



Canada's National Ballet School to Host 35 International Dance Training Organizations for Assemblée Internationale 2023, Centering Festival on Anti-Black Racism

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – TORONTO, ON (January 4, 2023) – Canada's National Ballet School (NBS) will host the fourth Assemblée Internationale (AI23) festival in Toronto, welcoming students and artistic staff from 35 international dance training schools and organizations. In recognition of the imperative for systemic change within the art form of ballet, AI23 will be centred on anti-Black racism.

Guests will be in Toronto from April 30 to May 6, 2023, with blended cast performances created by Canadian and international guest choreographers to celebrate the rich artistry of young dancers. Learning and rehearsals will take place online in the months leading up to the week in Toronto, followed by a call to action afterward.

“The full breadth of Assemblée Internationale 2023, which is strongly influenced by students’ input, will enable meaningful conversations about race, decentering whiteness, and equity within ballet. Discussions we hope will spark further and ongoing actions within the wider dance community,” said Mavis Staines, NBS’ Artistic Director and CEO. “The festival is an opportunity for leaders of the global ballet training community to come together to examine our accountability in advancing equity and create the change needed in how our beloved art form is practiced. To strengthen the language of ballet and to make it more relevant and powerful, the delivery and the creative process of ballet must resonate with and reflect the full diversity of our society.”

This year’s festival will be more student-centred than ever before, with a diverse international group of young leaders representing different organizations involved in the planning for AI23. In addition, a diverse working group of leaders has also been instrumental in the development of learning and programming activities. In addition to Staines, these include Melanie Person, Co-Director, The Ailey School; John Alleyne, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Artistic Advisor, Canada’s National Ballet School; Ernst Meisner, Artistic Director, Dutch National Ballet Academy; Christopher Powney, Artistic Director, Royal Ballet School; and Margaret Tracey, International Dance Educator.

With recognition that the seven days of the festival won’t be enough to cover the depth required of discussions on anti-Black racism in ballet, the festival will be in three phases for participating schools and organizations.

1. Educational lead-up (October 2022-April 2023) – will include an online learning series as well as online workshops with artists and choreographers.
2. In-person programming (April 30-May 6, 2023) – will engage students in collaborative rehearsals and performances, working with renowned choreographers, teachers, coaches and their peers.
3. Call to Action: The festival will conclude with a debrief and a clear call to action so that AI23 will provide the momentum for systemic evolution.

AI23 is made possible through the generosity of numerous supporters including **AI23 Leading Supporters** Linda Dagg & Kenneth Wiener, The Lawrence Schafer Foundation; **Special Thank You to** The Estate of Penelope Doob, The Estate of Cornelius Anderson Silber, NBS 60th Anniversary Circle, Heather* & Richard Thomson, OC (*Fondly Remembered); **Air Travel Support Provided by** Air Canada; **Sponsorship Support Provided by** Comerica Bank, Gordon Food Service, Harlequin Floors; **School Supporters** The Renette and David Berman Family Foundation, Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso, Pierre Lapointe Foundation, Joan Lozinski, OC & Jerry Lozinski, OC, Caron Thorburn Institute, The von Teichman Family, An Anonymous Donor; **NBS' Government Partners** Government of Canada, Ontario Arts Council, City of Toronto.

About Assemblée Internationale

Established by Canada's National Ballet School in 2009, Assemblée Internationale is an Olympic-calibre gathering of pre-professional dancers and artistic directors from training schools and organizations around the world. A unique and dynamic global event, Assemblée Internationale empowers young artists to develop as leaders and create meaningful connections with their peers. Collaboration is the essential and central value of each version of the festival.

For more information about the Assemblée Internationale or Canada's National Ballet School, please visit: <https://www.nbs-enb.ca/assemblee-internationale>

About Canada's National Ballet School

At Canada's National Ballet School (NBS), programming excellence, access and inclusion fuel our belief in sharing the transformative power of dance to change lives for the better. Since 1959, this is what has driven our commitment to making dance a part of all Canadians' lives—from the Olympic-calibre dancer training for a professional ballet career on the world stage to the young child or older adult who may be embracing the joy of dance for the first time.

- 30 -

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