

Bridgett Zehr Promoted to Principal Dancer Tina Pereira and Jonathan Renna Promoted to First Soloist

Elena Lobsanova, Noah Long, Jenna Savella, Robert Stephen and Brett van Sickle Promoted to Second Soloist

Winners of the David Tory Award and the Patron Award of Merit Announced

June 15, 2009... Toronto, Ontario... **Karen Kain**, Artistic Director of The National Ballet of Canada, today announced promotions for the 2009/10 season. **Bridgett Zehr** has been promoted from First Soloist to Principal Dancer.

Bridgett Zehr joined the company in 2006 from Houston Ballet. This season, she danced the title role in Peter Wright's *Giselle* and the lead role in the North American premiere of Davide Bombana's *Carmen*. She performed principal roles in the world premiere of Peter Quanz's *IN COLOUR* in March 2009 and the company premiere of Jerome Robbins' *Glass Pieces* in 2007. Ms. Zehr has also danced lead roles in the world premiere of Crystal Pite's *Emergence* and the company premiere of Christopher Wheeldon's *Polyphonia*. Clement Crisp, dance critic at the Financial Times (London, UK) wrote of her performance in *IN COLOUR*, "[Bridgett Zehr is] exquisite, all linear grace" and Dance International stated "[Zehr] is someone to watch. She sparkles in technique and dances with a wonderful sense of freedom".

Tina Pereira and **Jonathan Renna** have been promoted to First Soloist. This season, Ms. Pereira, winner of The Erik Bruhn Prize for female dancer in 2007, danced the title role in *Carmen*, a lead role in the company premiere of Twyla Tharp's *In The Upper Room* and made her debut as the Sugar Plum Fairy in James Kudelka's *The Nutcracker*. Of her debut in *Carmen*, the Toronto Star wrote "Tina Pereira is a petite sizzler, Carmen as catalyst to the men she brings down with a flick of her finger or pointed toe".

Mr. Renna has danced the roles of Dorn in the North American premiere of John Neumeier's *The Seagull*, Tybalt in John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet*, Uncle Nikolai in *The Nutcracker* and lead roles in the North American premieres of *Carmen* and Dominique Dumais' *Skin Divers*. Of his performance in the company premiere of Jerome Robbins' *West Side Story Suite*, DanceView wrote "Jonathan Renna's Bernardo was impulsive and mercurial".

Elena Lobsanova, Noah Long, Jenna Savella, Robert Stephen and **Brett van Sickle** have been promoted to Second Soloist. Ms. Lobsanova, who took The Erik Bruhn Prize for female dancer this year, danced the lead role of Nina in *The Seagull*, made her debut as the Snow Queen in *The Nutcracker* and was Maria in *West Side Story Suite*. Mr. Long represented the company in The International Competition for The Erik Bruhn Prize with Ms. Lobsanova in March 2009. His roles include Don José in *Carmen*, Medvedenko in *The*

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Karen Kain
Artistic Director

Media Release

Seagull, Riff in *West Side Story Suite* and Uncle Nikolai and the Snow Trio in *The Nutcracker*. Ms. Savella danced a lead role in *Skin Divers* and the company premiere of Christopher Bruce's *Rooster*, the Snow Queen in *The Nutcracker* and featured roles in *The Sleeping Beauty*, James Kudelka's *The Four Seasons* and George Balanchine's *Symphony in C* and *The Four Temperaments*. Mr. Stephen performed the role of Garcia in *Carmen* and featured roles in *Emergence*, *DEXTRIS* and *Rooster*. Mr. van Sickle danced Paris in *Romeo and Juliet*, a lead role in *Polyphonia* and *Giselle*, a demi-role in Harald Lander's *Etudes* and the Snow Trio in *The Nutcracker*.

Ryan Booth, **Shino Mori** and **Brendan Saye**, who were members of The National Ballet of Canada's RBC Apprentice Programme and YOU dance will join the company as members of the Corps de Ballet.

First Soloist **Etienne Lavigne** and Corps de Ballet member **Lise-Marie Jourdain** are the winners of the 2009 David Tory Award, named for **David Tory**, former Vice-Chairman of The National Ballet of Canada's Board of Directors, who passed away in 2006. Mr. Lavigne was recognized for the leadership and enthusiasm he brings to all aspects of his work and Ms. Jourdain for her unfailing professionalism and generosity toward her colleagues. Each receives an award of \$2,500.

Corps de Ballet members **Chelsy Meiss** and **Christopher Stalzer** have been awarded the Patron Award of Merit by the Patrons' Council Committee of The National Ballet of Canada. The award is given to one male and one female Corps de Ballet member or Apprentice at the end of each season. They each receive \$1000 and an additional donation of \$1000 is made in their names to the Dancer Fund of The National Ballet of Canada, Endowment Foundation.

The 2009/10 season marks important milestones for two company members. **Lorna Geddes** celebrates her 50th anniversary with the company. Ms. Geddes is a Principal Character Artist, Pointe Shoe Manager and Assistant Ballet Mistress. **Tomas Schramek**, Principal Character Artist, celebrates his 40th anniversary with the National Ballet.

The 2008/09 season is presented by CTV and The Globe and Mail.

Bridgett Zehr is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Diana Weatherall.

Elena Lobsanova is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Sandra Faire & Ivan Fecan.

Noah Long is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Sandra Faire & Ivan Fecan.

Jenna Savella is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Elvio & Marlene DelZotto.

Robert Stephen is sponsored through *Dancers First* by Mr. Thor Eaton & The Honourable Nicole Eaton, Senator.

The National Ballet of Canada gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the Canada Council for the Arts; the Ontario Arts Council; the City of Toronto through the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department; The Government of Canada through the Honourable James Moore, Minister, the Department of Canadian Heritage; the Government of Ontario; the Ontario Arts Foundation; the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

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