



## **Donation to Canada's National Ballet School honours life, ballet love of Anna McCowan-Johnson**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Toronto, ON, June 9, 2022 – Canada's National Ballet School (NBS) is excited to announce the naming of our stage in honour of Anna McCowan-Johnson in appreciation of a leadership gift from Donald K. Johnson. The gift of \$3 million will also support NBS' three-year Dancing Opens Doors fundraising initiative.

"The Anna McCowan-Johnson Stage in the Betty Oliphant Theatre is a training and performance space that will continue to allow dancers, artists and community to learn and share creativity and artistry through the language of dance," says Mavis Staines, NBS' Artistic Director and CEO. "The gift and the stage naming celebrates Anna's life as a passionate dance educator who personally touched the lives of many young ballet dancers through her own Toronto-based company, Interplay School of Dance."

The Dancing Opens Doors initiative will be the foundation of growth at NBS by raising funds for areas of high need and significant potential. An equally clear priority of this initiative is opening our own doors to the NBS community in new ways, one of which is the inaugural NBS Block Party, a FREE open house event with a festival feel that successfully took place this past weekend on June 4.

"Dancing Opens Doors shares how dance engages our brain, body and spirit unlike any other activity, and how, through dance, we have countless opportunities to engage with diverse communities, lived experiences, cultures and more," says Staines. "The initiative will make more of those opportunities available and accessible to more Canadians.

"We are profoundly moved by Don's beautiful celebration of Anna's life through this generous gift."

Donald K. Johnson has made a remarkable cumulative gift of \$16 million that celebrates the amazing life and ballet love of his late wife Anna McCowan-Johnson. In addition to a gift to NBS of \$3 million, he has also gifted Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet with \$3 million for the establishment of the Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirant Program Fund; and The National Ballet of Canada with \$10 million for the Anna McCowan-Johnson New Creations Fund and the Anna McCowan-Johnson Director of Equity and Engagement.

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