

## PRESS RELEASE

# BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

## BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET ANNOUNCES THE WORLD PREMIERE OF BLACK SABBATH - THE BALLET

- **BLACK SABBATH - THE BALLET WILL PREMIERE AT BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME IN SEPTEMBER 2023**
- **FURTHER AUTUMN 2023 DATES AT PLYMOUTH THEATRE ROYAL AND SADLER'S WELLS LONDON TO BE ANNOUNCED**
- **HEAVY METAL DANCE EXPERIENCE WILL FEATURE 8 BLACK SABBATH TRACKS REORCHESTRATED FOR THE ROYAL BALLET SINFONIA PLUS NEW MUSIC INSPIRED BY THE BAND**
- **LEAD CHOREOGRAPHER PONTUS LIDBERG, DESIGN BY ALEXANDRE ARRECHEA, COMPOSITIONS BY CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN AND DRAMATURGY BY RICHARD THOMAS**
- **IMAGES:  
BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET ARTIST SOFIA LIÑARES PHOTOS © PEROU  
[HERE](#)**

**CARLOS ACOSTA & TONY IOMMI ON BLACK SABBATH BRIDGE,  
BIRMINGHAM, PHOTO © DREW TOMMONS [HERE](#)**

Birmingham Royal Ballet today announces the world premiere of **Black Sabbath - The Ballet** with tickets available for the Birmingham Hippodrome 23 - 30 September now and further dates for autumn 2023 at Theatre Royal Plymouth and Sadler's Wells London to be announced soon.

A full-length, three-act, Ballet Now commission, this brand-new work brings together a host of international creatives including lead Swedish choreographer Pontus Lidburg, Cuban designer Alexandra Arrechea, Tony Award winning composer Christopher Austin with additional choreographers Raúl Reinoso and Cassi Abranches and composers Marko Nyberg and Sun Keting. Richard Thomas is dramaturg for the project and lighting design is by Kieron Johnson. See full biographies for the creative team in notes.



Rehearsals will begin in April this year, and on 27 April we are planning a media event in Birmingham which will include sharing some performance-in-progress, musical direction and designs. Filming, photography and interview opportunities will be available at this event. Full details coming soon. Contact [mandyrose@m7pr.co.uk](mailto:mandyrose@m7pr.co.uk) to register interest.

The 8 Black Sabbath tracks that will feature are: Paranoid (Paranoid, 1970); Ironman (Paranoid, 1970); War Pigs (Paranoid, 1970); Black Sabbath (Black Sabbath, 1970); Solitude (Master of Reality, 1971); Orchid (Master of Reality, 1971); Laguna Sunrise (Vol 4, 1972) and Sabbath Bloody Sabbath (Sabbath Bloody Sabbath, 1973). The music will be re-orchestrated for the Royal Ballet Sinfonia with new compositions inspired by Black Sabbath also performed live by the orchestra. On the stage guitars and drums will be integrated into the performance.

*Black Sabbath - The Ballet* is the second Birmingham-focussed commission from Carlos Acosta. The first, *City of a Thousand Trades* which looked at the city's industrial heritage and multicultural communities, premiered in 2021.

The idea of a Black Sabbath ballet has been on Carlos Acosta's mind since he first arrived in Birmingham at the start of 2020, just before the pandemic hit. Black Sabbath played their first ever gig in The Crown pub just a stone's throw from Birmingham Royal Ballet's base on Thorp Street. The pub was recently saved from demolition and is deemed a heritage site by fans.

**Acosta said** *'Black Sabbath is probably Birmingham's biggest export, the most famous (and infamous) cultural entity to ever emerge from the city - so I was naturally drawn to the idea of a collaboration between what most people might think are the most unlikely of partners. The band's enthusiasm for the project is a huge endorsement. They are putting their trust in us to deliver something completely new and original, and that's quite a responsibility but one that we are beyond excited to take on. Everyone in the BRB company is thrilled to be involved and we cannot wait to share the vision for the show in more detail in the coming months. I have hand picked the creative team and will work closely with them to make a spectacular show.'*

Black Sabbath co-founder, lead guitarist, co-songwriter and local resident **Tony Iommi** said *'I'm looking forward to seeing how this all develops! Black Sabbath have always been innovators and never been predictable, and it doesn't come any more unpredictable than this! I'd never imagined pairing Black Sabbath with Ballet but it's got a nice ring to it! I've met with Carlos several times and his enthusiasm is infectious. I performed alongside some of the dancers at the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony and they had an incredible energy, so I'm happy to go along for the ride with them and see you on the other side!'*

The official press night will be on Wednesday 27 September 2023 with further UK dates in Plymouth and London for autumn 2023 to be announced soon.

