

VANCOUVER **courier**

Ballet BC's season finale has RITE stuff

Stravinsky and Nijinsky's revolutionary The Rite of Spring inspires two world premieres

[Cheryl Rossi](#) / Vancouver Courier

May 5, 2015 11:34 AM



Ballet BC closes out its season with RITE, May 7 to 9 at Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

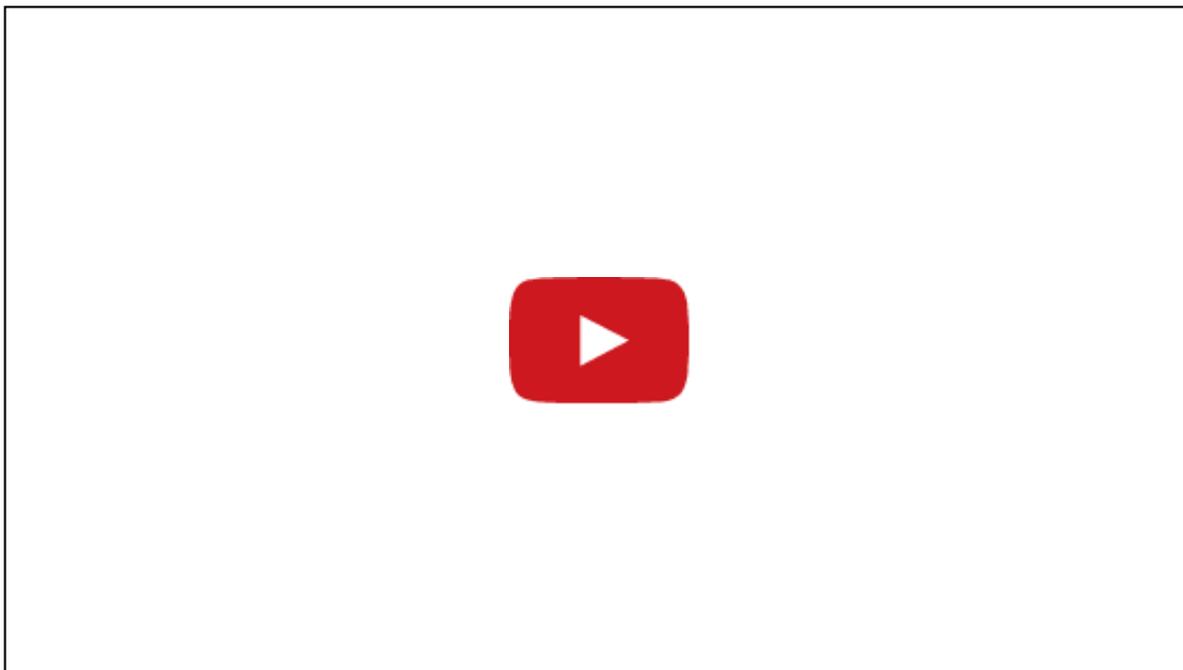
Parisians came to blows when The Rite of Spring premiered in 1913.

Igor Stravinsky's dissonant orchestral score alienated some, Vaslav Nijinsky's choreography saw dancer's legs turned in and, with great theatrically, the work explored sacrifice, the primitive and sexuality.

