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Great Britten

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Dr. Susan A. Cole, President
 Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts
 Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts & Cultural Programming

Richard Alston Dance Company *Great Britten*

Artistic Director **Richard Alston**
 Executive Director **Isabel Tamen**
 Rehearsal Director **Martin Lawrance**
 Production Manager **Paul Kizintas**

Dancers **Ihsaan de Banya, Nicholas Bodych, Elly Braund, Jennifer Hayes, James Muller, Nancy Nerantzi, Liam Riddick, Oihana Vesga Bujan, Simon Donnellon, Phoebe Hart**

Guest Artists
Heather J. Buchanan, Choral Director
Vincent Carr, Organ
Nicholas Phan, Tenor
Jason Ridgway, Piano
American Contemporary Music Ensemble
Montclair State University Vocal Accord

PROGRAM

American Premiere!
Rejoice in the Lamb

~~Pause~~

Unfinished Business Duet

~~Pause~~

American Premiere!
Hölderlin Fragments

~~Intermission~~

Illuminations

Rejoice in the Lamb was commissioned by The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, with production support from Peak Performances @ Montclair State, New Jersey (USA).

Unfinished Business Duet was commissioned by Octagon Theatre, Yeovil.

Hölderlin Fragments was commissioned by the Barbican Centre, London, for the Barbican Britten celebrations.

Duration: 85 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.

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 in the theater.

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Montclair State's **Office of Arts & Cultural Programming (ACP)** presents and produces leading artists of the world in dance, music, theater, and opera. Under its signature series Peak Performances, ACP has produced works such as *Zinnias: The Life of Clementine Hunter* by Robert Wilson, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Toshie Reagon, and Jacqueline Woodson; *Dog Days* by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek; Harry Partch's *Oedipus*; and Ridge Theater's *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* by David Lang. In addition, ACP has commissioned works by Bill T. Jones, Kronos Quartet, Jan Fabre, Liz Lerman, Wayne McGregor, Laurie Anderson, Romeo Castellucci, Richard Alston, Susan Marshall, Fred Hersch, and David Gordon.

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



Peak Performances

THE 2014-15 SEASON



Richard Alston Dance Company *Great Britten*



Photo by Chris Mash

October 30—November 2, 2014
 Alexander Kasser Theater



Program

Rejoice in the Lamb (2014)

Choreography **Richard Alston**

Music **Benjamin Britten**, *Rejoice in the Lamb* (1943); music by arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes

Lighting **Zeynep Kepekli**

Costumes **Peter Todd**

Dancers:

Christopher Smart **Nicholas Bodych**

Jeffrey **Ihsaan de Banya**

Elly Braund, Phoebe Hart, Jennifer Hayes,

Nancy Nerantzi, Simon Donnellon,

James Muller, Liam Riddick,

Oihana Vesga Bujan

Choral Director **Heather J. Buchanan**

Choir **Montclair State University Vocal Accord**

Organ **Vincent Carr**

Unfinished Business Duet (2011)

Choreography **Richard Alston**

Music **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**, Andante, Piano Sonata no. 15 in F major K. 533 (1788)

Lighting **Zeynep Kepekli**

Costumes **Rebecca Hayes**

Dancers **Elly Braund, James Muller**

Piano **Jason Ridgway**

For Betsy Gregory, former director of Dance Umbrella.

American Contemporary Music Ensemble

Artistic and Executive Director **Clarice Jensen**

First Violins **Keats Dieffenbach, Anna Elashvilli, Ben Russell**

Second Violins **Caleb Burhans, Courtney Orlando, Chris Otto, Alex Shiozaki** (sub)

Cellos **Clarice Jensen, Brian Snow**

Bass **Kris Saebo**

Montclair State University Vocal Accord

Conductor **Heather J. Buchanan**

Soprano **Angel Baker, Katie Carey, Nicole Jodoin, Karen Levandoski,* Christine Rauschenbach,****

Claire Tsiporukha

Alto **Lisa Andreacchi,** Lauren D’Imperio, CJ Harden, Christina McCall, Allison Mello, Elaine Thoman***

Tenor **Ford Foster,** Zachery Morehouse, Ngqibeka Peter Ncanywa,** Timothy Price,**

Joseph Schnorrbusch,* Terrence Thornhill

Bass **Gabriel Baseman, John McLean,* Stefon Gaines, Aaron Kurtz, Jamey Vavra, Jason Zacher****

Rehearsal Accompanist **Steven W. Ryan**

*Soloist **Soloist understudy

Program Notes

Rejoice in the Lamb

The 18th-century poet Christopher Smart was susceptible to bouts of religious mania. He had a tendency to pull passers-by in the street to their knees to pray with him and so was confined to a mental asylum, where he passed the time writing long sprawling poems “from the hand of the artist inimitable.”

