

**Northern
Ballet**

**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
NORTHERN BALLET**

Candidate Application Pack



Letter from the Chair

David Nixon OBE retires as Artistic Director of Northern Ballet after 20 exceptional years at the helm having transformed the Company into an internationally renowned commercially-thriving organisation. The last 15 months have been challenging for many arts organisations but Northern Ballet has come through in good artistic and financial health and is looking towards an exciting and creative future.

Based in Leeds with a major presence in the city, Northern Ballet is the widest touring ballet company in the UK, touring full-length narrative ballets, mixed repertoire and productions specifically for children. We have our own studio theatre in our purpose-built facility in Leeds programming dance from UK and International companies.

Northern Ballet relies on funding from Arts Council England (ACE) and this is an exciting time as we embrace the new ACE strategy, *Let's Create*, whilst developing our own new five-year vision and strategy for the Company. We also enjoy support from Leeds City Council and are a key part of the Leeds culture offering. During the periods of lockdown, Northern Ballet developed its digital strand creating many short and full-length films and this is an area that we would expect our new Artistic Director to embrace as part of their overall vision.

We appreciate that Artistic Directors come in all guises and we welcome and embrace applications from everyone with the skills and qualities detailed below. This is an opportunity for a creative, dynamic, and innovative artist to join Northern Ballet to work alongside an experienced team of professionals.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sir David Wootton
Chair, Northern Ballet

BACKGROUND

A Powerhouse for Inventive Dance

Northern Ballet is a powerhouse for inventive dance. We tell unexpected stories that move our audiences, creating innovative full-length ballets and mixed programmes to tour alongside pieces from existing repertoire. We aim to reach as many different people and places as possible with our passionate storytelling, mastery of classical dance technique and live music.

We have an absolute commitment to our leading role as an internationally facing world-class dance company where excellence and diversity are recognised and celebrated. Locally, we are working to establish the Leeds Dance Partnership to ensure that great dance is created and presented in a wide range of spaces in Yorkshire, the North and beyond and we are committed to diversifying audiences and extending the reach of our work, particularly in under-represented areas.

We continue to work with a wide range of partners to ensure that we are more financially resilient and agile with an increased range of income streams. 'The Creative Case for Diversity' remains at the forefront of all our work and as the new ACE strategy, 'Let's Create', comes into play we are looking at how to embed its four investment principles into all our work.

Northern Ballet believes that live music enhances performance and is committed to music being played live for almost all productions. Our freelance Northern Ballet Sinfonia is made up of 27 players who travel the length and breadth of the UK with the Company playing for over 150 performances every year. Our recently appointed Music Director, Jonathan Lo, is determined to ensure that music remains at the heart of our artistic vision.



BACKGROUND

A Unique Company

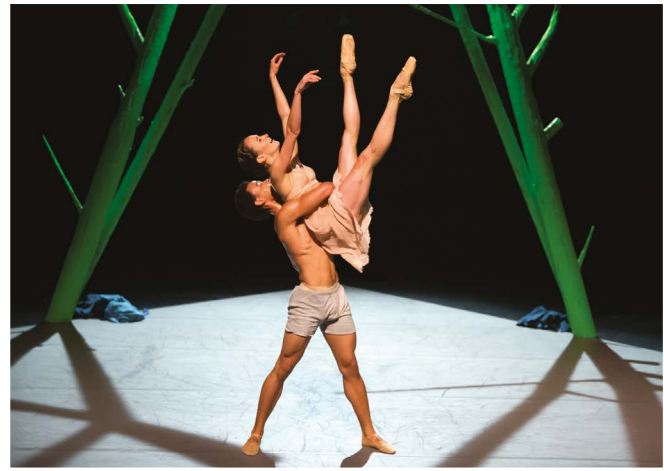
Northern Ballet was established in 1969 and has since grown to become one of the best-loved dance companies in the world. We take inspiration from an eclectic mix of classical dance, theatre, popular culture, literature and opera to develop new and original productions and to create new interpretations of popular classical ballets. We now present work in theatres, online, in cinema and on TV.

We have a track record of creating high-calibre narrative ballet productions working with expert teams of collaborators to create full-length ballets that are world-class and appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Our repertoire choices are bold and innovative. Recent work includes *1984*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, *Casanova* and *The Little Mermaid*. Our Children's Ballets were the first of their kind, created specifically with pre-school children in mind from start to finish and have reached live, cinema and TV audiences.

Northern Ballet has a loyal and supportive audience who are regular attenders at our performances around the UK. We aim to build on this and seek out new audiences, breaking down barriers to watching and participating in ballet and dance and ensuring we are accessible and engaging to as many people as possible.

