



The School of  
American Ballet  
AT LINCOLN CENTER

**NEW YORK CITY BALLET  
AND THE SCHOOL OF AMERICAN BALLET  
ANNOUNCE NEXT GENERATION OF ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP**

**JONATHAN STAFFORD  
NAMED ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF NYCB AND SAB**

**WENDY WHELAN  
NAMED ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF NYCB**

*NYCB Resident Choreographer and Soloist Justin Peck  
to Take on Additional Role of Artistic Advisor for NYCB*

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**NEW YORK – February 28, 2019** – The Boards of Directors of New York City Ballet (NYCB) and its affiliate training academy, the School of American Ballet (SAB), today announced the appointment of Jonathan Stafford as Artistic Director of NYCB and SAB, and Wendy Whelan as Associate Artistic Director of NYCB, establishing the esteemed former NYCB dancers, SAB alumni, and prominent industry notables as the next generation of artistic leadership at two of the world’s most acclaimed and storied dance institutions.

At NYCB, Stafford and Whelan will serve in a new management structure designed to ensure that one of the world’s preeminent dance companies will continue to present performances of the highest artistic caliber while providing a supportive and nurturing environment for all of its artists, including more than 90 dancers and the 62-piece New York City Ballet Orchestra.

“New York City Ballet is proud to usher in this next generation of leadership with two of our own brightest luminaries at the artistic helm,” said Charles W. Scharf, Chairman of New York City Ballet’s Board of Directors. “Jonathan Stafford, whose 20-year career with the Company includes remarkable work as both an exemplary principal dancer and indispensable ballet

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master, has done an extraordinary job as our interim artistic leader over the past year. Wendy Whelan is one of the most important and beloved dancers in our Company's history who went on to build a dynamic post-NYCB career as an innovative and collaborative artist.

"I would also like to thank members of the joint search committee which was comprised of board members from both NYCB and SAB and co-chaired by Barry Friedberg and Barbara Vogelstein," added Scharf. "The boards of NYCB and SAB tasked the committee with gathering feedback from more than 220 artists, employees, and various stakeholders across the larger cultural community and then evaluating the broadest candidate pool as possible to establish our artistic leadership for the future. We are thrilled with the selection of Jonathan and Wendy, who have more than 50 years of combined experience with NYCB and SAB, and also bring fresh perspectives.

"I would also like to express my appreciation to Justin Peck, Craig Hall, and Rebecca Krohn who provided outstanding service to NYCB over the past year as members of the interim artistic team; and finally, I would like to thank the entire New York City Ballet community of dancers, musicians, ballet masters, production crew, staff, board, donors, and audience members who have been steadfast in their support of the Company during this transitional period," Scharf said.

Barbara Vogelstein, Chairman of the School of American Ballet's Board of Directors, added, "The shared artistic leadership of School and Company, originally modeled by George Balanchine, will ensure that our organizations continue to work seamlessly to maintain our distinctly American brand of classical ballet. Jonathan's accomplishments as a dancer and his long tenure with the School as a faculty member uniquely position him to lead SAB's efforts in producing the highest caliber artists for NYCB and companies around the world."

Candidates from across the globe submitted applications and others were nominated for consideration by multiple sources. From that pool of candidates, 20 of the most qualified individuals were invited to in-person interviews with the full search committee. Outside counsel and management of the entire process was led by Phillips Oppenheim, a leading non-profit consultancy firm.

Stafford, who has been serving in interim leadership roles for NYCB and SAB since December 2017, will begin his new positions immediately and Whelan will begin her new role with NYCB in mid-March.

## NEW YORK CITY BALLET

The new artistic leadership structure at NYCB – with both an Artistic Director and Associate Artistic Director – acknowledges the growing and evolving demands of an arts organization of its size and stature. NYCB is the largest dance organization in America and currently functions

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with an annual operating budget of approximately \$88 million and supports more than 450 employees, including both artists and administrators. The board concluded that the demands of maintaining the highest standards of artistic excellence and managing the artistic needs of the Company are best served with the complementary skills of Stafford and Whelan.

As Artistic Director for NYCB, Stafford will supervise all areas of the Company's artistic operations, working closely with NYCB Executive Director Katherine Brown, who is responsible for all administrative functions for both the Company and its home, the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center. Stafford will also continue to teach Company class and rehearse and prepare ballets for performance.

During his career with NYCB, Stafford performed an extensive repertory of leading roles in works by Balanchine, Robbins, Peter Martins, and numerous other choreographers, and was renowned for his outstanding partnering skills. As a ballet master for NYCB and teacher and educator for SAB, Stafford has played an integral role in the School and Company's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and also spearheaded a mentorship program which partners current NYCB dancers with new apprentices from SAB to help guide them through their first year with the Company. Stafford was also SAB's first-ever Professional Placement Manager, a role created to assist students with the transition into their professional careers.

In the role of Associate Artistic Director for NYCB, Whelan will focus on conceiving, planning, and programming NYCB's annual performance season; commissioning new work from choreographers, composers, and other artistic collaborators; and working closely with NYCB's dancers in the rehearsal studio, both teaching class and coaching numerous works in NYCB's unparalleled repertory.

