

LOUISVILLE BALLET



KENTUCKY! VOLUME 1

The logo features a pink outline of the state of Kentucky at the top. Below it, the word "Kentucky!" is written in a large, blue, cursive font. Underneath "Kentucky!", the words "VOLUME 1" are written in a smaller, yellow, sans-serif font. The entire logo is framed by a pink line that forms a bracket-like shape at the bottom.

Choreography by Robert Curran, Louisville Ballet Artistic Director

Music: Original Score by Scott Moore / The Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47 by Jean Sibelius

Cinematography by KERTIS

Scenic Design Projections by Clovehitch Productions

Costume Design by Alex Ludwig

Lighting Design by Jesse AlFord

Story Co-Creators: Robert Curran + Natalie Harris

Music Conducted by Tara Simoncic

With Contributing Guest Artist, Hannah Drake

Thank you to our production sponsors
for making *Kentucky! Volume 1* possible.



THE
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ARTISTS' STATEMENT

ROBERT CURRAN + NATALIE HARRIS

The work of this new ballet, and the two more to follow, started almost exactly two year ago with an Australian and a Kentucky-born American, our stacks of books, corresponding notes, a blank white wall, and a few black markers. We stood side-by-side, markers in hand, and drew the first of four family names, wrapped in a circle, connected by lines.

To be clear, it was already an idea hanging in the air that must've settled not long after Robert left Australia and arrived here in Louisville in August 2014. Kentucky is a place – even if your point of origin isn't originally the other side of the world – that can seem improbable, remarkable, and strange. Even if, like Natalie, you were born in Harlan, a descendent of generations of people from Eastern Kentucky. And, let's face it, the usual perception of this place falls somewhere between genteel pastoral and bleak, impoverished wasteland.

Fill in the blank. Be honest. Tell us, how do you finish the start of this sentence?

Kentucky is: Rolling, bluegrass-covered hills, chestnut-colored horses, necks bent while grazing, posing by rustic black tobacco barns?

Kentucky is: coal mines and white coal-covered miners, caught in a black and white photos, with unsmiling children leaning over the rails of a rough-hewn front porch?

Kentucky is: bourbon, women in oversized hats, tobacco farms, and our own brand of fried chicken? We're Flyover Country, banjo playing, violent, welcoming, poor, gentleman farmers, white, enslaved, shoeless, well-heeled, full of ghosts, the in-

between place, caught and bound by mountains, defined by the Ohio? We're a Dark and Bloody Ground, the land of brother against brother, the barrier / the gateway between enslavement and freedom?

How do you begin to define a place? Is Kentucky all or any of this? For us, the first step was to look beyond the perception, mythology, and preconceived ideas. We dove into history, bad TV stereotypes, poetry, and family stories traded on long car rides as we traveled throughout the state. We met with artists and dug through archives, with the goal of making a ballet that explores, confronts, and ultimately celebrates the making of a Commonwealth.

Kentucky is, and has always been, transient by nature. The indigenous people, the first Americans, viewed much of Kentucky as a place to move through, transitional and fluid. This pattern remains and is intentionally reflected in this ballet. When we made the decision to fully expose the stage, and all theatrical devices, it cracked open our ability to expose the story and its emotional narrative. Here is an epic, a fictional account, a microcosm of the history of this country, framed between just before the official founding of our state, dipping in and out of chronology, with no pretense or facade.

Kentucky is: always, always the border.

The place between here and there. Where you are now.

And this is only the beginning...



ROBERT CURRAN

Choreographer / Co-Creator

Trained at The Australian Ballet School and having enjoyed a thrilling and fulfilling career with The Australian Ballet as a Principal Artist, Robert Curran took the passion and discipline he developed as a dancer and set his sights on diversifying his knowledge, skills, and abilities. Education and experience continually expanded his ability to move his own body on stage and, through this, move an audience through a wide range of emotions. Beyond his dancing career he strives to continue to move people towards a satisfying encounter with dance. Mr. Curran is motivated by the form that a dancer gains from training in the traditions of classical ballet, where respect and discipline can facilitate breathtaking strength and freedom. He is also inspired by the innovation that forms the function of any artist, that being, to bravely and boldly express oneself through art for the greater good of a community. As Artistic + Executive Director of Louisville Ballet, Mr. Curran continues to contribute to the global arts community, enriching his knowledge of the art form to which he has devoted his life. He is excited by, and committed to, the Louisville community with its abundant respect for the arts and its exciting perspective on the future.