We tour extensively throughout the UK and aspire to more frequent touring internationally, ensuring the highest quality experience for everyone we come into contact with. From November 2019, Northern Ballet started a year of celebrations for its 50th Anniversary. Planned activity was seriously curtailed due to COVID-19.

Northern Ballet is proud to deliver more performances than any other British ballet company throughout the UK and is recognised as the best value for money of the major companies. We support all ACE's objectives but are particularly committed to ensuring that more people have the opportunity to experience and participate in great art. The breadth of the tour is unrivalled by any other funded organisation and the geographic range of our tour remains hugely important to us for developing relationships with our audiences and funders.





Our vision for the period 2018/22 is to:

- Produce a programme of new creations and collaborations, with revivals of Northern Ballet Heritage work alongside the presentation of International Heritage work and increased gender equality across our creative collaborators.
- Continue to offer Children's Ballets, as an affordable access route to our work using titles that are classic family favourites but making them relevant to modern society and ensuring they reach the least engaged areas.
- Develop choreographers both from within the Company and externally and to build voices for the Company in the future. This approach not only supports choreographic development and the 'Creative Case for Diversity' but by working with young and diverse voices, experiencing today's world, we will reflect the ideas, trends and aesthetics of the UK of today.
- Develop digital projects that expand both the Company's output in this area of work but also use digital technology as a platform to break down barriers to engagement and develop dance in the digital arena, making use of cutting-edge technology to produce bold new work.
- Increase the quality, creativity, ethnic diversity and perceived status of the Company.

CULTURAL VALUES

At Northern Ballet we believe that dance has the power to change lives. Our ambition is to reach as many people and places as possible with our work. These are the values that flow through everything we do:

Creativity

Championing creativity is fundamental to our success. We are creative thinkers and strive to embed innovation across the organisation.

Innovation & Our History

We respect the heritage of this remarkable art form. We aim to push the boundaries of what is possible, to help ensure our craft is sustainable and relevant long into the future. The stories we tell may surprise and sometimes challenge, but through our work we aim to celebrate the human spirit and the talent of our artists.

Entertainment

We endeavour to provide the highest quality artistic experiences that move people in the UK and beyond, in the theatre and through digital. Entertaining, inspiring, and stimulating audiences is at the heart of what we do.

Diversity, Inclusivity & Accessibility

We strive to understand, respect and champion diversity in all its forms within our workforce, repertoire and practices. We are constantly working towards creating an inclusive and accessible environment for those who work with us, watch our live or digital work and take part in dance with us.

Nurturing

We believe in seeking out the best people, creatives and collaborators from around the world and encouraging talent across all areas. We aim to provide a supportive workplace to inspire motivated people who shine at what they do. Our high-quality training nurtures the professional dancers of the future to achieve their potential, whilst our outreach work finds the dancer in everyone.



A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

We are a multi-award winning and nominated company. From 2018 to March 2021, we have achieved significant recognition. Highlights include:

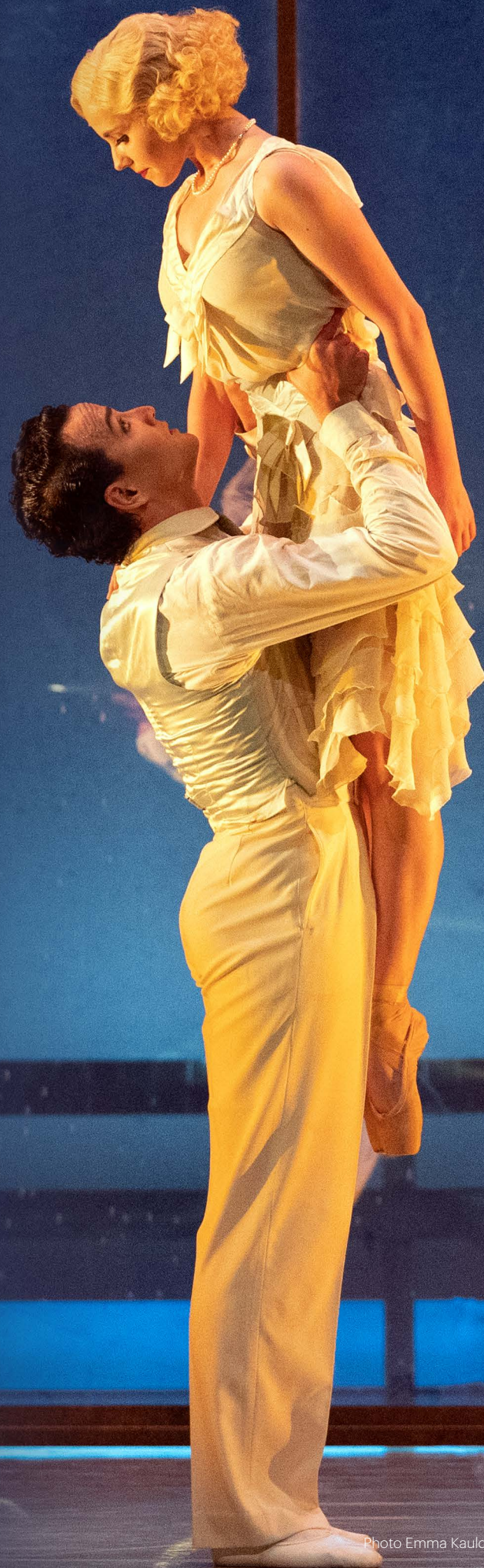
- Winner of Best Corporate Partnership for Excellence in Fundraising Emcees Arts and Cultural Awards 2018
- Highly commended in the 2018 CIM Marketing Excellence Awards for Best Content Marketing Campaign (*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*)
- Nominated in the 2018 Tenfold Awards Making a Difference category for *Expressions*
- Winner of the UK Theatre Achievement in Dance Award 2018
- Nominated for the Promotion of Diversity and Best Presentation of Touring Theatre Award in 2018
- Winner of the Outstanding Achievement in a New Dance Production award at the 2018 BroadwayWorld UK Awards for *The Little Mermaid*