One of these was *Jubilate Agno* (Rejoice in the Lamb), eccentric to be sure but brilliantly expressing Smart’s fervent and unswerving faith. The words start with a driving litany of Old Testament figures and animals, calming down to a more serene Hallelujah. In his solitude, Smart took time to contemplate his most steady companion—the cat Jeffrey, “for I am possessed of a cat, surpassing in beauty”—and also to consider flowers, which he described as “peculiarly the poetry of Christ.” Regular attacks of depression unsteadied the poet, causing him to imagine that everyone was against him: “For I am under the same accusation with my Saviour—for they said he is besides himself.”

Eventually it was music that brought him comfort, “For M is Music and therefore he is God,” and the poem embarks upon an imaginary list of all the sounds different instruments make. This music, wild though it may be, seems to soothe his spirit: “For at that time malignity ceases and the devils themselves are at peace.” And so, eventually, was Kit Smart.

Britten’s piece was commissioned by a remarkable man, Walter Hussey, at that time vicar of St. Matthew’s Northampton. Later, Hussey became the Dean of Chichester where he continued to commission new art for the Cathedral, including the *Chichester Psalms* by Bernstein. I dedicate this choreography to him.

Unfinished Business Duet

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. The duet is danced to a stark and troubled Andante, dark, brooding, questioning.

Hölderlin Fragments

Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente is one of the lesser known of Britten’s song-cycles. The words are indeed fragments from the visionary, mentally troubled poet Friedrich Hölderlin. They reflect an idealistic vision of a new Hellenism and clearly resonate with Britten’s own personal sense of innocence and beauty. The six songs are full of tempestuous energy, floating serenity, and, in the case of the third song (“Socrates and Alcibiades”), a breathtaking simplicity. I find them utterly beautiful.

The songs were a present from Britten to his good friend Ludwig of Hesse. As it happens, Ludwig’s wife was sister-in-law to Pytt Geddes, a quite remarkable woman who pioneered the teaching of T’ai Chi Chuan in Britain and who was one of my most important teachers. Pytt died in 2006, and I’ve always wanted to make a dance in her memory. This is it.

Illuminations

Synopsis

With much fanfare, the stridently confident young Rimbaud cries out, “*J’ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage*”(I alone have the key to this wild sideshow). Figures from his imagination capture the frantic speed of city bustle. We see Rimbaud clambering across the roofs of Paris to seek out his fellow writer, the older and completely infatuated Verlaine. They set off together, the young boy impatient to rush ahead toward adventure, Verlaine less impetuous, not so brave.

The pair imagine an ideally happy couple, an ideal of love to which Rimbaud cannot commit. He is too restless, dreaming of the sea and of light glittering sharply. Gradually, Rimbaud’s wild nature and disordered senses are inevitably beginning to take their toll. He staggers as he tries to recapture his earlier confidence, but his mind is now troubled and uncertain. The poet dreams of a “Being Beauteous” coming to claim Verlaine as her own, and he wakes to find himself alone. Left to the mercy of his own imaginary creatures, now aggressive and threatening, Rimbaud fights his way free and in a burst of anger breaks completely with Verlaine. He turns away to start a new journey. “*Depart dans l’affection et les bruits neufs*” (Leave in the midst of love and new sounds).

Background

Britten was introduced to the poetry of Rimbaud by W. H. Auden in the 1930s. He recognized the figure of a young artist arriving in a large and intimidating metropolis, and more importantly, he identified with Rimbaud and Verlaine, two artists obsessively in love. Britten himself had recently met the young singer Peter Pears, the beginning of a lifelong partnership, and it was not long after they had left together for America that *Les Illuminations* was composed. From the first notes of the opening fanfare, the music has the intensity and clarity of a supremely confident young man, and this intensity develops into the heady sensuality of early love. Both music and text go on to portray the drug-induced hallucinations that sent Rimbaud’s world spiraling downward until he finally broke himself free. “Depart,” the last section, is the calm after a storm, the departure for a new world (Africa in Rimbaud’s case, America for Britten), and the voice movingly expresses both the opportunity of a fresh start and the exhaustion of such an emotional upheaval.

All program notes written by Richard Alston, Artistic Director.

About the Company

Richard Alston (Artistic Director) choreographed his first work in 1968, as one of the 12 students of the newly formed London Contemporary Dance School. In 1972, he formed the UK’s first independent dance group, Strider. In 1975, Alston went to New York to study at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio. On his return two years later, he worked throughout the UK and Europe as an independent choreographer and teacher.

In 1980, Alston became resident choreographer with Ballet Rambert and later was appointed artistic director, a position he held from 1986 to 1992. In his time there, he created 25 dances for the company and was also commissioned to create work for the Royal Danish Ballet (*Kingdom of Pagodas*, 1982) and the Royal Ballet (*Midsummer*, 1983). In 1992, Alston was invited to create a full evening of his own work, including Boulez’s *Le marteau sans maître*, for the Ballet Atlantique in France. He made another full evening for London Contemporary Dance Theatre at the 1994 Aldeburgh Festival, forming his own company when he became artistic director of The Place in 1994.