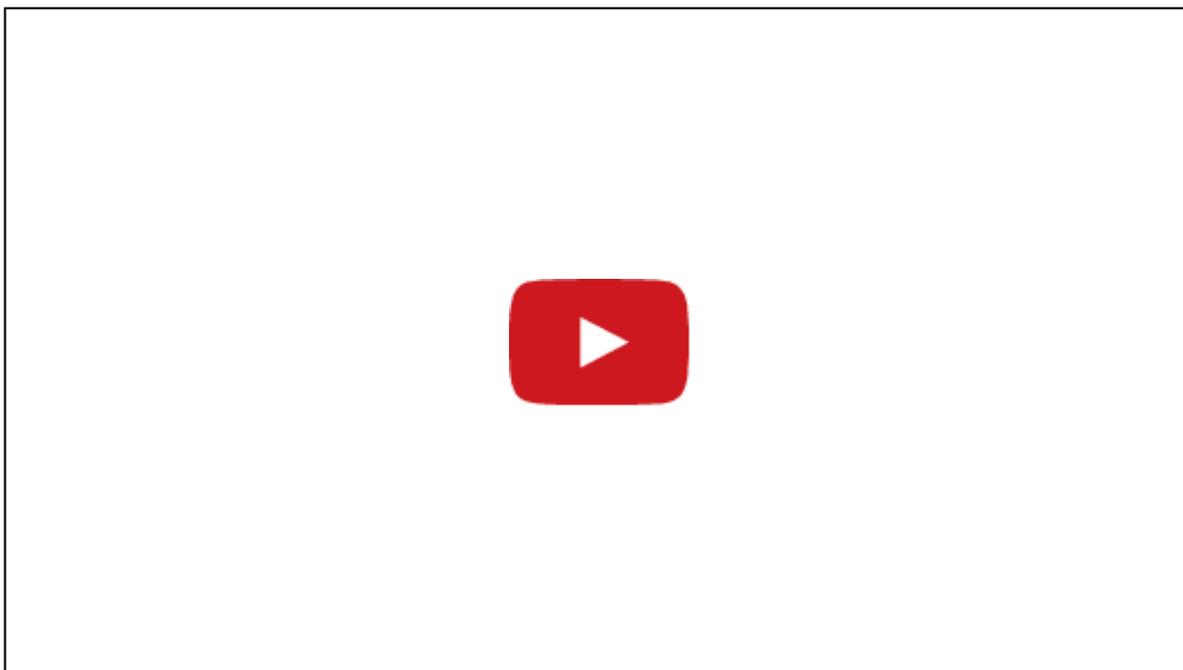
So it's no small undertaking to tackle the revolutionary, influential work, but Ballet BC is doing just that with its season finale — two world premieres inspired by The Rite of Spring with RITE, May 7 to 9 at Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

The original Rite of Spring ends when the woman who's sacrificed dances herself to death. Emily Molnar, choreographer and artistic director of Ballet BC, has envisioned what comes next.

"It's kind of this vacuum of time between coming from one place and going to the other," she said.



RITE will come to life with an otherworldly set designed by Omer Arbel, an internationally renowned Vancouver-based designer who received the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's Allied Arts Medal for 2015, and a composition by Jeremy Schmidt, a member of local psych rock outfit Black Mountain and the man behind the cosmic synthesizer music of Sinoia Caves.



Molnar has created an abstract visual poem in four movements, discarding references to male or female.

"There's an androgyny in this piece because I just wanted to deal with the sensations one would feel at the moment," she said.

Like Arbel, Molnar starts her creative process with an idea. She researched the making of *The Rite of Spring* and the time when it was created in Europe and learned about an art movement called Suprematism. Suprematists wanted to get to pure expression, so Molnar says it was the first time art lovers saw a black box on a white canvas. She's drawn inspiration from this movement, creating a monochromatic world.

"It's about getting the body right to true expression," she said. "I reference, a lot, what we know of the original choreography."

She's created a new vocabulary of movement with which the dancers improvise, in moments, and she's drawn from the original score by incorporating percussive actions.

The dancer's movements are backed by Schmidt's drone music, which is about the subconscious, about getting to other levels of understanding, and they'll be obscured by costumes and makeup that make them look inhuman as an homage to the original production.

Molnar says her RITE is about Europe around 1913 and our world right now, about who's judging who's normal in the urban jungle and who's watching.

Spanish choreographer Gustavo Ramirez Sansano created the other piece in the program using Stravinsky's music.

"For any choreography to tackle creating a dance work to that work is a huge undertaking," Molnar said, adding there have been wonderful versions by Germany's Pina Bausch, France's Maurice Béjart and Canada's Marie Chouinard.

"It's such a historic work. Any choreographer, when they take it on, it's usually someone in their mid to senior career because it's a very important piece of music."

Sansano was artistic director of the late Luna Negra Dance Theater in Chicago, created work for Spain's Compañía Nacional de Danza, Hamburg Ballet, Budapest Dance Theatre and the Netherlands Dance Theatre. He also created *Lost and Seek*, which premiered with Ballet BC in 2014.

"His point of view is really looking at it from the primal, sexual awakening or the universal awakening of an individual, so when you're becoming aware of your body and the relationship with other people, and just that primal force, understanding your place in the world and your sensuality," Molnar said.

Intimate moments with beautiful duets contrast with the grandeur of percussive music that leaves you in a transformed state, Molnar said. With longtime collaborator, Spanish designer Luis Crespo, Sansano has created a sensual world, a forest fashioned from seatbelts.

"Most of our shows have varied pieces that are not similar to each other," Molnar said. "This show has got, because of the lovely collaboration working with the designers, there's an additional element that is quite unique and quite exciting, so I'm hoping that people will be able to see it."

For more information, see [balletbc.com \(http://balletbc.com\)](http://balletbc.com).

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