Proudly supported by the Augusta Brown Holland Philanthropic Foundation.



SCOTT MOORE

Composer / Musician

Scott Moore was born and came of age in rural Kentucky. He began his career as a violinist and composer as a four-year-old in New York. He's been a soloist with a number of orchestras, played Mozart for the Archduke of Austria, and given an impromptu recital in Carnegie Hall for an audience of ghosts. He's been an organic farmer and a professional driver, learned fiddle tunes from old-timers in the hills of eastern Kentucky, drunk bourbon with rock stars on a steam-powered riverboat, and played music on four continents

An enthusiastic collaborator on stage and in the recording studio, Scott has forged a reputation as a skillful and inventive musician unbound by genre. His versatility, imagination, and unique artistic voice have made him a performer and creator in growing demand.



TARA SIMONCIC

Conductor

Tara Simoncic served as music director of Ballet West from 2015–2018 and is a frequent guest conductor with Louisville Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, and New York City Ballet. She recently made her conducting debut with the ballet at Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Ms. Simoncic is principal conductor of the Flexible Orchestra in New York City as well as music director of the Greenwich Symphony’s Young People’s Concerts. She holds a BM in Trumpet Performance from the New England Conservatory, an MM in Orchestral Conducting from Northwestern University, and a Professional Studies Diploma in Conducting from Manhattan School of Music. Ms. Simoncic is Louisville Ballet’s Music Director.

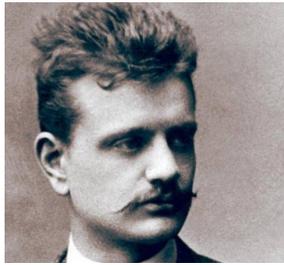
Proudly supported by Bill & Julie Ballard.



KERTIS

Film Production + Cinematography

KERTIS is a creative agency in Louisville, Kentucky, founded on the belief that human connection inspires action. Our team of strategists, filmmakers, photographers, writers, and designers makes beautiful, honest, and thoughtful work that amplifies ideas worth sharing. We are committed to telling the stories of people, organizations, and brands that make our communities more livable, equitable, and interesting.



JEAN SIBELIUS

Composer

Johan (Jean) Julius Christian Sibelius
(December 8, 1865–September 20, 1957)

Jean Sibelius was a Finnish composer of the late Romantic period. His music played an important role in the formation of the Finnish national identity. The core of Sibelius's oeuvre is his set of seven symphonies. Like Beethoven, Sibelius used each successive work to further develop his own personal compositional style. His works continue to be performed frequently in the concert hall and are often recorded.

In addition to the symphonies, Sibelius's best-known compositions include *Finlandia*, the *Karelia Suite*, *Valse triste*, the *Violin Concerto in D minor* and *The Swan of Tuonela* (one of the four movements of the *Lemminkäinen Suite*). Other works include pieces inspired by the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*; over 100 songs for voice and piano; incidental music for 13 plays; the opera *Jungfrun i tornet* (*The Maiden in the Tower*); chamber music; piano music; Masonic ritual music; and 21 separate publications of choral music.

Like many of his contemporaries, Sibelius was initially enamored of the music of Wagner. A performance of *Parsifal* at the Bayreuth Festival had a strong effect on him. However, his appreciation for Wagner waned and Sibelius ultimately rejected Wagner's Leitmotif compositional technique, considering it to be too deliberate and calculated. More lasting influences included Ferruccio Busoni, Anton Bruckner and Tchaikovsky. Hints of Tchaikovsky's music are particularly evident in works such as Sibelius's *First Symphony* (1899) and his *Violin Concerto* (1905). Similarities to Bruckner are most strongly felt in the 'unmixed' timbral palette and sombre brass chorales of Sibelius's orchestration, a fondness for pedal points, and in the underlying slow pace of the music.

Sibelius progressively stripped away formal markers of sonata form in his work and, instead of contrasting multiple themes, he focused on the idea of continuously evolving cells and fragments culminating in a grand statement. His later works are remarkable for their sense of unbroken development, progressing by means of thematic permutations and derivations.

