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A Ceremony of Carols

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

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PRIMA VOCE

Conductor **Heather J. Buchanan**

Soprano I **Angel Baker, Jessica Eucker,* Julianne Froehlich, Serena Gattuso, Cornelia Lotito, Christine Rauschenbach, Claire Tsiporukha**
Soprano II **Jordan Barry, Adrieana Blazin, Autumn D’Esposito, Nicole Jodoin, Karen Levandoski,* Cassandra Pautler, Kristina á Váli, Courtney Wright**
Alto **Lisa Andreacchi,* Krystle Lee Avinger, Daveda Browne, Lauren D’Imperio, Andria Kwasnicki, Christina McCall, Gabriella Natale, Elaine Thoman**
Rehearsal Accompanist **Steven W. Ryan**

*Section Leader

PROGRAM NOTES

Roughcut

Roughcut was made to celebrate the energy and exuberance of the young dancers Richard Alston was working with 20 years ago at Rambert Dance Company. It was a dance about vitality and, as its name implied, it did not bother to be tidy at the edges. In reviving it now for his own company, Alston has found that *Roughcut*’s casual air is deceptive—the throwaway energy of the movement is anchored by a very specific use of the body’s weight and pull, and this emphasis has to be there to properly articulate and syncopate the music’s intricate rhythm.

First performed by Rambert Dance Company at the Newcastle Theatre Royal on December 7, 1990. First performed by Richard Alston Dance Company at Cambridge Arts Theatre on October 7, 1999. This revival first performed at Northcott Theatre, Exeter, on February 16, 2011.

Unfinished Business

Richard Alston’s *Unfinished Business* is danced to the beautiful, lucid, and flowing music of Mozart, who composed his K. 533 late in his short life, only four years before he died. There are two sublime and profoundly beautiful movements: an Allegro flowing in an unending lyrical stream and a starker, more troubled Andante, dark, brooding, questioning.

Desperate for money, Mozart rushed these off to his publisher, hastily attaching a Rondo he had written one year earlier, but the Rondo comes from a different world. For *Unfinished Business* Alston has chosen instead to conclude with the succinct Gigue in D, an unabashed homage by Mozart to Bach in an extraordinary arrangement by Federico Busoni. Busoni brilliantly interweaves music from the opera *The Marriage of Figaro* that scurries along not pausing for breath.

Co-commissioned by Octagon Theatre, Yeovil. First performed on September 28, 2011.

A Ceremony of Carols

A Ceremony of Carols was written in 1942. At that time, Benjamin Britten was living and working in America. Stricken with a sudden intense bout of homesickness, he somehow managed to get a passage back to England (not so easy mid-war) on a Swedish freighter. The freighter stopped on the way at Halifax, Nova Scotia, where Britten went ashore and happened to find, in a second-hand bookstore, a collection of medieval English verse. Back in his cramped and overheated cabin, he wrote settings of these medieval carols on the tedious transatlantic journey home.

It is music seemingly so simple and direct, full of a powerful, frankly joyous elation, deploying superb skill in its expression of images from the Christmas story. The words are early English and sometimes strange to the modern ear, but that they completely caught Britten’s imagination is abundantly clear from this glorious music.

Taking the lead from Britten, Richard Alston has not tried to narrate the Christmas story as such but, rather, to portray the poetic imagery of the medieval words. *A Ceremony of Carols* is a gathering assembled to meditate on the mystery of Christ’s humble beginnings—something the poor in the Middle Ages would have understood all too clearly. The harp interlude is intended to convey the image of the Virgin Mary having insight into what would inevitably happen to her child.

First performed February 8, 2012, at The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Richard Alston (Artistic Director/Choreographer) choreographed his first work in 1968 as one of the original students at the London School of Contemporary Dance. He went on to choreograph for London Contemporary Dance Theatre before forming the UK’s first independent dance company, Strider, in 1972. In 1975, he came to New York to study at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio. While he was in New York, Alston’s

teachers included Merce Cunningham, Carolyn Brown, Valda Setterfield, Gus Solomons, Jr., and Alfredo Corvino at Dance Circle. On his return to London two years later, he worked throughout the UK and Europe as an independent choreographer and teacher.

In 1980, Alston was appointed resident choreographer with Ballet Rambert and became the company’s artistic director from 1986 to 1992. During his time there, he created 25 works for Rambert besides being commissioned to create works for the Royal Danish Ballet and the Royal Ballet. In 1992, Alston was invited to create a full evening of his own work for the Ballet Atlantique based in La Rochelle, France. He made another full evening for London Contemporary Dance Theatre at the 1994 Aldeburgh Festival, and it was therefore a logical step to go on to form his own company, which he did when he took up the post of artistic director of The Place in 1994. The Richard Alston Dance Company was launched at The Place in November of that year. Over the past 18 years, Alston has made over 30 pieces for this company.

