



ROYAL
OPERA
HOUSE

10 October 2014
PRESS RELEASE

**GRACE AND PASSION COMBINE TO CELEBRATE THE
WORK OF THE ROYAL BALLET'S FOUNDING
CHOREOGRAPHER FREDERICK ASHTON**

Scènes de ballet / Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora
Duncan / Symphonic Variations / A Month in the Country

18 October - 12 November 2014



The Royal Ballet presents a mixed programme of four of **Frederick Ashton's** finest ballets, celebrating not only his vast and impressive body of work but also the distinctive English balletic style he shaped. Frederick Ashton was the founding choreographer of The Royal Ballet and is regarded as one of the world's greatest and most distinctive choreographers of the 20th century. Ashton's career spanned over 40 years (1938-1980) and during this period he created many Royal Ballet masterpieces including *Cinderella*, *La Fille mal gardée*, *Symphonic Variations* and *Scènes de ballet*.

The programme opens with *Scènes de ballet*, originally performed in 1948 and Ashton's own personal favourite of all his works. With a score by **Stravinsky**, Ashton described the piece as 'just an exercise in pure dancing'. An elegant and complex piece, it was choreographed with the aim that it could be viewed from any angle and still 'work'. Role debuts will be made by **Steven McRae**, **Yuhui Choe** and **Valentino Zucchetti**.

The programme also includes *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan* for which Ashton drew on his own recollections of the great American dancer for its creation in 1975 with Lynn Seymour as Isadora. This solo piece will have two casts over the run of performances: First Soloist **Helen Crawford** and First Artist **Romany Pajdak**.

Symphonic Variations is undoubtedly one of **Frederick Ashton's** greatest works. With music by **César Franck** and designs by **Sophie Fedorovitch**, this ballet is notoriously difficult to dance with its precise choreography and unyielding pace. *Symphonic Variations* premiered at the Royal Opera House in 1946 with an opening cast including **Margot Fonteyn**, **Pamela May**, **Moira Shearer**, **Michael Somes**, **Brian Shaw** and **Henry Danton**. For this revival role debuts include **Marianela Nuñez**, **Matthew Golding**, **Melissa Hamilton** and **Vadim Muntagirov**.

Rounding off the programme is *A Month in the Country*, which premiered in 1976 and is one of Ashton's last works. Based on the play by **Turgenev**, it is a minutely observed domestic drama of unrequited love, set to music by **Chopin**. Its final *pas de deux* is one of the most beautiful and passionate that Ashton ever created. Role debuts include **Natalia Osipova** as Natalya and Francesca Hayward as Vera.

--- ENDS ---

A Month in the Country: Generous philanthropic support from Lindsay and Sarah Tomlinson. Original production (1976) and revival (1983) supported by The Linbury Trust.

Notes to Editors

Scènes de ballet / Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan / Symphonic Variations / A Month in the Country

18 October at 7pm / 22, 28 October and 4, 5, 11, 12 November at 7:30pm

Image credits (left to right)

Zenaida Yanowsky and Rupert Pennefather in *A Month in the Country*. ROH/ Tristram Kenton.
Sarah Lamb in *Scènes de ballet*. ROH/Johan Persson.
Steven McRae in *Symphonic Variations*. ROH/Dee Conway.

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