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MACBETH

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MACBETH

IN ASSOCIATION
WITH AVIS

A co-production with West Australian Ballet

Choreography Alice Topp

Music Christopher Gordon

Set and lighting design Jon Buswell

Costume design Aleisa Jelbart

Dramaturg Ruth Little

Intimacy Director Megan Adams

Assistant to the Choreographer Adam Bull

Conductor Hamish McKeich

Musicians String ensemble from the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

ROYAL NEW ZEALAND BALLET

Artistic Director Ty King-Wall

Executive Director Tobias Perkins

Rehearsal Directors Clytie Campbell, Laura McQueen Schultz, Nicholas Schultz

Principals Ana Gallardo Lobaina, Joshua Guillemot-Rodgerson, Kihiro Kusukami, Mayu Tanigaito, Laurynas Vėjalis

Soloists Zacharie Dun, Dane Head, Shaun James Kelly, Katherine Minor, Branden Reiners, Jemima Scott, Kirby Selchow, Gretchen Steimle

First Artists Cadence Barrack, Catarina Estévez Collins, Jennifer Ulloa, Rose Xu

Artists Timothy Ching, Muyheon Choi*, Joshua Douglas, Ethan Dwyer, Emma Gavan, Jake Gisby, Tessa Karle, Callahan Laird, Padraic Lum, Angus O'Connell, Olivia Platt, Ruby Ryburn, Jordan Sawtell, Ema Takahashi, Shanwen Tan*, Hannah Thomson

Todd Scholar Lyn Lin

Friedlander Foundation Scholars Breyah Takitimu, Charlotte Willis

Student performers† Blake Russell, Marco Russell (Wellington), Kieran Fish, Finlay Hunter (Auckland), Liam Templeton (Dunedin), Aneel Bartlett, Ming Conway (Christchurch)

**Student seconded from the New Zealand School of Dance*

†New Zealand School of Dance 2026 Associates, performing the role of Fleance

Cover and this page: Principal Ana Gallardo Lobaina and Soloist Branden Reiners, photograph by Ross Brown.



FOR CASTING,
PLEASE SCAN
THE QR CODE

Welcome



Prepare yourself for a tangled web of greed, deception, and betrayal, where all is not well beneath the surface, and scratching beneath a thin veneer of beauty reveals a dangerous darkness lurking beneath. Welcome to the Royal New Zealand Ballet's world premiere of Alice Topp's *Macbeth*, in association with Avis, which opens our 2026 Season.

Shakespeare had such a gift for capturing the essence of human nature in all its complexity, revealing to us our flaws, insecurities, and vulnerabilities. The themes he explored in plays such as *Macbeth* – unbridled ambition, the temptation of power, self-destruction, and the nature of evil - remain as prevalent and salient today as they were when they were written. It is also what makes them such fertile creative ground for adaptation through the language of dance.

An incredible creative team have been at Alice's side for the realisation of this work. Her long-time collaborator Jon Buswell has conjured an awe-inspiring set and lighting design, and a huge acknowledgment must go to our very own Technical Director, Andrew Lees, who has brought their vision to life on stage. Dramaturg Ruth Little has been invaluable to Alice as she has interpreted Shakespeare's prose and poetry through a movement vocabulary, while costume designer Aleisa Jelbart deftly captures the aesthetic of contemporary high society. Finally, composer Christopher Gordon has delivered a bold, genre-defying score, which runs the musical gamut from heavy metal to big band and swing! The score will be accompanied live by a string octet of musicians from the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, led by the masterful Hamish McKeich.

By the pricking of my thumbs,
something wicked this way comes.
Prepare yourself, if you dare, for the
wickedness that is *Macbeth*.

TY KING-WALL
Artistic Director

Nau mai, haere mai



Nau mai, haere mai. Welcome to *Macbeth* and to the beginning of an exhilarating new year with the Royal New Zealand Ballet.

The production you will witness tonight is the RNZB at our most ambitious and bold, bringing a level of theatricality and drama to the stage that we hope will set a new bar for our company.

Being able to back the vision of these exceptional artists to create innovative and boundary pushing work is down to the exceptional circle of supporters and collaborators we are proud to call our family.

Firstly, we recognise our co-production partner, West Australian Ballet, who have made a substantial investment in this season. We hope it delivers similar impact in Perth later this year and we are delighted to usher this ballet into the world with them as our partner. We also acknowledge our friends at both the 2026 Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts, and Te Ahurei o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival. It is a thrill for us to return to both festivals for the first time since 2018 and to contribute to the excitement they generate in our communities.

This is the second production backed by the Haythorne Circle whose support is directed towards building distinctive new full length works for the RNZB. Sharing the process of creating new work with them continues to bring us such joy after the knockout success of *The Nutcracker* last year. We are hugely thankful for their

continued support as we turn our eyes towards 2027 and a major new commission for Christmas next year.

The RNZB aspires to and reaches new heights of artistic achievement and impact across the community thanks to public and private investment, working in harmony. This year, Avis has a special association with *Macbeth*, and we are grateful to them and to all our sponsors who see partnership with the RNZB as an essential part of their business. Our performances are also underpinned by significant Crown investment and we acknowledge Manatū Taonga for their continued support. Across all areas, on stage and off, so many people and organisations play a part in our success, including Pub Charity Limited and the Lion Foundation, and many more.

Following the conclusion of this tour we look forward to sharing the stage with international colleagues at London's Royal Opera House, supported by the RNZB Foundation, and to returning to regional centres with original children's ballet *Dazzlehands*. Whether at home or abroad, our mission to uplift Aotearoa New Zealand and express who we are through ballet drives all our endeavours. Thank you to all our supporters and to all of you who have joined us on this journey. We hope you enjoy this performance.

TOBIAS PERKINS
Executive Director



Welcome from Avis

Avis is proud to help the Royal New Zealand Ballet bring *Macbeth* on tour to audiences throughout Aotearoa. This bold reimagining of Shakespeare's timeless tragedy exemplifies the company's commitment to artistic excellence, creative courage, and storytelling that resonates deeply with contemporary audiences.

As you take your seats, we celebrate the power of the Royal New Zealand Ballet to inspire, ignite, and bring people together - on the stage, on the road, and within the communities it reaches.

Enjoy the show.



TOM MOONEY

Managing Director for Avis Budget Group Pacific



Characters

In Shakespeare's play the Thanes and Lords are male, but in a contemporary context gender-blind casting more accurately represents the social world.

MACBETH

an ambitious and capable political prodigy; destined for high office and possessed of a moral compass, but impatient for success and in thrall both to his wife and to the malign influence of social media

LADY MACBETH

a shrewd and seductive partner to Macbeth; hungry for power at any cost, forcefully persuasive, and, at first, scornful of consequence

BANQUO

a rising political star and loyal ally to Macbeth, whose strong ambition is restrained by conscience

INFLUENCERS

masters of media and dangerously compelling messaging

FLEANCE

Banquo's young son

DUNCAN

head of state and mentor to Macbeth; a steady, purposeful and trusting leader

MALCOLM

Duncan's son and political heir

DONALBAIN

Duncan's second child

MACDUFF

a former ally of Macbeth, who flees following Banquo's murder, and whose family is slaughtered on Macbeth's order

LENNOX

a minister in Duncan's, and later Macbeth's, government; loyal to Macbeth until the murder of Macduff's family

ROSS

a minister in Duncan's, and later Macbeth's, government; an enthusiastic sharer of news

ANGUS

a minister in Duncan's, and later Macbeth's, government; quick to recognise the danger represented by Macbeth

GUESTS, ASSASSINS, HENCHMEN, POLITICIANS

The Story

ACT 1

Macbeth is the leader of a political faction vying for power over a rowdy and hostile opposition. In partnership with his close ally Banquo, Macbeth takes on his opponents in a heated debate, and forces them into submission. On their way to celebrate their victory, Macbeth and Banquo encounter three social media influencers, whose ambiguous prophecies seem to point Macbeth towards the fulfilment of his wildest dreams: party leadership followed by leadership of the nation. But there's a catch: according to the prophecy, Macbeth's supremacy will be short-lived, while Banquo's descendants will achieve unimaginable power in generations to come. Later, at a bar, Macbeth's political allies Ross and Angus inform him that the first of the influencers' prophecies has come to pass: he has been promoted by the incumbent head of state, Duncan, to party leadership. Duncan duly praises Macbeth and Banquo, but dashes Macbeth's hopes by publicly naming his son Malcolm as his own successor.

Macbeth communicates the day's strange events to his wife Lady Macbeth, who immediately seizes on the prospect of the ultimate goal for herself and her husband. By murdering Duncan and implicating Malcolm in the crime, she knows Macbeth can claim the prize of power for himself. As the couple prepares to welcome Duncan to their home, Macbeth falters at the thought of killing his leader and mentor. But Lady Macbeth goads

and berates him, and her appetite for power ultimately wins Macbeth over. She concocts a lethal poison and delivers it to Duncan at a dinner party in his honour. Torn between his commitment to his wife's desires and his conscience, Macbeth clumsily attempts to revive the dying Duncan, and the couple are smeared with blood which Lady Macbeth insists they can wash away completely. Horrified, suspicious and under suspicion themselves, Malcolm and his sibling Donalbain, along with Duncan's loyal supporter Macduff, flee the scene of the crime. Macbeth names himself head of state and assumes the leadership.

ACT 2

The newly unelected leader meets privately with Banquo to discuss the influencers' prophecy. But, already growing isolated under the strain of his crime and the prospect of losing power to Banquo's descendants, Macbeth determines to have his friend killed and so guarantee an unhindered dictatorship. He summons hitmen to do the job, but hides the truth from Lady Macbeth. Banquo is slaughtered in a manufactured pool-room brawl, but his son Fleance escapes. The murderous couple, meanwhile, host a sumptuous banquet to mark Macbeth's succession. The banquet begins, but Macbeth is stricken by the sudden appearance of Banquo's ghost. Despite Lady Macbeth's urging, he falls into seeming madness and the banquet is

abandoned. Unable to sleep or to relish the fruits of their actions, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth search for solace but cannot find it.

Elsewhere, Lennox, Ross and Angus share their suspicions about Macbeth's role in the murders of Duncan and Banquo, which have upended the governance of the nation. Macbeth, meanwhile, increasingly paranoid and credulous, returns to the influencers for further predictions of his future. In a series of cryptic and contradictory messages, they assure him that he need fear none but Macduff, and that his strength cannot be vanquished if he seize the nearest way to absolute power. Taking this to mean he should obliterate his enemies, he determines to kill Macduff and his family. But his plan fails; though Macduff's loved ones are annihilated in a car 'accident', Macduff escapes and joins Malcolm in exile. Ross informs him that his family has been murdered, and Macduff turns his grief and rage towards Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth, her mind fractured by guilt and horror, sleepwalks alone and unreachable, and finally takes her own life. Exiled from his society, his companions and his heart, a reckless and despairing Macbeth takes refuge in his fortress home, but Lennox, Ross, Angus, Malcolm and Donalbain descend upon him. Still believing himself untouchable, Macbeth is stunned to meet Macduff, who metes out rough justice against the usurper, leaving Fleance with the final word.

Image / Principal Ana Gallardo Lobaina. Hair and make-up by Amy McLennan, jewellery by Vhernier, courtesy of Partridge Jewellers.