Recent commissions for other companies include *Sheer Bravado* for Ballet Theatre Munich and *Walk Through a Storm* for Ballet Black. In 2009, Alston was invited to choreograph a new version of *Carmen* for Scottish Ballet. In 2011, he made *A Rugged Flourish* for New York Theatre Ballet and, in 2012, *Even Song* for the Holland Dance Festival. Alston’s *Light Flooding into Darkened Rooms* will be performed by the New York Theatre Ballet in spring 2013.

Alston was made an honorary doctor of philosophy (in dance) at Surrey University in 1992, and in 2003 he received an honorary MA from Chichester University. In 1995, he was named Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in recognition of his work in France, and in 2001, he received the Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in the New Year Honours list. In 2008, Alston won the Critics Circle National Dance Awards’ DeValois Award for Outstanding Achievement. This year Alston was presented with the Award for Excellence in International Dance by the International Theatre Institute.

Martin Lawrance (Rehearsal Director) was born in Leicester, England, and trained at London Contemporary Dance School from 1991 to 1994. He performed with the postgraduate performance group 4D, where he first worked with Richard Alston. He was a dancer with Richard Alston Dance Company (RADC) from 1995 to 2007, having over 25 works created on him in this time. As RADC’s rehearsal director, he has restaged 12 of Richard Alston’s choreographies, in Britain and overseas, including *Lachrymae, Slow Airs, Sudden Exit, Roughcut, Fever, Red Run, Gypsy Mixture, Movements from Petrushka, Overdrive, Shimmer, Light Flooding into Darkened Rooms, and The Devil in the Detail*. He has also been developing his

own choreography, and the RADC repertoire has included such works as *Grey Allegro* (2003), *Charge* (2004), *About-Face* (2006), *Brink* (2007), *To Dance and Skylark* (2009), *Lie of the Land* (2010), and most recently *Madcap* (2012).

Jason Ridgway (Pianist) graduated from the Guildhall School of Music with one of the highest honors in the history of the school and was awarded the Piano Prize. He has performed with many of the UK’s leading orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican, the Philharmonia at St. John’s Smith Square, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic at Hope Concert Hall. He has won the Julius Isserlis Prize presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society, he was a piano finalist in the BBC Young Musician, and he was awarded the first prize at the Guild competition.

Heather J. Buchanan, Ph.D. (Choral Director) was born in Australia. She is associate professor of music and director of choral activities at MSU, where she conducts the 165-voice Chorale, 60-voice University Singers, and 24-voice Vocal Accord. She has collaborated with a variety of renowned international performing artists in the United States, Europe, and Australia, and her choirs regularly perform with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. Her publications include books, book chapters, articles on Body Mapping and choral pedagogy, edited choral octavos, and a DVD. Dr. Buchanan holds degrees from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Australia), Westminster Choir College of Rider University, and the University of New England (Australia). A licensed Andover Educator, she also specializes in the teaching of Body Mapping and somatic pedagogy for musicians. A vibrant teacher, dynamic performer, and passionate musicians’ health advocate, Dr. Buchanan is in demand as a guest conductor, somatic educator, and choral clinician in the US and abroad.

André Tarantiles (Harpist) received his bachelor of music and master of music degrees from Indiana University School of Music. He has concertized throughout the United States, performed as soloist in all the major New York City concert halls, and appeared on national television accompanying notable opera stars. Formerly principal harpist for the Metropolitan Opera Guild, New York City Opera National Company, and Opera Orchestra of New York, Tarantiles is currently principal harpist for the Philly Pops, Glimmerglass Opera Festival, Arizona Opera Wagner Festival, New Jersey State Opera, Connecticut Grand Opera, the Center for Contemporary Opera, Teatro Grattacielo, Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, Riverside Symphonia, the Princeton Symphony, Festival Musical de Santo Domingo, and, most recently, the Casals Festival in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He is currently a faculty member of The College of New Jersey, MSU, and Bryn Mawr College.

Prima Voce (Choir) is a professional-level women’s choir founded by Heather J. Buchanan specifically for this collaboration with Richard Alston. The choir’s auditioned membership is drawn primarily from MSU students and alumni who have extensive performance experience as both solo vocal artists and choral singers.

Elly Braund (Dancer) was born in Falmouth, England, and trained at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, graduating in 2011. She joined Richard Alston Dance Company as an apprentice in 2011 and became a permanent member of the company in 2012.

Nathan Goodman (Dancer) was born in London and began his training at the BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology (2002–06). He continued his training at London Contemporary Dance School. Goodman joined Richard Alston Dance Company in 2009.

Hannah Kidd (Dancer) was born in Oxford, England, and began her training at Elmhurst Ballet School. From Elmhurst, she continued her training at London Contemporary Dance School. She joined Richard Alston Dance Company in 2007. Kidd was recently nominated as Outstanding Dancer Female (2012) by the Critics’ Circle National Dance Awards.

Andrew Macleman (Dancer) was born in Dundee, England, and trained at London Contemporary Dance School, graduating in 2012 with a First Class BA Honours degree. He joined Richard Alston Dance Company as an apprentice in 2012.

