

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 14, 2025

**Ballet Kelowna’s Evocative Mixed Program Explores  
the Depths of Human Connection in  
– Ex Animo: From the Heart –**

***The company welcomes back three of its most esteemed choreographers, featuring two world premieres and a returning audience favourite***

**Kelowna, BC – Ballet Kelowna** celebrates the many facets of human connection with a special Valentine’s program, ***Ex Animo: From the Heart***, on **February 14 + 15, 2024**, at **7:30pm**, at the **Kelowna Community Theatre**. The winter production features distinctive works from three of the company’s lauded choreographers, including the world premiere of ***payεçot γεχət*** from Associate Artist **Cameron sinkwə Fraser-Monroe**, the world premiere of ***Vestiges*** from choreographic luminary **Alysa Pires**, and the highly anticipated return of ***In the Light of the Waking Sun*** from award-winning choreographer **Robert Stephen**.

“We are delighted to bring this uplifting program of comfort and belonging to Kelowna audiences this winter season, perfectly timed for the Valentine’s Day weekend,” says Simone Orlando, Ballet Kelowna’s Artistic Director and CEO. “It’s particularly exciting to present works from three of our long-time and highly sought-after choreographic partners. It’s our mission at Ballet Kelowna to act as a vital incubator for emerging choreographic talent in Canada, and we are honoured to have been the first professional ballet company to commission works from both Cameron sinkwə Fraser-Monroe and Robert Stephen, as well as the first company to commission a full-length work from Alysa Pires. It’s a joy to welcome back and celebrate all three creators in a program of meaningful dance.”

Ballet Kelowna Associate Artist Cameron sinkwə Fraser-Monroe’s work will return to the Kelowna stage with his fourth commission for the company: ***payεçot γεχət*** (meaning “I always remember” in Ayajuthem, the language belonging to the Homalco, Klahoose, K’omoks, and Tla’amin First Nations). Featuring a poignant score by Indigenous cellist and composer Cris Derksen, Fraser-Monroe’s piece explores his intimate relationship to hoop dance, as one of his earliest dance influences and representations of his artistic identity.

A member of the Tla’amin First Nation, Fraser-Monroe studied a wide range of dance styles, including Ukrainian, hoop, and grass dance, before graduating from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School. He served as Ballet Kelowna’s first Artist in Residence in 2022/23 and as Choreographer in Residence with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in 2023/24, where he created ***T’əl: The Wild Man of the Woods***. In 2024, he

premiered *šęgatəm* at Fall for Dance in New York, and accompanied Ballet Kelowna on their fall tour, during which they featured his two Ballet Kelowna-commissioned works, *taqəš* and *The Cowboy Act Suite*. The first stop of this tour was his home Tla'amin Nation of qathet (also known as Powell River), where he was bestowed the Tla'amin name, sinkwə, which means "big open ocean."

Award-winning choreographer Alysa Pires also returns with her third creation for Ballet Kelowna, following the incredible reception to *MAMBO* (in 2018) and her acclaimed full-length adaptation of *Macbeth* (in 2022). Pires' latest work, *Vestiges*, is a striking commentary on the search for true connection and meaning amid disorder. Set to the cinematic melodies of violinist Hilary Hahn and composer Hauschka, this work will highlight the virtuosity of Pires' bold and lively choreography.

A graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University, Pires held the position of Choreographic Associate at The National Ballet of Canada from 2019-2022, where she created *In Between*, *Frenzied Order* and her 2022 mainstage debut, *Skyward*. In 2023, Pires was the first Canadian woman to be commissioned by New York City Ballet, with *Standard Deviation*.

*In the Light of the Waking Sun* is the second of three Ballet Kelowna-commissioned works from Robert Stephen. Set to the elegant melodies of Schubert's *Symphony No. 5 in B-Flat Major, D. 485*, Stephen's classical choreography is an uplifting meditation on finding hope in challenging times and was inspired by the universal struggles experienced during the pandemic.

As a dancer, Stephen was a First Soloist with The National Ballet of Canada and member of Gauthier Dance // Dance Company Theaterhaus Stuttgart. As a choreographer, Stephen has been commissioned by Ballet Kelowna three times, most recently creating his first narrative ballet in 2024, which was adapted from Kat Sandler's Dora Mavor Moore Award-winning play, *Mustard*. He also created *New Leaves* for Toronto Metropolitan University's School of Dance program, in 2024. As a teacher, he is on the faculty at Canada's National Ballet School.

Tickets and information at [balletkelowna.ca](http://balletkelowna.ca)

*Ballet Kelowna's 2024/2025 season is presented by the Thomas Alan Budd Foundation.*

*The commissioning of payęçot yęxət and Vestiges has been made possible through the generosity of Leadership Giving Donor Dr. Adrian Bak.*

### **About Ballet Kelowna ([balletkelowna.ca](http://balletkelowna.ca))**

Founded in 2002, Ballet Kelowna is the sole professional dance company in B.C.'s Interior. The organization is committed to its role as a leader in the region through encouraging, promoting, and developing Canadian dancers and choreographers. The company performs annually for more than 12,000 audience members in Kelowna and on tour, and provides unique dance training opportunities and outreach programs. Its Artistic Director and CEO, Simone Orlando, is an award-winning choreographer and former dancer with Ballet BC and The National Ballet of Canada. Under Orlando's direction, Ballet Kelowna was named the 2024 Artistic Company of the Year by the BC Live

Performance Network (formerly the British Columbia Touring Council) and was an organizational recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's Arts and Music Award in 2022.

**LISTING INFORMATION**

**Ballet Kelowna presents *Ex Animo: From the Heart***

Dates: February 14 + 15, 2025

Time: 7:30pm

Tickets: Kelowna Community Theatre  
Phone: 250-469-8940  
Online: [theatre.kelowna.ca](http://theatre.kelowna.ca)  
In Person: 1375 Water Street, Kelowna, BC

Ticket Prices: From \$61.50 (Adult), \$53.33 (Senior), \$32.78 (Student/Child)

Performance Venue: Kelowna Community Theatre  
1375 Water Street, Kelowna, BC

Website: [balletkelowna.ca](http://balletkelowna.ca)

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**For further media information, contact**

Angela Poon | C. 604.569.5343

[apoon@mpmgarts.com](mailto:apoon@mpmgarts.com)

MURRAY PATERSON  
MARKETING GROUP