**Interview requests, press tickets and interest in attending the media event on 27 April**  
please contact: [mandyrose@m7pr.co.uk](mailto:mandyrose@m7pr.co.uk) 07454 365421

## **Listings information**

### **Black Sabbath - The Ballet**

Birmingham Hippodrome

Sat 23 Sep 7.30pm

Wed 27 Sep 7.30pm **PN**

Thu 28 Sep 2pm & 7.30pm

Fri 29 Sep 7.30pm

Sat 30 Sep 2.30pm & 7.30pm

[www.birminghamhippodrome.com](http://www.birminghamhippodrome.com)

## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

## **CHOREOGRAPHY**

**PONTUS LIDBERG** – Lead Choreographer

Lidberg has created works for dance companies including Paris Opera Ballet, New York City Ballet, Martha Graham Dance Company, Vienna Staatsoper Ballet, Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, Semperoper Ballet Dresden, Royal Swedish Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Le Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, Acosta Danza, and Beijing Dance Theatre

His work has been commissioned and presented by festivals and venues including Montpellier Danse, Théâtre National de Chaillot, Basel Ballet, Miami City Ballet, The Joyce Theater, the National Arts Centre of Canada, New York City Center's Fall For Dance Festival, the Havana International Ballet Festival and the Spoleto Festival.

His work *Siren* received a Villanueva Award from UNEAC, The National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba in 2018.

In 2021, he won the Lumen Prize, Nordic Award for Art and Technology for *Centaur*.

His film, *The Rain*, received numerous awards. The New York Times wrote "memorably, *The Rain* illustrates what filmed dance can say that staged dance cannot."

His first feature film, *Written on Water*, starring Aurélie Dupont premiered at Le Festival International du Film sur l'Art in Montréal in 2021.

Raised in Stockholm, Sweden, Lidberg trained at the Royal Swedish Ballet School and the Conservatoire National de Musique et de Danse de Paris..

He was the Artistic Director of Danish Dance Theatre in Copenhagen, Denmark until March 2023

### **RAÚL REINOSO - Choreographer**

Born in Pinar del Río, in 2002, since 2015 he has been a dancer with Acosta Danza.

As a choreographer he has created Anadromous, a piece that was part of the show "A Classical Farewell", by Carlos Acosta, that was performed in United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Hong Kong.

With Beatriz García he created the dueto Nosotros, premiered by Acosta Danza.

With this choreography he performed at the Fire Island Dance Festival 2017, in New York.

In 2018, Raúl Reinoso premiered his choreography Satori. This piece won the Villanueva Award from the Association of Scenic Critics, as one of the best shows presented in Cuba in 2018.

### **CASSI ABRANCHES - Choreographer**

Born in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1974.

As a dancer, Cassi performed with Brazil's Raça Cia de Dança, Balé do Teatro Castro Alves and Balé do Teatro Guaíra, before she joined Grupo Corpo in 2001, where she danced until 2013. As a choreographer, Cassi has created numerous works for Grupo Corpo that have toured the world.

Besides her work for dance companies, Cassi has choreographed for film, commercials and music videos, including the creation of Pas-de-Deux from the movie Rio, I Love You.

She was Director of Movement and Choreographer of Rio 2016 Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony.

On 6 June, 2019, Cassi's *Agora*, was premiered by São Paulo Cia de Dança and then toured to the Movimento Festival in Wolfsburg, Germany.

In February, 2020, *Agora* received the APCA Award 2019 in Sao Paulo for Best Choreography/Creation. Sao Paulo Cia de Dança plans to tour *Agora* to Europe and the UK in 2021.

More recently, in November 2020, Cassi created *Respiro*, her response to lockdown for São Paulo Cia de Dança which premiered at Teatro Alfa and on line.

In September 2021, Cassi was appointed the new Artistic Director of Balé da Cidade de São Paulo in Brazil.

