

# Queensland Ballet Unveils Bold New Era

**Landmark First Season of Artistic Director Ivan Gil-Ortega**  
One World Premiere and Seven Australian Premieres



Libby-Rose Niederer, Edison Manuel. Photo David Kelly

**Brisbane, 16 October 2025:** In a milestone moment for Queensland Ballet, **new Artistic Director, Ivan Gil-Ortega**, today unveiled his inaugural 2026 season, an ambitious program signaling the beginning of his artistic leadership since his appointment in February 2025.

Introducing fresh new creative voices and new collaborations, the season features a rich selection of works that will showcase the company's distinctive artistry.

Minister for Education and the Arts, the Hon John Paul Langbroek said Queensland Ballet's 2026 season represents the very best ballet has to offer, showcasing the company's artistic excellence and its commitment to the cultural vibrancy of Queensland.

"Queensland Ballet continues to set a national benchmark for creativity and performance, and this inaugural season by Ivan Gil-Ortega, captures everything from drama to mythology to moments of pure beauty and transcendence. I encourage audiences across our state to experience these remarkable performances featuring our exceptional Queensland Ballet dancers, the acclaimed Queensland Symphony orchestra and our outstanding Brisbane Chorale and Canticum Chamber Choir."

Gil-Ortega said Queensland Ballet is entering a new era, a chapter defined by connection, collaboration, and creative ambition.

"The 2026 season captures dance in all its breadth, timeless classical masterpieces, bold new choreographic voices shaping the artform's future, and beloved ballets reimaged for today's audiences. Queensland Ballet's season balances discovery and tradition, and is designed to inform, enlighten and broaden audiences' understanding of dance," Gil-Ortega said.

"I'd also like to acknowledge the visionary support of the Ken Talbot Foundation, our Principal Guardian from 2026. With heartfelt gratitude we thank them for their extraordinary, continuing guardianship of Queensland Ballet, enabling us to dream big on and off the stage. Hand-in-hand with them, we can't wait to engage with as many 1/4

people as possible, in spaces and places throughout Queensland including our beloved Talbot Theatre,” Gil-Ortega added.

- **Messa da Requiem, 27 March – 4 April, 2026, Glasshouse Theatre, Queensland Performing Arts Centre**  
Presented in association with QPAC and generous support from the *Messa da Requiem* Giving Circle.

“I’m delighted to welcome one of the world’s most audacious and pioneering choreographers, Christian Spuck, to Queensland Ballet. Christian is the Director, Staatsballett Berlin, and will bring his epic interpretation of Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* – a monumental work of incredible scale and intensity, and as well as *The Seventh Blue*, as part of the Strings triple bill.”

“*Messa da Requiem* unites Queensland Ballet, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Brisbane Chorale and Canticum Chamber Choir. This landmark collaboration promises to be a profound and unforgettable experience which is sure to resonate deeply with our audiences,” Gil-Ortega said.

“Through these works I am introducing Queensland audiences to the canon of Christian Spuck, a choreographer whom I’ve known and worked with since 1995.”

Christian is not only meticulous in his research, but he brings a deep philosophical understanding and intellectual rigour to every project that he undertakes. His works reflect both precision and poetry, resonating with audiences on multiple levels. His creative vision and choreographic mastery have earned him international recognition. For the dancers it will be an unforgettable experience to work under his guidance and bring his dynamic artistry to life,” Gil-Ortega added.

- **Elastic Hearts, 30 April – 2 May, 2026, Talbot Theatre, Thomas Dixon Centre. Presented in Association with HOTA.**

Following *Messa da Requiem* we introduce Brisbane audiences to the cutting-edge work of internationally acclaimed Australian director and choreographer Garry Stewart who will bring pop icon Sia’s music to life in *Elastic Hearts*, in an emotionally charged and visually spectacular celebration of humanity.

- **Strings – Triple Bill, 28 – 31 May, 2026, Playhouse, Queensland Performing Arts Centre**

The winter season continues with the premiere of three contemporary ballets Edward Clug’s, *Chamber Minds*, Christian Spuck’s *The Seventh Blue* and Goyo Montero’s *Chacona*. Together, these contrasting works will showcase the dancers’ versatility and the evolving language of ballet.

“This is an extraordinary opportunity for our audiences to experience the latest creations from some of the world’s most influential choreographers, works that are shaping ballet’s future.”

“Premiering these works in Brisbane, and then touring them across Queensland, we hope to introduce a whole new generation of people to the power and beauty of world-class ballet,” Gil-Ortega said

- **Hamlet, 19 June – 18 July, 2026, Talbot Theatre, Thomas Dixon Centre**

“In an Australian first, I am also thrilled to present *Hamlet* by Romanian visionary director, Leo Mujić, offering audiences a fresh and unforgettable take on Shakespeare’s classic story.”

“Celebrated for his storytelling and striking, contemporary movement language, Leo’s productions have captivated audiences across Europe and North America. We are honoured to introduce his unique vision to Australian dance lovers.”

