

Scottish Ballet plans dazzling return to stage and screen with UK premiere of Gene Kelly's ballet



Claude Bessy and dancers of Paris Opera Ballet rehearsing *Pas de Dieux* with Gene Kelly. Photo by Jack Garofalo.

Starstruck

Gene Kelly's love letter to ballet

Autumn 2021

This autumn Scottish Ballet plans a return to stage and screen with Gene Kelly's ballet *Pas de Dieux*, given a new twist for its UK premiere.

One of the first choreographers to bring the 'American style' to Europe, the legendary Gene Kelly was invited to create an original work for the Paris Opera Ballet in 1960. Dancing the lead role of Aphrodite was the 'Étoile' of Paris, Claude Bessy, who had worked with Kelly in Hollywood and encouraged him across the Atlantic. His jazzy, joyful *Pas de Dieux* was

highly acclaimed at the time as ‘a breath of fresh air’ and is now being given a new set of wings for its UK premiere.

In collaboration with Kelly’s widow, **Patricia Ward Kelly**, Scottish Ballet’s CEO/Artistic Director **Christopher Hampson** and designer **Lez Brotherston** (*The Snow Queen*, *The Secret Theatre*) have lovingly revived the original ballet and added a delightful new twist.

Set within the glamour of Paris in 1960, *Starstruck* recreates a world where jazz meets ballet, gods masquerade as mortals, and the stars align. Set to Gershwin’s effortlessly cool Concerto in F, with extracts from Chopin; *Starstruck* is exactly the evening of entertainment audiences have been longing for.

It is hoped that *Starstruck* will mark Scottish Ballet’s long-awaited return to the stage, with an autumn tour of Scotland planned, subject to venues being able to reopen to significant capacity. The production is also being created as a **new feature-length film**, with tickets available to the public later this year.

The news of this new film comes hot on the heels of Scottish Ballet winning the prestigious ‘**Best Dance Film**’ at the **National Dance Awards** for its first feature film *The Secret Theatre* at Sunday’s awards. *The Secret Theatre* was released in December 2020 and watched by 55,000 people over three days.

Alongside the announcement of *Starstruck*, Scottish Ballet has launched a [‘Fit for the Gods’ Costume Appeal](#), asking the public to help bring the ballet to life. Donations will support the creation of nearly 100 stunning new costumes, reimagined by Tony and Olivier award-winning Designer Lez Brotherston. The glorious sixties Parisian designs will add lustre to Kelly’s energetic choreography, and the mischievous adventures of Aphrodite and Eros. After a year and a half without box office income, this public support is vital to help the company return to touring.

Christopher Hampson, CEO/Artistic Director of Scottish Ballet said:

‘Gene Kelly’s pioneering choreography and much-loved style influenced a generation of dance-makers, and we honour his creative legacy with this playful new production. We are very proud of the distinctive dance films we have made over the last few years, and look forward to adding this to our canon.’

Lez Brotherston, designer of Starstruck, said:

‘It’s a simple story that we aim to tell in a sophisticated way. I hope it will be a great event to get people back into the theatre and remind them of the fun of being there.’

Patricia Ward Kelly said:

‘It took over two decades for me to find the right home for Gene’s ballet, but I am certain now that it is in the right place and in the right hands... Gene would be very proud.’

ENDS

For further information, images and interviews please contact Susie Gray,
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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Production Page: <https://www.scottishballet.co.uk/event/starstruck>

Costume appeal: <https://www.scottishballet.co.uk/fit-for-the-gods-costume-appeal>

[A press pack of photographs and press release, is available for download here.](#)

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Starstruck, with original choreography by Gene Kelly and additional material created by Scottish Ballet CEO/Artistic Director Christopher Hampson, is a re-staging of *Pas de Dieux*, Gene Kelly's only ballet created for the stage, which was choreographed in 1960 for the Paris Opera Ballet and performed only twice since then.

- Original Choreography & Direction for *Pas de Dieux*: Gene Kelly
- Additional Choreography & Scenario: Christopher Hampson
- Design & Additional Scenario: Lez Brotherston
- Artistic Collaborator: Patricia Ward Kelly
- Lighting Designer: Laurie McLennan
- Music: George Gershwin & Frédéric Chopin

About Scottish Ballet

- Scottish Ballet, founded in 1969, is Scotland's national dance company. Based in Glasgow, the company performs regularly across Scotland, throughout the UK and internationally – promoting Scotland's pioneering spirit far and wide.
- Under CEO/Artistic Director Christopher Hampson, Scottish Ballet presents bold, adventurous performances rooted in strong classical technique, usually accompanied by the Scottish Ballet Orchestra. The company's broad repertoire includes new versions of the classics and ground-breaking commissions, on stage and screen.
- Scottish Ballet runs an extensive engagement programme, tailored to the needs of diverse communities, promoting confidence, fostering wellbeing and encouraging creativity through dance.
- Scottish Ballet's last live performance in Scotland was *The Snow Queen* at Eden Court, Inverness on 1 February 2020, with all subsequent tours cancelled or postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Scottish Ballet is funded by the Scottish Government.