

August, 2001  
(408) 288-2820 ext. 210

Media Contact: Lee Kopp, Publicity  
[lkopp@balletsanjose.org](mailto:lkopp@balletsanjose.org)

## FACT SHEET

### LEGS OF FIRE or THE RED SHOES AMERICAN PREMIERE

#### **October 18-21, 2001**

*Choreography* -Flemming Flindt

*Composer* - Erik Norby

*Music* - Legs of Fire

*Sets & Costumes* - Joe Vanek

First Performed February 7, 1998, Royal Theatre, Copenhagen  
Royal Danish Ballet

**Short Byte:** Flemming Flindt's *Legs of Fire Or The Red Shoes* tells the tale of a young girl obsessed with dancing. It is the story of the victim-hood of celebrity; the compulsive need for glamour and public adoration which is often at odds with the loneliness of existence away from the glare of the spotlight. The ballet could have been based on any number of famous artists whose careers have burned brightly and then burned out; but Flindt focuses on the short and dramatic life of Danish ballerina Elna Lassen, one the most talented dancers of 1920s Europe until she took her own life at the age of twenty-nine.

#### Performance Dates & Times

Thursday, October 18, at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, October 19, at 8 p.m.

Saturday, October 20, at 8 p.m.

Sunday, October 21, at 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

#### Location

San Jose Center for the Performing Arts  
255 Almaden Boulevard in downtown San Jose  
(Ample inexpensive parking nearby)

#### Tickets

Single Tickets/\$20 to \$68

Ballet Box Office: (408) 288-2800

Tickets are also available through our website: [www.balletsanjose.org](http://www.balletsanjose.org)

Or call Ticketmaster: (408) 998-TIXS or (415) 421-TIXS

*Additional press materials are available.*

*Press Contact: Lee Kopp (408) 288-2820 ext. 210*

## LEGS OF FIRE OR THE RED SHOES American Premiere of New Flemming Flindt Ballet

(San Jose, CA) Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley presents the American premiere of Flemming Flindt's, *Legs of Fire Or The Red Shoes*, October 18-21, 2001 at San Jose Center for the Performing Arts. The full-evening work blends elements of the Hans Christian Anderson tale "The Red Shoes" and the 1948 Michael Powell and Emeric Pressurjer film of the same name with a portrayal of the short and dramatic life of Danish ballerina Elna Lassen. Lassen was one of the most talented dancers of the 1920s in Europe and a beloved principal of the Royal Danish Ballet until she took her own life at the age of twenty-nine. Tickets for the production are \$20 to \$68.

*Legs of Fire Or The Red Shoes* looks at the dark side of life through the lens of a modern psychological drama. Secrets of passion and sexual desire mix with a compulsive need for glamour and public adoration. As in the motif from many folk tales (including the Anderson piece) the protagonist in Flindt's ballet dances because she cannot stop. She dances out of need and compulsion; her dance representing both pleasure and loss of control. Says Flindt, "It is very dangerous to put on the Red Shoes. But I did it; we (dancers) all do it."

The central character of the story is Ella, a beautiful young girl who is introduced to the world of ballet by her manic mother who at one time dreamed of being a dancer herself. Ella excels in class where all her teachers vie for her talent. After graduating, Ella goes off to look for work and meets the charming, flirtatiously seductive Dr. Mann who introduces her to the world of fashion and glamour and presents her with her first pair of red shoes. Ella's career, stage-managed by Dr. Mann, soars and she becomes the darling of the press and public. Her relationship with Dr. Mann, however, is less certain. He is a faithless lover and Ella is no match for her rival, the cold and elegant Lady W. When Ella has an unsettling performance at a local music hall, her spirits tumble. She finds herself on the verge of collapse, physically and mentally. Dr. Mann persuades her to make a comeback tour but he places her in a venue that ill-suits her classical talents. After a second disastrous performance experience, Ella retreats to Dr. Mann's apartment. She dresses in his clothes, lies down on the bed and shoots herself with a small revolver. The final scene of the ballet takes place at her funeral. Ella's mourners include the press, her fans, grieving ballet artists, and a young girl who plays at gathering red rose petals to decorate her little white ballet shoes.

Set and costume designer Joe Vanek has created a fascinating setting reminiscent of the 1920s and '30s that moves the plot in a film-like panorama through scenes of schoolyards, gas stations, railway stations, dance studios, theaters, cheap bars, society fashion shows, and an elegant opera house. The fabulous décor and fantastic skylines are beautiful and lush but still give a sense

of Ella's loneliness and growing despair. Danish composer Erik Norby has mixed the discordant sounds of the nineties with the rhythms of the 1920s for the commissioned score. An expanded pivotal scene and ten minutes of new music have been added for this production.

Legs of Fire Or The Red Shoes is presented October 18 through 21 at Center for the Performing Arts, 255 Almaden Boulevard in downtown San Jose. Tickets are \$20 to \$68 with discounts available for seniors, students, and groups. Subscriptions for the full ballet season including "Legs of Fire" are also available. For tickets and additional information call the Ballet Box Office at (408) 288-2800 or check the Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley website at: [www.balletsanjose.org](http://www.balletsanjose.org). Tickets are also available through Ticketmaster at (408) 998-TIX or (415) 421-TIXS.

Press Contact: Lee Kopp (408) 288-2820 ext. 210, or by email at [lkopp@balletsanjose.org](mailto:lkopp@balletsanjose.org)