Sibelius composed prolifically until the mid-1920s. However, after completing his *Seventh Symphony* (1924), the incidental music to *The Tempest* (1926), and the tone poem *Tapiola* (1926), he produced no large scale works for the remaining thirty years of his life. Although he is reputed to have stopped composing, he in fact attempted to continue writing, including abortive efforts to compose an eighth symphony. He wrote some Masonic music and re-edited some earlier works during this last period of his life, and retained an active interest in new developments in music, although he did not always view modern music favorably.

Source: Philadelphia Chamber Music Society



NOTES FROM THE COMPOSER

Since the earliest days of my involvement with Kentucky! (fall 2018 or so) I knew that part of my intention and responsibility would be to imbue the musical component of this ballet with a real and tangible sense of place. As a native Kentuckian, this was important to me personally; as a composer and co-creator, it seemed an obvious and necessary choice, albeit one which posed the enjoyable challenge of weaving the familiar and traditional into something nuanced and original.

So I began compiling a running list of ideas for folk music I thought might lend itself well to the spirit and character of this work. Some of the choices were personal favorites—lived-in and well-loved—tunes I’d played hundreds of times at shows, parties, and jam sessions. Others seemed to possess some thematic or symbolic connection to the storyline or subject matter: for example, “Soldier’s Joy” and “Liberty” for a scene set just after the end of the Civil War. Some,

as with “Old Granny Blair,” endlessly fascinated my composer’s brain: idiosyncratic, quirky, “crooked,” pungent, and resonating with a sense of the ancient and mysterious, they reveal themselves instantly and unmistakably, while at the same time drawing the ear in, provoking more questions and seeming ever stranger and more compelling the more familiar they become.

In each case, there was some connection with Kentucky, my home place. In the end, five folk tunes made their way into Volume One. I learned them all by way of the great game of telephone that is the oral tradition, from various other musicians over the years. And in the spirit of that tradition, they’ve all been filtered through my own experience and mind, and transformed. But along the way, I turned up source recordings by Kentucky fiddlers:

Estill Bingham (1898-1990, Bell County)
Art Stamper (1933-2005, Knott County)
Paul David Smith (1933-2011, Pike County)
Walker Johnson (1910-2004, Russell or Adair County)
J. P. Fraley (1923-2011, Carter County)

Although I didn't learn the tunes from these recordings, several of these fiddlers have been influential in some way as I've progressed along my journey into the traditional music of Kentucky, and I'm happy to have their spirits keeping me company here. There are quite a few others who likewise hold special significance for me, and who I hope might find their way into Volume Two or Three.

It's deeply gratifying, exciting, and humbling to find myself taking some small part in this process of spiritual and musical succession: digging and peering ever further into the past in search of meaning, understanding, significance, and connection; transforming, and being transformed, while racing headlong into an unknown future, full of possibility for great darkness and great beauty; seeking to be innovative and adaptable and responsible, attuned to ancient rhythms and the uniqueness of each moment, a good steward of past, future, and present.

Of course, this folk aspect was contrasted by the extraordinary decision to incorporate the Sibelius Violin Concerto—an evocative and electrifying masterwork of the violin literature, to be sure, but hardly an obvious musical choice for a ballet about Kentucky! Yet from the start, this piece had been an indelible part of Robert Curran's remarkable vision for this project—a vision I admired, and embraced. And so another part of my role as composer became to cut up and recast Sibelius's score to fit the kaleidoscopic, time-traveling structure of the storytelling; and what's more, to assimilate, re-interpret, and shape-shift various elements of the piece—themes, motifs, gestures—and transmute them into the context of this ballet. I re-composed, reharmonized, followed threads to new places, transplanted to new instruments: rhapsodic acoustic guitar, driving clawhammer banjo or beatbox, Klezmer clarinet, bubblegum Moog synthesizer. By these means I hoped to weave deconstructed fragments of the concerto (music by a Finnish composer of a quite different era) into the fabric of this new work; and thus, to evoke various period- and character-specific vignettes within the unfolding narrative, and integrate seamlessly with the rest of the music, in a way which might feel natural and believable, even imperceptible, to the listener.

