THE NATIONAL Ballet OF CANADA

Karen Kain
Artistic Director

AGM Message

Barry Hughson, Executive Director

The 2016/17 season was a time of artistic achievement, supported by meaningful institutional progress in many areas.

I will begin by thanking all of you, along with the 3,838 donors from Toronto, Ontario, and across Canada, who make our work possible.

Diana Reitberger, Director of Development, and her team, as always, supported the work of our volunteer fundraising leadership with professionalism, passion, and positive energy. Once again, we had a strong year of fundraising across all areas, including the launch of the public phase of the Soaring Campaign – the largest, and to date, most successful fundraising initiative in the National Ballet's history.

To the campaign cabinet, led by David MacDonald, I am continually moved by your commitment to ensure we cross the finish line of this monumental and transformational effort, and overwhelmed by your generosity of time, talent, and treasure.

In addition to our annual fundraising efforts for the operating company and The National Ballet of Canada Endowment Foundation, we continue to work with our new partners in the US and the UK in building relationships that will support our collaborations, co-commissions, and touring priorities in both countries.

I'm also pleased to report that the National Ballet had the strongest year at the box office in our history, both in revenue and attendance – anchored by a completely sold-out run of *The Nutcracker*.

Julia Drake, Director of Communications, and her team focused their efforts on the implementation of new pricing strategies, leveraging comprehensive online and social media initiatives, and building high impact institutional marketing opportunities, including the award-winning TTC campaign, to keep the National Ballet's brand front and centre.

What impresses me most about Julia and her team is their shared commitment to adaptability – to working closely as a team to follow key data, sales trends and consumer behavior and adjust plans as needed.

Our Information Technology department has continued to make progress in building and leveraging our technological capacity. Under the direction of Christopher Sonnemann, the team made significant improvements in infrastructure and processes around data protection and data storage, cloud-based efficiency and flexibility, and the launch of a new scheduling system that will, over time, meaningfully streamline our scheduling processes across the organization.

In Finance, we said goodbye to long-time Director of Finance Barry Shour, who retired after 20 years of service, and welcomed Ray Forzley. Ray has managed the leadership transition beautifully, and I look forward to working with him as a key strategic partner as we move forward. Ray and his team managed the audit process with Grant Thornton, and I'm pleased to report that we had a clean audit, and for the eighth consecutive year, have delivered an operating surplus.

To Ray's team, I want to thank you for your patience and professionalism during the leadership transition, and for your good work throughout the year.

I also want to thank the finance and audit committee, chaired by Donna Meyer, for your advice, counsel, and continued partnership as we work to ensure that the success of the past several years translates into continued financial sustainability for the National Ballet in the years ahead.

Our Production team, under the leadership of James Thornley, continues to deliver amazing work on stage and behind the scenes. From managing the challenges of touring, collaborating on the rebuild and restaging of Wayne McGregor's *Genus*, to the creation of Will Tuckett's *Pinocchio*, the entire production team once again demonstrated that they are the very best in the business.

Karen and I also want to acknowledge Associate Artistic Director, Christopher Stowell, who joined the team in January of 2017. The increased activity of the company over the past several years and the impact that activity has had on the artistic team, clearly illustrated to us the need to introduce this new permanent leadership support role for Karen and her staff.

2016/17 was also a year of engagement, with our community, with our industry, and with our Government.

You heard about some of the exciting educational programming that took place last year, including the continued partnership with the Regent Park community, and the live-streaming of our YOU dance programme to every province and territory in Canada.

We also collaborated with the Art Gallery of Ontario, our first major partnership with the AGO, to bring Robert Binet's *The Dreamers Ever Leave You* to life.

Engagement with industry peers included the second international summit of ballet Executive Directors at the Dutch National Ballet last January.

In Canada, I was elected to the National Council of the Canadian Dance Assembly as Vice Chair and served with David Binet on the Steering Committee for the 2017 Canadian Arts Summit.

2017 also marked the beginning of a new engagement strategy with our Governments in Toronto, Ontario, and at the federal level.

Our intent is to build the National Ballet's profile across governments to ensure stakeholders are aware of our contribution to the community and local economy, as well as the national and international scope of our programming, and that our objectives are well-understood. We also want to hear from leaders about the needs of their constituents, and when possible, to better align those needs with our work in the community.

At the federal level, we have submitted our first pre-budget consultation in more than 20 years, with a focus on advocating for an increase or elimination of the cap on funding for organizations under the Endowments Incentives Program of the Canada Cultural Investment Fund, enhancing opportunities for the National Ballet's involvement in the federal government cultural export programs, especially with regard to international touring, and investment in upcoming National Ballet infrastructure projects, to enhance both facilities and digital programming opportunities.

In just the last eight weeks, I have held dozens of meetings in Ottawa, including with high level officials in the Office of the Prime Minister, Canadian Heritage, Innovation, Science and Economic Development, the Ministry of Finance, Global Affairs, the Canada Council, and a dozen or so MP's from Toronto, those holding positions on key committees, and Heritage critics from opposition parties.

The feedback has been encouraging, with general consensus on the importance of the National Ballet as an exemplary cultural asset for the country. We are being encouraged to continue and amplify our efforts to reach more Canadians with our work, with the opportunities presented by the digital age as a major opportunity; to continue to make our work more economically accessible to the residents of the GTA, and to continue to make diversity, equity and inclusion an institutional priority.

THE NATIONAL Ballet OF CANADA

Karen Kain
Artistic Director

I'd like to conclude with a heartfelt thank you to Karen, for her vision, leadership and partnership, and to David Binet, for his mentorship and unwavering support over my first nearly four years at the National Ballet. I have worked with ten Board chairs over my 25 years in arts leadership and David sits at the top of the list. Thank you for always putting the National Ballet first, for leading with calmness and clarity, and personally, for helping to make my transition to a new country, a new city and a new company so much easier.

And to incoming Chair, Cornell Wright, I am delighted to partner with you, Karen, our Board, and the entire National Ballet team, as we continue this journey together in service to The National Ballet of Canada.

Thank you all for being here this evening, and we look forward to seeing you at the Four Seasons Center for the Performing Arts very soon.