From the choreographer

The seed of our *Macbeth* story was first sown six years ago in 2020, but really, it has been a lifetime journey in the making. I first fell in love with the story after studying it at school and treasured the hardback copy I received from my mother, inscribed with her maiden name from her own school days in the 1960s. Having had the privilege of experiencing several productions over the years, from Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* to a German adaptation in Oldenburg, my love for the story has continued to grow.

In 2020, during a Melbourne Covid lockdown, longtime collaborator and friend Jon Buswell and I got our brains busy in what was otherwise an inactive time for us creatives. The quiet times gave us an opportunity to dwell on the wonderful possibilities of creating our first narrative ballets and what those stories might be. I don't think I ever really entertained any other story at the time, no matter how many titles were on the table. *Macbeth* always ticked all the emotional boxes that led me to pursue dance, physical

Image / From left: Soloist Branden Reiners, First Artist Rose Xu, Artist Ema Takahashi, First Artist Catarina Estévez Collins, Artist Joshua Douglas, Artist Tessa Karle, First Artist Cadence Barrack (on table), Artist Paddy Lum. At back: Artists Hannah Thomson and Jake Gisby, Soloist Jemima Scott, Artist Jordan Sawtell and Soloist Kirby Selchow, photograph by Stephen A'Court.

expression and storytelling from an early age: a psychological story about the human condition, about love, guilt, grief, doubt, ambition, passion and pain. They were qualities that many of my favourite ballets shared and those stories, like *The Dying Swan* or *Romeo & Juliet*, were the very reason I was moved to pursue dance. In fact, many of the famous traditional ballet tragedies - *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, *Onegin*, *Manon* – share similar key qualities of love, loss and intense emotional drama, making *Macbeth* an obvious choice to me. And yet, there are few ballet adaptations of the story in the world.

Power, corruption, and the creation and dissolution of alliances and factions are themes we might associate with current political dynamics.

Unlike the synonymous unions of Tchaikovsky and ballet, Prokofiev and *Romeo & Juliet*, Stravinsky and *The Firebird* for example, there is no adaptation of Shakespeare's play pairing music and dance which has become a repertoire favourite. This only strengthened the appeal, as it gave me freedom to roam in the infinite possibilities of how to bring this story to life in movement, and allowed me to explore free of the constraints of historical comparisons. Written by Shakespeare in 1606, I was most excited to explore the relevance of the play over 400 years later, in our own disturbed times. Replacing kings,



Image / Choreographer Alice Topp and Soloist Zacharie Dun, photograph by Stephen A'Court.

thanes, noblemen and soldiers with politicians, power brokers and their factions gave the story new resonance in today's climate of political volatility and instability. I wanted to create a world which we could all relate to. The famous 'weird sisters' or witches quickly shape-shifted into a social media presence, transforming into Influencers; unnatural powers altering outcomes. The introduction of the technological and media-driven world gave us a vocabulary that corresponds directly with *Macbeth's* paranoia; the constant observation and surveillance of celebrity, the spectacle of authoritarianism, the power of social media and its ability to shape individual and group behaviour made fertile ground for the unfolding of our modern-day *Macbeth* story. Power,

corruption, and the creation and dissolution of alliances and factions are themes we might associate with current political dynamics. Macbeth - a young, charismatic and popular player - ambitious and credulous, in thrall to his shrewd and seductive wife, plays with the fire of propaganda and passion, both of which inevitably lead to his downfall.

Replacing kings, thanes, noblemen and soldiers with politicians, power brokers and their factions gave the story new resonance in today's climate of political volatility and instability.

With the ultimate 'power couple' in mind, our Lady Macbeth developed into a formidable, chic and alluring socialite with an elevated status in her own right. Dining on power, the pairing with her popular politico husband elevates her on the celebrity and societal ladder. Both driven and desirous, the couple are a captivating A-list duo; everyone either wants to be them or be around them.

Political Leader Duncan is a distinguished gentleman who over years of solid leadership has earned the trust and respect of his party. Macbeth, a party prodigy, receives a promotion for winning a recent parliamentary bill but soon after learns of Duncan's succession plan, ensuring his son Malcolm replaces him in the top job. Off the back of a wild prediction by some popular Influencers forecasting Macbeth's promotion to

the leadership, the couple take matters, and time, into their own hands. Goaded and persuaded against his initial instincts, Macbeth commits to annihilating Duncan and seizing the leadership for himself.

Banquo too, Macbeth's trustworthy and loyal friend ultimately faces the full brunt of Macbeth's paranoid wrath. As Macbeth begins to spiral psychologically after his acts of violent betrayal his growing fears of discovery amplified by constant surveillance, prompt further murders in an attempt to suppress the truth. The once glamorous power-couple rapidly become a viral news story for all the wrong reasons. The fall is precipitous for those at the top, as their world unravels in an increasingly hostile public arena.



Image / First Artist Jennifer Ulloa, photograph by Stephen A'Court.



Image / Principal Ana Gallardo Lobaina, photograph by Stephen A'Court

It's thrilling to explore the contradictions of human personality - the good and the bad – as we can all relate to it.

One aspect of the story that I've always been attracted to is the complexity of the protagonists' characters. Most ballet stories house 'good versus evil' characters; Aurora and Carabosse, White Swan and Black Swan, Cinderella and the evil stepmother and sisters, but Macbeth's protagonists are not purely or merely evil: they are to different degrees possessed by the horror of their actions and the voices of their own consciences. Plagued by the murders

committed, both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are ultimately undone by their own minds. It's thrilling to explore the contradictions of human personality - the good and the bad – as we can all relate to it. We are all, at times in our lives, unsettled or at odds with our own intrusive thoughts and conflicted feelings. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth make irreparable choices and act on their darkest thoughts. By bringing chaos and violence into their practice of politics and taking the lives of others, they end up losing their own, paying the ultimate karmic price.

ALICE TOPP, JANUARY 2026

From the dramaturg

William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a short sharp shock of a play, written over 400 years ago and as powerfully relevant today as it was in the time of King James I and the Scottish witchcraft trials to which it refers. Though Shakespeare's tale of the violent usurpation and chaotic rule of an 11th-century king dramatically altered historical fact to flatter the new King of Scotland and England, his narrative continues to speak with brilliant intensity to our times.

A great play - or any great story - endures in popular imagination because its structure and its substance both compel us in their clarity and specificity, and at the same time retain enough mystery and ambiguity to make space for our own hopes and fears. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is our *Macbeth* too; as capable, credulous, ambitious and impulsive as any violent authoritarian leader of recent or current times. And perhaps as importantly, his choices and actions, and those of his persuasive partner in crime, Lady *Macbeth*, catalyse a disturbance to the social order in a manner becoming

increasingly familiar to us all. In a perversion of the wing-flapping butterfly metaphor of chaos theory, here a 'serpent' strikes in a dark bedchamber, and the act reverberates and is amplified throughout the world.

Shakespeare was of course a master of language and the play of words. But of all his plays, perhaps *Macbeth* most urgently lends itself to dance and movement. *Macbeth*'s initial crime - the murder of his guest and mentor Duncan - quickly spirals into tyranny, drawing everyone bodily into a vortex of suspicion and slaughter, fuelled by the goading of his wife and the prophecies of the 'weird sisters'.

...the characters are caught in a widening vortex of disorder fuelled by suspicion and paranoia, conspiracy theories and guilt...

Macbeth is a story of propulsive and unstoppable motion, influence, inflammation and repercussion; a tale of embodied desire and overreach, of political, social and natural realms convulsing at injustice and cruelty, at the end of which the protagonists meet their fate exposed and alone. It is the story of our troubled times set in motion.



Image / Principal Kihiro Kusakami, Soloist Branden Reiners and Artist Padraic Lum, with Artists of the RNZB, photograph by Stephen A'Court.

I think of the movement qualities of Macbeth as arising from 4 'Rs': rapture, ritual, rupture and repercussion. In Shakespeare's text, the word 'rapt' is repeatedly used to describe the protagonist's response to the witches' prophecies. In a contemporary context, Macbeth is compelled, his ambition enkindled, by the influencers' predictions of his promotion and by their amplification of his social and political status.

All the rituals of power are played out in this realm of status-driven posturing: political battles at the long table, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's performative and lethal hosting of Duncan, the sumptuous banquet celebrating Macbeth's succession. But

Macbeth's murder of Duncan ruptures the social order, and throws the entire system into disarray, with fatal repercussions.

From the moment of Duncan's death, all the characters are caught in a widening vortex of disorder fuelled by suspicion and paranoia, conspiracy theories and guilt, and Macbeth's increasingly brutal attempts to quell dissent only exacerbate the cruelty and confusion surrounding him. In the end Macbeth and Lady Macbeth find themselves abandoned and isolated from their society and from one another, each looking into an abyss of their own making.

RUTH LITTLE, JANUARY 2026

Composing a new ballet

What happens to a person when they break their word, betray their allegiances and alliances, and treat their friends as enemies? Shakespeare's exploration of descent into nihilism, of ambition over morality, makes compelling reading. The story is richly woven with thematic material and imagery, and it was a dark place for a composer to dwell during the eighteen months it took to compose and record this score.

When she first approached me, Alice Topp and I discussed *Demon Lore*, a progressive rock piece I had written for a horror film, and how that style might suit the heavy energy of the *Macbeth* story. In fact, Alice's reimagination into the modern world provided the opportunity for wide contrasts in the music: 1940s big band and 1970s funk for the two party scenes, a hip-swaying hip hop beat for Lady Macbeth's first scene and brief allusions to EDM [electronic dance music] in Act Two.

The choir plays the important role of prophecy and media witchery, and the cinematic brass underline powerful forces and predestination. In all, 126 musicians contributed to the recording.

This vast array of styles and musical forces requires unity 'under the hood.'

Structurally, each scene drops a minor second in tonality from the previous one. *O never shall sun that morrow see.* Here are six of the musical themes that weave their way through the score.

MACBETH CHORD

Fair is foul and foul is fair

The ballet begins and ends with a mysterious chord of uncertainty. Let's call it the **Macbeth Chord** as it permeates the entire score. Based on D flat it contains both the minor and major thirds as well as the major seventh.

CELL

What's to be done?

From the **Macbeth Chord** is derived a tonally ambiguous (ambivalent?) **Cell** that is heard many times and in many guises: such as the solo violoncello when Macbeth broods, the powerful guitars during the parliamentary conflict, the velvet smooth saxophones when Lady Macbeth dances with Duncan, and the solitary viola as Lady Macbeth sleepwalks.

SEQUENCE

Look into the seeds of time

The concept of time plays an important role in Shakespeare's play (the very first word in the play and this score is "When"). This is reflected in the music by beginning very fast in the parliament scene then step by step, scene by scene slowing down to a

The image displays a musical score for Macbeth, divided into six sections. Section 1, '1 Chord', shows a single chord in the bass clef. Section 2, '2 Cell', shows a rhythmic cell in the bass clef. Section 3, '3 Sequence', shows a sequence of chords in the bass clef, labeled 'minor' and 'major'. Section 4, '4 Relationship', shows a sequence of chords in the treble clef, with a '3' indicating a triplet. Section 5, '5 Hubris', shows a sequence of notes in the treble clef. Section 6, '6 Fanfare', shows a sequence of chords in the treble clef.

grinding pace. Act Two commences with a harmonic **Sequence** that utilises the minor-major possibilities of the **Macbeth Chord**. As the Macbeths descend into their self-made void the **Sequence** repeats approximately fifty times. It is inexorable in its repetition and marking out of time until in the final scenes one beat equals precisely one second. *Come what may, Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.*

RELATIONSHIP

That I may pour my spirits in thine ear

The **Relationship** between the Macbeths is one of sexual and political closeness. The music for their scenes is more intimate than the rest of the score, being performed by a string octet which reduces to a duet of viola and violoncello when the couple argue and needle each other. Much of their music is derived from the **Macbeth Chord**, but their affection for each other is represented by a lush old Hollywood idea that takes advantage of the major seventh embedded in that **Chord**.

