

National Ballet freshens repertoire in 2008-09 season

Last Updated: Monday, February 11, 2008 | 3:06 PM ET

[CBC News](#)

The National Ballet of Canada plans a 2008-09 season filled with a fresh new repertoire, including three world premieres and the North American premiere of a full-length story ballet, *The Seagull*.

The Toronto-based company's season includes the North American premiere of *Carmen* with new choreography by Italian Davide Bombana and world premieres of shorter works by Canadian choreographers commissioned by the company, artistic director Karen Kain announced at a news conference Monday.

The company is also bringing American choreographer Twyla Tharp's *In the Upper Room*, set to music by Philip Glass.

"The National Ballet is an international company and it needs new influences," said artistic director Karen Kain. "It's invigorating for the company to have the creativity of working with new choreographers and new points of view."

Kain said she believes Canadian audiences will tap into the excitement of the new repertoire, which draws from so many international sources.

On the more traditional side, the ballet will reprise productions of *Giselle*, *Romeo and Juliet* and James Kudelka's version of *The Nutcracker*.

The Seagull is an adaptation of the play by Anton Chekhov about intergenerational conflict and spurned love.

The choreography by John Neumeier won the 2007 Stanislavsky Award in Moscow. The ballet premiered in 2002 at the Hamburg Ballet, where Neumeier is artistic director.

Music for the work, which the program describes as "theatrical," is by Shostakovich, Evelyn Glennie, Tchaikovsky and Alexander Scriabin.

"In the world of classical ballet there are only a handful of story ballets, so getting a new one is cause for excitement," Kain told CBC News.

Bombana's *Carmen*, which made its world premiere in France in 2006, is a reconceptualization of the ballet based on Bizet's opera. It is to be performed in a program with *Skin Divers*, another company premiere choreographed by former National Ballet soloist Dominique Dumais.



Xiao Nan Yu with artists of the National Ballet in *Romeo and Juliet*, one of the classical- story ballets that will be reprised in the coming season.
(Cylla von Tiedemann/ National Ballet of Canada)



Dumais, current artistic director of Ballet Mannheim in Germany, has based her ballet on the poetry of Canadian writer Anne Michaels.

In the Upper Room, with intense choreography by the internationally acclaimed Tharp, debuted in 1986 and was revived in New York in 2005.

Three Canadian choreographers — Peter Quanz, Crystal Pite and Sabrina Matthews — have contributed to *Innovations*, a program of new work commissioned by the National Ballet, that will debut in March.

This season also marks a return of *The Nutcracker* to Canadian cinemas, an experiment that the National Ballet attempted for the first time in 2007.

About 10,500 people went to theatres throughout Canada to see the Christmas classic simulcast from the Toronto performance. In one small Quebec town, the theatre was sold out.

National Ballet artistic director Karen Kain said she thinks audiences will tap into the excitement of the new repertoire, including the North American premiere of *Carmen*.
(Canada Council for the Arts)