

KEVIN O'DAY (Choreographic mentor + co-creator)
ARTISTIC STATEMENT REGARDING LITTLE MATCH GIRL

For the past 30 years, I have had the ongoing fortune, privilege, and pleasure of being part of Canadian dance. It has been an incredible journey—one that continues to inspire me. I am honored to contribute once again through The Little Match Girl with Belle Spirale and the Vancouver Chamber Choir, a project that feels deeply relevant to our world today.

The Little Match Girl is a full-evening dance work inspired by the story of Hans Christian Andersen and set to the vocal and musical score by David Lang. At its core, it explores humanity, compassion, and the consequences of turning away from those in need.

In our Vancouver reimagining, the piece is grounded in the present, directly reflecting the realities of homelessness in Vancouver. The Little Match Girl is no longer just a figure of the past—she represents the countless individuals living unhoused in our cities today. She moves through an urban landscape of indifference, reaching out for warmth, recognition, and connection. Each match she lights is more than a fleeting comfort; it is a reflection of hope, memory, and the dignity that the world too often ignores.

Her journey unfolds in the cold, surrounded by people who pass by, too busy or unwilling to see her. Yet, even in isolation, she finds moments of beauty—visions of love, of family, of a life that once was or could have been. Her final match burns brightest as she is reunited with her mother, a moment of solace beyond suffering.

A New Epilogue: The Ones Who Turned Away

In this expanded version, we introduce an epilogue that shifts the focus onto those who ignored her. In the wake of her absence, they begin to feel the weight of their choices. Regret settles in. One person hesitates, recalling their own struggles. Another looks back, finally seeing the girl they once dismissed. A third realizes they, too, could be in her place. Through these figures, we confront the question: How often have we looked away?

This addition transforms The Little Match Girl into more than a tragic reflection—it becomes a call to action. Through movement, we ask audiences to recognize the humanity in those who are most often unseen. Because in the end, compassion is not just an emotion—it is a choice.

Kevin O'Day
Choreographer Biography

The American Kevin O'Day was born in Phoenix, Arizona. In 2002 he was appointed artistic director of the Nationaltheater Mannheim Ballett, renamed Kevin O'Day Ballett NTM. From 2013 to 2016 he held the position of Ballett Intendant and Deputy Operating Manager. Beginning season 2018/2019 he holds the position of Artist in Residence of the Tanzcompagnie Würzburg at Mainfranken Theater Würzburg.

As a choreographer, O'Day has produced more than seventy original ballets. He has been commissioned to create works for the New York City Ballet, Ballet British Columbia, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Les Grands Ballet Canadiens, Stuttgarter Ballett, Les Ballets de Monte Carlo, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet, Ballet Argentino, The

Royal Danish Ballet, ProArteDanza, BalletX, Ballett im Revier, Ballett Augsburg, Ballett Nordhausen and Visceral Dance Chicago, among others.

O'Day received his early dance training at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York. After one year he joined the Joffrey II, and the following year, he became a member of the main company of the Joffrey Ballet. In the winter of 1984, O'Day began his long association with choreographer Twyla Tharp. From 1988 to 1991, he was a soloist with American Ballet Theatre, where he performed in a wide variety of featured roles both in the classical and contemporary repertoire. In 1991 he joined William Forsythe's Frankfurt Ballet, and from 1992 until 1995 he was a member of Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project. During that time he appeared frequently as a guest with the New York City Ballet. In 1994 Mikhail Baryshnikov invited O'Day to choreograph a new work for the White Oak Dance Project, marking his choreographic debut. In 1998 O'Day formed his own company, O'Day Dances, in collaboration with composer John King.

O'Day has been the recipient of numerous awards and nominations for his choreography. In 2000 he was nominated for an MTV video music award for best choreography in a video for *So Pure* by Alanis Morissette. *Full Bloom*, a piece choreographed by O'Day, Robert Glumbek and Luches Huddleston Jr., was nominated for the Canadian Dora Mavor Moore Award in 2010. In the same year O'Day was the first to be awarded the Koerner Award by the Canadian Banff Centre.