HUBRIS

All Hail, Macbeth!

When Macbeth isn't brooding, he is lit by ambition, power and **Hubris**. In these moments a descending figure expands the minor seconds of the **Macbeth Chord** but it feels tonally forced and unfulfilling.

FANFARE

A gentleman on whom I built an absolute trust

A brass **Fanfare** plays at moments of leadership, when Duncan first enters, during the toasts and the apparitions, and ironically at the very end of the ballet over the top of the final iteration of the **Sequence**.

**CHRISTOPHER GORDON,
JANUARY 2026**



Costume design

In the early stages of designing *Macbeth*, Alice and I focused on capturing a world defined by power and opulence. We looked at modern archetypes that reflect the characters - from political elite and business tycoons to A-list celebrities and influential families. In an era of 24-hour news cycles and social media, these figures are more accessible than ever. What someone wears, or the way they present themselves to the public can be incredibly influential. A crafted public image is used as a tool to promote an agenda, sell a product or project a narrative. In our world of *Macbeth*, image and clothing are important forms of power.

For the parliament scenes, I wanted to capture an austere tone steeped in tradition. Amongst the parliament's dress code, we see Macbeth wearing his suit differently from everyone else - a subtle nod to someone very aware of their ability and confidently rejecting the status quo. Macbeth's costume often mirrors his thoughts and emotions, from private moments with Lady Macbeth to his eventual unravelling. Similarly, Lady Macbeth's wardrobe subtly mirrors her journey from strength to vulnerability and madness.



Images / John F Kennedy Jr and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, 1998. Photograph by John Barrett/PHOTOlink.net/MediaPunch/Alamy. Costume designs by Aleisa Jelbart. From top: Macbeth Act I; Lady Macbeth at the Banquet.



The Dinner Party and Banquet scenes draw inspiration from high profile events and exclusive after-parties. Inspired by power dressing, 'old money' luxury and the contemporary aesthetics of fashion houses like Saint Laurent and Tom Ford, the designs reflect the high stakes, influential world the Macbeths are a part of.

A crafted public image is used as a tool to promote an agenda, sell a product or project a narrative.

A significant challenge in this process was translating fashion-inspired mood boards into functional ballet

costumes. My final designs are the result of a careful balance between the aesthetic of Macbeth's world and the technical requirements of the choreography. I want to thank the RNZB Costume department for their dedication and skill in realizing these designs. From planning and prototyping to fittings, fabric dyeing, construction, and the ongoing maintenance throughout the season, these costumes pass through many hands. I am grateful to the whole team for their brilliant work.

ALEISA JELBART, JANUARY 2026

Images / Costume designs by Aleisa Jelbart. Clockwise from top Banquet guests; Influencers; Politicians. Semaine de la haute couture à Paris/Paris Fashion Week. Photograph by Pascal Vandon/Alamy.



Suited and booted



The contemporary political setting of *Macbeth* has brought formal menswear to the RNZB stage in a way never seen before. Rather than making dozens of suits from scratch, RNZB Head of Costume Donna Jefferis approached long-standing New Zealand menswear firm Rembrandt to collaborate with the team in realising Aleisa Jelbart's distinctive design vision.

Rembrandt has been making clothes for over 80 years, originally as a manufacturing business, and over that time they've dressed men from all walks of life and for all kinds of occasions. Alongside everyday menswear, their tailoring has been used for film, television and live performance, and they've worked with organisations such as the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

There's something immediate about suiting, it signals authority, control and confidence almost instantly...

Founded in 1946 as a small tailoring business on Vivian Street in Wellington, Rembrandt has spent decades refining the art of menswear, built on expert construction, quality fabrics and a deep understanding of fit. While this is their first ballet collaboration, the idea of Rembrandt

suits being used on stage didn't feel like a stretch – but a special challenge, due to the physicality of the dancers.

Suits were an important part of establishing a modern, powerful image for *Macbeth*. There's something immediate about suiting, it signals authority, control and confidence almost instantly, which aligned perfectly with the tone of the production and its exploration of power and ambition.

Rather than creating anything new specifically for the ballet, the focus was on selecting garments from Rembrandt's existing collection that already had the right qualities. Black-tie tailoring was a natural area for Rembrandt to contribute, given their long-standing expertise in this area.

Garments had to stand up to the realities of rehearsal and performance, repeated movement, lifting, heat and physical strain, and hold their presence under stage lighting. Construction was crucial. The suits needed to be properly tailored and sewn, not fused, so they could be altered, adjusted and reinforced where needed.

Through fittings and testing, both teams worked closely to understand how traditional tailoring could function in a ballet environment. In

total, Rembrandt supplied 63 garments, including dark green and maroon suits, plush velvet pieces for the black-tie scenes, and jet-black suiting chosen specifically because it's the deepest black they've ever produced. The fabric absorbs light rather than reflecting it, ensuring the suits read as truly black on stage, even under strong production lighting.

The dancers stress-tested the garments to ensure they could withstand the physical demands of ballet, and movement quickly became the guiding factor in every decision, from silhouette to fabric choice.

Wider, pleated trousers were selected to allow greater freedom through the hips and legs, accommodating the dancers' muscular physiques without compromising the line of the suit. Rembrandt jackets naturally feature higher armholes, a tailoring detail that provides a much wider range of motion through the shoulders, which is essential for complex choreography. Fabric choice also played an important role. Many of the suits are made from merino wool or merino blends, selected for their natural breathability, comfort and ability to perform under heat and stage lighting.

Power dressing has always been part of the language of suiting, even though what that looks like has evolved over time. When people think of power suiting, they often picture



Image / Pinning alterations at Rembrandt's store on Wellington's Johnston Street, photograph courtesy of Rembrandt.

the 1980s: strong shoulders and pinstripes. While tailoring has softened since then, a suit still provides structure, presence and authority to the body.

In *Macbeth*, power isn't about exaggeration, but intention. The right silhouette, proportion and fit helped reinforce authority and inner tension, not just physically, but psychologically.

Across decades, people return to suiting to feel their best, to give themselves confidence and presence. That idea feels just as relevant on stage as it does in everyday life.

With thanks to Emma Stanley-Tait and Grady Quinn at Rembrandt.

Rembrandt.



Set and staging

When Alice and I first started discussing a ballet of *Macbeth*, we knew right away that we didn't want to tell a period story. One of the greatest aspects of Shakespeare's many works, is that, when you peel away the locations and situations of the time in which they were written, the themes behind the stories are all based on human traits which are as relevant today as they were four hundred years ago.

So, when we think about the struggle to overthrow a King, witches predicting or manipulating the future; what parallels can we draw in a modern world?

Well, especially right now, you can't go past politics. That is where we decided to place our version of the story. It seemed a good fit. When you throw in the impact of social media and the relatively new concept of 'fake news', we begin to see how those human traits of greed, ambition and domination can easily flourish.

Influence of lobby groups, political think tanks and billionaire oligarchs mean that politics is increasingly corruptible to the highest bidder. Empathy, compassion, accountability and a political will to do what is best

for the whole population are rapidly left behind.

When you throw in the impact of social media and the relatively new concept of 'fake news', we begin to see how those human traits of greed, ambition and domination can easily flourish.

I knew the play structure fairly well, having worked on or designed lighting for about five versions in my career. The different versions had vastly different stylistic approaches, but the plays were still spoken in Elizabethan English, so there was always a link to the language of the 1600s.

Ballet, being a mute artform is not restricted in this way, so we are free(er) to explore a modern story. As our treatment of the story progressed, it occurred to me that what we needed in a set was a flexible environment. However, because we are not using the spoken word, I felt fairly strongly that the set should have some anchor in the past.

I have opted for a metal finish set featuring a modern version of an heraldic design which from the beginning of the show is new, hard and shiny. As the Macbeths journey into treachery and authoritarianism,

the trappings of excess, largesse and corruption begin to show themselves. The historic heraldic panels are covered up by opulent red drapery until we finally arrive at the Macbeth inauguration banquet.

The locations of the ballet are diverse. Parliament, the Macbeths' home, offices, a bathroom, pool hall and a park among others. I felt that trying to portray a realistic setting of all these locations would be distracting, so subtle changes of the set to suggest these locations is the way I have gone.

As our treatment of the story progressed, it occurred to me that what we needed in a set was a flexible environment.

Later on, as the cracks begin to show in Macbeth's world, we begin to see what is behind the drapes, the metal has rusted and is now decayed. I suppose when I think of recent world events and the cover ups that are becoming increasingly normalised, we perhaps don't see what damage all this does to the fabric of our society. The decay reveals itself just prior to Macbeth's demise.

I have kept the furniture largely modern. I think it's completely

plausible that you can have a modern table and chairs in a parliament setting that looks like a great chamber. The pool hall reminds me of an 80s cop drama setting. Lady M's bathroom is more traditional – suggesting an older home with a modern update. Similarly, the banquet scene is overbearing and shows a level of debauchery that exists even now.

Lighting is key to making these locations work. We need to shift from the austere chamber of parliament to the intimate setting of Lady Macbeth's bathroom, to a seedy pool hall. The scenes are episodic, so the lighting will direct and show us where to look. Projection too has a role to play in this production – mainly as a device to bring some key phrases into the work, to ground the work back to the original text.

JON BUSWELL, FEBRUARY 2026

Thank you to our friends at POW Studios VFX Producer - Marie Silberstein and VXF Artist - Tim Armstrong for projection design and realisation.

The logo for POW Studios, featuring the letters 'POW' in a large, bold, black font with a white outline, and the word 'Studios' in a smaller, black font to its right, all set against a solid orange background.





The origins of Macbeth

Macbeth is *the Scottish Play*, the one with the witches, something to do with the Gunpowder Plot. All of these are true, and they are all useful points of entry into Shakespeare's tragedy and the context in which it was written and first performed, probably in early 1606. But there's much more to say about this great play, written in the middle of Shakespeare's astonishing run of tragedies (*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, all written 1601-1606), in the first years of the reign of James VI and I, who had succeeded Elizabeth I in 1603, when Shakespeare's own company were well established at the

Globe Theatre and newly promoted to royal patronage as the King's Men.

Shakespeare plays fast and loose with history in *Macbeth*.

Scotland first: with the accession of James to the English throne the Scots were, if not exactly family, then at least no longer the 'auld enemy' they had been before. Scottish history gained a renewed currency as a source for plays on the English stage, especially ones which might please the new king. Macbeth was a historical figure who reigned 1040-1057, whose story can be found in the same source, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577),

Image / Left: Principal Ana Gallardo Lobaina, photograph by Stephen A'Court. Above: Image from Holinshed's Chronicles, illustrating Macbeth and Lord Banquo meeting the three witches aka the Weird Sisters or Wayward Sisters. 16th century engraving / Alamy.

which Shakespeare had earlier used for his English history plays. Even more than he does in those, however, Shakespeare plays fast and loose with history in *Macbeth*, for example making him act alone in killing Duncan (in the historical source, he plots with Banquo and others), and attributing to him deeds in fact carried out by other murderous Scottish monarchs. He also makes some key changes to the character of Macbeth's wife, omitting any mention of her previous marriage (although the play does refer to her child, presumed dead) and never naming her: while she was historically named Gruoch, for Shakespeare she remains the Lady.