And so I found myself progressing from the initial terror of the “blank page” and a ninety-minute ballet score to deliver; to amassing and then parsing a sprawling collection of ideas, comprising my own musical brainstorm, traditional songs and fiddle tunes, and the results of a deep dive into the concerto score; to several months of fleshing out, trimming fat, assembling, refining, orchestration, recording, and incessant work. Then, finally, three weeks before the orchestra was to take the pit and the dancers the stage, a global pandemic: a reality suddenly so much scarier and so very formidable in its uncertainty, with no guarantee that the world as we knew it—much less the performing arts—would survive or ever return to normal.

Yet here we are.

There are still no guarantees, as of course there never were; the world is still hurting, and the future is as unknowable as ever. And yet we persevere. I'm extremely proud of all the work (collective, as well as personal) that's gone into making this performance a reality in spite of the limitations of our present situation. To reach this point has required vision, patience, and resilience. In my own case, it has meant many more hours spent in the recording studio—one I've built partly in order to get work done in a “distanced” world. I'm happy and exceedingly fortunate that this is work, and a workspace, which I happen to love.

In some cases the paradigm shift from live performance to “digital stage” has produced results so unforeseeable as to feel almost absurd—such as the fact that, having composed music for orchestra for the first time, my first time actually hearing it performed was via playback, over the phone, from the control room speakers of a recording studio in Prague! The oddness of this scenario was only amplified by the fact that the music being played, my own composition, was based partly upon an obscure and quirky old-time fiddle tune, which I learned from my Mississippian friend, who probably learned it in North Carolina, though it was recorded by a long-deceased Kentucky fiddle player named Estill Bingham. The title of this tune, “Old Granny Blair,” made it into the vocabulary of the wonderful New Yorker recording engineer (David Merrill) who, from his control room in a city seven time zones away from me, kept referring to the music simply as “Granny.”



We have so much critical work to do as humans in this moment, in the shadow of such monumental challenges—climate change, racial justice, the ongoing assault on democracy, the erosion of critical thought, the struggle to identify and hold onto the essence of our humanity and the light which is the life of the soul. In the face all of this, making art could seem trivial or comparatively insignificant. At least, it can be tempting to feel that way, and be overwhelmed, from my perspective as an artist. Yet it's my conviction that when done with the right spirit, art can heal, bring us together, challenge our presuppositions and prejudices, inspire us to be better, remind us of who we are and whence we've come, and challenge us to be more fully, tenderly, searingly, miraculously human. It can provide the rare opportunity to step out of everyday patterns, and into the pure, redemptive joy of taking part in something beautiful. And so, art may provide a bit of illumination amid the darkness; and in this way, become essential.

It is with this humble conviction, and in this spirit, that I have made and continue to make music. For this opportunity in general, I am endlessly grateful. And for the opportunities which this project in particular has afforded me—to grow and improve as a

composer, recording engineer, and musician—and for all the joy and satisfaction which have been the fruit of five years (and counting!) of dynamic, challenging, and immensely rewarding collaboration with the wonderful artists and staff of the Louisville Ballet—for all of this, I am especially thankful.

As for the performance at hand—I am so very excited to take in the finished product, the results of this long and unpredictable creative process! As we creators “let go” of what we've made and see it into the world, it is my fervent hope that our work will spark questions, stir souls, and draw a smile, or a tear, or that unnameable welling-up that art may sometimes elicit. And I hope those folks who call Kentucky home, as well as any who peer into this production from without, might recognize something authentic, resonant, unique: fully of the present, while evocative of a rich and complex past worth studying and learning from. I hope that they might recognize, perhaps rethink, and even fall a bit (more) in love with, the place on earth and in our hearts that is...Kentucky!

Scott Moore
1 December 2020

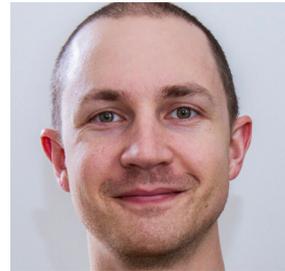
ARTISTIC TEAM



MIKE ELSHERIF

Cinematographer / Scenic Design

Mike Elsherif studied filmmaking at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. His films have been selected by many national and international film festivals. He was the recipient of the 2018 AI Smith Individual Artist Fellowship award in filmmaking from the Kentucky Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. He was a fellow at the 2019 Rawi Screenwriters Lab held by the Royal Film Commission in Jordan. Mike currently works at Clovehitch Productions on narrative, documentary, and commercial film projects. He also co-hosts the radio show Film Fatale on 97.1 WXOX ARTxFM.



