

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 4, 2022

Digidance Launches 2022/23 Season with the Canadian Streaming Premiere of Swedish Choreographer Alexander Ekman's *Play*, Performed by the Renowned Paris Opera Ballet

Drawing inspiration from the childlike urge to jump into action, the work combines dance, theatre, and music to create a high-energy spectacle

Vancouver, BC — DanceHouse, in partnership with **Digidance**, kicks off its third season with the Canadian premiere of acclaimed Swedish choreographer **Alexander Ekman's *Play***, streaming **Nov. 7–27, 2022**. Originally created for the Paris Opera Ballet in 2017, *Play* transforms the historic Palais Garnier into a vast playground for 36 dancers who are encouraged to improvise with the sets and its elements. In one particularly iconic scene that is characteristic of Ekman's spectacular visual compositions, 40,000 green balls are unleashed upon the stage.

"For our third season, the Digidance partners wanted to reflect a sense of optimism and hope as the world gradually learns to move forward through the pandemic," says Jim Smith, Artistic and Executive Director of DanceHouse and Digidance Partner. "*Play* was a natural choice for us to launch our 2022/23 season, as it showcases such a beautifully festive and delightfully mischievous quality. This work was created before the world had even heard of COVID-19, and this unaffected sense of levity is just what audiences need right now. Alexander Ekman's choreography is full of surprises that allow for moments of metamorphosis. We cannot wait to bring this joyful work to homes across Canada."

Play was Ekman's first piece created for the Paris Opera Ballet. Three dozen dancers unleash their emotions and imaginations onto the stunning sets created for the company's principal venue at the storied Palais Garnier. Bodies frolic in rainfalls of green plastic balls, leap with antlered forms, and come together in playful games amongst metallic structures and elevations. The choreography is backed by a musical score from long-time collaborator Mikael Karlsson, a Swedish composer who has also worked with well-known singers such as Alicia Keys and Lykke Li. The immersive work is carried by enticing rhythms and communicative energy, plunging the audience into the boundless world of Ekman's mind, where humour and profundity are discovered alike.

Le Monde praised the work, writing that "with its impressive scenography, the piece *Play* marries theatrical play and entertainment." The original production ran for 25 sold-out performances and was subsequently recorded for the screen due to its immense popularity. In 2019, the work won the Golden Prague award for best recording of a live performance.

Ekman ventured into choreography following a successful career with the Royal Swedish Ballet, Cullberg Ballet, and NDT 2. He often composes music and designs the décor for his own pieces, and has become known for his fast-paced timing, witty humour, and clever transitions. He aims to create work that can speak to many, focusing on pieces that both entertain and challenge the observer. His hope is to transform the audience through the work and to surprise with each new creation.

Ekman created several works for NDT 2, including *Flockwork* (2006); *Cacti* (2010), which was nominated for the VSCD Zwaan Award in 2010, National Dance Award in 2012, and an Olivier Award in 2013; *Left Right Left Right* (2012); *Maybe Two* (2013); *FIT* (2018); and *Four Relations* (2020). For NDT 1, he created *Definitely Two* (2013). He works worldwide with companies such as the Cullberg Ballet, Compañía Nacional de Danza, Göteborg Ballet, Ballet de l'Opéra du Rhin, and the Royal Swedish Ballet. In 2005, at the International Choreography Competition of Hannover, Ekman was awarded first prize

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by the critics, and won second prize with *Swingle Sisters*. In 2014, he created his own version of *Swan Lake*, which received enormous attention worldwide as he used 6,000 litres of water to create a real lake on stage. In 2015, he received the Swedish Medea Award for Inventor and Renewer, and the German theatre award Der Faust the next year.

The full-length film recording of *Play* (runtime 105 minutes) was directed by Tommy Pascal and produced by the Paris Opera Ballet, Bel Air Media, and SVT. The work was recorded during the original run in December 2017. The Digidance streamed presentation of *Play* will include a 10-minute pre-show documentary featuring some of the creative team and Star Dancer Stéphane Bullion, and Principal Dancers Muriel Zuspereguy and Vincent Chaillet.

For tickets and information on *Play* and Digidance, visit: dancehouse.ca

About Digidance

Digidance is a joint initiative of Canadian dance presenters to deliver exceptional, full length Canadian and international dance content online to patrons across the country. Created in July 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Digidance consists of the following leading dance presenters: [DanceHouse](https://dancehouse.ca) (Vancouver), [Harbourfront Centre](https://harbourfrontcentre.ca) (Toronto), the [National Arts Centre](https://nationalartscentre.ca) (Ottawa), and [Danse Danse](https://danse-danse.ca) (Montreal).

By joining expertise, experience, and international networks, the partner organizations are better equipped to pivot to presenting work online — a first for all four organizations. Beyond the short term response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on presenting live work in theatres, Digidance will ensure a rich legacy of dance in Canada for future years through continued presentations and access to Canadian and international dance works without the barriers of transportation, physical mobility, and affordability.

LISTING INFORMATION

Play

Choreography by Alexander Ekman

Performed by Paris Opera Ballet

Dates:

Nov. 7–27, 2022

Video on Demand Streaming in Canada only

Available from midnight PDT on November 7.

Price:

From \$15 + applicable taxes

Event Link:

dancehouse.ca

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For further media information, contact:

Angela Vannatter C. 604.992.2489

avannatter@mpmgarts.com

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