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THE NEW ZEALAND DANCE COMPANY APPOINTS WORLD CLASS NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Board of the New Zealand Dance Advancement Trust today announced the appointment of former Nederlands Dans Theater chief executive Janine Dijkmeijer as The New Zealand Dance Company's (NZDC) Executive Director; and renowned dance artists and directors Victoria (Tor) Columbus and James O'Hara, as Co-Artistic Directors.

Board Chair Sharon van Gulik welcomed the new team saying the company was well placed for its next phase of development, building on the incredible artistic and organisational legacy of co-founder and former Chief Executive/Artistic Director, Shona McCullagh.

"The Trust was founded on the ambition of creating a full-time contemporary dance company for New Zealand by bringing together a high-calibre community of dancers, creative collaborators, arts managers and supporters dedicated to creating inspiring new dance. In appointing Janine, Tor and James, we believe we now have the talent to grow the artform of contemporary dance, and take the company into its next era", van Gulik says.

Janine Dijkmeijer, currently living in the Netherlands as an advisor in the performing arts, says one of her missions in life is to be an advocate for the language of dance.

"I come from a family of researchers, innovators and doctors. I understand why I have come to be passionate about dance, because dance is deeply healing and always tells a true story. This language is nonviolent and global. Communicating through dance is playful and is never judgmental.

The New Zealand Dance Company is a jewel. I have known Shona through her films and it feels we are family. Shona's wide vision of what is possible within dance and communication has always been close to me. I have seen the company perform in the Netherlands and always been impressed with the high quality of dancers. I'm very much looking forward to working with the new artistic directors and the team in New Zealand - the possibilities are unlimited", she says.

Victoria (Tor) Columbus and James O'Hara who will co-lead the artistic vision and programme for the company, say they're excited about the opportunity to nurture the NZDC into the next - together.

"We are honoured to be appointed as the new co-Artistic Directors of the New Zealand Dance Company and are delighted to be working alongside Janine Dijkmeijer. We are looking forward to collaborating with the incredibly talented team at NZDC and are very excited to extend our

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connections with the wider artistic community that we adore and are inspired by. The dancers and makers of New Zealand have a unique sensibility forged by the artistic climate and the specific culture of Aotearoa. Grounded in the values that makes Aotearoa so unique, NZDC will continue to grow as a place of kindness, friendship and listening.

We would like to thank Shona for creating a unique platform for dance to grow in Aotearoa, and we want to acknowledge and thank all those that have woven their artistry and life into the company so far. We will honour the traditions already created, and are determined to continue growing NZDC as a place of research, discovery, discussion and adventure”, they say.

The New Zealand Dance Company Co-Founder and now Artistic Director of the Auckland Arts Festival, Shona McCullagh welcomed the appointments.

McCullagh says, *“I am thrilled with the calibre and integrity of the new leadership team, who I know will lead NZDC with surety into brilliant new territory. I have huge respect for Janine whom I have known for decades as one of the world’s great dance arts managers. James is a globally respected, inspirational dance wonder and the DNA of dance in Aotearoa runs deep in Tor’s veins as a beautiful dancer, teacher, mentor and choreographer. I know that as a team of world class dance experts they will hold the dancers’ wellbeing front and centre of the company, where it belongs”.*

The new leadership will commence part-time from June, with both roles moving to full time in 2021.

-ENDS-

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BIOGRAPHIES

Janine Dijkmeijer's inspiration is to challenge different art forms and to work across traditional boundaries. With her creative management skills and approach, she forms strategies for growing audiences, raising funds and strengthening the quality for artistic development in talent. She is



known for building a strong network of partners across various artistic disciplines. Janine loves to share ideas and co-create. She is a mentor and coach and is inspired by research and curious people.

Currently in the Netherlands, Janine works as advisor and mentor within the performing arts. She has formed a network called CASC Connect|Art|Sharing|concepts supporting an interdisciplinary and sustainable arts sector. In September 2019 Janine completed a five-year stint as CEO of Nederlands Dans Theater. The artistic voice of the company contained a diverse range of choreographers and creators amongst them Leon & Lightfoot, Crystal Pite, Ohad Naharin, Marco Goecke, Sharon Eyal, Hofesh Schechter, Jiří Kylián and Hans van Manen. Before this she was manager of the Dutch National Ballet (HNB and earlier ran multiple performing arts organisations. Janine is co-founder of international dance film festival Cinedans, developing and presenting a true collaboration between the media of dance and cinematography. In 2009 she co-founded Nicole Beutler Projects which realises interdisciplinary performances in the Netherlands and beyond.

