

PRESS KIT

Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet



RWB | Sarah Davey photo: David Cooper

For more information, interviews with artistic staff or dancers and/or access to high resolution images and videos please contact:

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CANADA'S ROYAL WINNIPEG BALLET

Under the distinguished patronage of the Governor General of Canada

Founders: GWENETH LLOYD & BETTY FARRALLY

Artistic Director Emeritus: ARNOLD SPOHR, C.C., O.M

Founding Director, Professional Division: DAVID MORONI, C.M.

Artistic Director
ANDRÉ LEWIS

Executive Director
JEFF HERD

Senior Ballet Master
JOHNNY W. CHANG

Guest Ballet Mistresses
CAROLINE GRUBER &
CINDYMARIE SMALL

Music Director
& Conductor
TADEUSZ BIERNACKI

Pianist
ROSS HOUSTON

School
Director
ARLENE MINKHORST

Director of
Operations, School
DEBRA ZOERB

Associate School
Director
JORDEN MORRIS

School Principal,
Professional Division
JACQUELINE WEBER

Aspirant
Program Director
STÉPHANE LÉONARD

School Principal,
Recreational Division
KELLY BALE

Teacher Training
Program Director
JOHANNE GINGRAS

Artists

TARA BIRTHWISTLE VANESSA LAWSON
GAEL LAMBIOTTE** JAIME VARGAS*

AMANDA GREEN EMILY GRIZZELL JO-ANN SUNDERMEIER JENNIFER WELSMAN
DMITRI DOVGOSSELETS ALEXANDER GAMAYUNOV YOSUKE MINO

CARRIE BRODA MAUREYA LEBOWITZ CHELSEY LINDSAY SERENA SANDFORD
AMAR DHALIWAL

YAYOI EZAWA JACELYN LOBAY
LIAM CAINES TRISTAN DOBROWNEY THIAGO DOS SANTOS
HARRISON JAMES ERIC NIPP ROBERT PLESCHKE ZHEN GUO CHEN

Apprentices

SARAH DAVEY BETH LAMONT ALEX LANTZ

Aspirants

ERIN BRENNAN LINDEN KUITENBROUWER SEONG-A LEE SOPHIA LEE
CHENXIN LIU ALANNA MCADIE WON JUNG NOH ANNA O'CALLAGHAN
STEPHAN POSSIN CATHERINE RUTHERFORD YINAN WANG

Director of Production
BOB STEWART

Production Stage Manager
INGRID KOTTKE

*ON LEAVE **GUEST ARTIST

About the Royal Winnipeg Ballet

“The company has never looked more resplendent, more assured, or more ravishing... a triumph for the indefatigable prairie troupe, a jewel box of sumptuous dancing...at every moment, the energy and youth radiating from the stage is palpable.”

- The Vancouver Sun

“...In a time when everything is possible, dance is first and foremost an expression of joie de vivre, and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet does a marvelous job at capturing this essence.”

- Le Droit (Ottawa)

Versatility, technical excellence and a captivating style are the trademarks of Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet, qualities that have garnered both critical and audience acclaim. These qualities keep the RWB in demand as it presents more than 150 performances every season.

Founded in 1939 by Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Farrally, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet holds the double distinction of being Canada's premier ballet company and the longest continuously operating ballet company in North America. In 1953, the Company received its royal title, the first granted under the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. In 1958, Arnold Spohr was appointed artistic director. Under his direction the Royal Winnipeg Ballet grew and developed to take its place among the world's internationally renowned companies.

In 1996, André Lewis was named Artistic Director of Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet. A native of Hull, Quebec, Mr. Lewis has maintained a thirty year association with the RWB. He joined the RWB School's Professional Division in 1975, entered the company's corps de ballet in 1979 and was promoted to soloist in 1982. He was asked to join the artistic staff in 1984 and was appointed Associate Artistic Director in 1990. During his tenure as Artistic Director, Lewis has worked to revitalize the company's repertoire, especially with the commissioning of new full-length ballets such as *Dracula*, *Nutcracker*, *The Magic Flute* and *Moulin Rouge – The Ballet*.

The repertoire of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet embraces a wide array of dance styles, which includes classical story ballets and an intriguing collection of shorter dances. The RWB achieves a fine balance between the classical traditions of Europe and the boldness of contemporary ballet, which in turn has produced a unique style.

RWB | Since founded in 1939
Photo: David Cooper



The Royal Winnipeg Ballet first began to tour Canada in 1945; it completed its first American tour in 1954. Today, the Company spends 15 or more weeks a year on the road, performing in centres large and small. The RWB is compact in size, with 24 dancers, a production crew of seven and a semi-trailer that carries approximately 25,000 kilograms of equipment. For full-length ballets, the RWB travels with two semi-trailers and an expanded company. The RWB has performed in the United States, South America, Europe, the Middle East, Russia, Japan, Asia, Mexico and in every Canadian province.

The Company is also noted for artistic excellence. In 1980, Principal Dancers Evelyn Hart and David Peregrine won Bronze Medals at the World Festival Ballet Concours in Japan. That same year, at the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria, the Company earned a number of prizes - Hart received a Gold Medal for her performance, as well as the rarely-awarded Certificate for Exceptional Artistic Achievement; Peregrine won a Bronze Medal; Music Director Earl Stafford received a Gold Medal; and choreographer Norbert Vesak won the Gold Medal for *Belong*.

