

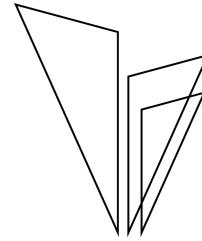
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American Repertory Ballet

AMERICAN REPERTORY BALLET PRESENTS
Ethan Stiefel's *SPIRIT OF THE HIGHLANDS*

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY – American Repertory Ballet (ARB) continues its dynamic 2024-2025 season with the breathtaking world premiere of [Ethan Stiefel's *SPIRIT OF THE HIGHLANDS*](#) on Friday, March 7 through Sunday, March 9, 2025 at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center. An adaptation of August Bournonville's romantic classic *La Sylphide*, *SPIRIT OF THE HIGHLANDS* re-imagines the tale of a Scotsman's pursuit of a mystical forest spirit.

Building off of the classic story, a young Scotsman named James Munro is betrothed to a woman named Effie, when he catches sight of a mystical fairy, known as The Sylph. Entranced by her magical beauty, he abandons Effie to follow The Sylph into the forest to proclaim his devotion. However, through his pursuits, he is tricked by evil witch Madge and eventually loses everything he holds dear. Stiefel, a standing member of the New York Caledonian Club and the Clan Munro Association, traces his mother's family roots back to the Scottish Highland Clan Munro, taking his heritage and infusing it into the choreography and design aesthetics of this lively and bewitching ballet.

"This project is truly a labor of love, both in terms of honoring my mom's ancestry, my long-standing admiration of Bournonville and the opportunity to veritably display affection and appreciation for Scottish heritage," says Stiefel. "Infinitely inspired by Bournonville's production, I aim to thoughtfully blend and balance what has made that staging so charming and timeless, while drawing upon identifiable Highland dance movements and sequences in many areas. Furthermore, and another matter of great personal passion, is that my vision lends the overall designs a cohesive and distinctively genuine attractiveness that celebrates Highland culture and specifically Clan Munro. Ultimately, my hope is that whether one is an avid dance fan, or holds a passion and interest for Scottish culture, audience members will

choose to don their Highland spirit and/or attire and come out and enjoy what I believe will be an unmatched retelling of this beloved tale!"

In preparation for the performances, ARB gained additional insight and inspiration from professional Highland dancer Kendra Monroe, who conducted a workshop with cast members at the start of the rehearsal process. "As a member of the Munro Clan and a lifelong Highland dancer, I am excited to bring the vibrancy and athleticism of this rich art form to ballet," says Monroe. "With its intricate footwork and deep ties to Scottish heritage, Highland dance perfectly complements Ethan's vision, blending tradition with precision to honor our shared ancestry and showcase the universal power of dance as a storyteller."

Partnering once again with scenic designer Howard C. Jones, costume designer Janessa Cornell Urwin, and lighting designer Joseph Walls, Stiefel has assembled an extraordinary creative team to help fully realize his artistic vision. "All the tartans are specific to the Clan Munro and came directly from the mills in Scotland. Our kilts are crafted by a team of talented experienced kilt makers," says Cornell Urwin "In contrast, the costumes for the witches and Sylphs differ from that of the human costumes, pulling inspiration from Celtic lore and incorporating details such as Scotland's national flower, the thistle."

SPIRIT OF THE HIGHLANDS is made possible by a generous Leading Sponsor gift from The Ted & Mary Jo Shen Charitable Gift Fund.

Additional production support comes from B. Sue Howard, E.J. Grassmann Trust, and The Hyde and Watson Foundation.

New Brunswick Performing Arts Center | New Brunswick, NJ

Friday, March 7, 2025 at 7:00 PM

Saturday, March 8, 2025 at 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM

Sunday, March 9, 2025 at 2:00 PM

Tickets for [*SPIRIT OF THE HIGHLANDS*](#) range from \$30 to \$60. ADA seating is available. Running time is approximately 1 hour and 25 minutes with one intermission.

For more information, contact Grant Jacoby, Director of Marketing, at gjacoby@arballet.org, or by calling 609-921-7758 x 34.

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ABOUT AMERICAN REPERTORY BALLET

With a distinctive reputation for innovation and individuality, American Repertory Ballet (ARB) is recognized as one of the state's premier performing arts organizations. Presenting classical repertory alongside new and existing contemporary work, ARB is a founding resident company of the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center while also performing in major venues across New Jersey and beyond for an annual audience of more than 30,000. Founded in 1954 as the Princeton Ballet Society, ARB has been designated a "Major Arts Institution" by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and has been awarded a Citation of Excellence by the Council. The company is a core partner of The Arts Institute of Middlesex County and has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts and other major foundations and leaders in the field as a prominent force in the field of dance. Princeton Ballet School, ARB's official school, attracts talent from around the world while providing opportunities for local students of all ages, such as through its award winning DANCE POWER program. Find American Repertory Ballet online at arballet.org.

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