Far more than flattering the new king's Scottish origins or even his ancestry, Shakespeare's play reflects James's interest in kingship itself.

King James and the House of Stuart claimed descent from Banquo, Macbeth's friend (whose murder he orders in the play) but whose son Fleance escapes. Far more than flattering the new king's Scottish origins or even his ancestry, though, Shakespeare's play reflects James's interest in kingship itself, not just his defence of the 'Divine Right of Kings' (which he had set out in *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, 1598), the idea that kings were appointed by God and therefore absolute in their power, but also his account of how kings should act and rule, what made a good king and what a bad, in his book *Basilikon*

Doron which he had written for his son Prince Henry and published in Edinburgh in 1599 (and again in London in 1603). Shakespeare's *Macbeth* asks some of the same questions about kingship: its protagonist is a great warrior and a charismatic leader who becomes a murderer and a usurper, and a paranoid, murderous tyrant.

King James, a highly intelligent and learned man, was also deeply interested in witches. Perhaps contrary to popular imagination, there was no particular witch craze in early modern England; there were isolated incidents in particular communities and there was, at a general population level, a 'belief' in witchcraft. In 1584 Reginald Scot had published the *Discoverie of Witchcraft* which was less a tell-all than an exposé, arguing that most so-called witchcraft was a fraud and a con, and that to believe in witchcraft was mere impious superstition. His book incensed James, who in response wrote *Daemonologie*, strongly affirming the existence of witchcraft, in 1597. In Scotland, there were regular and significant periods of persecution: James was convinced, for example, that Scottish and Danish witches working together had tried to kill him by raising storms during his voyage to Denmark to marry Queen Anna in 1590; the king was personally involved in the trial of these so-called North Berwick witches, which resulted in the torture and deaths of many people.

The witches (who are never described as 'witches' in the play; they are the 'Wyrd Sisters') appear in the play's very first scene, with the stage direction (in the earliest printed text, the Folio of 1623) *Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches*. On the early modern stage, thunder might be supplied by a cannon ball being rolled slowly up and down in a long wooden tub, but lightning involved the use of fireworks, and hence gunpowder. In its first performances, therefore, *Macbeth* began with the smell of cordite, the 'filthy air' as the witches describe it, and gunpowder was rather more topical than anyone could have previously imagined in 1606.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* asks some of the same questions about kingship: its protagonist is a great warrior and a charismatic leader who becomes a murderer and a usurper, and a paranoid, murderous tyrant.

On the eve of the state opening of Parliament in November 1605, following a tip-off, a search of the cellars below Westminster Hall found a man, later identified as Guy Fawkes, and many barrels of gunpowder, around a tonne in total. The familiarity of that bare outline perhaps makes it easy to forget that, had the plot succeeded, the result would have been a massacre, destroying an area of Westminster the size of a city block and killing not only the king but most of the nobility of England.

The government response was swift and brutal, with the plotters—a network of young Catholic gentlemen, led by the charismatic Robert Catesby—rapidly apprehended. Although only Guy Fawkes was tortured, the fate of the plotters was never in doubt; they were tried and swiftly executed in January 1606, subjected to the ritualized savagery of the prescribed penalty, hanging, drawing, and quartering. It seems very likely that Shakespeare knew some of the plotters; some were members of the Warwickshire gentry, the county in which he had grown up, and the ringleader Catesby was a relation of his mother, Mary Arden; some were friends of his friend the playwright Ben Jonson in London. The savage violence of *Macbeth*, on the battlefield and off, and including the brutal murder of women and children, has a counterpart in both the reckless, catastrophic violence intended by the ill-fated rebels and the brutality of the state violence which was the response. Yet some of *Macbeth's* most powerful moments are smaller and far more human, out of time, not locked in history. A man and his wife do terrible things together, and their marriage crumbles under the pressure. He cuts himself off from his friends, from his wife, trusts no one, hates himself. They both, in different but related ways, go mad, haunted by visions of blood, darkness, loss, grief. Most human of all, they can no longer sleep...

HESTER LEES-JEFFRIES



Image / Soloist Branden Reiners and Principal Ana Gallardo Lobaina, photograph by Stephen A'Court.

Macbeth on stage and screen

By the time it was first printed, in the 1623 Folio, *Macbeth* had already acquired some extra witches, in additional passages probably written by the playwright Thomas Middleton which included songs apparently borrowed from Middleton's own play *The Witch*, and even directions for dancing. And this began a trend: when the play was revised and revived by William Davenant when the theatres reopened following the restoration of Charles II in 1660 it gave particular prominence to the witch scenes and to music and dancing. Productions until the mid-nineteenth century featured much business for singing, dancing witches: in the late eighteenth century the great actor-manager John Philip Kemble had a chorus of some fifty witches, with child extras playing spirits, and as late as 1888 Henry Irving's production had a chorus of sixty 'spirits' who wore greenish-white gauze and sang. The witches were sometimes comic or grotesques, and were very often played by men until the late nineteenth century. Even alongside its all-singing all-dancing witches, *Macbeth* had room for other kinds of spectacle, especially in the character of Lady Macbeth: Kemble's sister Sarah Siddons, powerful and terrifying in white draperies for nearly

three decades from 1785; Ellen Terry in glittering green for Irving in 1888, her costume sewn with thousands of iridescent beetle wings.



Image / John Singer Sargent, Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth (detail), oil painting on canvas, 1889. Tate Britain. Incamerastock / Alamy

Music, visual spectacle, and innovative solutions for the play's dark magic have characterised its adaptations in many forms. Verdi's opera *Macbeth* premiered in Florence in 1847, before Shakespeare's play had ever been performed in Italy, and before Verdi himself had read the original play; he

worked with an Italian prose translation and an Italian libretto, and naturally included a chorus of witches. (In 1865 he produced a revised French version, which included a ballet; adapted into Italian, this is the version which remains current.)

There have been influential translations or adaptations into non-European languages and cultures, notably Akira Kurosawa's great 1957 film *Throne of Blood*, set in feudal Japan, strongly influenced by both Noh theatre and Hollywood Westerns; on the stage, in 1936, the (very) young Orson Welles (he was 21) directed a production set in a version of pre-revolutionary Haiti, in Harlem with an all-Black cast: it became known as the *Voodoo Macbeth*. *uMabatha* by the South African playwright Welcome Msomi transposed the play to the Zulu kingdom in the early nineteenth century; since its original production in South Africa in 1970, it has been revived many times, frequently touring internationally. Punchdrunk's

immersive theatre production, *Sleep No More*, inspired by *Macbeth*, film noir and the 1697 Paisley witch trials, originated in London in 2003 and has become an international phenomenon, staged in New York, Shanghai and most recently Seoul.

Among English language films, Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* (1971) has cast a long shadow, with its cod medievalism, naked witches (and naked Lady; it was funded by Hugh Hefner's Playboy Productions) and gratuitous, grisly violence, its notoriety only enhanced by its being the first film Polanski directed after the murder of his wife Sharon Tate. By contrast, in 1976 the RSC production directed by Trevor Nunn set a new standard for the play's claustrophobic psychological intensity and palpable sense of evil: performed in a dimly-lit studio theatre on a tiny budget, a simple circle chalked on the floor, its enduring myth includes the priest who came as often as he could, eventually telling the cast that he was there to try to keep them safe. It was



Image / Toshiro Mifune and Isuzu Yamada in *Kumonosu-jo* (*Throne of Blood*) 1957, directed by Akira Kurosawa. Photo 12 / Alamy; *uMabatha* – The Zulu *Macbeth*, performed at Shakespeare's Globe, London, April 2001. Independent / Alamy.



Image / From left: Poster for 1936 Works Project Administration/Federal Theatre Project production of *Macbeth* aka 'the Voodoo Macbeth' directed by John Houseman and Orson Welles. Granger Historical Picture Archive/Alamy; Ian McKellen and Judi Dench in *Macbeth* at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), *The Other Place*, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1976. Directed by Trevor Nunn, design by John Napier, lighting by Leo Leibovici. Donald Cooper/Alamy; Patrick Stewart as Macbeth at the Gielgud Theatre, London, a Chichester Festival 2007 production. Design by Anthony Ward lighting by Howard Harrison, fights by Terry King directed by Rupert Gooold. Donald Cooper/Alamy; *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (2021) directed by Joel Coen and starring Denzel Washington, Frances McDormand and Alex Hassell. British Film Archive/Alamy.

filmed for TV in 1978, with long close-ups on the pallid, anguished faces of its protagonists, played by Ian McKellen and Judi Dench, as they slipped into madness. More recent films include some which began life on stage, notably that starring Patrick Stewart (2010), vaguely Soviet in its setting, its witches murderous nurses who sometimes moonlight as household servants, the more conventionally 'medieval' film with Michael Fassbender and Marion Cottillard (2015), which opened unambiguously with them burying their child, and the 2021 film starring Denzel Washington and Frances McDormand, directed by Joel Coen in a far more stylised, arthouse mode, and in black and white. *Macbeth* has even more recently made an appearance in the title of Eleanor Catton's novel *Birnam Wood* (2023), which borrows from Shakespeare's play the name of its guerilla gardening collective.

Ballet interpretations of *Macbeth* have been less frequent, but recent productions have included a version by Will Tuckett for the National Ballet of Japan (2023) and Helen Pickett's *Lady Macbeth*, for Dutch National Ballet (2025). Akram Khan's new *Lady Macbeth* for the Royal Danish Ballet will premiere in April this year.

**HESTER LEES-JEFFRIES,
JANUARY 2026**

Hester Lees-Jeffries is Associate Professor of English at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of St Catharine's College; she graduated MA from the University of Canterbury in 1998. Her books include *Textile Shakespeare* (2025) and *Shakespeare and Memory* (2013); she has also written a new introduction to the Cambridge edition of *Romeo and Juliet* (2023). She is currently working on a new edition of Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and writes a daily Shakespeare blog #SlowShakespeare.



ALICE TOPP

Choreographer

Born and raised in Bendigo, Alice started dancing at the age of four. After two years dancing with the Royal New Zealand Ballet, she joined The Australian Ballet as a dancer in 2007, where her choreographic identity first emerged. Her first work, *Trace*, was created for The Australian Ballet's 2010 season of its choreographic showcase 'Bodytorque'. Between 2011 and 2014, Alice would go on to create three more works for Bodytorque, refining her craft and gaining the attention of critics and company directors alike. In 2016, Alice choreographed the critically acclaimed work *Little Atlas*, which appeared on The Australian Ballet's mainstage 'Symphony in C' program in 2016 and 2017.

In 2018, Alice created her first mainstage one act work *Aurum*, which was created with the support of a Rudolf Nureyev Prize for New Dance. It premiered as part of the company's 'Verve' program and went on to its international debut the following year at New York's leading contemporary dance venue, The Joyce Theater.

In September 2018, Alice was appointed one of The Australian Ballet's Resident Choreographers. In 2019, she was invited to spend a month with Studio Wayne McGregor in the United Kingdom, creating a piece for The Grange Festival. The duet she created on the company, *Clay*, went

on to form the basis for a larger work titled *Logos* for The Australian Ballet's 2020 'Volt' program, which included two works by McGregor.