JOHNBEN LACY

Cinematographer / Scenic Design

JohnBen Lacy is thrilled to collaborate with Louisville Ballet for the first time. As a student of both theatre and film, he enjoys working in mediums that combine visual storytelling and sound. JohnBen has worked with Actors Theatre of Louisville, StageOne Family Theatre, Theatre [502], and Bunbury Theatre. In film, he works in many capacities, from acting to cinematography. JohnBen currently works at Clovehitch Productions on narrative, documentary, and commercial film projects. He also co-hosts the radio show Film Fatale on 97.1 WXOX ARTxFM.



ALEXANDRA LUDWIG

Costume Designer

Now in her third full season, Alexandra has enjoyed designing a handful of shows with Louisville Ballet. In the past, she has worked as the head of wardrobe for Moscow Ballet, Barrington Stage Company and Company XIV. She also toured with Ringling Brothers and began her career at Universal Studios.

Originally from Los Angeles, Alexandra has styled music videos and short films. Her design career has brought her all over the world from Guilin, China to Turks and Caicos. She has designed extensively for circus troupes, flying trapeze acts and for musical theatre. However, she has found a home with Louisville Ballet.



JESSE ALFORD

Lighting Designer

Jesse is a freelance Lighting Designer and Circus Coach based in Louisville. His previous designs with Louisville Ballet include *Force Flux* and សុំនាមបុរេផ្សារក្រុង. His work can also be seen with The Big Apple Circus, Theatre [502], Pandora Productions, Stage One, Acting Against Cancer, Circus Flora, Suspend Louisville, The Louisville Orchestra, Va Va Vixens, and more. He is the Head Coach at My Nose Turns Red Youth Circus, and serves as the Board President for the American Youth Circus Organization and the American Circus Educators.

ARTISTIC TEAM



NATALIE HARRIS

Co-Creator / Writer / Voiceover

Natalie Harris, an Eastern Kentucky native, writer, and person in the world, has lived and worked in Louisville, Kentucky for most of her adult life. She studied both theater and dance, and earned an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Bennington College, but has spent most of her professional life in the world of copywriting, marketing, and communications. Kentucky! Volume 1 is her first creative work with Louisville Ballet. She is thrilled to continue to uncover the stories of her home for more seasons to come.



HANNAH L. DRAKE

Spoken Word Artist / Guest Performer

Hannah L. Drake is a blogger, activist, public speaker, poet, and author of 11 books. She writes commentary on politics, feminism, and race. Hannah's message is thought-provoking and at times challenging, but Hannah believes that it is in the uncomfortable spaces that change can take place. "My sole purpose in writing and speaking is not that I entertain you. I am trying to shake a nation."

TILL, PLANT, WAIT

BY HANNAH L. DRAKE

There were times that I did not understand
That I prayed for this cup to pass from me
No one should ever sip the bitterness of bondage
A lil bit of freedom is still captivity
How do you begin to explain freedom
To people who have the power to give it and take it as they see fit?
How do I begin to explain that my choice to remain has nothing to do with them
And everything to do with me and what I've seen
You cannot hold a vision captive
So I'm here
I know the ground I stand on is sacred
Ground fertilized by the blood of my people
We were born to bear fruit
Because my mother showed me the way
You must till the soil, plant the seeds and wait for the harvest
And as you wait, pray
So I plant seeds so that one day you will know
You were born to live free
So I till, plant and wait
Planting seeds for tomorrow
Even when my soul is tired
I till the ground
Plant the seeds
Wait for the harvest

Till Plant Wait

Till Plant Wait

And pray, Dear God let my seeds become
Let my seeds become what I see when I close my eyes
Cause when I close my eyes I can see him
If I quiet myself, I can hear him
He's there in my dreams
His voice carries on the wind floating in a distant breeze
He sings a new song...he sings songs of freedom