In 1999 Janine ended her professional dance career. She has worked with many different companies and choreographers amongst them, Paul Selwyn Norton, Francesca Harper, Gideon Obarzanek and Gary Stewart (Chunky Move), Krisztina de Châtel, Rogie & Company, Conny Janssen, Leine & Roebana. From 2000 she taught contemporary dance at Amsterdam University of Dance, Codarts Rotterdam, Artez Dance and Theatre Arnhem and Royal Conservatoire the Hague. In 2002 Janine finalised a two-year programme in website building and design at SAE.edu

Victoria (Tor) Colombus is a New Zealand dance artist with a wealth of experience as a performer, mentor, educator and maker. She is driven by a love of connection through movement, and believes that connection to both self and others is a doorway to expressing authentic creative essence. Her inspiration is to nurture wellbeing and creativity through movement, research and communication. Those who have worked with Tor have described her as immeasurably kind, invested and with ample humility. Her passion is to encourage young dance artists to find and express their creative voice. With perpetual warmth and kindness, Tor's presence is a life force, and can be felt resonating throughout the world in many of the dancers and makers that have had the privilege to have worked with her.

Tor has created work for Footnote Dance Company, Tempo Dance Festival, The Body Festival, New Caledonia Festival, Sydney Lighthouse Project, Pacific Dance Festival and the New Zealand School of Dance Graduation Season. She has a previous association with the New Zealand Dance Company with the creation of her work 'The Fibonacci'. Tor was appointed as the Choreographic director for The World of Wearable Arts from 2015-2018 and has performed and choreographed with the organisation for a decade.

Since graduating from the New Zealand School of Dance in 2002, Tor has performed with Black Grace Dance Company, Australian Dance Theatre,



Michael Parmenter Commotion Company and has been a choreographic assistant for Dance North, Movement of the Human and Muscle Mouth Dance Company. Tor has dedicated the last 11 years working as a contemporary dance tutor at New Zealand School of Dance. She regards the connections she has built with these young artists as one of the most meaningful aspects of her work and she feels privileged to have mentored these NZSD graduates, who currently create and perform all across the globe.

James O'Hara has been a collaborator his entire career. With 18 years of experience as dance performer, teacher, choreographic assistant and director, James is immersed in dance communities all around the world. James is internationally renowned for his unique movement quality, work ethic and leadership abilities. His generosity and humility belie his extraordinary talent. His work in the studio and on stage has inspired countless colleagues and collaborators around the world. Compassionate and respectful, quietly commanding and gently demanding, James' experiences to date have seen him engaged from deep inside the process: Invested, amicable and supportive, he leads by example with focus, commitment and finesse.

From Fremantle, Western Australia, James was a member of Ballet Junior de Genève and recipient of a Princess Grace Foundation Bursary in 2004. He has worked with Ballet Preljocaj, Matthew Lutton (Malthouse, Melbourne), Ross McCormack (Muscle Mouth, NZ), Yang Liping (China), Marina Abramovic (USA) and Stephanie Lake (Australia). As a guest he has performed with Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet/Ohad Naharin, The Australian Ballet/Gideon Obarzanek, The Norwegian National Ballet, The Paris Opera Ballet and The Bolshoi Theatre. He has collaborated extensively as both performer and assistant with Marina Mascarell (Korzo Den Haag/Gothenburg Dans Kompani, Lyon Opera Ballet), Michael Keegan Dolan (Teac Damsa) including at the NZ Festival this year, and with, Damien Jalet and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *'Babel'* (Eastman, Belgium) and with Natalia Osipova at Auckland Arts Festival.

Growing up in Steps Youth Dance Company in Perth, with who he continued to collaborate with for over 16 years, fuelled a passion for working with young people in dance. He was assistant director at National Youth Dance Company Sadlers Wells London, and has taught at many universities and institutions throughout the world. James was a full time tutor at New Zealand School of Dance in 2017-18. James has made works with STEPS, Cross Connections Copenhagen, WA Academy of Performing Arts, University of Melbourne, New Zealand School of Dance, Transformation Montreal, Footnote Dance (alongside Eliza Sanders), and with the Royal New Zealand Ballet. James has been nominated for Helpmann, Green Room and Australian Dance Awards and is recipient of a West Australian Dance Award.