Richard Alston Dance Company started in the autumn of that year, and over the past 20 years Alston has made almost 40 dances for the company. Commissions from other companies have included *Sheer Bravado* for Ballet Theatre Munich (2006), *Walk through a Storm* for Ballet Black (2008), and a version of *Carmen* for Scottish Ballet (2009). In 2011, he made *A Rugged Flourish* for New York Theatre Ballet and, in 2012, *Even Song* for the Holland Dance Festival. Alston recently made *All Aight* for Phoenix Dance Theatre, which premiered in February 2013 and has toured throughout the UK. *Light Flooding into Darkened Rooms* has been remounted on New York Theatre Ballet and premiered in New York in February 2013. Alston is currently restaging his *Carmen* on Miami City Ballet, which will receive its premiere in February 2015.

Martin Lawrance (Rehearsal Director) was born in Leicester and began dancing with Leicester Youth Dance Theatre under the direction of Sue Rosenbloom. He trained at Coventry Centre for the Performing Arts and then at London Contemporary Dance School. He first worked with Richard Alston while performing with the postgraduate performance group 4D. He danced with Richard Alston Dance Company (RADC) from 1995 to 2007, having over 25 works created on him. In 2000, Lawrance was invited by Meltdown Festival director and composer Scott Walker to make *Thimble Rigging* to an original score. He has created five works for London Contemporary Dance School and two works, *Grey Allegro* and *Silken Steel*, for the State School of Dance in Athens. In June 2003, he presented a full evening of his work at The Place, and in 2004 *Charge* was commissioned for The Place Prize. *Grey Allegro* and *Charge* were subsequently taken into the RADC repertoire. His creations for RADC include *About Face, Brink, Stealing Poison, Body & Soul, To Dance and Skylark, Lie of the Land, Other than I, Madcap, and Burning*; for Ballet Black, *Pendulum, Captured, and Limbo*; for Scottish Ballet, *Run for It* (for Dance GB), and *Dark Full Ride* (for Edinburgh International Festival 2013); and for Ballet Manila, *Misfit or Maverick*.

Dancers

Ihsaan de Banya was born in London and began his training with The Place’s Centre for Advanced

Training and with Shift. During his four years with both, he worked with choreographers including Bawren Tavaziva, Tom Dale, and Maresa von Stockert. In 2010 he continued training at London Contemporary Dance School. He graduated in 2013 with the Principal’s Award for Outstanding and Consistently High Achievement. He joined Richard Alston Dance Company as an apprentice in 2013, becoming a full company member in 2014.

Nicholas Bodych was born in Cheshire. He trained at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts and Rambert School, where he graduated in 2011. He has worked with National Dance Company Wales (including Dream for Dance GB), London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012 events, 2Faced Dance Company, The Musical Compass, and New Movement Collective. Bodych has performed works by Ohad Naharin, Stephen Petronio, Christopher Bruce, Itzik Galili, and Mark Baldwin. He joined Richard Alston Dance Company in 2013.

Elly Braund trained at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, graduating in 2011. She has performed works by Gary Lambert and in Kerry Nicholls’s *Ave Maris Stella*, a commission for Purbeck Arts Week 2011 in collaboration with Meridian Brass. In 2011, she performed at the Royal Festival Hall for the 60th-anniversary celebrations of the 1951 Festival of Britain. After her apprenticeship in 2011, Braund became a full member of Richard Alston Dance Company.

Jennifer Hayes started performing with Shift at The Place and worked with choreographers Avatara Ayuso, Rick Nodine, and Zoë Demitriou. She went on to train at Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) and created works with Andrea Buckley and Alexander Whitley. In 2013 Hayes graduated from NSCD and became an apprentice for Richard Alston Dance Company. She became a full company member in 2014.

James Muller was born in Colchester and began his training at the Linda Shipton School of Dance in Ipswich. He continued training at the Royal Ballet School and Central School of Ballet, graduating in 2006. He has worked with Northern Ballet, Peter Schaufuss Ballet in Denmark, Ballet Ireland, and Theater Ulm in Germany. He has performed in works by David Nixon, Christopher Gable, Peter Schaufuss, Ashley Page, and Roberto Scafati, among others. In 2011 Muller participated in the German Young Choreographers Platform, creating *Prisoners’ Cinema* for Theater Ulm. He joined Richard Alston Dance Company in 2013.

Nancy Nerantzi was born in Athens, where she trained at the National Ballet School of Greece. She continued her training at London Contemporary Dance School and joined National Dance Company Wales (2008), gaining a postgraduate diploma in Contemporary Dance. She has also worked with Ballet Junior de Genève (2009–10), Hellenic Dance Company (2010), and Aenaon Chorotheatro Daniel Lommel (2011) and has performed works by Alexander Ekman, Andonis Foniadakis, Patrick Delcroix, and Guilherme Botelho, among others. She joined Richard Alston Dance Company in 2011.