2021-2022 Join Us in Engaging with the Imaginations of Unparalleled Visionaries

4-21-2022

SMASHED2

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/peak-performances-2021-2022

Part of the Theatre and Performance Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the PEAK Performances Programming History at Montclair State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2021-2022 Join Us in Engaging with the Imaginations of Unparalleled Visionaries by an authorized administrator of Montclair State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@montclair.edu.
Gandini Juggling

April 21 | 22 | 23 | 24, 2022
Alexander Kasser Theater

Kati Ylä-Hokkala and Sean Gandini
Photo by Camilla Greenwell
US Premiere
Gandini Juggling
SMASHED2

Director Sean Gandini
Assistant Director Kati Ylä-Hokkala
Performers
  Kati Ylä-Hokkala
  Sakari Männistö
  Luke Hallgarten
  Yu-Hsien Wu
  Kim Huynh
  Francesca Poppi Mari
  Valerie Jauregui
  Frederike Gerstner
  Lynn Scott
Outside Eye Ben Duke
Lighting Design Guy Dickens
General Manager Marina Arranz
Executive Producer Rae Lee
Tour Booking and International Development Axel Satgé

Duration: 52 minutes, no intermission.
Program Notes

80 oranges, 7 watermelons, 9 performers.

A witty look at the strained relations between men and women, Smashed2 is juggling reinvented, using plenty of explosive fruit and slow-motion comedy. Inspired by the work of the great choreographer Pina Bausch, Gandini Juggling combines elements of Bausch’s gestural choreography with intricate patterns and cascades of solo and ensemble juggling. The result is a new hybrid of juggling, in a dance theater style, performed with meticulous unison and split-second timing.

A funny, inventive, and characterful work showcasing Gandini Juggling’s masterful stagecraft.

The original outdoor incarnation of Smashed, commissioned for the National Theatre’s Watch This Space Festival in 2010, saw Gandini Juggling continue its joyful acceptance of the failure of juggling, of the “drop.” This resulted in a light-hearted and zesty destruction of apples and crockery that celebrated the release that comes with accepting failure, accompanied by the performers’ mischievous disruptions of each other’s work.

For this new version, the material has taken on a darker, subversive sexual energy. Sean Gandini and Kati Ylä-Hokkala have acknowledged their debt to Pina Bausch, and this influence runs through the piece, with echoes of 1980 and Kontaktthof. Ostensibly, much of the material is the same as the original version, but with a gender-reversed cast, the power struggles become even more apparent and give a different political tone to the piece.
About the Company

Formed in 1992 by world-renowned jugglers Sean Gandini and Kati Ylä-Hokkala, Gandini Juggling continues to be at the forefront of contemporary circus, reinventing and reinvigorating juggling for the 21st century.

Ferociously prolific Gandini is constantly creating new work, which ranges from edgy visual art experiments to family-friendly entertainment, from narrative-infused dance escapades to humorous shenanigans. Liberation calls them the “Kings of Juggling” whose works are “…marvels of originality,” while The Guardian says of the company, “juggling that is not just artful, but art.”

Since the company’s inception, the Gandini’s have performed over 6,000 shows in 50 countries. They continue to perform at many of the most prestigious festivals and venues throughout the world. Their work transcends cultural barriers: the simple pleasure of watching people move while keeping objects in the air has a natural theatrical quality that has beguiled audiences globally.

Gandini continues to collaborate with a wide range of leading artists ranging from ballet choreographers to computer programmers, from costume designers to set makers, mathematicians to composers. They have spent several seasons working with symphonic orchestras, their choreographed juggling patterns lightly meshed to canonical classical works.

Their latest project, LIFE, is partnered with the Merce Cunningham Trust (New York, USA) with artistic collaborators Jennifer Goggans and the Pulitzer Prize–winning composer Caroline Shaw.

From May 19 through June 10, Gandini Juggling can be seen at the Metropolitan Opera, performing in Philip Glass’s Olivier Award–winning masterpiece, Akhnaten. Directed by Phelim McDermott, this unforgettable production brings ancient Egypt to vivid life with striking stage tableaux and Sean Gandini’s skilled ensemble showcasing mesmerizing choreographic skill.
About the Artists

Sean Gandini (Director) was fascinated by magic and mathematics as a child growing up in Havana. In the 1980s, he was a regular performer in London’s Covent Garden and toured with various theater groups. Since then, Gandini has spent the last 25 years researching and contributing to all aspects of juggling; he is a prolific creator, and his work also extends to choreography and directing. Throughout his career he has collaborated with many other acclaimed artists, including pioneering American musician Tom Johnson and the influential British choreographer Gill Clarke.

