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BAG IT

'Every single bag is different'

How do you bag a ballerina?

Totem is giving new life to the National Ballet of Canada's street banners that promote productions around the Toronto by turning them into tote and messenger bags.

"It's not a unique idea," admits green-minded Paul Richardson, who with wife Melissa started Totem a year ago. "There are lots of bags out there made from old banners — just not really good ones."

Richardson wanted to make quality bags that are fashionable, durable and eco-friendly. He uses only locally sourced and previously used materials — old bicycle inner tubes for the handles, old seat belts for the straps. Only the hardware and stitching are new.

"People are buying a bag with a history," he says. "Every single bag is different."

Richardson approached Carol's

ALEKSANDAR ANTONIJEVIC PHOTO
The National Ballet of Canada's Sonia Rodriguez with a totem bag.

Flag & Banner Ltd., which makes the National Ballet's banners, and they forwarded the idea of recycling the old banners to the ballet company. A deal was struck.

"This is our way of contributing to being greener," says National Ballet spokesperson Catherine Chang, adding the bags are available at the National Ballet boutique at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.

Next month, Totem is launching a similar business-to-business program with Toronto's big name sports teams — the Toronto Maple Leafs, Raptors, Toronto FC and Toronto Marlies. The two styles of bags will be available next month at Real Sports Apparel, across from the Air Canada Centre.

The messenger bag costs \$130 and the market tote is \$100. The bags are also available at Modrobes, Gotstyle Menswear, Psyche and Bikes on Wheels. See the entire collection at totembags.ca.

Kate Robertson