- Javier Torres won the People's Choice Award at the One Dance UK Awards in 2019
- Winner of the Digital Innovation Award at the 2019 UK Theatre Awards
- Nominated for Excellence in Touring at the 2019 UK Theatre Awards
- Winner of Best Dance Short at the New Renaissance Film Festival 2019 (*Silenced* by Gavin McCaig)
- Short film *EGO* received two nominations and one win at international film festivals
- Winner of the 2020 Northern Marketing Awards (Best Use of Content Marketing) for our 'Pay As You Feel' Digital Season
- Winner of the South Bank Sky Arts Award for Dance 2020 (*Victoria* by Cathy Marston).
- Three nominations at the National Dance Awards 2021 (to be announced). This includes our 7th nomination for Outstanding Company.

Northern Ballet is widely reviewed in the regional and national press and we have received some excellent praise for our work:

- Dance Europe said "The Company that boasts the best dance actors in the world."
- '(Northern Ballet) have consistently proved themselves innovators and masters of narrative dance theatre' said Manchester Theatre Awards
- *Victoria* received four stars from The Guardian, Independent, Mail on Sunday, The Stage and Daily Telegraph
- In 2019 Dance Europe stated 'Northern Ballet deserves every honour in striving for excellent standards in repertoire that will engage audiences of all ages and backgrounds'
- *The Great Gatsby* received four stars in the Daily Telegraph and stating that 'It (NB) has never been a company to shrink from a challenge'
- *Dracula* received five stars in the Yorkshire Post who called it 'Flawless'
- *Cinderella* was very well received by regional press across the tour including Sheffield Telegraph who called it 'a dazzling performance'
- The Guardian said *Little Red Riding Hood* was 'an attractive introduction to ballet's magic'
- *Geisha* received four-star reviews in The Stage, The Times, The Guardian and The Telegraph, who called it 'a balletic jewel'
- The Daily Mail gave BBC Four's screening of *Dracula* four stars describing it as 'a fast-paced and atmospheric affair....must have been fantastic to see live'
- The Sunday Express awarded five stars to *EGO* – 'a stunning short film...exquisitely shot.'
- The Telegraph gave four stars to *Iconic Classics* at Leeds Playhouse calling it 'a testament to the physical and technical excellence of Northern Ballet's dancers'



DIVERSITY & EQUALITY

We are proud that 40% of our dancers are from ethnically diverse backgrounds and we continue to seek opportunities to further increase diversity throughout the whole Company. We continue with our long term strategy by developing the 'Spotted!' programme at local schools to ensure any child with the potential to pursue a career in ballet is nurtured and supported to do so. We target schools with ethnically and economically diverse pupils, whom we can appropriately support through our **Centre for Advanced Training** programme with financial assistance from the Department for Education's Music and Dance Scheme.

We work to an accessible pricing structure in all venues, with premium tickets available alongside entry prices of around £10/£15. We maintain this breadth of pricing, in addition to discounts for those experiencing economic barriers to attendance including the unemployed, students and disabled people. Our Children's Ballets continue to be priced accessibly to reduce barriers to attendance, with the average ticket price of around just £7.