With Gandini Juggling, co-founded with Kati Ylä-Hokkala in 1992, Gandini continues to perform at many of the most prestigious festivals and venues throughout the world, reinventing and reinvigorating juggling for the 21st century. In 2016 he worked as choreographer on the Philip Glass opera Akhnaten for the English National Opera and won an Olivier Award for Best New Opera Production. In 2018 he directed Spring in collaboration with choreographer Alexander Whitley.

Kati Ylä-Hokkala (Assistant Director/Performer) is one of her generation’s iconic jugglers. As a co-founder of Gandini Juggling, she has not only built a reputation as a highly skilled technical juggler but is also renowned as one of the leading innovators in dance-juggling.

Ylä-Hokkala began her professional career in the 1980s, performing with the influential Ra-Ra Zoo. In 1991, with Sean Gandini, she co-founded Gandini Juggling. Since then she has been instrumental in the company’s experiments into the possibilities of juggling, including working to create unique “two-person sharing” juggling patterns.

A former rhythmic gymnast, Ylä-Hokkala has a distinctive ability to combine movement with extremely complex coordination that is second to none. In this she has crafted an intimate and extensive knowledge of the relationship between dance and juggling. Knowledge that has ensured that Gandini Juggling’s work is always of the highest technical standard. Ylä-Hokkala’s own performances are always accompanied by a unique calm precision, a precision that comes from decades of throwing while standing on one leg. She has used this same calm precision to steer Gandini Juggling for the past 25 years.
Ylä-Hokkala has performed in all of Gandini Juggling’s works since 1991, performing in over 2,500 shows throughout the world—in art galleries and palaces, in town squares and stadiums, in intimate theaters and on the stages of some of the world’s most iconic venues. In recent years she has co-directed many of the company’s pieces.

**Guy Dickens** (Lighting Designer) trained as a lighting designer and production manager for theater. He learned his trade and refined his skills working at theaters in the UK (The Corn Exchange, Newbury; Shoreditch Town Hall; Chichester Festival Theatre; West Yorkshire Playhouse). He has toured extensively throughout the UK and worldwide principally with dance, circus, and opera, notably with Gandini Juggling, Phoenix Dance Theatre, Opera Della Luna, Ra-Ra Zoo, Lost Dog, Norman Douglas & Co., Vincent Dance Theatre, Chris Goode & Co., and Kiera Martin. Original lighting design credits include works for most of the above. More recently, Dickens has been working with outdoor arts companies at 101 Outdoor Arts Creation Centre in Newbury, UK.

**Frederike Gerstner** (Performer) has a BA degree in Circus Arts from London’s National Centre for Circus Arts, graduating in 2006. She is based in London and has performed worldwide for over a decade, specializing in juggling. Alongside Gandini Juggling Fred has performed in various different solo, duet, and ensemble shows and through this has gained a wide range of performing experience. She is part of the duet Ben & Fred; their show explaining physics and science concepts through juggling patterns won the Josh Award for science communication in 2019.

**Luke Hallgarten** (Performer) graduated from the National Centre for Circus Arts in 2015 before going on to study at Le Lido in Toulouse, graduating in 2017. Since then, Hallgarten has been working with NoFit State Circus and Gandini Juggling alongside producing and directing his own work with the Revel Puck Circus. Hallgarten’s first major encounter with Gandini Juggling was in 2008 when he was 14 and performed with the company in *The Big Water Juggle*; he is in slight adorated disbelief that he is now performing with the company that inspired him to become a professional juggler all those years ago.
Kim Huynh (Performer) trained in classical dance from the age of four in Germany. She continued with contemporary dance and received her dance certificate in 2003 at the Conservatoire de Saint Denis in France. Autodidact in juggling from the age of 10, Huynh has been working since 2004 as a professional juggler in companies that combine dance and juggling or “new magic,” such as the Cie Jérome Thomas, Cie 14:20, and Gandini Juggling. In 2008 she cofounded the French company Sens Dessus Dessous that focuses on “choreographed juggling,” merging dance, object manipulation, and juggling. Today she mainly works with Gandini Juggling and is touring several shows with them.

Valerie Jauregui (Performer) was born in Mexico City in 1994 and at the age of 19 specialized in antipodism and juggling at Mexico’s National Center of Arts. Since then Jauregui has performed in some of the most important theaters in her native country as well as internationally. Jauregui was cast in the show Cirkunia directed by Rob Tannion and is a cast member in Gandini Juggling’s Smashed2. In 2017 she received a scholarship from Mexico’s National Fund for Culture and Arts thanks to her foot juggling project Hunch. In 2018 Jauregui participated in the 17th International Circus Festival and in the International Juggling Association Regional Competition, winning first place.