- **Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, 26 June – 4 July, 2026, Talbot Theatre, Thomas Dixon Centre**

During the holiday season, Queensland Ballet continues its commitment to cultivating young audiences with its popular series, *My First Ballet*, designed specifically for children under eight. In 2026, choreographer, Academy of Queensland Ballet, Paul Boyd, brings to life *Red Riding Hood and the Wolf*, a playful take on *Little Red Riding Hood*. Narrated by Sarah McIntosh and set to Shostakovich’s music, it’s an engaging and accessible introduction to ballet for young audiences.

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- **Gala Academy of Queensland Ballet, 6 – 8 August, 2026.** Talbot Theatre, Thomas Dixon Centre.
- **Soirée, 24 – 26 September, 2026.** Talbot Theatre, Thomas Dixon Centre. Presented in association with Phillip Bacon Galleries.

The *Soirée* and *Gala* programmes have become both a cherished tradition and an essential training ground, giving Academy students, Jette Parker Young Artists and Academy Pre-Professional dancers the opportunity to shine on stage and experience the thrill of performing for a live audience.

The 2026 *Gala* program spans classical ballet, dynamic neo-classical and contemporary works, and culminates in the Academy Défilé, for a finale that showcases the unity and spirit of the Academy.

Uniting visual art, dance and live orchestral music, *Soirée* will feature the work of seminal artist, Jeffrey Smart. Presented in collaboration with Philip Bacon Galleries and Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra, the artworks of Smart will be transformed into innovative choreography and storytelling.

The Academy of Queensland Ballet – first established by Queensland Ballet founder, Charles Lisner in 1953, is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of professional artists, sought after across Australia and internationally.

Today, Academy alumni make up 52% of Queensland Ballet's Company, and since 2015, more than 340 graduates have secured contracts with many of the world's leading dance companies.

- ***Bespoke*, 2 – 17 October, 2026, Talbot Theatre, Thomas Dixon Centre**

*Bespoke*, Queensland Ballet's contemporary series, returns in 2026 with an expanded vision. For the first time, choreographers, composers, designers were invited to express their interest to collaborate with Queensland Ballet for this contemporary season. Offering a rare platform for emerging creatives to experiment and develop bold new works, Ivan's vision for *Bespoke* is to transform it into a platform to spotlight fresh creative voices from across Australia.

"I was trained under one of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries most prolific choreographers, John Cranko, who believed in developing not only dancers, but also musicians, choreographers and designers. That philosophy has stayed with me throughout my entire career," Gil-Ortega explained.

- ***The Nutcracker*, new commission, 9 December – 19 December, 2026, Queensland Performing Arts Centre.**

"A highlight I'm particularly excited about is the world premiere of British director, Derek Deane's, *The Nutcracker*, which I specially commissioned for Queensland Ballet. This new production is made possible through the generosity of the Ken Talbot Foundation.

"This new commission from the same visionary creative team behind the hugely successful *Strictly Gershwin*, features striking new characters and lavish designs by Lez Brotherston OBE, the renowned associate artist with New Adventures and Matthew Bourne, in a reimagined classic to enchant families for years to come."

Executive Director, **Ms Dilshani Weerasinghe** said the 2026 season is grounded in cross-cultural collaborations and celebrates Queensland Ballet's long ties to Europe, dating back to its founding by French born, Charles Lisner.

"Ivan not only brings his own lived-in experience as a Principal dancer with Stuttgart Ballet and Dutch National Ballet, but also a global perspective, new ideas and fresh tastes that are shaped by his international career."

"At Queensland Ballet we tell stories that connect with people. Ivan's first season introduces a dynamic group of choreographers whose fresh and compelling perspectives reflect the world around us. This is about ensuring ballet remains relevant, moving and accessible," Ms Weerasinghe said.

“Under Ivan’s leadership, we will take our audiences, our artists and our supporters, on a journey of renewed purpose: to deliver bold productions that connect deeply with diverse audiences, amplifies sector collaboration, and generates lasting cultural and economic value for our Company, and our State,” Ms Weerasinghe added.

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Production releases, mages and background information [here](#)

#### [About Queensland Ballet](#)

Queensland Ballet's mission is to contribute to Australia's cultural landscape by being an integral part of the national and international ballet ecology - striving for artistic excellence, pathways for emerging artists, and impact through our community 4/4 outreach, education, and dance health programs. We aim to enrich lives and contribute to wellness across society through the magic of ballet.

#### [About the Academy of Queensland Ballet](#)

Queensland Ballet provides industry-informed ballet and dance training pathways through our world-class Academy, developing dancers towards professional careers in Australia and overseas. Together, we are nurturing the dancers of the future. Under the direction of Academy Director, Christian Tátchev, Queensland Ballet Academy provides comprehensive professional ballet and dance training programs and events for students from age 6 through to career employment.