Since retiring as a dancer after 14 years with The Australian Ballet, Alice has gone on to create *Annealing* for the company's 'Instruments of Dance' program in 2022 and *Solstice* for Dance X. In the same year, she restaged *Aurum* with the Royal New Zealand Ballet and created a new work for their digital season, *Absence of Light*. 2023 saw Alice premiere *Open Heart Story* for West Australian Ballet's season at The Quarry as part of Perth Festival, restage *Logos* for the RNZB, all whilst continuing to progress the company she founded with longtime collaborator Jon Buswell, Project Animo.

Alice has been nominated for a Green Room Award (*Little Atlas*, 2017) and for three Australian Dance Awards (*Aurum*, 2018, *Same Vein*, 2014, *Trace*, 2010). In 2019, *Aurum* saw Alice and her creative team win the Helpmann Award for Best Ballet, and a nomination for an Australian Dance Award for Outstanding Achievement in Choreography. She has been invited to create works for Houston Ballet II (*Lighthouse*, 2018), Queensland Ballet (*Warm Tears*, 2017) and several music videos for celebrated Australian musicians.

To celebrate The Australian Ballet's 60th Anniversary, Alice created *Paragon*, as part of the company's 'Identity' season at the Sydney Opera House and *Little Atlas* toured to the Royal Opera House in the UK as part of the 60th anniversary celebratory gala.

In November 2023, Singapore Ballet premiered Alice's *After Happy Ever* and she returned to the company in 2025 to create a new ballet, *The Persistence of Memory*. More recently, Alice has created *High Tide* for the RNZB, *Square Pegs* for Tulsa Ballet and *Open Heart Story* for West Australian Ballet.

In early 2025, Alice created *Soft Knocks*, a new work for Germany's Oldenburg Ballet and she will return to the company in early 2026 to create a second ballet.

In September, 2025, Alice created her first full-evening ballet, *Butterfly Effect* for West Australian Ballet which was premiered to brilliant reviews: "Alice Topp's ballet is a masterful contemporary work that plays out with effortless skill." Post newspapers, Australia.

Image / Alice Topp in the Poul Gnatt Studio, Royal New Zealand Ballet, January 2026, photograph by Stephen A'Court





CHRISTOPHER GORDON

Composer

Christopher Gordon is based in Sydney, Australia and composes for a wide spectrum of genres from the concert hall to ballet/dance to film scores and events. He has composed a number of ballet and dance works, including *Macbeth*, *Paragon*, *The Happy Prince*, *The Hedonists*, and *Giselle and the Wraith Queen*, for The Australian Ballet, Royal New Zealand Ballet, West Australian Ballet, and Universal Ballet, and for choreographers Graeme Murphy and Alice Topp.

His film scores, which include *June Again*, *Ladies in Black*, *Adore*, *Mao's Last Dancer*, *Daybreakers* and *Master and Commander*, have received wide international acclaim with many awards and nominations including an EMMY nomination.

Christopher has received commissions from many of Australia's premiere ensembles, including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Gondwana Voices, Synergy Percussion, Omega Ensemble, and the Sydney International Brass Festival and various solo artists.

He has also composed for many of Australia's major celebrations, including the opening ceremonies of the Commonwealth Games 2006 and the Rugby World Cup 2003, the official celebration of the Centenary of Federation of Australia 2001, and the Millennium Eve global telecast. In 2006 he was commissioned by the Prime Minister of Australia to arrange the official orchestral version of the Australian National Anthem.

In the studio Christopher has conducted over seventy film and game scores, including *Anaconda*, *Send Help*, *GOAT*, *Mortal Kombat 1 & 2*, *Furiosa*, *What If?*, *Echo*, *Diablo IV*, *Three Thousand Years of Longing*, *World of Warcraft*, *La Brea*, and *Star Wars: The Director and the Jedi*, as well as a concert tour of *Ministry of Sound*.

An album of his chamber music was released in March 2022.

In a parallel universe Christopher was a Councillor on the City of Ryde Council (in metropolitan Sydney) from September 2017 to December 2021, including a year as Deputy Mayor.



ALEISA JELBART

Costume designer

Aleisa Jelbart is an award-winning Costume and Stage Designer based on Gadigal land/ Sydney, specialising in movement, dance, and cross-disciplinary performance.

Aleisa has collaborated with arts organisations including the Royal New Zealand Ballet, The Australian Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Opera Australia, Bell Shakespeare, Legs on the Wall, BlakDance, FORM Dance, the Australian Theatre for Young People, Singapore Ballet and the Komische Oper Berlin. Her designs have been presented across Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the United States. She has collaborated with a number of visual artists with her designs featuring in exhibitions and presentations at the National Portrait Gallery, the Biennale of Sydney, Gertrude Contemporary, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and the TarraWarra Biennial.

Aleisa has worked extensively with Sydney Dance Company, designing costumes for major works by Rafael Bonachela, Melanie Lane and Tra Mi Dinh and over 30 new commissions in the company's *New Breed* program (2014-2025).

As an educator, Aleisa has led design workshops and classes for The Australian Museum, Australian Theatre for Young People, Matriark Theatre, City of Sydney, and Design Centre Enmore. In 2019, she was Artist in Residence at the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse's Arterie program, working with patients in a therapeutic art setting.

Aleisa is the recipient of the 2014/15 Hephzibah Tintner Fellowship for Production Design and the 2016 Berlin New Music Opera Award from the Opera Foundation for Young Australians.



Image / Aleisa Jelbart in the Royal New Zealand Ballet Costume Department, January 2026, photograph by Stephen A'Court



JON BUSWELL

Set and lighting designer

Acclaimed lighting designer Jon Buswell is renowned internationally for his work in ballet, theatre and opera as well as large scale events and television. Jon worked initially for the Royal Shakespeare Company before becoming a freelance designer in 1997. Since then he has worked as both lighting and set designer on numerous projects.

Whilst working at The Australian Ballet as Technical Director, Jon designed lighting for a number of main stage productions as well as the Storytime series of children's ballets. Highlights include David McAllister's celebrated production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Paragon*, a tribute to the company's 60 years featuring past and current dancers, the reimagined production of Nureyev's *Don Quixote* and his many collaborations with choreographer Alice Topp. This year he revisits lighting for John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

As Technical Director of West Australian Ballet from 2008 – 2015, Jon designed lighting for most of the company's repertoire. 2026 is busy in WA, as all the main stage seasons feature Jon's designs. For the RNZB, Jon has designed lighting for many productions since first working with the company in 2006. Most recently, Jon designed sets and lighting for *Home, Land and Sea* in 2025. This year, in addition to *Macbeth*, Jon will revisit his lighting design for Greg Horsman's *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Jon recently collaborated with Alice Topp on her first full-length ballet, *Butterfly Effect*, for West Australian Ballet and will design both set and lighting for her forthcoming work *SISU* a single act work for Houston Ballet.

Jon's other freelance commitments with companies in Australia and internationally have included Queensland Ballet, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Black Swan State Theatre Company, New Zealand Opera, the Royal Exchange Theatre Manchester, the Royal College of Music and in London's West End.

Particular highlights include *Lady Windermere's Fan*, directed by Sir Peter Hall and starring Vanessa Redgrave at the Haymarket Theatre London, Loughlan Prior's *Hansel and Gretel* for the RNZB, currently making its debut in Canada and the USA and *Dracula* for West Australian Ballet, which is about to premiere in Dortmund, Germany.

Jon was the lighting and set designer for the Helpmann Award-winning ballet *Aurum* (2018), which also premiered in New York (2019) and New Zealand (2021). With his fellow creatives, Jon won the WA Dance Award for *Helix* (2011) choreographed by Barry Moreland and featuring Daryl Brandwood. He has also worked as Lighting Designer for televised features such as *The Nutcracker Sweeties*, for Birmingham Royal Ballet and the BBC and *Poppea* for Welsh National Opera and the BBC.



RUTH LITTLE

Dramaturg

Ruth Little was born on Gadigal land in Sydney, Australia, and is a theatre and dance dramaturg, a teacher and writer. She established her international career in the UK after completing a PhD in Renaissance drama at the University of Cambridge, and lecturing in English literature at the University of Sydney. She was literary manager at Griffin Theatre (Sydney), Out of Joint, Soho Theatre and the Royal Court, and artistic associate at the Young Vic (London). She was dramaturg for Akram Khan Company from 2010-2020.

Previously associate director of international art-climate change company Cape Farewell, she led art-science collaborations and sailing expeditions across the Western and Northern isles of Scotland, and was co-director of Archipelago Folkschool, Scotland. She was Dramaturgy for Dance programme leader under Emily Molnar at Banff Centre, festival navigator for Perth Festival from 2016-2019, and dramaturg for many internationally touring and award-winning theatre and dance works, including Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem* for the Royal Court; Akram Khan's *Gnosis*, *Vertical Road*, *Desh*, *iTMOi*, *Xenos*, *Until the Lions* and *Outwitting the Devil*, and Khan's *Dust*, *Giselle* and *Creature* with English National Ballet; Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's and Nick Cave's *Shell Shock* for La Monnaie/de Munt, Belgium; Jonathan Watkins's *Kes* for Sheffield

Theatres and *1984* for Northern Ballet; Simon Beaufoy's *The Full Monty*; Canadian skate-dancers Le Patin Libre's *Vertical Influences* and *Threshold* for Dance Umbrella; Garry Stewart's *South* for Australian Dance Theatre; Dana Gingras' *Frontera* and *Creation/Destruction* for Animals of Distinction, Canada; Phillip McMahon's and Philip Connaughton's *Party Scene* for ThisIsPopBaby, Ireland; and Veronica Nadine Gleeson's *Tell Me I'm Here* for Belvoir Theatre.

Ruth was Associate Artist, New Work at Sydney Theatre Company, and dramaturg for Kip Williams' production of Tommy Murphy's *On the Beach*, and Angus Cerini's *Into the Shimmering World*, as well as Joanna Murray-Smith's *Julia* and *The Talented Mr Ripley*. Ruth is a winner of the Kenneth Tynan Award for Dramaturgy and was a MacGeorge Fellow (MTC/Melbourne University). Publications include *The Young Vic Book* (Methuen), *The Royal Court Theatre Inside Out* (with Emily McLaughlin: Oberon), Introduction to *Plays: Royal Court 2000-2010* (Methuen), 'Art, Place, Climate: Situated Ethics' in *Art and Ethics* (Springer), 'Testimony: Art for the Sake of Place' (*Elemental: An Arts and Ecology Reader*), Voiceover narrative for 6-part Sky Arts series with Akram Khan, *Why Do We Dance?*, 'One an(d)other: Two reflections on Sheep Pig Goat', with Alan McElligott (*Love and Not Knowing*, Performance Research Books).



MEGAN ADAMS

Intimacy Director

Megan Adams is an intimacy director/ coordinator, choreographer, movement director, rehearsal director and teacher based in Auckland, New Zealand.

With over 30 years' experience as a choreographer, movement director, rehearsal director, and educator, Megan brings deep, embodied knowledge of movement, dance, and the body to her intimacy practice.

Trained in contemporary dance and ballet at the New Zealand School of Dance, Megan works as a rehearsal director, choreographer, and teacher. She has collaborated with leading choreographers and dance companies throughout Aotearoa and is the choreographic executor of the Douglas Wright Estate, restaging his iconic works both nationally and internationally. Megan is currently restaging *Gloria* by Douglas Wright which will be performed in the Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts, 2026.