Sakari Männistö (Performer), immersed in the world of circus from a young age, started juggling at 13 and soon began devising his own shows. Throughout his career Männistö has been involved as a performer and director in over 50 different circus performances with companies such as Agit-Cirk, Circo Aereo, Cirk La Putyka, and Gandini Juggling. He has performed throughout Finland, Central Europe, Russia, Canada, and the USA. Männistö has also taught master class workshops at ENC Montréal, Lille-Lomme, Berlin Katakomben, and National Centre for Circus Arts (London). Apart from his performing and teaching work, Männistö is also a founding artistic director of Agit-Cirk, Makeshift Company, and the Silence Festival in Lapland (2010–16) and Silence London (2018).

Francesca Poppi Mari (Performer), born in 1988, completed her bachelor’s degree in Literature and Philosophy at the University of Bologna in 2012 and studied clown and physical theater in Brussels and in Italy with renowned teachers including Micheline Vandepoel and André Casaca. At 17 she began juggling and has since
been training through workshops around Europe with international jugglers including Emiliano Sanchez Alessi, Emilia Tau, La Compagnie Mouvement Alerte, and Florent Lestage.

**Lynn Scott** (Performer), graduated from the National Centre for Circus Arts in 2013. Since then she has worked internationally as a solo artist and part of larger companies. She is currently based in London.

**Yu-Hsien Wu** (Performer) was born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. As a freelance dancer, she has worked with various artists and choreographers such as Russell Maliphant, Marina Mascarell, Morgann Runacre-Temple, and Ming-Lung Yang. Wu’s self-choreographed solo *Dirty Paw* was selected and performed on the closing night of Resolution 2018, and previous works *Childhood* and *Cross* have won awards from Chin-Lin Foundation Dance Alliance and Next Choreography Project. Wu is currently working with Gandini Juggling and the Alexander Whitley Dance Company.
Arts + Cultural Programming

Jedediah Wheeler | Executive Director
J. Ryan Graves | Director of Production
Laurel Brolly | Business Administrator

Camille Spaccavento | Marketing & Media Director
Patrick Flood @ Flood Design | Art Director
Blake Zidell Associates | Media Representative
Percy Cole Media | Website
Claudia La Rocco | PEAK Journal Editor
Maya Siguenza | Administrative Assistant

Colin Van Horn | Technical Director
Andy Dickerson | Production Coordinator
Kevin Johnson | Audio Supervisor
Stephanie Benjamin-Flores, Daniel Mackle, Kimberly S. O’Loughlin, David Vandervliet | Production Crew

Robert Hermida | Audience Services Director
Jeff Lambert Wingfield | Box Office Manager
Maureen Grimaldi | House Manager
William Collins | Assistant House Manager
Yazeed Alomar, Jacob Batory, Shannon Mulraney, Martin Pyda, Katya Reyes | Box Office Lead Associates
Susan R. Case | Program Copy Editor
Bart Solenthaler | Program Layout Design

College of the Arts

Daniel Gurskis | Dean
Ronald L. Sharps | Associate Dean
Christine Lemesianou | Associate Dean
Linda D. Davidson | Assistant Dean
Zacrah S. Battle | College Administrator
Arts + Cultural Programming (ACP) produces and presents dance, music, theater, opera, and circus performances in the Alexander Kasser Theater, on the campus of Montclair State University, for MSU students and the general public. Through its internationally acclaimed live performing arts series PEAK Performances, ACP defies convention by supporting new performance ideas without compromise. ACP believes that for the performing arts to be sustainable, audiences must evolve and that the way to achieve this goal is to empower the best artists of our time to achieve new heights of imagination. With its newly launched PEAK Plus video-capture program, ACP makes live performances accessible worldwide, drastically expanding audiences for new work. Through its Creative Thinking course, ACP engages artists to participate in a groundbreaking research laboratory, illustrating for students of all fields of study that art and science are symbiotic. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values manifested in ACP’s long-standing embrace of work by artists not yet supported by other major institutions in the region. Because ACP provides the highest-quality production values, audiences have an opportunity to engage with creative viewpoints that are bold and insightful and fully realized. PEAK Performances is credited with 57 world premieres, 54 US premieres, and 66 commissions. ACP Executive Director Jedediah Wheeler has been awarded the William Dawson Award for Programmatic Excellence and sustained Achievement in Programming from the national organization Association of Performing Arts Professionals. For five successive years The New Jersey Council on the Arts awarded ACP a Citation of Excellence in performance programming.

ACP gratefully acknowledges our student staff and volunteers.