## COMPOSITION

### CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN - Lead Composer, Project Music Supervisor, Conductor

Tony® Award-winning orchestrator Christopher Austin will create a new score for choreographer Pontus Lidberg, forming the final act of this evening length work. He is also Music Supervisor for the whole ballet.

Austin's Tony® and Drama Desk Award-winning orchestrations for Christopher Wheeldon's *An American in Paris* followed on from his work with Joby Talbot, arranging and orchestrating music by The White Stripes for Wayne McGregor's *Chroma*, and working on Talbot's score for Christopher Wheeldon's critically acclaimed *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (both for the Royal Ballet). *Chroma*, *Alice* and *An American in Paris* are performed around the world. More recently for the Royal Ballet (in 2017), Austin made new orchestrations for Mark-Anthony Turnage's score *Strapless* and orchestrated Frank Moon's music for Arthur Pita's *The Wind*.

Christopher Austin's most recent dance collaboration was his Houston Ballet commissioned score for Arthur Pita's *Good Vibrations*, which premiered in September 2022.

For Rambert, Austin has arranged and orchestrated music by Alex North for Javier de Frutos's *Elysian Fields* (2011) and created new orchestrations of Witold Lutosławski's Chain 2 and Symphony No. 4 for Kim Brandstrup's *Life is a Dream* (2018).

Austin's work as a conductor for dance includes Ballet Boyz (for Javier de Frutos and Pontus Lidberg); CCN Roubaix - Carolyn Carlson (for the Carlson/Talbot ballet *Eau* at the Opéra de Lille and elsewhere); and Rambert's *Life is a Dream*. Austin will be conducting the first performances of *Black Sabbath - The Ballet*.

Since 2020, Austin has been working as both conductor and orchestrator with singer/songwriter Rufus Wainwright.

Christopher Austin studied composition at Bristol University (with Raymond Warren and Adrian Beaumont) and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (with Robert Saxton and Simon Bainbridge).

### MARKO NYBERG - Composer / Sound Design

Marko Nyberg is the studio head of El Camino Helsinki and one of Finland's most sought-after writers of film scores and advertising music.

As the founder and main songwriter of the ambient pop ensemble Husky Rescue - set up in 2002 and currently on a hiatus - Nyberg has released four studio albums and performed at music festivals from Glastonbury to Lollapalooza and Austin City Limits. Husky Rescue's music has been featured in a number of advertisements and TV series, including HBO series *The Sopranos*, the BBC's *Top Gear* and the Netflix's *Lovesick*.

Since the late '90s, Nyberg has provided rich aural tapestries for the likes of Nokia, Wrigley's, Finnair and Colemans. He was nominated for the HARPA Nordic Film Composers Award in 2017 for his score for Ville Jankeri's *Onnenonkija*.

Nyberg is currently finishing his debut solo album, a follow-up to the early 2022 solo EP 'Ingrid'. This eponymous, multidisciplinary solo project combines raw emotion with neoclassical and techno, and is often accompanied by contemporary dance and abstract video art.

[markonyberg.com](http://markonyberg.com)

### **SUN KETING - Composer**

Sun Keting is a London-based, China-born composer, researcher, and creative director. Her composition work is focused on multidisciplinary collaboration, combining with Eastern cultural, spiritual, and philosophical elements. Her works have been described as "the future way to go" (*The Independent*) and "very attractive for its harmonic imagination, mastery of instrumentation" (*Bachtrack*).

Keting's music has been performed in the U.K (including the Aldeburgh Festival and *Tête-à-tête*) the U.S., Europe and Asia. She has composed music for the London Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the BBC Singers, the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, the Riot Ensemble, the Silk Road Ensemble, the Ligeti Quartet, Psappha, the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, and the National Chinese Orchestra, Taiwan.

Keting has also composed music for film and dance, including a collaboration with Rome-based Chinese choreographer/artist Huang Xiao. They jointly created the dance works *Ensō* and *Now I will do nothing but Listen*, with music performed by members of the London Symphony Orchestra at LSO St. Luke's.

Keting is graduate of both the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (BA) and the Royal Academy of Music in London (MMus) where she is currently completing a doctorate in composition.

[ketingsun.com](http://ketingsun.com)

## **DESIGN**

### **ALEXANDRE ARRECHEA - Designer**

Alexandre graduated from Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) in Havana in 1994.