Megan also works as a movement director/coach, assistant theatre director and intimacy director/coordinator in theatre, opera, circus, film and TV. She has worked with NZ Opera, Auckland Theatre Company, Taki Rua, The Dust Palace and The Pop Up Globe. Recent screen credits include *East of Eden*, *Megan 2.0* and *Chief of War*.

Megan is a certified intimacy coordinator with Intimacy Directors and Coordinators (USA).

A passionate dance educator, Megan has taught movement and dance across tertiary institutions, schools, and community programmes. She is also a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher.



ADAM BULL

Assistant to the Choreographer

Adam Bull's ballet journey began under Brian Nolan before joining The Australian Ballet School, graduating with honours in 2001. He joined The Australian Ballet in 2002 and was promoted to principal artist in 2008, a position he held for 16 years.

He performed all the major lead roles in the classical repertoire, as well as contemporary works and world premieres, collaborating with choreographers such as Christopher Wheeldon, Sir Wayne McGregor, and Alexei Ratmansky. His performances earned him Green Room Award nominations (2007, 2009) and a Benois de la Danse nomination (2009) for his portrayal of Siegfried in Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake*.

A dedicated mentor, Adam holds a Graduate Diploma of Elite Dance Instruction from The Australian Ballet School, where he now serves as Principal Guest Teacher. He is also Artistic Director of The Boys Summer School in Sydney.

Since retiring in 2023, Adam has continued to share his expertise and passion for ballet, coaching and teaching both in Australia and internationally.



HAMISH MCKEICH

Conductor

New Zealand-born conductor Hamish McKeich has forged an impressive international conducting career alongside a passionate loyalty for developing the repertoire of contemporary and experimental music. He has established an acclaimed partnership with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and is currently their Principal Conductor in Residence.

Among the many projects he has curated, the NZSO "Shed Series" featuring a redefined way orchestras interact with the audience, has met with critical acclaim for its concept and innovative programming. In 2019 McKeich was also appointed Principal Conductor of the Royal New Zealand Ballet.

McKeich has performed in New Zealand, Australia, China, the Netherlands, Italy, England, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Armenia and Lebanon. Working regularly in Europe, and with all the major orchestras in New Zealand and Australia, he has given over 100 world premieres of new works and is also chief conductor of the contemporary ensemble Stroma. He has worked with many orchestras and chamber ensembles, including the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Asko Ensemble of Holland, Metropole Orkest, Tasmanian Symphony, Stroma Ensemble, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra

Filarmonica Italiana, Adelaide Symphony, Armenian Philharmonic, Melbourne Symphony, Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra, Queensland Symphony, West Australian Symphony, 175 East, Elision Ensemble, Auckland Philharmonia, Christchurch Symphony, Dunedin Symphony and the EX Orchestra.

Hamish McKeich studied conducting with legendary teacher and pedagogue Professor Ilya Musin and also prominent conductors Valery Gergiev, Sian Edwards and Peter Eötvös. McKeich was a finalist of the Gergiev Festival Conductors Masterclass, under the guidance of Professor Ilya Musin and Valery Gergiev. He started his career as bassoonist and at aged 19 became Associate Principal Bassoon with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and thereafter working with orchestras in Britain and Holland. Highlights of Hamish McKeich's immediate upcoming engagements include concerts and recordings with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Royal New Zealand Ballet, New Zealand Opera and Stroma, Auckland Philharmonia, Sydney Symphony, Adelaide Symphony and the Christchurch Symphony.

In 2012 Hamish McKeich was awarded a Douglas Lilburn Trust citation for services to New Zealand music.

MUSICIANS FROM THE NEW ZEALAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLINS

Vesa-Matti Leppänen
Jessica Oddie

SECOND VIOLINS

Andrew Thomson
Julia Broom

VIOLAS

Eli Vincent
Lyndsay Mountfort

CELLOS

Ken Ichinose
Joseph Kelly

NEW ZEALAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA | TE TIRA PŪORO O AOTEAROA

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (Te Tira Pūoro o Aotearoa) is Aotearoa New Zealand's national orchestra. One of the world's oldest national symphony orchestras, it has charmed and entertained audiences with memorable concerts and recordings since 1947.

Recognised as an outstanding orchestra of international stature, its reputation for artistic excellence attracts many of the world's leading conductors and soloists each year.

From the great classics to contemporary work, collaborating with indigenous, folk, indie, rock and pop artists from Aotearoa New Zealand and across the world, the orchestra is also committed to the development and celebration of Aotearoa New Zealand's composition by commissioning and performing new works each year.

NZSO+ livestreams concerts from Wellington's Michael Fowler Centre and provides access to free master classes and other music and education content for audiences in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the world.

Find out more at nzso.co.nz

The RNZB gratefully acknowledges support from the Turnovsky Endowment Trust towards the live music for *Macbeth*.

RECORDED MUSIC

Christopher Gordon's original score for *Macbeth* combines live and recorded performers.

STRING OCTET (RECORDING)

Violin Andrew Haveron, Alexandra Osborne, Fiona Ziegler, Lerida Delbridge

Viola Richard Waters, Jaqui Cronin

Violoncello Teije Hylkema, Andrew Hines

BAND

Guitars Greg Howe, Randy McStine, Marcel Coenen, Damian de Boos Smith

Bass Guitar Jonas Reingold, Mohini Dey

Acoustic Bass Jonathan Zwartz

Drums Gavin Harrison

Timpani Joshua Hill

Piano Benjamin Kopp

Synthesizers & Electronics

Christopher Gordon

Voice Michael Mills

MAGIC FIRE ORCHESTRA

Cantillation

Conductor Christopher Gordon

Engineer Craig Beckett

Pro Tools Operator Liam Moses

Additional Pro Tools Isaac Ross

Simon Leadley Scoring Stage,

Trackdown Studios, Sydney

Orchestra Contractor Alex Henery

Choir Contractor Alison Johnson

Synth Wrangler Rose Mackenzie-Peterson

Recording Producer Christopher Gordon

Special thanks to Alice Topp, Elaine Beckett, Matthew Chin, and Robin.



TY KING-WALL

Artistic Director

Born in Waihi, New Zealand, Ty undertook his early training at the Dance Education Centre in Tauranga and as a Junior Associate at the New Zealand School of Dance. He won the 2002 PACANZ National Young Performer Award before leaving New Zealand to study at the Australian Ballet School, where he graduated dux with honours. He won the Silver Medal at the 2005 Asia Pacific International Ballet Competition and was accepted into The Australian Ballet in 2006.

Ty was promoted to Principal Artist in 2013 and performed featured roles across the company's repertoire through his seventeen-year career. He danced with The Australian Ballet on international tours to Paris, London, New York, Tokyo and Beijing, and performed as a Principal

Guest Artist with the Royal New Zealand Ballet and Houston Ballet.

Ty holds a Bachelor of Arts (Classical Studies/Psychology) through Massey University, and a Master of Arts and Cultural Management through the University of Melbourne. Since retiring from The Australian Ballet in 2022, he has worked as a teacher for the New Zealand School of Dance, National Theatre Ballet School, and the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School, and was a classical teacher at the Australian Ballet School in 2023. He served as Dancers' Director on the Board of The Australian Ballet from 2022-2023. Ty was appointed Artistic Director of the Royal New Zealand Ballet in November 2023.



TOBIAS PERKINS

Executive Director

Tobias is an experienced producer and arts administrator having worked across the classical music, opera, and dance sectors. A musician by training, his professional career has included positions at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, London's Barbican Centre and at Northern Ballet, UK. Tobias worked in several positions during his seven years at Northern Ballet including as Director of Planning and Interim Executive Director. Particular successes during his tenure included bringing the highly popular Children's Ballets strand of work to audiences of upwards of 30,000 young people and their families each year. This was recognised in 2022 with a nomination for the UK Theatres Excellence in Touring Award.

Tobias has also served as a trustee to Mobius Dance before joining the Royal New Zealand Ballet as Executive Director in July 2023. During three years in post at RNZB Tobias is proud to have continued building support for ballet in Aotearoa that allows the artform to thrive. Alongside Artistic Director Ty King-Wall this has meant pairing bold new commissioning with extending both the company's audience reach and its whānau of supporters. This has been rewarded by record breaking audience numbers in 2025. Tobias is proud to have introduced the Haythorne Circle of support whose investment in the company is directed towards bringing ambitious new work to the stage and looks forward to developing this further in years to come as the company builds towards its 75th year in 2028.



CLYTIE CAMPBELL

Rehearsal Director

Clytie Campbell joined the artistic staff of the Royal New Zealand Ballet in January 2017, after more than a decade dancing with the company.

In 2021 she was responsible for re-staging Ethan Stiefel and Johan Kobborg's production of *Giselle*, and Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, revisiting the latter in 2024. She also took a central role in the 2024 re-staging of Russell Kerr's *Swan Lake*. As Choreographic Assistant to former RNZB Ballet Master Greg Horsman, Clytie has recently worked with Queensland Ballet, West Australian Ballet and Royal Winnipeg Ballet, to create and then re-stage a new production of *La Bayadère*. She also re-staged *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Queensland Ballet at the beginning of 2023. In 2024 she travelled to Alberta, Canada to work alongside RNZB Loughlan Prior on re-staging his *Hansel & Gretel* for Alberta Ballet, and she has just returned from re-staging the same work for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Clytie takes an active role in the RNZB's work fostering the next generation of ballet dancers, teaching regularly at the New Zealand School of Dance and also teaching open classes to pre-vocational dance students while on tour with the RNZB. She has also taught at summer

schools for the RAD in Wellington and MacDonal College in Sydney.

Starting at the age of five, Clytie's entire ballet training was at her mother's school, the Philippa Campbell School of Ballet in Auckland. At 17, Clytie joined the Deutsche Oper Ballet in Berlin, where she danced for more than six years, before moving to Vienna's Staatsoper Ballet. Returning to New Zealand in 2005, Clytie danced many principal and solo roles with the RNZB, in New Zealand and internationally, including Kitri, Mercedes and the Queen of the Dryads in *Don Quixote*, the Sylph in *La Sylphide*, Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis in *Giselle*, the grand pas de deux in *The Nutcracker*, Carabosse and the Lilac Fairy in *The Sleeping Beauty*, the Fairy Godmother and the Tall Step Sister in Christopher Hampson's *Cinderella* and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Her featured roles in contemporary works included David Dawson's *A Million Kisses To My Skin*, Jorma Elo's *Plan to A*, Christopher Hampson's *Esquisses* and *Silhouette*, *Banderillero* by Javier De Frutos and *In The Middle, Somewhat Elevated* by William Forsythe.



LAURA MCQUEEN SCHULTZ

Rehearsal Director and Rehabilitation Coach

Laura McQueen Schultz joined the RNZB whānau as a Ballet Master in 2018 after a 19-year career as a professional dancer. Since joining the RNZB Laura has had the privilege to coach and stage several works from the RNZB's repertoire. She has also staged Andrea Schermoly's *Stand to Reason*, created for the RNZB in 2018, for Golden State Ballet in San Diego. She has co-choreographed the hugely successful *Ugly Duckling*, *Tāne and the Kiwi* and *Tiaho Pō* alongside her husband Nick Schultz, fellow RNZB Rehearsal Director, for RNZB family performances.

Teaching is also a big part of the job, allowing her to meet the tamariki of Aotearoa while on tour and she has the pleasure to teach classical majors at the New Zealand School of Dance. The enormous amount of information that is gained from working alongside world class staggers, and choreographers is the best part of being a Rehearsal Director. Passing along the information to the next generation of dancers is what makes this the most incredible job.

