

AGM Message

Karen Kain, Artistic Director

The 2017/18 season was an exciting year and personally it marked two milestones I have long desired for the company. The National Ballet dancers performed on the stage of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris and the legendary theatre director Robert Lepage co-created a new work for the company.

In October, we returned to Paris after an absence of 45 years to perform John Neumeier's transcendent *Nijinsky* to glowing response from both audiences and critics. In fact, we were named Best Company of the Year by the Association of Professional Critics in France and awarded the Golden Feather by Dances avec la plume for our performances, with a special mention for Guillaume Côté in the title role.

Robert Lepage is one of Canada's most internationally celebrated artists, renowned around the world for his work in theatre and opera. The world premiere of *Frame by Frame* in June, his collaboration with Principal Dancer and Choreographic Associate Guillaume Côté, was his first work for ballet and the company. This brave, beautiful production was like nothing we have seen on our stage before and it was a thrilling experience.

The company also returned to London to perform *The Dreamers Ever Leave You* by Choreographic Associate Robert Binet at the Printworks in London, England. It was wonderful to see this gorgeous work remounted and enjoyed by a UK audience and to have our dancers perform alongside dancers from The Royal Ballet. The company also toured *Nijinsky* to San Francisco as part of San Francisco Ballet's 2017/18 season and to the National Arts Centre in Ottawa for our annual appearance.

The Toronto season included an all-Canadian programme, Made in Canada, featuring works by some of the finest Canadian choreographers at work today: James Kudelka, Crystal Pite and Robert Binet. The season also saw the company premiere of Justin Peck's *Paz de la Jolla*.

Thank you to all the talented and dedicated people who work at the National Ballet, here at The Walter Carsen Centre and the theatre – the dancers, musicians, artistic staff, production staff, administrative staff, volunteers, donors and board members. The success of last season couldn't have been possible without their hard work and commitment to the company.

I want to recognize Cornell Wright who completed his first year as Board Chair. Thank you for your outstanding leadership, calm and steady guidance and generosity of spirit.

Now, my favorite part of this meeting, giving out the 20-year service pins. It always reminds us of the devotion and commitment of so many to The National Ballet of Canada:

- Principal Character Artist Stephanie Hutchison
- Construction Supervisor Sandy Middleton
- Principal Oboe Mark Rogers

Celebrating 25 years with the company are:

- Violinists Sheldon Grabke and Xiao Grabke
- Senior Manager, Major Gifts Joanna Ivey

Marking 30 years with the National Ballet are:

- Resident Cutter, Christopher Read
- Assistant to Cutters, Susan Howse

Recognized for 35 years of service are:

- Violinist Ron Mah
- Oboist Karen Rotenberg

Marking 40 years of service are:

- Violinist Sonia Klimasko-Leheniuk
- English Horn Player Lesley Young
- Orchestra Personnel Manager and Music Administrator Raymond Tizzard

And finally, we bid farewell to Principal Pianist Janis Neilson after 36 years and Mary Hurley, Costume Rental Coordinator, after 34 years with the National Ballet. Both have contributed so much to the company through their hard work, commitment and dedication and will both be missed dearly.

The 2017/18 season was a year of great artistic and institutional success, one that forecasts a promising year to come and I can't wait for the season to begin.