His work comprises large-scale installations, sculptures, watercolour drawings, and videos that debate such issues as history, memory, politics, and the power relations of the urban space.

His mode of working site specifically makes him explore the ideological and philosophical legacy of the surrounding context to create a more engaging interaction with the audience.

His exploration of space contemplates cultural resonances implicit in architecture, from design to social value, and how these condition its multiple readings.

He is internationally renowned as one of the founding members of the Cuban collective, Los Carpinteros [The Carpenters], active between 1991 and 2003.

Embarking on his solo career in the same year, Arrechea is widely recognized for No limits (2013), a monumental project composed of ten sculptures inspired by iconic buildings in New York City and erected along Park Avenue, and Katrina Chairs (2016), erected at the Coachella Music Festival, Palm Springs, California, USA.

Last December, he created "Dreaming with Lions," an immersive rotunda resembling an enormous forum-cum-library installed at Faena Miami Beach.

## **LIGHTING**

### **KIERON JOHNSON**

Kieron is a lighting designer for dance, theatre and opera. They are a graduate of the ALPD 20:20 Lumiere Scheme. Recent credits include, Dogs(Liverpool Playhouse), Happy Meal(Traverse/Roots/Theatre Royal Plymouth), Knot of the Heart (Royal Birmingham Conservatoire), Masters Showcase (Guildford School of Acting), Smile: The Musical(Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts), Celebrated Virgins (Theatr Clwyd), Coming to England (Associate/Birmingham Rep), As You Like It (Northern Broadsides/National Tour), Black Is...(Fubunation/Sadler's Wells),Decades: Stories from the City (Leeds Playhouse), West Side Story: Symphonic Dances (Opera North), EBÓ and BlackWaters (Phoenix Dance Theatre), Head Above Water and Khepr (Joss Arnott Dance).

### **RICHARD THOMAS - Dramaturg**

Richard Thomas is an Olivier-Award winning composer and writer and is best known for writing and composing Jerry Springer - The Opera, the first-ever musical to win all four British 'Best Musical' awards.

Richard wrote the lyrics for the musical adaptation of Made in Dagenham, which opened at the Adelphi Theatre in London's West End in 2014 with music by David Arnold

He is also known for his BBC2 television series Kombat Opera Presents which won two Rose D'Or awards in 2008 for Best Comedy and Best Programme across all categories.

Richard has also written songs for two seasons of the Emmy-nominated The Tracey Ullman Show (BBC1/HBO)

Richard is working on a several new musicals, amongst which are "Rock Bottom - the AA musical", "Grayson Perry- The Musical?!", "Singing Heads" for The New Group in New York as well as a series of piano-dramas including "The Covid-19 Variations" which have already been heard at The Guggenheim Theatre (NYC) and Birmingham Rep.

### **Birmingham Royal Ballet**

Based at Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham Royal Ballet is the United Kingdom's leading touring ballet company performing a range of traditional, classical and heritage ballets as well as ground-breaking new works with the aim of encouraging choreographers of the future.

The Company's Director since January 2020 is the internationally renowned Carlos Acosta.

Birmingham Royal Ballet standardly performs at Birmingham Hippodrome for approximately ten weeks of the year and the remainder of the year tours throughout the United Kingdom and overseas. On average, the Company performs 175 shows a year nationally and internationally.

**The Royal Ballet Sinfonia** is Birmingham Royal Ballet's permanent orchestra, it is also Britain's busiest ballet orchestra. The Sinfonia also plays frequently for The Royal Ballet and other leading ballet companies, including performances with Paris Opéra Ballet, New York City Ballet, Australian Ballet, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, the Kirov, Norwegian Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and La Scala Ballet. [www.brb.org.uk](http://www.brb.org.uk)

**Ballet Now** is generously supported by Oak Foundation's Special Interest Programme, which provided major funding for the project, Foyle Foundation, Anthony Coombs and The Keith Coombs Trust, The Big Give 2017, The John Feeney Charitable Trust, The John S Cohen Foundation, The H Steven and PE Wood Charitable Trust, The W and M Morris Charitable Trust, the estate of Judith and John Percival, Birmingham Royal Ballet's New Work Syndicate 2017 and Director's Appeal 2017.