Laura grew up in Grand Rapids Michigan. She studied at the School of Grand Rapids Ballet and at summer schools at Houston Ballet Academy, San Francisco Ballet School, and Canada's National Ballet School. After training, Laura danced with St Louis Ballet followed by 17 years at Grand Rapids Ballet. Her repertoire included principal roles in *The Four Temperaments*, *Who Cares?*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Black Swan* and *White Swan*, *The Moor's Pavan*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Raymonda* Pas de Dix, *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*. Laura was also privileged to have works created for her by choreographers including Robyn Mineko Williams, Penny Saunders, Andrea Schermoly, Mário Radačovský, and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa.

While still a dancer with Grand Rapids Ballet, Laura was Associate Artistic Director of Young People's Ballet, Ballet Master and stager for Grand Rapids Ballet, faculty teacher at numerous schools in the West Michigan area, choreographer and Co-director for Children's Opera Workshop, and Outreach Educator for Grand Rapids Ballet.



NICHOLAS SCHULTZ

Rehearsal Director

Nicholas Schultz joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet as a Ballet Master in 2018. During his time at the RNZB, Nick has co-created three family ballets with his wife, Laura McQueen Schultz: *The Ugly Duckling* in 2021, *Tāne and the Kiwi* in 2022 and *Tiaho Pō* in 2023, for free family performances at Te Papa. He has also been onstage with the Company as the King in *The Sleeping Beauty* and as Herr Drosselmeier in Val Caniparoli's *The Nutcracker*.

Together with Laura, he staged the RNZB's production of *Black Swan, White Swan* by Mário Radačovský in 2019, and has staged multiple works for Tutus on Tour. Nicholas and Laura have two wonderful children, Arya and Ezra, and truly love their life in New Zealand.

Nick grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan where he began his dance studies at Grand Rapids Ballet School. He was a member of both the Junior and Senior Trainee divisions, performing numerous productions alongside Grand Rapids Ballet. Nick also took part in summer schools at Joffrey Ballet in Chicago and at the National Ballet of Canada. In 2002, Nick joined Grand Rapids Ballet as an

apprentice and was promoted to full company member in 2003. He danced featured roles in ballets including *Giselle*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Cinderella* and more, as well as works by iconic choreographers such as George Balanchine, José Limón, Paul Taylor, Val Caniparoli, and Davis Parsons. He has worked on new creations with choreographers including Olivier Wevers, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Mário Radačovský, Penny Saunders, Robyn Mineko Williams and Sagi Gross.

From 2012-2016 Nick, alongside Laura, was also the Artistic Director for Young People's Ballet Theatre in Flint, Michigan, where he staged and choreographed many works for the company. Nick was also responsible for teaching and cultivating many young dancers, of whom some have continued to professional careers. Nick and Laura also served as the choreographers and stage directors for Children's Opera Workshop from 2012-2017.

Nick is a qualified Fight Director and has choreographed the battle scene in Act I of *The Nutcracker*.

DANCERS OF THE ROYAL NEW ZEALAND BALLET

The Royal New Zealand Ballet, and especially the dancers themselves, would like to thank everyone who supports the Company's work. We would particularly like to thank Dennis and Analee Emery for their significant and practical support of all the dancers via our Artistic Health programme. We also acknowledge, with gratitude, a bequest made through the Royal New Zealand Ballet Foundation which has contributed substantially to our Artistic Health programme in 2024 – 6, and all the supporters of our Partner a Dancer programme.

For our performers, whether they are just starting their career as Scholars, or dancing Principal roles, knowing that there is a personal supporter, a company or a trust as committed to their success as they are, is an honour and an inspiration. If you would like to join our special family of supporters please contact Susannah Lees-Jeffries, Development Director, susannah@rnzb.org.nz.

PRINCIPALS



ANA GALLARDO LOBAINA | *Supported by Ann-Louise and Campbell Gower*

Ana joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in January 2020 and was promoted to Soloist in December 2020 and Principal in May 2024, after making her debut as Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*.

Ana's other highlights at the RNZB include creating the title role in *The Firebird* (2021 and 2025), Titania in Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2021 and 2024), and Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023), and being part of the creation of *To Hold* (2024) *The Autumn Ball* (2022) and *Ultra Folly* (2021) by RNZB Choreographer in Residence Sarah Foster-Sproull. Since making her debut as both the Lilac Fairy and Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty* (2020) she has performed featured roles in Alice Topp's *Aurum* (2021 and 2022), *Logos* (2023) and *High Tide* (2024) as well as Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024), 'Dark Angel' in Balanchine's *Serenade* (2023), Twyla Tharp's *Waterbaby Bagatelles™* (2021 and 2022) and Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain* pas de deux (2022 and 2023).

Other recent roles include the Sugar Plum Fairy in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025), Cinderella and Stepmother in Loughlan Prior's *Cinderella* (2022) Juliet and Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* (2023) and *Requiem for a Rose* by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa (2023).

Born in Holguín, Cuba, Ana attended a regional ballet school, studying full-time at the Cuban National Ballet School in Havana from the age of 14 and later at the Miami City Ballet School and at the Boston Ballet School. In 2012 she joined Cincinnati Ballet as a Second Company member and in 2013 she was promoted to full company member. Her featured roles in Cincinnati included Olympe in *The Lady of the Camellias* by Val Caniparoli and *Minus 16* by Ohad Naharin. In 2017 Ana joined West Australian Ballet, where her featured roles included one of the solo Shades in *La Bayadère* by Greg Horsman.



JOSHUA GUILLEMOT-RODGERSON | Supported by the Deane Endowment Trust

Joshua joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet midway through the 2020 season as a guest artist, performing Prince Désiré in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and became a full-time company member in 2021. That same year he was promoted to Soloist during Ethan Stiefel and Johan Kobborg's *Giselle*, and to Principal during the 2024 season in Russell Kerr's *Swan Lake*.

Other highlights of Joshua's repertoire with the RNZB include Romeo in Andrea Schermoly's *Romeo & Juliet* (2023), Prince Charming and the Royal Messenger in Loughlan Prior's *Cinderella* (2022), Oberon and Demetrius in Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2021/2025), the pas de deux from Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain* (2022), Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024), Harry Beecham in Cathy Marston's *My Brilliant Career* (2025), and the Nutcracker Prince in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025). He has also enjoyed being part of the creation of contemporary works such as Sarah Foster-Sproull's *The Autumn Ball*, and Moss Te Ururangi Patterson's *Home, Land & Sea*.

Josh was born in Christchurch, New Zealand and holds a BFA in Dance from The Juilliard School. A tap dancer for many years, he transitioned into ballet at age fourteen when he left New Zealand to study full-time at Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, followed by four years at Juilliard. He attended summer intensives at Nederlands Dans Theater, Springboard Danse Montréal, Axis Connect New York, and with Glen Harris at Southern Ballet.

Prior to joining the RNZB, Josh danced with the Houston Ballet from 2017 – 20. In 2020, he was named one of Pointe Magazine's Stars of the Corps.

Joshua's choreography was featured in Juilliard's Choreographic Honours for three years. At the RNZB, as well as participating in choreographic workshop RNZB RAW, he has choreographed *King of the Castle* for RNZB Screen (2022), and children's ballet *Dazzlehands* (2024).



KIHIRO KUSUKAMI | Supported by QT Wellington

Kihiro joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2018. He was promoted to Soloist at the beginning of 2020 and to Principal in 2023.

Since joining the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Kihiro has performed many leading roles including Siegfried in *Swan Lake* (2024), *Infra* by Wayne McGregor (2024), the Nutcracker Prince in *The Nutcracker* (2018 and 2025), Rothbart in *Black Swan, White Swan* by Mário Radacovský (2019), *Artifact II* by William Forsythe (2019), Prince Désiré and Bluebird in *The Sleeping Beauty* (2020), Twyla Tharp's *Waterbaby Bagatelles™* (2022), Puck and Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2021 and 2024), Albrecht in *Giselle* (2021), Hansel and the King of the Dew Fairies in *Hansel & Gretel* (2019 and 2023), Romeo and Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* (2023), *Te Ao Mārama* by Moss Te Ururangi Patterson (2023) and Waltz Man in *Serenade* (2023) by George Balanchine. His pas de deux repertoire includes the *Flames of Paris* (2019), 'After the Rain' by Christopher Wheeldon (2023), and *Don Quixote* (2023).

Originally from Nagoya, Japan, Kihiro was awarded a scholarship to The Australian Ballet School at the 2013 Youth America Grand Prix, training at the School from 2014-16 and performing as a member of the Dancers' Company of The Australian Ballet. In 2016 he also appeared in Houston Ballet's production of *Romeo and Juliet* during the company's Australian tour.

Prior to joining the RNZB, Kihiro spent 2017 with Queensland Ballet's Jette Parker Young Artists Programme and was a Company Artist with Queensland Ballet for the first half of 2018.





MAYU TANIGAITO | Supported by the Pye Foundation

Mayu joined the RNZB in 2012 and was named as a Principal in 2019. She has performed around the world with the RNZB, and internationally as a guest artist in Greece and Australia. Mayu returned to the stage in late 2025, just six months after having her son, to perform as the Sugar Plum Fairy and Pōhutukawa in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker*.

She has performed leading roles in classical repertoire including Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake* (2024), Giselle and Myrtha in *Giselle* (2016, 2021), *Carmen* by Roland Petit (2017), Kitri in *Don Quixote* (2015), Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (2017, 2023), Swanhilda in *Coppélia* (2014), Titania and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2021, 2024), Queen of the Dew Fairies in *Hansel & Gretel* (2019, 2023) and the title roles in *Paquita* (2021), *The Firebird* (2021) and *Cinderella* (2022).

She has also performed leading roles in modern works by master choreographers including *Petite Mort* and *Sechs Tänze* by Jiří Kylián (2018), *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* (2016) and *Artifact II* (2019) by William Forsythe, *Allegro Brillante* (2014), *Serenade* (2019, 2023) and *Divertimento No. 15* (2018) by George Balanchine, and *Waterbaby Bagatelles™* (2022) by Twyla Tharp. Recent highlights in modern works include featured roles in Alice Topp's *Aurum* (2022), *Logos* (2023) and *High Tide* (2024), and Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024).

Mayu was born and raised in Japan where she received many awards in international ballet competitions. She studied full-time at the Royal Ballet School in Antwerp and at the Rock School for Dance Education in the USA and joined the RNZB after a year dancing with North Carolina Dance Theater II.



LAURYNAS VĖJALIS | Supported by Erica McLean

Laurynas made his Royal New Zealand Ballet debut as the Nutcracker Prince in 2018. Laurynas was promoted to Soloist in 2019 and to Principal in December 2020.

Most recently, Laurynas appeared as the Nutcracker Prince in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025), Siegfried in *Swan Lake* (2024), Tybalt and Romeo in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023), the Waltz Man in *Serenade* (2023), Annabel Lopez Ochoa's *Requiem for a Rose* (2023), Alice Topp's *Logos* (2023), Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024) and Victor Gsovsky's *Grand Pas Classique* (2025).

He has performed multiple principal roles including the *Flames of Paris* pas de deux (2019), Prince Désiré and Bluebird in *The Sleeping Beauty* (2020), Albrecht in Ethan Stiefel and Johan Kobborg's *Giselle* (2021), Arrow in Loughlan Prior's *The Firebird* (2021), and Oberon and Lysander in Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2021, 2024). In 2022, his roles included The Royal Messenger in Loughlan Prior's *Cinderella*, the *Le Corsaire* pas de trois and featured roles in Alice Topp's *Aurum* and Twyla Tharp's *Waterbaby Bagatelles™*.

