection *Maria, Maria & Other Stories*, will lead the third book discussion on March 23 at San Juan Capistrano Library.

There will also be a *Like Water for Chocolate* community movie screening in March.

Seegerstrom Center for the Arts and American Ballet Theatre Partnership

Seegerstrom Center for the Arts and American Ballet Theatre's co-presentation of *Like Water for Chocolate* continues the partnership between America's National Ballet Company® and one of the nation's leading presenters of dance. The Center is set to continue holding ABT World and West Coast Premieres and engagements each spring through 2024, including a third World Premiere in 2024.

Since 2015, ABT has wowed Southern California audiences at Seegerstrom Center with annual holiday engagements of *The Nutcracker*, totaling over 75 performances. In 1988, ABT gave the World Premiere of Mikhail Baryshnikov's *Swan Lake* at the Center, and in 1999, the ABT production of *Le Corsaire* was taped for broadcast on PBS' *Dance in America*. In 2008, ABT co-commissioned Twyla Tharp's *Rabbit and Rogue* with Seegerstrom Center for the Arts, which received its World Premiere in New York and its West Coast Premiere at the Center.

The Center additionally held the West Coast Premiere of former ABT Artistic Director Kevin McKenzie's *The Sleeping Beauty* in 2007, as well as several ballets by ABT Artist in Residence Alexei Ratmansky, including the World Premiere of a new production of *Firebird* in 2012, the West Coast Premiere of *The Nutcracker* in 2015, the World Premiere of *Whipped Cream* in 2017, the West Coast Premiere of *Harlequinade* in 2019, and the World Premiere and co-commissioned production *Of Love and Rage* in 2020.

In April 2021, the Center presented *Uniting in Movement*, a unique dance project that brought 18 ABT dancers together for safe collaboration and an exhilarating performance of new works by Jessica Lang, Lauren Lovette, and Darrell Grand Moultrie. In March 2022, ABT and the Center presented a mixed repertory program that included the World Premiere of *Single Eye* by Alonzo King to the music of Jason Moran, the West Coast Premiere of Ratmansky's *Bernstein in a Bubble*, and Jessica Lang's *ZigZag*, featuring songs recorded by Tony Bennett.

American Ballet Theatre is one of the greatest dance companies in the world. Revered as a national treasure since its founding season in 1940, its mission is to create, present, preserve, and extend the great repertoire of classical dancing for the widest possible audience. Headquartered in New York City, ABT is the only cultural institution of its size and stature to extensively tour, enchanting audiences for eight decades in 50 U.S. states, 45 countries, and over 480 cities worldwide. ABT's repertoire includes full-length classics from the nineteenth century, the finest works from the early twentieth century, and acclaimed contemporary masterpieces. In 2006, by an act of Congress, ABT was designated America's National Ballet Company®. Find out more at ABT.org and follow ABT dancers at @abtofficial on Instagram, on Twitter at @ABTBallet, and on Facebook at @AmericanBalletTheatre.

Under the directorship of Kevin O'Hare, **The Royal Ballet** unites tradition and innovation in world-class performances and is a driving force in the development of ballet as an art form. Based at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, it brings together today's most dynamic and versatile dancers with a world-class orchestra and leading choreographers, composers, conductors, directors, and creative teams to share awe-inspiring theatrical experiences with diverse audiences worldwide. The Company's extensive repertoire embraces 19th-century classics, the singular legacy of works by Founder Choreographer Frederick Ashton and Principal Choreographer Kenneth MacMillan, the compelling new canon of work by choreographers today including Resident Choreographer Wayne McGregor and Artistic

Associate Christopher Wheeldon, and the bold and complementary programming in the Linbury Theatre. Guest choreographers Cathy Marston, Crystal Pite, Twyla Tharp, Pam Tanowitz, Hofesh Shechter, and Sid Larbi Cherkaoui have also created work for the Company.

Seegerstrom Center for the Arts is an innovative, nonprofit arts organization committed to supporting artistic excellence, creating impactful educational programs, and dedicated to engaging a culturally connected, inclusive, and vital Orange County community for all, through the power of live performance.

As the leading cultural arts hub, the Center presents a variety of programming with performances by international dance companies, Broadway national tours, jazz and cabaret musicians, chamber orchestras and ensembles, comedy, and speaker series. Through the Education and Community Engagement departments, the Center also delivers family-friendly programming and performances on the Julianne and George Argyros Plaza; these events include outdoor movie screenings, concerts, dance classes, diverse festivals, and more.

With six venues on a beautiful multi-disciplinary campus, Seegerstrom Center for the Arts proudly serves as the artistic home to three of the region's major performing arts organizations: Pacific Symphony, Philharmonic Society of Orange County, and Pacific Chorale as well as two independently acclaimed organizations: Tony Award®-winning South Coast Repertory and a site opening this fall as the home of the Orange County Museum of Art. Seegerstrom Center is also home to the American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School and Studio D, Arts School for All Abilities.

**American Ballet Theatre
Like Water for Chocolate
Seegerstrom Center for the Arts
Seegerstrom Hall**

March 29 – April 2, 2023
Wednesday, March 29 at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, March 30 at 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 31 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 1 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 2 at 2:00 p.m.

In-person and Phone-
The Box Office
600 Town Center Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
(714) 556-2787
Monday 10 am – 2 pm
Tuesday through Friday Noon- 5 pm
Closed Saturdays and Sundays

Tickets start at \$29
Online - SCFTA.org

Group Sales - (714) 755-0236

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