HANOVER, NH—Aspen Santa Fe Ballet (ASFB), a 20-year-old company that has pioneered an exciting blend of classical virtuosity and cutting-edge choreography, performs at the Hop Friday and Saturday, September 25 and 26 at 8 pm in The Moore Theater. ASFB previously performed at the Hop in summer 2009.

Described by The New York Times as “a breath of fresh air,” ASFB stands out as a model of what a small ballet company should be, with its musicality, athleticism and technique-conscious delivery. Led by Tom Mossbrucker, celebrated former star of the Joffrey Ballet, the chamber-sized ensemble has commissioned almost 30 works from more than a dozen international choreographers including Twyla Tharp, David Parsons, MOMIX’s Moses Pendleton, Trey McIntyre and—represented in the Hop program—Nicolo Fonte, Jorma Elo, and Alejandro Cerrudo (who came to the Hop in 2014 as resident choreographer with Hubbard Street Dance). ASFB’s performances offer intense partnering, deep emotion and precision as well as fluency as they move between classical ballet language and modern and vernacular styles.

Based in both Aspen and Santa Fe, ASFB has helped lead the charge to dissolve the boundaries that once existed between ballet and modern dance to create a new vision of contemporary dance, technically rigorous yet freed from the strictures of classical ballet. In recognition of their pioneering and innovative model for American dance, Mossbrucker and co-founder Jean-Philippe Malaty were honored by the Joyce Theater Foundation with the Joyce Theater Award in 2010.

The international dance community has long been aware of what ASFB brings to the art form. Wrote World Dance Review, “Aspen Santa Fe Ballet has become a must-see company.” Clive Barnes wrote in Dance Magazine, “This is a model of what a small classic company should be.” Enthused The New York Times, “They raise the bar, and then they jump over it.”
At the Hop, ASFB presents sophisticated gems including Fonte’s *The Heart* and Elo’s 1st *Flash*. *The Heart*, which ASFB premiered last year, is, as its title suggests, about relationships and caretaking, tender gestures combined with fire and zest. Set to an energetic score by Italian composer Ezio Bosso, passages reference people caring for each other, sharing eye contact and assistance, while the second movement is a clearly romantic *pas de deux* including a woman *en pointe*, bringing to mind classical ballet. Wrote the *Ottawa Citizen*, "The effect was like stepping out of a dark room into the high desert sun. Exuberant, fast-paced and sexy, the piece’s hot-bloodedness lived up to its title ...The company danced with explosive power, delivering a pulse-quickening close to the season."

Set to music of Elo’s countryman Jean Sibelius’ *Violin Concerto in D minor* (his most popular work), 1st *Flash* is a six-dancer sensory experience juxtaposes ultra modern movement with Sibelius’ restrained yet Romantic music. A highly physical work that inventively incorporates seemingly unballistic moves—such as, in a duet with lush arabesques and lifts, when the woman suddenly squats into a roly-poly and hops like a ball—1st *Flash* offers a muscular counterfoil to the mournfulness in some movements of the concerto. In other places, movement echoes music, such as when a string riff accompanies a detailed, short-lived spasm. All this takes place amidst eerie lighting, partially from a large rectangle hanging upstage right. Premiered in 2003 by Netherlands Dance Theatre, 1st *Flash* signaled to the dance world the young Finnish choreographer’s unmistakable style.

**About the Artists**

The Brooklyn-born **Nicolo Fonte** danced with Peridance in New York City and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal before spending seven years with Nacho Duato’s Compañía Nacional de Danza in Madrid, where he forged a strong identity with both his dancing and his choreography. Since retiring from performance in 2000 to choreograph fulltime, he has created or staged his ballets for companies throughout the US, Europe and Australia, winning a Choo San Goh award for his 2002 collaboration with Pacific Northwest Ballet, *Almost Tango*, of which R.M. Campbell of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* wrote, “Fonte is a thinker, an architect who creates the new rather than reinvent the old. He is a master of manipulating space and creating relationships.” *Almost Tango* was also voted as one of *Dance Europe*’s “Best Premieres” when it was re-staged for The Australian Ballet in 2004. During a long-term creative partnership with Sweden’s Göteborg Ballet, he created his first full-length ballet, *Re: Tchaikovsky*, based on the life of Tchaikovsky, which made the "Best of 2005" lists of both *Ballett-Tanz* and *Dance Europe*. Fonte has also played an important role in the ongoing development of Aspen Santa Fe Ballet as one of that company's most popular guest choreographers, creating to date eight highly successful works for the company that have toured throughout the US and overseas. Fonte is currently the Resident Choreographer for Ballet West, in Salt Lake City, which began with the 2012-2013 season.

A former hockey goalie, **Jorma Elo** is one of the hottest choreographers working today. Since 2005, he has served as the Resident Choreographer for Boston Ballet and was recently awarded the prestigious Prix Benoir de la Danse for 2010. His work is "a high intensity fusion of classical and contemporary movement that is physically demanding to the extreme...[and] requires virtuoso dancers who possess a sense of abandon coupled with precise coordination," writes *Playbill Arts*.