We offer accessible performances for visually impaired patrons through audio described performances in partnership with VocalEyes. To increase the depth and quality of the experience, we offer Touch Tour Insight workshops with company dancers and highly experienced professionals. **This year we also created audio described versions of two of our digital dance films.**

We continue to deliver relaxed performances of Children's Ballets in the Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre and work with partner venues to encourage and support them to offer relaxed performances in their venues.

At our state of the art studios we deliver **Ability**, our dance course for adults with learning disabilities consisting of weekly sessions in dance technique and creative sessions, and **In Motion**, dance courses for wheelchair users.



THE ACADEMY OF NORTHERN BALLET



We offer opportunities for people from all walks of life and of all ages and ability to experience the joy and excitement of dancing. Our **Centre for Advanced Training (CAT)** delivered in partnership with the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, continues to grow and proves highly successful in providing high quality dance training to young people enabling them to succeed in entering vocational training. CAT graduates from the ballet strand have continued onto training at the Royal Ballet Upper School, English National Ballet School, Central School of Ballet, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Elmhurst, the School of Hamburg Ballet and National Ballet of Canada School.

Our **'Spotted!'** programme identifies gifted and talented young dancers through workshops in schools and in the community. Children are invited to attend free classes at Northern Ballet, in schools and in community settings to signpost them to audition for the CAT programme. Most of this work is targeted to schools with high levels of pupils with protected characteristics, particularly those from BAME heritage and low socio-economic backgrounds. Arts Awards will be offered to Intermediate Foundation students and Lower-Level CAT students with a target of 50% opting to take the Arts Award with a 90% success rate.

Our **Associate Division** offers training in classical and contemporary dance and is a less time intensive course with less focus on progression to a career in dance.

Our **Professional Graduate Programme** is an exciting one-year classical ballet finishing course designed to make the connection between full-time training and professional performance. Our unique combination of training and professional development techniques aims to give students the skills and knowledge needed to secure a first professional position. As well as receiving opportunities to perform in our full-length productions, students also play a pivotal role in delivering our children's ballets, experiencing the demands of being out on tour and performing in a range of different environments.

We also offer a range of **Open Classes** to children, young people, adults and older people of all backgrounds and ability.

WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

northernballet.com

digitaldance.org

northernballet.com/academy

leedsdancepartnership.com



THE ROLE

The Artistic Director sets and drives the artistic vision for Northern Ballet and provides inspirational leadership for its many and varied activities. They work with the Chief Executive and Heads of Department in the strategic planning for the organisation and act as an advocate for the Company promoting its vision, mission, ethos and values in all matters. The Artistic Director holds responsibility for recruiting, motivating, developing and advising on the careers of the Company's dancers and artistic staff.

The Artistic Director works in a joint leadership position with the Chief Executive, both of whom report to the Chair and Board.

The role has line management responsibility for the following departments/areas of the organisation:

- Academy
- Artistic Direction/Programme/Repertoire Planning
- Dancers
- Music (Artistic)
- Personnel, Management and Recruitment of dancers, artistic and academy staff



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Artistic Leadership

- Create and oversee implementation of an ambitious artistic vision that reflects the Company's history, maximises opportunities for the future, and positions the Company as distinctive and influential within the national and international dance scene.
- Ensure diversity and inclusion continue to be integral to the Company, through commissions, talent development, learning work and other creative projects.
- Devise and curate the artistic programme for live performance, touring and digital activity in consultation with the Chief Executive and Heads of Department, ensuring artistic excellence, financial stability and audience development.
- Maintain and develop Northern Ballet's tradition of narrative story-telling in its ballets, understanding the need for, and creating dedicated supporter-focused content.
- Research, commission and brief choreographers, designers, composers, and other collaborators in the creation of new work for live or digital performance.
- Recruit, select and retain talented dancers and artistic staff to ensure the quality and reputation of the Company are maintained.
- Collaborate with the Music Director in ensuring that the work of the Northern Ballet Sinfonia remains at the heart of our work both in the pit and in its own right.
- Contribute to the overall strategic planning and direction of the organisation, ensuring the artistic programme fully reflects the Company's vision and resources.
- Work closely with the Chief Executive and Heads of Department as appropriate, to develop and manage programming and commissioning budgets.
- Oversee the work of the Academy ensuring it remains an integral and financially robust part of the Northern Ballet offer.
- Lead the evaluation of artistic activities, creating a culture of learning and improvement.
- Keep up-to-date with the work of other ballet companies, current ballet practice, and the development of the art form.