Nancy Nerantzi (Dancer) was born in Athens and trained at the National Ballet School of Greece in 2007 and at London Contemporary Dance School in 2008. She joined Richard Alston Dance Company in 2011.

James Pett (Dancer) was born in London and competed as a gymnast before training at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, graduating in 2011 with a First Class BA Honours degree. Pett joined Richard Alston Dance Company as an apprentice in 2011, becoming a full company member in 2012.

Liam Riddick (Dancer) was born in South Wales and trained at London Contemporary Dance School in 2007. He joined Richard Alston Dance Company as an apprentice in 2010, becoming a full company member in 2011. Riddick was recently nominated as Outstanding Dancer Male (2012) by the Critics’ Circle National Dance Awards.

Monique Smith-McDowell (Dancer) was born in London and competed as a gymnast for 10 years before training at London Contemporary Dance School, graduating in 2012. She joined Richard Alston Dance Company as an apprentice in 2012.

Pierre Tappon (Dancer) was born in Angoulême, France. In 2002 he moved to Bordeaux in order to join the Junior Ballet d’Aquitaine under the direction of Daniel Agésilas. In 2005, Tappon completed a one-year apprenticeship with Richard Alston Dance Company before joining as a full-time dancer in 2007.

Oihana Vesga Bujan (Dancer) was born in San Sebastian and trained at the Conservatoire National Maurice Ravel (Biarritz, France) before joining London Contemporary Dance School and graduating in 2012. She joined Richard Alston Dance Company as an apprentice in 2012.

Alistair Goldsmith (Dancer) is a third-year student at London Contemporary Dance School and is currently on exchange with Purchase College, SUNY, for 2012–13. He joins Richard Alston Dance Company in *A Ceremony of Carols* for the Peak Performances season.

Chloe Mead (Dancer) graduated from London Contemporary Dance School in 2012 and joins Richard Alston Dance Company in *A Ceremony of Carols* for the Peak Performances season.

RICHARD ALSTON DANCE COMPANY

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Marketing Officer **Jack Wright**
Production Electrician **Paul Kizintas**
Sound Technician **Owen Joseph**
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Katherine Rothman

The Richard Alston Dance Company is very grateful to Dr Haruhisa Handa and the International Foundation for Arts and Culture for their financial support.

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Dance

Dance

Dance

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 Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts & Cultural Programming

Peak Performances presents:

Richard Alston Dance Company

Artistic Director **Richard Alston**
 Executive Director **Isabel Tamen**
 Rehearsal Director **Martin Lawrance**
 Production Manager **Zeynep Kepekli**

Dancers **Elly Braund, Nathan Goodman, Hannah Kidd, Andrew Macleman, Nancy Nerantzi, James Pett, Liam Riddick, Monique Smith-McDowell, Pierre Tappon, Oihana Vesga Bujan, Alistair Goldsmith (A Ceremony of Carols), Chloe Mead (A Ceremony of Carols)**

PROGRAM

Roughcut (1990)
 Choreography **Richard Alston**
 Reconstructed 2011 by **Martin Lawrance**
 Music **Steve Reich**, "New York Counterpoint" for clarinet and tape (1986)
 and "Electric Counterpoint" for guitar and tape (1987)
 Music by arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes
 Lighting **Charles Balfour**
 Dancers **Nathan Goodman, Pierre Tappon, James Pett, Liam Riddick, Andrew Macleman, Nancy Nerantzi, Elly Braund, Oihana Vesga Bujan, Hannah Kidd, Monique Smith-McDowell**

For Val Bourne, founding director of Dance Umbrella.

Unfinished Business (2011)
 Choreography **Richard Alston**
 Music **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**, Piano Sonata no. 15 in F major, K. 533 (1788); **Ferruccio Busoni**, Giga, Bolero e Variazione (1909)
 Pianist **Jason Ridgway**
 Lighting **Zeynep Kepekli**
 Costumes **Rebecca Hayes**
 Dancers:
 Allegro **Liam Riddick, Hannah Kidd, Andrew Macleman, Nancy Nerantzi**
 Andante **Elly Braund, James Pett**
 Gigue **Pierre Tappon, Oihana Vesga Bujan, Liam Riddick**

For Betsy Gregory, current director of Dance Umbrella.

American Premiere!
A Ceremony of Carols (2012)
 Choreography **Richard Alston**
 Music **Benjamin Britten**, *A Ceremony of Carols* (1942)
 Music by arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes
 Lighting **Charles Balfour**
 Costumes **Richard Alston** (made by **Rebecca Hayes**)
 Dancers **The Company**
 Choral Director **Heather J. Buchanan**
 Harpist **André Tarantiles**
 Choir **Prima Voce**

A Ceremony of Carols was co-commissioned by Sadler's Wells, London; The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury; and Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ).

This appearance of Richard Alston Dance Company was supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes, including two 15-minute intermissions.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

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Peak Performances

12/13
 SEASON



Credit: Tony Nandi

Richard Alston Dance Company

December 13-16, 2012

Alexander Kasser Theater

Montclair State University

To view our complete season and for more information, visit www.peakperfs.org.



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