So I Till Plant Wait

And pray, Dear God let my life reap a harvest

Cause in my dreams I see you

There, standing

My faith has taken roots

My hope that has become flesh

My life has borne fruit

I have planted trees for shade I will never see

But you will

Because I can see you

I see your hands

Hands that have never toiled in a field

I see your feet

Feet that have never been shackled

So I

till

plant

wait

and pray

Dear God, Let him grow

Let him be

Because for me

He be's...power

He be's freedom

He be's the answer

He be's those that leapt to a watery grave

He be's loosed shackles on slave ships

He be's our original names

He be's the flow of the Nile

He be's our hope

He be's our chance

He be's our fight

He be the backs that bore the lash

He be's David's psalms

Africa's drumbeat

He be's revolution

He be's everything I ever dreamed

So let him grow,

Let him be

Let him be

Loud

Fearless

Magnificent and Brilliant

Let him be the dream

Let him be restored

Let him be light

Let him be laughter

Let him be love

Let him be spirt

Let him be new beginnings

Let him be still waters

Let him birth something new

And then, oh God, then

Let him dance

Let him place his bare feet on grass and dance

Let him hear the rhythm of his ancestors

That never got a proper burial

That never were mourned

Who were simply buried underneath bluegrass and forgotten

Remind him that we were here

And we are with him

Always with him

Let him dance to a new song...his song

Let him sway

Let him move

Let him be rhythm

Let him be...everything.

But Oh God, My God, let him be...free

COULD BE EARS RINGING

BY NATALIE HARRIS

could be ears ringing the hum of a refrigerator or maybe just wires growing inside your walls

could be a pumpkin vine throws itself over the backyard fence

twists could be: disguised impending blossoms

bindweed vine there to answer

veiny heart-shaped leaves climb back

should you worry is this a cause for more weeping

already her pillow too wet for sleeping

which means or could be

nothing left watch her she opens this back door

grass saws and clamors pushes

against those knees watch

her stretch between walnut

saplings she becomes listens

and to listen gives up

first: ankle

elbow skin reaching to wrist

she offers thanks and thanks be

to whatever vine might take them

COMPANY DANCERS

Leigh Anne Albrechta, Natalia Ashikhmina,
Emmarose Atwood, John Aaron Brewer,
Lexa Daniels, Erin Langston Evans,
Tristan Hanson, Justin Michael Hogan,
Mark Krieger, Minh-Tuan Nguyen,
Erica De La O, Brandon Ragland,
Sanjay Saverimuttu, Aleksandr Schroeder,
Kateryna Sellers, Shelby Shenkman,
Ryo Suzuki, Ashley Thursby, Phillip Velinov,
Trevor Williams, Brienne Wiltsie

STUDIO COMPANY

Savanna Airee, Owen Bakula, Teagan Bentley,
Nicholas Bentz, Sarah Bradley, Anthony Cefalu,
Christian Chester, Reece Conrad, Kelsey Corder,
Emma Delaney, Anna Ford, Emma Fridenmaker,
Griffin Greene, Veronica Higgins, Isabelle Hilton,
Caitlin Kowalski, Kinsey Love, Addison Mathes,
Jake Mingus, Natalie Orms, Hannah Pidgeon,
Courtney Ramirez, Sarah Ray, David Senti,
Madison Skaggs, Isabella Sumera, Kayleigh Western, Amber Wickey

GRADUATE INTERNS

Elizabeth Abbick, Tyler Ferraro, Allison Haan

MUSICIANS

Tara Simoncic, Conductor

Scott Moore: violin, viola, cello, fiddle, octave violin, percussion,

ukulele bass, acoustic guitar, electric guitar,

Moog synthesizer

Erica Pisaturo: violin, viola, cello, voice

Mark Kleine: clarinet

Ryan Nottingham: trumpet

Colin Dorman: horn

Chris Fortner: trombone

Kevin Ratterman: drums

Brey McCoy: drums

Chris Rodahaffer: banjo

Evan Vicic: handclaps

Seth Folsom: trombone

Czech National Symphony Orchestra

Sibelius Violin Concerto recorded & mixed by David Merrill

“Turned Over To Dreams” recorded and mixed

by Daniel Martin Moore

All other music recorded & mixed by Scott Moore