Personnel management and development

- Inspire and motivate staff and dancers, creating a positive working environment.
- Lead the approach to skills and talent development, advising on careers and supporting and enabling artistic staff, dancers and dance students to achieve their potential through creating new opportunities within the artistic vision.
- Line manage the ballet staff, Associate Director of the Academy, dancers and Music Director, taking responsibility for performance management and professional development.
- Recruit Ballet Staff, choreographers, designers, composers, guest teachers, music staff and other collaborators as required.
- Lead and manage artistic teams to plan and collaborate on productions.
- Lead and manage the Academy and its staff.
- Ensure the fitness and welfare of the dancers and contribute to the Company's health and well-being policies.

Communication and Representation

- Communicate the artistic vision effectively so that it is understood throughout the Company.
- Build and maintain good working relationships and collaborations with artistic organisations regionally, nationally and internationally to further the Company's work and enhance its reputation and profile.
- Develop links with other ballet schools to contribute to the development of young dancers, choreographers and training.
- Work with the Chief Executive and Director of Communications & Digital on audience development initiatives, strengthening the links between programming and diversifying audiences.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Communication and Representation cont.

- Work with the Chief Executive and Director of Development to create and develop new funding opportunities for the Company, contributing to funding applications and bids as appropriate.
- Act as host at sponsorship and marketing events on behalf of the Company as required.
- Work with the Chief Executive to identify new opportunities for international touring.
- Work with the Chief Executive to identify opportunities for national and international co-productions.
- Act as an advocate for the work of the Company and for Ballet as an art form.
- Represent the Company at regional, national and international events.
- Represent the Company in the press and media including building positive relationships with key dance critics and press.

Governance

- Attend Board meetings and other Sub-Committee meetings as required.
- Brief the Board on artistic progress, issues and risks.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

The ideal candidate will be a recognised and respected member of the dance world with an established reputation for quality productions as Director, Choreographer, Dancer or Producer in ballet.

The role requires the following experience, skills, knowledge and qualities:

Experience

- Experience of commissioning, creating, producing and/or curating imaginative programmes and projects.
- Significant experience and a track record of delivering work of exceptional quality and excellence.
- Strong creative track record either directly through choreographic work or through acclaimed creative producer/director roles.
- Experience of initiating and maintaining successful creative relationships and collaborations.

Skills

- The ability to set and drive a dynamic, ambitious and evolving artistic vision for Northern Ballet.
- The ability to lead and motivate a team.
- Proven ability to nurture talent and develop potential with a demonstrable commitment to the artistic development of the Company and its artists at all levels.
- The ability to balance risk-taking and artistic and financial viability.
- The ability to contribute to the Company's strategic planning.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills with the ability to make the artistic vision accessible to all.
- A leader capable of collaborative working on an international scale.
- Proficiency in English (verbal and written), as the working language of the Company.

Knowledge

- Extensive knowledge of current ballet and dance practices in the UK and internationally, with a wide network of national and international contacts.
- An understanding of the training of classical dancers.
- An understanding of the administrative and financial aspects of a company, with a track record of working to budgets and deadlines.
- An understanding of the health and safety and training needs of dancers.

Qualities

- A pragmatist who can work as part of the team to establish and deliver a quality repertoire within the Company's financial and commercial constraints.
- An enthusiastic and passionate advocate for Northern Ballet.
- Generous in offering opportunity to develop talent and careers.
- Interest in, and commitment to supporting the fundraising initiative.
- A natural capacity for inspiring confidence and developing productive relationships.
- Committed to bringing equality, diversity and inclusion to all areas of Northern Ballet's work.
- Interest in working collaboratively with other arts organisations in Leeds and the North.
- Interest in seeking out dynamic collaborations nationally and internationally and developing the Company's profile overseas.

Desirable

- Experience of leading a touring company and developing repertory programmes.
- Experience in overseeing creations and choreographers.
- Experience of working with and reporting to a non-executive Board.
- Experience of recruiting and managing staff.
- Understanding of the subsidised arts sector.

HOW TO APPLY

Please apply in writing telling us why you want to be the Artistic Director of Northern Ballet and the qualities and experiences you would bring to the role and how those meet the Person Specification. Letters should be no longer than 3 pages. Please also include your CV (max. 2 pages) and completed Equal Opportunities form. Links to videos of your work included in your application will be welcomed.

Applications should be emailed to Heather Newill, Director AEM International, at hnewill@aeminternational.co.uk. For an informal and confidential conversation about the role, please call Heather Newill on +44 (0) 1728 660026.

If you would find it more accessible to complete this application in a different format, video applications of up to 5-minutes in length would be welcomed.

Shortlisted candidates will have the opportunity to engage with the Company prior to an interview with the Appointment Committee.

