

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

BRB2

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**CARLOS ACOSTA'S *BRB2* BEGINS SECOND UK TOUR WITH A
NEW GLOBAL COHORT OF FIRST-CLASS
EMERGING BALLET DANCERS**

ALL 2023 BRB2 MEMBERS TO JOIN BRB COMPANY AS ARTISTS



In Spring 2023, Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) Director, the world-renowned **Carlos Acosta**, launched **BRB2** - a new initiative through which BRB pro-actively seeks out some of the best young ballet graduates from across the globe.

Announced today, after 12 months with BRB2, all five original members of the 2023 cohort will join the Birmingham Royal Ballet Company as Artists at the end of the current season. They are: **Jack Easton**, **Frieda Kaden**, **Maïlène Katoch**, **Mason King** and **Oscar Kempsey Fagg**.

Now, after a hugely successful inaugural tour in 2023, BRB2 hits the road again with further performances of **Carlos Acosta's Classical Selection**, a mixed programme of balletic highlights chosen by Acosta himself, visiting some venues for the first time. Opening in Cheltenham, the tour then visits Poole, Northampton, Canterbury and Peterborough. BRB2's visit to Canterbury will mark the first time Birmingham Royal Ballet has performed in the city.

BRB2 features some of the brightest young stars in the ballet world, hailing from the UK, USA, Ukraine, France, Germany, New Zealand and Australia, and offers a unique opportunity for audiences to be the first to see ballet's elite rising stars on stage.

In this second year the original cohort, who are all joining the main Company as Artists from this Autumn, are joined by five new members of the company selected by Carlos Acosta and Assistant Director Dominic Antonucci. They are: **Ariana Allen** (UK / Royal Ballet School), **Alisa Garkavenko** (Ukraine / Princess Grace Academy), **Thomas Hazelby** (UK / Royal Ballet School), **Alexandra Manuel** (USA / Royal Ballet School) and **Alfie Shacklock** (UK/Australia / Royal Ballet School).

Alisa Garkavenko trained at Kyiv State Ballet School and Vaganova Ballet Academy in Ukraine. When Russia declared war on Ukraine, Alisa was offered refuge at Monaco's Princess Grace Academy before joining BRB2. Alisa said: *"I think it is really important to have junior companies like BRB2 because this kind of company, they are giving the opportunity to young dancers to show their talent. It's an incredible experience."*

BRB2 is a magnet for the best UK and international talent, providing extensive training and professional experience, sending developed, professional dancers back into the dance sector and providing role models for the next generation. The two-year performance programme provides vital employment for the next generation of exceptional ballet dancers (aged 18-22) to transition from training into jobs at BRB or other leading ballet companies, impacting the dance sector worldwide.

BRB2 dancers have danced alongside the main Company, with many from last year's cohort performing pivotal roles in the current repertoire, including the world premiere of *Black Sabbath - The Ballet*, *The Nutcracker* and the current UK tour of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

The music for *End of Time* and *Dying Swans* will be performed live by **Jeanette Wong** (Head of Piano) and **Antonio Novais** (Principal Cellist). Jeanette will also perform two solo piano pieces by Ravel to accompany a brand-new duet, titled *Mirrored*, choreographed especially for BRB2 this year by Will Tuckett.

Carlos Acosta said: *"Everyone was so delighted with how the inaugural year of BRB2 went. It's been a great year, watching the inaugural group of dancers grow and develop, and to welcome the second intake join and quickly establish themselves as vital members of the Company. Many BRB2 artists are already taking important roles in the current The Sleeping Beauty tour (over 41 shows this Spring) and I cannot be more thrilled that all of the initial intake will be joining the Company full-time at the end of this season. It's not just about talent spotting though! My Classical Selection is a brilliant evening of ballet whether you are an established fan or looking for a way to discover what ballet is all about."*