A return visit to Bulgaria in 1990 resulted in further international accolades for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. At the 14th International Ballet Competition in Varna, Principal Dancer Laura Graham was awarded a Silver Medal in the senior women's category. Her noncompeting partner, Stephen Hyde, received a Certificate of Excellence; and Soloist Mark Godden was presented with a second prize for new choreography for *Myth*. At the 1991 Second International Ballet Competition in Helsinki, Finland, Soloist Suzanne Rubio took home third prize in the senior women's division; Godden won again, sharing second prize for new choreography for his pas de deux *La Princesse et le Soldat*; and Company pianist Barbara Riske was awarded Best Pianist.

This October 2012, Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet will open its 72nd season in Winnipeg with the World Premiere of *Svengali*, a new work by critically-acclaimed choreographer Mark Godden. The Company will take this new production on the road with stops in Calgary, Medicine Hat, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, Minneapolis, Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver. In December, the RWB will share its cherished *Nutcracker* with audiences in Cleveland before helping Winnipeggers celebrate the holiday season with six performances of the classic at home. South of the border engagements include a tour of *Wonderland* to Atlanta, Georgia and *Moulin Rouge – The Ballet* touring to Texas, California, Michigan, New York State, North Carolina, South Carolina, Indiana, Virginia, Iowa, Michigan, Tennessee and Nebraska. In March, after a decade's absence, the haunting classic *Giselle* returns to the RWB stage in Winnipeg. The RWB's season will conclude in May with *Pure Ballet* a mixed repertoire of unadulterated ballet including Peter Quanz's *Luminous*.

RWB | Photo: Sarah Stoddart/Photo: Sarah Stoddart/Photo: Sarah Stoddart



Historical Highlights – 71 years of Excellence

- 1939** ▪The Winnipeg Ballet Club, founded by Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Farrally, gives its first performances.
- 1953** ▪**Winnipeg Ballet receives the first Royal charter granted by Queen Elizabeth II, becoming the first Royal ballet company of the Commonwealth.**
- 1959** ▪**Command performance for Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh.**
- 1965** ▪First Canadian company invited to represent Canada at the British Commonwealth Festival of the Arts performing in Wales, Scotland and England.
- 1968** ▪**RWB wins two Gold Medals at the Paris International Dance Competition** ▪First Western ballet company to tour the USSR and Czechoslovakia.
- 1973** ▪**Mikhail Baryshnikov guests with the RWB**, his first performance after defecting, with partner Gelsey Kirkland.
- 1974** ▪First Western company to visit Cuba since the revolution.
- 1975** ▪First Canadian company to tour Israel.
- 1980** ▪**Principal Dancers Evelyn Hart and David Peregrine win Gold and Bronze Medals at the World Ballet Concours in Japan** ▪At International Ballet Competitions in Varna, Bulgaria, Evelyn Hart is the first Canadian to win a Gold Medal and is singled out for her performance with a certificate for the Highest Artistic Achievements.
- 1981** ▪Artistic Director Arnold Spohr receives Annual Dance Magazine Award for outstanding contribution to the world of dance.
- 1987** ▪Evelyn Hart guest stars with the Odessa State Ballet, partnered by Bolshoi dancer Andris Liepa. The visit becomes the subject of a TV special, "Evelyn Hart in Russia".
- 1990** ▪RWB tours Europe and the Soviet Union (**the only Canadian ballet company to have toured the USSR**) ▪RWB performs for the first time in Hungary, East Germany and The Netherlands.
- 1995** ▪RWB makes off-continent tour to 13 Japanese cities.
- 1998** ▪Artistic Director Emeritus Arnold Spohr receives 1998 Governor General's Performing Arts Award at Rideau Hall ceremony and nationally televised gala.
- 2005** ▪RWB is awarded the 'Touring Artist of the Year Award' for the 2004/2005 season by the Canadian Arts Presenting Association.
- 2009** ▪RWB premieres *Quantz by Quanz* choreographed by Peter Quanz, the first Canadian to create a work for the legendary Kirov Ballet ▪**Six specially selected RWB dancers perform Quanz's *In Tandem* in New York, a piece commissioned for Works & Process at the Guggenheim.**
- 2010** ▪RWB shatters box office records, presenting *Moulin Rouge – The Ballet* to nearly 50,000 audience members from all across North America ▪**As a part of the Cultural Olympiad for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, the Company performed alongside The National Ballet of Canada before an international audience** ▪Former Artistic Director, Arnold Spohr passes away on April 12, 2010.

André Lewis, Artistic Director

Approaching nearly 36 years with Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet, 14 of them as artistic director, André Lewis has spent the majority of his career with Canada's first professional dance company whose growth he has nurtured on stages at home and around the world.

A native of Hull, Quebec, André Lewis began his dance training in Ottawa before being accepted into the Professional Division at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School in 1975. Under the direction of David Moroni he trained there until 1979, when he was asked to join the Royal Winnipeg Ballet Company. Known for his strength as a soloist and as a partner, Lewis enjoyed an accomplished career as a dancer for over ten years, performing with the RWB until 1990.

In 1996 Lewis was appointed artistic director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet serving as associate artistic director for the previous five years. Since then, Lewis has been the driving force behind the new and innovative works that have dramatically rejuvenated the Company's repertoire. As artistic director, Lewis has sought out original creations and commissioned choreographers from around the world, consistently revitalizing RWB's performance seasons.

In addition to his position as artistic director, Lewis is a sought-after ballet instructor and has guest taught throughout Europe and in Japan. He has set the ballet *Romeo & Juliet* on companies around the world, including Ballet de Marseille (France), Maggio Danza (Italy), Hong Kong Ballet and the Greek National Ballet. Lewis is currently on the board of directors of Dance/USA.



 Gael Lambiotte
photo: David Cooper

