

# **Scottish Ballet to present 'The Scandal at Mayerling' at Festival Theatre in May**

**'The Scandal at Mayerling', Sir Kenneth MacMillan's iconic ballet about a dysfunctional royal family was boldly created in 1978 and is now reimagined and redesigned by Scottish Ballet, in a sumptuous production that is at once both intimate and epic.**

**Set in 1889 in the opulent, royal courts of Vienna, 'The Scandal at Mayerling' tells the true story of the Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria, an anti-hero as compelling as Hamlet. He enjoyed the privileges of a royal lifestyle – elaborate parties and his every whim catered for. But with it came mistresses, alcohol and drugs in excess – as his mental health rapidly declined and his place at Court became ever more tenuous, he developed a morbid fascination with death.**



Principals Christopher Harrison as Crown Prince Rudolf and Sophie Martin as Mary Vetsera. Credit Mihaela Bodlovic

The 'scandal' erupted when he and his teenage mistress Mary Vetsera were discovered dead in an apparent murder-suicide at the Mayerling imperial hunting lodge in the woods outside the city.\*

The original production, *Mayerling*, premiered at the Royal Ballet in 1978 (a Royal Gala performance on Valentine's Day, no less) and was hailed for both its epic grandiosity and breathtaking choreography. Scottish Ballet's version refocuses the spotlight on the lethal power dynamics between Rudolf and the women in his life – his wife, his mother and his mistresses – in a series of increasingly intense duets.

With the full company on stage, lavish new set and costume designs, and the Franz Liszt score performed live by the Scottish Ballet Orchestra, 'The Scandal at Mayerling' is set to startle audiences across Scotland.



L to R Principal Constance Devernay as Princess Stephanie, Artist Rishan Benjamin as Mitzi Caspar and Principal Sophie Martin as Mary Vetsera. Credit Mihaela Bodlovic

Christopher Hampson, Artistic Director/CEO of Scottish Ballet said: “During our 50th anniversary year Scottish Ballet made a commitment to bring five new full-length works into the repertoire over five years. ‘The Scandal at Mayerling’ is an important addition, as Lady MacMillan entrusts us to deliver a new version of one of Sir Kenneth’s most ground-breaking works. The role of Prince Rudolf is a marathon of endurance, physically and emotionally, for any principal dancer, and I am thrilled that our own Christopher Harrison will be giving the world premiere in Glasgow.

“I am also delighted that joining us for the tour as Principal Guest Artist is Royal Ballet Principal Dancer, Ryoichi Hirano performing the leading role in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. ‘The Scandal at Mayerling’ is a story rich with political intrigue, conflicting emotions, passion and obsession played out against an archaic and crumbling empire. Sir Kenneth’s choreography is some of the most visceral and emotionally charged ever produced – it demands our attention

right up to the ill-fated conclusion.”



Principals Christopher Harrison as Crown Prince Rudolf and Sophie Martin as Mary Vetsera. Credit Mihaela Bodlovic

Lady Deborah MacMillan, widow of Sir Kenneth MacMillan, said: “Kenneth didn’t set out to shock people but was acutely aware that in the ballet world of fairies and tutus, more realistic insights into human behaviour might prove difficult. It didn’t stop him, however, and the fact that 30 years after his death his work is still selling tickets is, I think, a testament to his work and the audience response.

“There is a strong Scottish connection – Kenneth was born in Dunfermline – and Scottish Ballet attests to the highest aims of ballet companies worldwide, performing the best of the classics as well as looking to the future in choreography, design and new technologies.”

‘The Scandal at Mayerling’ is on at Edinburgh’s Festival Theatre 25-28 May 2022