Born in Finland, Elo danced with Finnish National Ballet from 1978 through 1984 and with Cullberg Ballet from 1984 through 1990 before joining Netherlands Dance Theatre in 1990. Throughout his career as a dancer he worked closely with numerous master choreographers—notably Jiří Kylián, Hans van Manen, Mats Ek, Ohad Naharin, William Forsythe and Paul Lightfoot—whose influence led Elo to a choreographic career of his own. He has choreographed for companies throughout Europe and North America, and has been Resident Choreographer of Boston Ballet since 2005—the same year he won the Helsinki International Ballet.
Competition choreographic prize and was named a “talent to follow” by dance critic Anna Kisselgoff in her year-end review for The New York Times. He is also a skilled designer of costumes, lighting and video effects for his ballets.

Born in Madrid, Spain and trained at the Real Conservatorio Profesional de Danza de Madrid, **Alejandro Cerrudo** began his professional career in 1998 worked with Victor Ullate Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater 2. Cerrudo joined Hubbard Street Dance Chicago in 2005, was named Choreographic Fellow in 2008, and became the company’s first Resident Choreographer in 2009, choreographing 13 works to date for the company as well as commissioned works for other companies. His work is in the repertory of companies around the U.S. as well as in Australia, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. Honors include an award from the Boomerang Fund for Artists (2011); a Prince Prize for Commissioning Original Work from the Prince Charitable Trusts (2012); in 2012, and the Joyce Theater Foundation’s second Rudolf Nureyev Prize for New Dance; and being named the 2014 USA Donnelley Fellow by United States Artists.

**Aspen Santa Fe Ballet** began in 1996, when founder Bebe Schweppe invited Joffrey dancers Tom Mossbrucker and Jean-Philippe Malaty to create a ballet company in Aspen. A unique multidimensional arts organization developed rapidly from the ballet school Schweppe had established in the Rocky Mountains. Mossbrucker and Malaty now serve as ASFB’s artistic director and executive director, respectively. The company began modestly, with six dancers and start-up repertoire from friends noted in the dance world. The company soon launched a tradition of commissioning new works, forging an open, exploratory style that tapped the creative scene in Europe, where classical ballet was breaking from its boundaries. In 2000 the Aspen, CO-based ballet company forged a dual-city relationship with Santa Fe, NM. Under this hybrid business model, a roster of arts activities takes wing, year-round, in both cities. Performance, education, presentation and community outreach all join in the mix. Within this innovative structure, ASFB celebrates its 20th anniversary season in 2015-16.

ASFB now sits at the vanguard of its field, brandishing a strong national reputation. Repeat engagements at the American Dance Festival, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Joyce Theater, The Kennedy Center, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and Wolf Trap testify to the company’s popularity and ability to please audiences. Overseas invitations arrived and ASFB embarked on international tours to Brazil, Canada, France, Greece, Guatemala, Israel, Italy and Russia. Premier funders – National Endowment of the Arts, Joyce Foundation, Wolf Trap Foundation, Dance St. Louis, Jerome Robbins Foundation and Princess Grace Foundation – have supported ASFB’s growth.

In recognition of their pioneering and innovative model for American dance, Mossbrucker and Malaty were honored by the Joyce Theater Foundation with the Joyce Theater Award in 2010. The 2014-15 season sees the company’s return engagements in Denver, Pittsburgh, Tucson and debuts in Akron, East Lansing, Penn State, and San Antonio, as well as the Canadian capital, Ottowa. The company anticipates its seventh presentation at New York’s Joyce Theater.

**CALANDER LISTING:**

**Aspen Santa Fe Ballet**
The grace and elegance of classical ballet coupled with a repertoire full of sharp new works makes Aspen Santa Fe Ballet one of America’s leading contemporary ballet companies, breaking new ground through its blend of a European aesthetic and American vigor. Known for commissioning new works by some of the world’s foremost choreographers, the company brings to the Hop Finnish-born Jorma Elo’s tour de force 1st
**Flash** and the Brooklyn-born Nicolo Fonte’s bright, open *Heart(s)pace*. Post-show discussions with the artists.
Friday & Saturday, September 25 & 26, 8 pm
The Moore Theater, Hopkins Center for the Arts, Hanover NH
$25/40/50, Dartmouth students $10, 18 and under $17/19
Information: hop.dartmouth.edu or 603.646.2422

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Founded in 1962, the Hopkins Center for the Arts is a multi-disciplinary academic, visual and performing arts center dedicated to uncovering insights, igniting passions, and nurturing talents to help Dartmouth and the surrounding Upper Valley community engage imaginatively and contribute creatively to our world. Each year the Hop presents more than 300 live events and films by visiting artists as well as Dartmouth students and the Dartmouth community, and reaches more than 22,000 Upper Valley residents and students with outreach and arts education programs. After a celebratory 50th-anniversary season in 2012-13, the Hop enters its second half-century with renewed passion for mentoring young artists, supporting the development of new work, and providing a laboratory for participation and experimentation in the arts.