# Christopher Wheeldon blends ballet and Broadway in dynamic Royal Ballet showcase



Christopher Wheeldon's artistic journey is an exemplary fusion of classical ballet and contemporary narrative, a theme vividly explored in *Ballet To Broadway: Wheeldon Works*, currently showcased by The Royal Ballet. This programme spotlights Wheeldon's versatility, especially his forays beyond traditional ballet, with works that encompass both introspective moments and the exuberance of musical theatre.

One of the standout pieces, *Fool's Paradise*, created in 2007, exemplifies Wheeldon's signature intricate partnering. The choreography is polished yet some critics suggest it doesn’t reach the emotional depth of his finest ballet works. Still, it features memorable highlights, including a captivating duet by Marianela Nuñez and Lukas B. Brændsrød, whose fluidity and chemistry are genuinely hypnotic. Despite the ballet's overall sheen, it achieves impactful moments that resonate deeply with the audience.

Another notable work from the programme is *The Two of Us*, born out of the isolation of the pandemic lockdown. This piece reflects a profound introspective quality, as it delves into the dynamics of a couple who remain physically apart. With an on-stage orchestra and singer Julia Fordham bringing warmth to Joni Mitchell’s songs, the performance encapsulates a distinctive feeling of longing—echoing the solitude many experienced during those challenging times.

In performances such as *Us*, created for the Ballet Boyz in 2017, the emphasis on male duet dynamics showcases Wheeldon's ability to blend contemporary dance influences with classical technique. Dancers Matthew Ball and Joseph Sissens explore themes of connection and distance, utilising a balance that is both grounded and fluid.

Beyond more intimate works, Wheeldon's prowess in larger productions shines brightly, particularly in his adaptation of *An American in Paris*. Originally staged on Broadway, his interpretation was a breathtaking blend of ballet and drama. This adaptation is now repurposed as a standalone segment within the Royal Ballet's current celebration. The piece embodies the spirit of Gershwin's score, visually represented through Bob Crowley’s striking designs, reminiscent of Mondrian’s vivid style. With characters adorned in bright colours and geometric shapes, the choreography invites audiences into a lively dance narrative that epitomises the romance of the cityscape where the story unfolds.

The influence of Wheeldon's work extends beyond the Royal Ballet and into the broader theatre landscape. His adaptation of *An American in Paris* earned him significant acclaim, including a Tony Award for Best Choreography, highlighting his unique ability to translate the complexities of dance onto the theatrical stage. Critics noted how the production elegantly bridged the gap between ballet and musical theatre, providing a stunning visual and auditory experience.

The current showcase at The Royal Opera House runs until 27 May, celebrating not just Wheeldon's extensive repertoire but also the evolving narrative of how ballet can engage contemporary audiences through varied and dynamic forms. This exploration of both intimate and expansive narratives in dance continues to solidify Wheeldon’s status as a leading figure in the fusion of ballet and theatre.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/christopher-wheeldon-ballet-to-broadway-b2748428.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/429e96af-4cd4-4032-a0b0-b8f06e85f546> - The Financial Times reviews The Royal Ballet's production of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,' choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon. The production features stellar debuts, with Viola Pantuso and Francesca Hayward excelling as Alice. Bob Crowley's inventive designs, including a seven-man Cheshire Cat puppet and an enchanted forest panorama, are highlighted. Lauren Cuthbertson shines as the Queen of Hearts, and Steven McRae returns as a lively Mad Hatter. The production runs until July 2025.
3. <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/BWW-Reviews-Wheeldons-Ravishing-AN-AMERICAN-IN-PARIS-Beautifully-Fuses-Ballet-and-Drama-20150413> - BroadwayWorld reviews Christopher Wheeldon's 'An American in Paris,' highlighting its fusion of ballet and drama. The production is praised for its choreography, set against attractive backdrops by Bob Crowley. The overall effect is described as a dance concert with a semiserious musical squeezed into the cracks.
4. <https://ew.com/article/2015/04/12/an-american-in-paris-broadway-ew-review/> - Entertainment Weekly reviews 'An American in Paris' on Broadway, emphasizing its French setting and dance elements. The choreography by Christopher Wheeldon is noted for its traditional ballet presence on Broadway. The review mentions the opening montage and the 13-minute, 45-second dance sequence, highlighting the show's dance-centric approach.
5. <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/AN-AMERICAN-IN-PARIS-Christopher-Wheeldon-Wins-Tony-for-Best-Choreography-20150607> - BroadwayWorld reports that Christopher Wheeldon won the 2015 Tony Award for Best Choreography for 'An American in Paris.' The article provides background on Wheeldon's career and the production's opening details, including the cast and creative team.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/dance-blog/2015/jun/08/christopher-wheeldon-tony-award-american-in-paris-winters-tale> - The Guardian discusses Christopher Wheeldon's achievement in winning the Tony Award for Best Choreography for 'An American in Paris.' The article highlights Wheeldon's transition from ballet to Broadway and his directorial debut with the production.
7. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/performance/article/Christopher-Wheeldon-takes-on-Gershwin-s-11956181.php> - The San Francisco Chronicle covers Christopher Wheeldon's adaptation of Gershwin's 'An American in Paris.' The article discusses Wheeldon's praise for the Gershwin estates and the incorporation of new music into the production, including songs like 'Fidgety Feet' and 'I've Got Beginner’s Luck.'