

Canada's National Ballet School's Peggy Baker wins the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts

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October 6, 2010...Canada's National Ballet School is very pleased to announce that Artist-in-Residence Peggy Baker is the 2010 winner of the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts.

The prize, which is worth \$50, 000, is administered and presented by the Canada Council for the Arts. It recognizes the highest level of artistic excellence and distinguished career achievement by Canadian artists who have spent the major part of their career in Canada in dance, theatre or music. The recipient of the prize is selected by a peer assessment committee this year composed of Miriam Adams, José Navas and Serge Bennathan. Of Peggy Baker they stated, "Peggy Baker is excellence and generosity incarnate. She understands dance from the inside out. She has a huge presence and exquisite physicality in performance. A brilliant creator, a generous teacher and a profoundly honest artist, her passion and commitment have inspired and influenced generations of dancers at home and abroad. Through her teaching, Peggy has imbued ballet students with a modern dance sensibility and aesthetic; she has introduced new dance techniques and new ways of perceiving movement. Her artistry has been applauded by audiences in Canada and overseas. By continually reinventing herself, Peggy Baker sets a new standard for the art of dance."

In addition to being NBS' Artist-in-Residence, Peggy Baker is an internationally acclaimed contemporary dancer and teacher. Born in Edmonton, Ms. Baker studied acting at the University of Alberta, then moved to Toronto to pursue dance. She apprenticed with Toronto Dance Theatre, and began her professional career in 1974. She was a founding member and artistic director of the Toronto-based company Dancemakers, and toured internationally as a featured performer with both the celebrated Lar Lubovitch Dance Company and the White Oak Dance Project, created by Mikhail Baryshnikov. In 1990, she created her company, Peggy Baker Dance Projects. In 1992 Canada's National Ballet School's Artistic Director, Mavis Staines, invited Ms. Baker to assume the position of Artist-in-Residence at NBS, thus returning the teaching of contemporary dance to the School after an absence of 20 years. She is a recipient of numerous awards, including a Governor General's Performing Arts Award, the Order of Canada, the Order of Ontario, five Dora Mavor Moore Awards and an honorary doctorate from the University of Calgary.

"I'm absolutely thrilled for Peggy. She is an extremely talented and generous artist and I am so pleased that she is receiving this recognition and acknowledgement today. Her contributions to the international dance community are vast and her work with NBS students has brought incomparable depth to their dance education. I speak for everyone at NBS when I wish her a heartfelt congratulations," states Mavis Staines, NBS' Artistic Director and Co-CEO.

The Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts was created thanks to a generous donation to the Canada Council by Toronto businessman and philanthropist

Walter Carsen, O.C. It was presented for the first time in 2001, and is normally awarded annually on a four-year cycle: dance, theatre, dance, music.

About Canada's National Ballet School

Canada's National Ballet School is a world leader in the training of professional dancers and teachers. Dedicated to advancing the art of ballet, NBS develops dance professionals in a student-centred environment by weaving innovation with evolving practice in the finest teaching traditions. NBS graduates can be found as dancers, choreographers, artistic directors, teachers, and administrators in over 65 dance companies world wide, and in even more schools around the globe. NBS celebrated its 50th anniversary from September, 2009 – June, 2010.

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Canada's National Ballet School is grateful for the generosity of the following major supporters: The Government of Canada through the Honourable James Moore, Minister, the Department of Canadian Heritage, The Ontario Arts Council, the Government of Ontario, Active 2010, the City of Toronto, the British Columbia Arts Council, Human Resources and Development Canada.

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