BRB's First Soloist, **Kit Holder**, will again lead BRB2 as Artistic Coordinator, he said: *"Last year's inaugural BRB2 tour was a huge success and set the bar very high both technically and artistically. It's been wonderful to support the development of these young dancers who are already becoming seasoned professionals and I'm really pleased that our initial cohort will all be staying on to continue their careers as full members of Birmingham Royal Ballet. I am excited to watch their careers continue to develop and I'm proud to have helped propel them on to continuing success. I'm also excited by the new dancers who have joined us this season to begin their professional careers and I look forward to showcasing the talents of all of these young artists with audiences across the country in the spring."*

The programme for the 2024 UK tour includes the world premiere of *Mirrored*, a wholly new duet created by William Tuckett for BRB2. Further *pas de deux* include Frederick Ashton's *Rhapsody* - premiered at The Royal Ballet in 1980 by Mikhail Baryshnikov and Lesley Collier; August Bournonville's most famous ballet *La Sylphide*; the love duet from *Swan Lake* - probably the most famous *pas de deux* in ballet; Carlos Acosta's take on Fokine's *The Dying Swan* which features two dancers instead of one (hence *The Dying Swans* plural) and is double the usual length; Marius Petipa's *Diana and Actaeon pas de deux*; Ben Stevenson's *End of Time* set to Rachmaninov's gloriously melancholic Sonata in G Minor (3rd movement).

In the second half Gustavo Mollajoli's *A Buenos Aires* celebrates the spirit of tango to music by Astor Piazzolla; the iconic Edith Piaf's *Je ne regrette rien* choreographed by Ben Van Cauwenbergh, whose Jacques Brel-inspired humorous gala piece *Les Bourgeois* will also feature. Acosta's choreography for the *Carmen pas de deux* promises to raise the temperature with Bizet's heat-seeking score. Will Tuckett's new duet *Mirrored* will captivate audiences before Jorge Garcia's *Majisimo* closes out the programme, performed to Massenet's music from *Le Cid*.

See listings information for full tour details.

Press information

Ben Wooldridge benw@breadandbutterpr.uk / 07791 183 043
Clair Chamberlain clair@breadandbutterpr.uk / 07957 272 534

Listings information

Everyman Theatre Cheltenham
Fri 10 May 7.30pm; Sat 11 May 2pm & 7.30pm

The Lighthouse Poole
Sat 18 May 2.30pm & 7.45pm

Northampton Royal and Derngate
Sat 25 May 2.30pm & 7.30pm

Marlowe Theatre Canterbury
Wed 29 May 2.30pm & 7.30pm

New Theatre Peterborough
Sat 1 June 2.30pm & 7pm

Programme (subject to change)

Rhapsody – pas de deux
Choreography: Frederick Ashton
Music: Sergei Rachmaninov, Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini

La Sylphide – Act II pas de deux
Choreography: August Bournonville
Music: Herman Lovenskiold

Swan Lake – Act II pas de deux
Choreography: Marius Petipa, Lev Ivanov, Sir Peter Wright
Music: Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky

The Dying Swans
Choreography: Carlos Acosta (after Michel Fokine and Michel Descombes)
Music: Camille Saint-Saens

Diana and Actaeon – pas de deux
Choreography: Marius Petipa, Agrippina Vaganova
Music: Cesare Pugni

End of Time – pas de deux
Choreography: Ben Stevenson
Music: Sergei Rachmaninov, Cello Sonata in G Minor (3rd movement)

Interval

A Buenos Aires
Choreography: Gustavo Mollajoli
Music: Astor Piazzolla, Primavera Portena

Je ne regrette rien
Choreography: Ben Van Cauwenbergh
Music: Edith Piaf's Je ne regrette rien (Dumont/Vaucaire)

Les Bourgeois
Choreography: Ben Van Cauwenbergh
Music: Jacques Brel's Les Bourgeois

Carmen
Choreography: Carlos Acosta
Music: George Bizet – Shchedrin

Mirrored
Choreography: Will Tuckett
Music: Maurice Ravel

Majisimo
Choreography: Georges Garcia
Music: Jules Massenet (from Le Cid)

Notes to Editors

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 around 100 shows a year nationally and internationally.

The Royal Ballet Sinfonia

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.