

## Universal Ballet: Kenneth MacMillan's Romeo and Juliet: A Three-Day Journey

Julia H. Moon

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To commemorate the 40th anniversary of Universal Ballet Company, Julia H. Moon, General Director, and Universal Ballet Artistic Director, Bingxian Liu, presented Kenneth MacMillan's "Romeo and Juliet" from May 10th to 12th at the Seoul Arts Center Opera Theater.

Universal Ballet first acquired the performance rights to Kenneth MacMillan's "Romeo and Juliet" in 2012, making it the first Korean company to do so. This version of "Romeo and Juliet" is highly acclaimed for its faithful adaptation of Shakespeare's original play among the numerous renditions.

Set against the dramatic music of Prokofiev, this performance provided an excellent opportunity to witness the concentrated and unparalleled artistry of Universal Ballet, which has been honed over 40 years.

For the first time in Korea, Hee Seo, the principal dancer of American Ballet Theatre (ABT), took on the role of Juliet. She made history in 2015 as the first Asian to become a principal dancer at ABT in its 75-year history. Playing opposite her as Romeo was Daniel Camargo, former principal dancer at Stuttgart Ballet and Dutch National Ballet, and currently a principal dancer at ABT.

Another Juliet was played by Mi-sun Kang, the 2023 winner of the prestigious "Benois de la Danse" award, solidifying her status as Korea's top ballerina. Kang previously played Juliet in the 2016 production of "Romeo and Juliet," receiving acclaim for her rich inner expression and superb technique. Her Romeo was Hyonjun Rhee, a principal dancer with Universal Ballet, renowned for his exceptional technical skills and acting prowess. Rhee has also been a principal dancer with Tulsa Ballet in the U.S., where he performed a wide range of repertoires.

Julia H. Moon, General Director of Universal Ballet, stated, "Kenneth MacMillan's 'Romeo and Juliet' is a masterpiece that most closely aligns with Shakespeare's original work, and it is a performance I am eager to present to Korean audiences. The chemistry between Mi-sun Kang and Hyonjun Rhee, as well as the excellent pairing of ABT star ballerina Hee Seo and Daniel Camargo, makes it worth watching every show." She added, "Universal Ballet will utilize all its capabilities to deliver a deeply moving and unforgettable performance."