During her 30-year career as a dancer with NYCB, Whelan performed roles in nearly all of the Company's heritage repertory of works by Balanchine and Robbins, and was also the dancer most choreographed on in NYCB history, creating leading roles in countless new works by such choreographers as Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp, William Forsythe, and numerous others. Whelan also had close working relationships with Christopher Wheeldon and Alexei Ratmansky, collaborating with the choreographers on several of their most critically-acclaimed works. Since leaving NYCB in 2014, Whelan has pursued a variety of multi-disciplinary projects with cultural organizations around the world.

The new leadership formation at NYCB will also expand the involvement of Resident Choreographer Justin Peck, who will add the role of Artistic Adviser to his portfolio. In this capacity, and at Stafford and Whelan's invitation, Peck will work closely with both of them on ideas for programming and new commissions. Throughout the past year, Peck played an important part in these areas as a member of the interim artistic team, and has been instrumental in several recent commissions for NYCB including Kyle Abraham's *The Runaway*, which premiered last fall to great acclaim; and a new work from choreographer Pam Tanowitz, who

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will create her first-ever ballet for NYCB during the 2019 Spring Season. Following the 2019 Spring Season, Peck will transition off NYCB’s dancer roster where he is currently a Soloist.

### SCHOOL OF AMERICAN BALLET

As Artistic Director of the School of American Ballet, Stafford will work closely with Chairman of Faculty Kay Mazzo and SAB Executive Director Carrie Hinrichs to ensure that the most promising ballet students in the United States have the training, resources, and guidance to develop into world-class artists and healthy, well-rounded individuals. While Whelan will not take on a formal leadership role at SAB, she is expected to guest teach with regularity.

Based at Lincoln Center, the School trains approximately 1,000 students per year and actively recruits nationally and abroad for the intermediate and advanced students who live onsite. Each year, New York City Ballet selects up to 10 students to join the Company as apprentices. All but two of NYCB’s current dancers trained at SAB. As Artistic Director, Stafford will be charged with maintaining the high quality of the School’s training and curriculum and support essential fundraising initiatives for scholarships and programming.

“For more than a decade, Jon has been an important figure in the life of the School, serving as a faculty member, creating the role of Professional Placement Manager, and spearheading the introduction of a formal mentorship program for apprentices,” said Barbara Vogelstein, Chairman of the School of American Ballet’s Board of Directors. “In all of these roles, Jon has been widely admired as a natural leader who is immensely invested in the success and growth of the School’s students. We are confident that the School will thrive under his leadership, and that students will also benefit tremendously from the presence of one of the greatest ballerinas of her generation, Wendy Whelan, in our classrooms.”

### ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP STATEMENTS

“For me there are no more treasured institutions than New York City Ballet and the School of American Ballet,” said Stafford. “My time with the School and Company began in 1996, and each year that I have spent here, I have grown as a person and artist. I have developed a deep appreciation for the organizations, their commitments to Balanchine, Kirstein, and Robbins, and all of the people – past and present – who comprise NYCB and SAB. I am immensely proud to serve as Artistic Director, and to stand with Wendy Whelan to lead us forward.

“This appointment represents a homecoming for me, and I could not be more thrilled to return to New York City Ballet,” said Whelan. “I feel a strong, personal need to be here and to share all that I have to offer to instill positive growth and change for the Company. Having served as a role model during my career as a dancer, I am excited to now have the opportunity to contribute

in a leadership capacity. The magnitude of what my appointment represents for female dancers, and all women, is of critical importance to me. The moment for change at New York City Ballet is now, and I am excited to help welcome it with Jonathan Stafford.”

“I am overjoyed to team up with Jonathan Stafford and Wendy Whelan, two individuals I admire greatly,” said Peck. “I look forward to working with them closely and to the future of New York City Ballet, and am especially excited for all that we will accomplish together to bring innovative new works to our stages, inspiring both artists and audience members alike.”

## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

### **Jonathan Stafford**

Stafford is a Ballet Master and a former Principal Dancer with New York City Ballet, and a permanent faculty member at the School of American Ballet. He has been leading the interim artistic team of NYCB since December 2017, working closely with the rest of the Company’s artistic staff to oversee and manage the day-to-day artistic life of NYCB.

During his performing career with NYCB, he danced an extensive repertory of featured roles in numerous ballets by George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Peter Martins, and Christopher Wheeldon, and also originated featured roles in works by Mauro Bigonzetti and Alexei Ratmansky. As an educator, Stafford served as a member of SAB’s guest faculty beginning in 2006 and joined the School’s permanent faculty in 2007. In 2015 he was named SAB’s first Professional Placement Manager, a role created to assist students with the transition into their professional careers. He graduated summa cum laude from the Fordham School of Professional and Continuing Studies with a B.A. in Organizational Leadership.

