

A Visions and Voices Signature Event

WENDY  
WHELAN

BRIAN  
BROOKS

BROOKLYN  
RIDER

# SOME OF A THOUSAND WORDS

A JOYCE THEATER PRODUCTION

Tuesday, February 21, 2017, at 7:30 p.m.  
Bovard Auditorium, University of Southern California



Photos: Erin Baiano

## KNOW BEFORE THE SHOW

- Wendy Whelan, a longtime principal dancer at New York City Ballet, is one of the world's leading ballet dancers.
- Choreographer Brian Brooks has been called "the 'it' boy of contemporary American dance" (*Dallas Morning News*).
- This program fuses Whelan's classical ballet background with Brooks's contemporary aesthetic.
- Brooklyn Rider has been described as "four classical musicians performing with the energy of young rock stars" (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*).

## WENDY WHELAN

Widely considered one of the world's leading dancers, Wendy Whelan spent 30 years at New York City Ballet, dancing virtually all of the major Balanchine roles, working closely with Jerome Robbins, and originating roles in ballets by such notable choreographers as William Forsythe, Twyla Tharp, Alexei Ratmansky, Christopher Wheeldon, Jorma Elo, Shen Wei, and Wayne McGregor. In 2011, she received both the Jerome Robbins Award and a Bessie Award for her sustained achievement in performance. In 2012, as her career at New York City Ballet began to wind down, Whelan started developing new collaborative projects. *First Fall*, one of the pieces in tonight's program, was part of her inaugural project, *Restless Creature*.

## BRIAN BROOKS

Choreographer Brian Brooks has been awarded a Guggenheim fellowship, a New York City Center Choreography fellowship, and many other honors. He has danced with numerous choreographers, including three years with daredevil Elizabeth Streb. *Dance* magazine says that Brooks "loves to shatter conventional notions of the human capacity for strength and endurance." In 2016, he became the first choreographer in residence at Chicago's Harris Theater for Music and Dance, and he also choreographs for his own Brian Brooks Moving Company, among others.

## BROOKLYN RIDER

Brooklyn Rider is Johnny Gandelsman and Colin Jacobsen on violin, Nicholas Cords on viola, and Michael Nicolas on cello. The quartet has performed at venues around the world, including Carnegie Hall, Opernhaus Zurich, the San Francisco Jazz Festival, and South by Southwest. The group is known for crossing genres, from classical to world to rock music, and for collaborations with other artists such as Gabriel Kahane, Béla Fleck, and Kayhan Kalhor. For their multidisciplinary project *The Brooklyn Rider Almanac*, they recorded and toured 15 works, each inspired by a different artistic muse.

## SO WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BALLET AND CONTEMPORARY DANCE?

Classical ballet is a strict system of defined techniques, rules, and positions—think turned-out hips and feet, impeccable balance centered on a vertical axis, and the sense of floating on air that is conveyed by a dancer in pointe shoes. Ballet grew out of aristocratic court dances of the Renaissance era, and the rules that now define it began to be developed in the seventeenth century.

In the early to mid-twentieth century, Martha Graham asked dancers to take off their shoes, turn their feet parallel, and shift their weight closer to the ground—all key characteristics of the revolution now known as modern dance. Of course, modern dance didn't suddenly appear in a single moment. Before Martha Graham there was Isadora Duncan, whose free and expressive style of dance broke from the rigidity of ballet. And as with any art form, dance has evolved through the creativity and experiments of many people, and it hasn't been a simple linear trajectory from court dance to ballet to modern to contemporary. Multiple individual and cultural influences have shaped contemporary dance. Today, some choreographers still work in the classical ballet tradition, while others (such as William Forsythe) innovate in relation to that tradition, and still others perform earthy, low-to-the-ground, or wildly off-center styles of dance that are as far from classical ballet as you can imagine. And then there's everything in between.

Some define as “contemporary” any choreography where the centered vertical axis of classical ballet has shifted. Others use the term to refer to a particular aesthetic, or to broadly describe a sense of freedom and expressiveness as opposed to classical rigidity. Depending on whom you ask, the term “contemporary dance” can describe everything from contemporary ballet (dance that builds on the classical tradition while pushing it forward into the future) to hybrid styles that combine elements of ballet, modern, jazz, and as-yet-undefined innovations.

### FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ◉ When you watch Whelan and Brooks, can you pick out elements of classical ballet? Are there specific moments when you see contemporary dance and ballet coming together, colliding, or otherwise interacting?
- ◉ Choreography is often concerned with patterns and repeating shapes. What do you notice in terms of shapes and patterns in this program?
- ◉ How did the music affect your interpretation of the dances? Do you think it made a difference that the musicians performed live on stage?

### IF YOU LIKED SOME OF A THOUSAND WORDS, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT

- ◉ Upcoming Visions and Voices dance events, such as Noche Flamenco's *Antigona* featuring Soledad Barrio  
Learn more at [visionsandvoices.usc.edu](http://visionsandvoices.usc.edu)
- ◉ Events and classes at the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance  
Learn more at [kaufman.usc.edu](http://kaufman.usc.edu)
- ◉ Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at the Music Center  
Learn more at [www.musiccenter.org](http://www.musiccenter.org)
- ◉ Excerpts from Wendy Whelan's *Restless Creature*  
Watch at [www.wendywhelan.org/projects/restless-creature/](http://www.wendywhelan.org/projects/restless-creature/)
- ◉ The Brian Brooks Moving Company  
Learn more at [www.brianbrooksmovingcompany.com](http://www.brianbrooksmovingcompany.com)
- ◉ Videos of Brooklyn Rider on YouTube  
Watch at [www.youtube.com/user/BrooklynRiderVideo](http://www.youtube.com/user/BrooklynRiderVideo)



Photos: Nir Arieli

## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

Music librarian **ANDREW JUSTICE** has selected the following resources to help you learn more about tonight's performance. The books are available for check out from Doheny Memorial Library. The articles, audio recordings, and video recordings below are all electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu).

### Books

- Bales, Melanie. *Dance on its Own Terms: Histories and Methodologies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. GV1601.D38 2013 (Doheny)
- Cubberley, William. "Wendy Whelan" in *Round About the Ballet: Featuring Dancers from American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet*. Pompton Plains: Limelight Editions, 2004. GV1785.A1 C83 2004 (Doheny)
- Perron, Wendy. "Seeing Balanchine, Watching Whelan" in *Through the Eyes of a Dancer: Selected Writings*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013. GV1600.P47 2013 (Doheny)

### Articles

- Burke, Siobhan. "Chasing Wildness, and Sometimes Catching It." *New York Times (Online)*, New York: New York Times Company. Jun 24, 2016.
- Kramer, Elizabeth. "Wendy Whelan returns to Louisville to create new work." *Courier-Journal*, Louisville: Gannett Co., Inc. May 1, 2016.
- Molzahn, Laura. "A Big Prize for a Growing Artist: Chicago's Harris Theater Has Awarded its Inaugural \$600,000 Fellowship to Brian Brooks." *Dance Magazine*, July 2016, 14.
- Rogoff, Jay. "A Conversation with Wendy Whelan." *Ballet Review* 43:2 (2015), 98-105.

### Audio

- Brooklyn Rider. *Dominant Curve*. In A Circle Records, 2010. [Accessible via Classical Music Library.]
- Brooklyn Rider. *Passport*. In a Circle Records, 2008. [Accessible via Classical Music Library.]
- Brooklyn Rider. *Seven Steps*. In A Circle Records, 2012. [Accessible via Classical Music Library.]
- Brooklyn Rider. *A Walking Fire*. Decca 28948102792, 2015. [Accessible via Naxos Music Library.]

### Video

- Drew, Jacoby and Joshua Martens. "Wendy Whelan: Life at New York City After Balanchine." TenduTV, 2010. [Accessible via Dance in Video.]
- Tatge, Catherine, et al. "Balanchine Foundation Video Archives: Maria Tallchief coaching excerpts from George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*." George Balanchine Foundation, 2008 [Accessible via Dance in Video.]
- Tatge, Catherine, et al. "Balanchine Foundation Video Archives: Maria Tallchief coaching "Sanguinic" variation from *The Four Temperaments* and *Sylvia: Pas de Deux* (ballerina solo)." George Balanchine Foundation, 2008 [Accessible via Dance in Video.]