Born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Stafford studied at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet before first entering SAB in the summer of 1996. Named an NYCB apprentice in October 1998, Stafford joined the Company as a member of the corps de ballet in February 1999. He was promoted to the rank of Soloist in March of 2006 and became a Principal Dancer in May 2007. Upon retiring from performing in May 2014, Stafford was named one of NYCB’s Ballet Masters.

### **Wendy Whelan**

Whelan, one of the most acclaimed dancers of her generation, performed with New York City Ballet for 30 years. With a repertory of more than 50 ballets, Whelan danced virtually all of the major Balanchine roles, worked closely with Jerome Robbins on many of his works, and

originated roles in ballets by such choreographers as William Forsythe, Twyla Tharp, Alexei Ratmansky, Christopher Wheeldon, Jorma Elo, Lynne Taylor-Corbett, Wayne McGregor, Peter Martins, and numerous others. Following her retirement from NYCB in 2014, she has cultivated multi-disciplinary performance projects with a range of collaborators including choreographers Kyle Abraham, Joshua Beamish, Brian Brooks, Alejandro Cerrudo, Lucinda Childs, Daniele Désnoyers, Javier De Frutos, David Neumann, Annie-B Parson, and Arthur Pita.

Her awards include the *Dance Magazine* Award in 2007, and in 2009 she was given a Doctorate of Arts, honoris causa, from Bellarmine University in her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. In 2011, she received both the Jerome Robbins Award and a Bessie Award for Sustained Achievement in Performance.

Whelan began studying dance in Louisville with Virginia Wooton, a local teacher, and at the Louisville Ballet Academy. In 1981 she received a scholarship to the Summer Course at SAB and a year later, enrolled as a full-time student. She was named an apprentice with NYCB in 1984 and joined the corps de ballet in 1986. She was promoted to Soloist in 1989 and to Principal Dancer in 1991. Whelan's last performance as a dancer with NYCB, which took place on October 17, 2014, was a landmark evening that brought together generations of artists and audience members in a celebration of her remarkable performing career.

### **Justin Peck**

In addition to his role as Resident Choreographer and Soloist for NYCB, Peck is also one of the most acclaimed and in-demand choreographers of his generation, and has created more than 35 works for ballet companies around the world. His artistic collaborators include composers Dan Deacon, Bryce Dessner, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and Sufjan Stevens; and visual artists John Baldessari, Jules de Balincourt, Marcel Dzama, Shepard Fairey, Karl Jensen, and Sterling Ruby. He is the recipient of a 2018 Tony Award for his choreography for the Broadway revival of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*, and is currently collaborating with Academy Award-winning director Steven Spielberg on a new film adaptation of *West Side Story*, which Peck will choreograph. Peck will transition off NYCB's dancer roster, where he is currently a Soloist, at the end of the Company's 2019 Spring Season.

A native of San Diego, California, Peck studied at California Ballet and the School of American Ballet. He has danced with NYCB since 2007, where he performs a variety of repertory by George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Alexei Ratmansky, and Christopher Wheeldon, among others. Peck first choreographed as a student at SAB in 2005 and participated in a working session at the New York Choreographic Institute, an affiliate of NYCB, in the fall of 2009. He was named NYCB's Resident Choreographer, the second in the Company's history, in July 2014.

**About New York City Ballet**

New York City Ballet is one of the foremost dance companies in the world, with a roster of more than 90 dancers and an unparalleled repertory of modern masterpieces. The Company was founded in 1948 by the legendary choreographer George Balanchine and arts patron Lincoln Kirstein, and quickly became world renowned for its contemporary style and a repertory of original ballets that has forever changed the face of classical dance. In 1949 Jerome Robbins joined the Company as Associate Director and together with Balanchine created a vast and varied repertory that grew each season. From 1983 until his retirement in 2017, Peter Martins was the Company's Ballet Master in Chief. In 2009 Katherine Brown was named NYCB's first-ever Executive Director, a position created to oversee the administrative management of the Company and its long-time home, the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center. In February 2019, NYCB named Jonathan Stafford Artistic Director and Wendy Whelan Associate Artistic Director.

**About the School of American Ballet**

The School of American Ballet is widely regarded as America's leading ballet school. It is the official academy of New York City Ballet, trains almost all of New York City Ballet's dancers as well as dancers for companies around the globe, and is world renowned for the excellence of its classical training as established by the School's founders – the legendary teacher and choreographer George Balanchine and the visionary arts patron and writer Lincoln Kirstein. Students enrolled in the 2018-19 Winter Term hail from throughout New York City, 25 states and 5 foreign countries, and 42 percent identify as students of color. Approximately 20 advanced students embark on professional dance careers annually. Beyond the footlights, the School's alumni have made their mark over the past 85 years as founders, artistic directors, choreographers and teachers for dance companies and schools around the world. While closely affiliated with New York City Ballet, SAB is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with its own board, administration, budget, and fundraising. Peter Martins succeeded George Balanchine as Artistic Director and Chairman of Faculty in 1983. After Mr. Martins' retirement at the end of 2017, Kay Mazzo was named Chairman of Faculty. In February 2019, Jonathan Stafford was appointed Artistic Director to oversee the School's operations alongside Executive Director Carrie Hinrichs.