Laurynas moved to New Zealand after three years with the National Ballet of Canada, which he joined as a member of the corps de ballet in 2015. Highlights from his time at the National Ballet of Canada include the peasant pas de deux in Act I of *Giselle* and solo roles in Balanchine's *Rubies* and *Genus* by Wayne McGregor.

Laurynas was born in Lithuania and moved to Japan when he was four. He studied ballet at the Austrian Ballet School in Tokyo and then finished his studies at The Royal Ballet School in London.

SOLOISTS



ZACHARIE DUN | Supported by Anna Gibbons

Zacharie joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet's 2023 revival of *Hansel & Gretel* as a guest dancer, performing the roles of The Sandman and The Witch As her True Self. He joined the RNZB permanently as a Soloist in 2024.

Zach's featured roles to date include the Nutcracker Prince in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025), Rothbart and the Pas de Trois in *Swan Lake*, Wayne McGregor's *Infra*, Oberon and Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024) and the *Grand Pas Classique* (Tutus on Tour, 2025).

Zacharie began dance training at the Andrea Rowsell Academy of Dance in his hometown of Taree, New South Wales, later training full-time at The Australian Ballet School and Queensland Ballet's Pre-Professional Programme. He joined Queensland Ballet as a Jette Parker Young Artist in 2016. From 2017 – 23 he was a member of Alberta Ballet based in Calgary, Canada. His featured roles there included Botero in Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Botero*, Albrecht in Christopher Anderson's *Giselle*, The Creature in Jean Grande-Maitre's *Frankenstein*, the Sugarplum Cavalier in Edmund Stripe's *Nutcracker* and the Pas De Deux Couple in Alys Pires' *Skyward*.



DANE HEAD | Supported by the Pye Foundation

Dane joined the RNZB in 2021 as the Todd Scholar and was promoted to Artist in 2022 and Soloist for 2026.

Dane's featured roles to date include Annaliese Macdonald's *Limerence* (Tutus on Tour 2025), the Act III pas de deux from *Coppélia* (Tutus on Tour 2025), Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2021 and 2024), the Jester in *Swan Lake* (2024), Hansel in *Hansel & Gretel* (2023) and Mercutio in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023).

Dane was born in Auckland and began dancing at the age of four. He trained at Bays School of Dance and Mount Eden Ballet Academy. At the Alana Haines Awards in 2017, Dane was awarded a two-week full-time scholarship at the Central School of Ballet in London. In 2018, Dane placed third at the New Zealand National Young Performer Awards and was a finalist at the Asian Grand Prix in Hong Kong. At the age of sixteen, Dane began full-time training at the New Zealand School of Dance as a Classical Major.





SHAUN JAMES KELLY | Supported by Mark and Louise Binns

Shaun joined the RNZB in 2014. He was promoted to Soloist in 2019.

Shaun's highlights over a decade onstage with the RNZB are numerous. They include Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2015, 2021, 2024), Hansel in *Hansel & Gretel* (2019, 2023), Frédéri in *L'Arlésienne* (2017), the Jester in *Swan Lake* (2024), Prince Charming in *Cinderella* (2022) and Mercutio and Benvolio in *Romeo & Juliet* (2017 and 2023). He has also performed the Pas de Trois in *Paquita* (2021), the Wedding Couple in *Giselle* (2016, 2021), as well as solo roles in Twyla Tharp's *Waterbaby Bagatelles™* (2022), *Black Swan*, *White Swan* by Mário Radačovský (2019), in William Forsythe's *In The Middle, Somewhat Elevated* (2016, 2017) and *Artifact II* (2019), and Jiří Kylián's *Soldatenmis* (2015).

Shaun was appointed RNZB Choreographer in Residence in 2018. His most recent commission for the RNZB, *Chrysalis*, premiered in July 2025 to critical acclaim. His previous works include *Prismatic* (2023), created for the Platinum Gala to mark the RNZB's 70th birthday, the extended version touring nationally for Tutus on Tour (2024) and performed in an evening with Scottish Ballet (2025). Shaun was the recipient of the RNZB Harry Haythorne Choreographic Award for his work *Blanc* in 2016 and again for *Prismatic* in 2023. He created *Aura* for Tutus on Tour (2017) and *The Ground Beneath Our Feet* for the Choreographic Series (2019), revived for Tutus on Tour (2022). Other works include children's ballet *Little Red* (2018), *The Soldier's Tale* with the NZSO (2021) and digital work *Alba* (2022), as well as collaborations with New Zealand Fashion Week (2017) and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2023).

Born in Perth, Scotland, Shaun trained at the Dance School of Scotland before undertaking training at the English National Ballet School. On graduating in 2011, Shaun took up a contract with the Tivoli Ballet Theatre in Copenhagen.



KATHERINE MINOR | Supported by Catherine and Steven Fyfe

Katherine joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2014 and was promoted to company Soloist in 2019, when her featured roles included White Swan in Mário Radačovský's *Black Swan*, *White Swan*, Waltz Girl in Balanchine's *Serenade*, and William Forsythe's *Artifact II*.

In 2023, the role of Juliet was created on Katherine in Andrea Schermoly's *Romeo & Juliet*. Other highlight roles include Sybilla Melvyn in Cathy Marston's *My Brilliant Career* (2025), Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake* (2024), the title role in Loughlan Prior's *Cinderella* (2022), Giselle in Johan Kobborg and Ethan Stiefel's *Giselle* (2021), Titania in Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2021 and 2024), Aurora and Bluebird in *The Sleeping Beauty* (2020), Marie in Val Caniparoli's *The Nutcracker* (2018), and principal role in Twyla Tharp's *Waterbaby Bagatelles™* (2022), Alice Topp's *Aurum* and *Logos* (2022, 2023), Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain* (2023), Jiří Kylián's *Petite Mort* (2018), and Balanchine's *Divertimento No. 15* (2018).

Katherine created the role of Peaseblossom in Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2015). Other early appearances with the RNZB included Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante* (2014), and solo roles in *A Christmas Carol* (2014), *Salute* (2015), and *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* (2016).

Katherine has created two works for RNZB in-studio choreographic performances, *La'jwa* (2021) and *Waking Up* (2024).

Born in France and raised in Portland, Oregon, Katherine trained at the School of Oregon Ballet and spent a year at the Paris Opéra Ballet School. She joined Oregon Ballet Theatre as an apprentice in 2010 before moving to Chicago to dance for the Joffrey Ballet in 2011 – 13 and then to Northern Ballet in the UK until 2014.



BRANDEN REINERS

Branden joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in February 2023 after a decade in the profession, initially as member of Minnesota Ballet (2013 – 15) and latterly with Grand Rapids Ballet (2015 – 23) in Michigan, USA. His RNZB roles to date include Siegfried and Rothbart in *Swan Lake* (2024), Tybalt and Lord Capulet in *Romeo & Juliet*, *Serenade*, the 'Clay' pas de deux in Alice Topp's *Logos* (2023, reprised in Tutus on Tour 2024), the Father in *Hansel & Gretel* and a prominent solo in Moss Patterson's *Te Ao Mārama*. Branden has also performed in Wayne McGregor's *Infra* and the opening solo in Alice Topp's *High Tide* (2024), *Burnt Mask* in Loughlan Prior's *The Firebird*, and Storm Master in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025).

Branden's repertoire prior to joining the RNZB encompassed many solo and principal roles in both classical and contemporary ballets, notably works by George Balanchine, Val Caniparoli, Paul Taylor (*Company B*) and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa. He also created roles in new works by Penny Saunders, Danielle Rowe and Mário Radačovský. In 2017 he appeared as a guest artist in the Royal New Zealand Ballet's previous production of *Romeo & Juliet*, including performances as Tybalt.

Branden grew up in New Jersey and undertook his early ballet training at the School of American Ballet and the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School in New York City, later training at pre-professional programmes at Boston Ballet and San Francisco Ballet.



JEMIMA SCOTT | Supported by Agincourt Holdings Ltd.

Jemima joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2020 as a guest dancer. In 2021, Jemima officially joined the company as the inaugural Royal New Zealand Ballet Foundation Scholar. She was promoted to Company Artist in 2022, and to Soloist for 2025.

Jemima's featured roles to date include *Grand Pas Classique* in Tutus on Tour, the Firebird in Loughlan Prior's *The Firebird*, and the Sugar Plum Fairy in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker*. In 2024, Jemima performed the central role in Sarah Foster-Sproull's *To Hold*, which was created on her, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the Pas de Trois in *Swan Lake*. Other roles to date include the Ice Cream Witch in *Hansel & Gretel* (2023), the Fairy Godmother and Stepsister Madeleine in *Cinderella* (2022), Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024) and Sarah Foster-Sproull's *The Autumn Ball* (2022).

Jemima grew up in Wellington, New Zealand and started dancing at the age of four with Paula Hunt. She trained at Mt. Eden Ballet Academy, European School of Ballet, The National Ballet Theatre, and the Bottaini Merlo International Center of Arts in Munich. Jemima was also a Scholar and Associate with the New Zealand School of Dance for six years.

Before joining the RNZB, Jemima competed in the Prix De Lausanne (2020), and was a prize winner in many New Zealand and Australasian competitions.



KIRBY SELCHOW | Supported by Nautilus Estate of Marlborough

Kirby joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2014 and was promoted to Soloist in 2020. Since joining the company, Kirby has performed featured roles in a wide range of classical and contemporary repertoire. Particular highlights include Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016, 2021, 2024), the Pas de Trois in *Swan Lake* (2024), Lady Capulet in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023), Black Swan in Mairo Radačovský's *Black Swan, White Swan* (2019), Myrtha in *Giselle* (2021), Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty* (2020), Alice Topp's *Aurum* (2022), *Logos* (2023) and *High Tide* (2024), Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024), William Forsythe's *Artifact II* (2019) and Alexander Ekman's *Episode 21* (2017).

She has inspired choreographers to create roles for her, including a notable solo in Andrea Schermoly's suffrage-themed *Stand to Reason* (2018), Gretel in Loughlan Prior's *Hansel & Gretel* (2019, 2023), Step-sister Nicolette in Prior's *Cinderella* (2022) and Katherine Mansfield in his *Woman of Words* (Wānaka Festival of Colour, 2023).

Born in Perth, Western Australia, Kirby trained at the Graduate College of Dance before being accepted into The Australian Ballet school in 2009 on the Laurie Cowled Scholarship in Melbourne. Kirby performed with The Australian Ballet's Dancers' Company in 2012 and 2013 and graduated as school captain in 2013. In 2024, Kirby returned to Perth as a guest artist with West Australian Ballet to perform the role of Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty*.



GRETCHEN STEIMLE | Supported by Ceinwen Kelly

Gretchen joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2022 and was promoted to Soloist for 2026.

Recent roles include Step-sister Madeleine in Loughlan Prior's *Cinderella* (2022), the Nurse in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023), the Rose in Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Requiem for a Rose* (2023) the Pas de Trois and the Princess Mother in *Swan Lake* (2024), Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024), Alice Topp's *High Tide* (2024), Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024) and Aunt Drosselmeyer in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025). In 2024 she also created an original work, *Tides of Affection*, for the RNZB's in-studio choreographic workshop, *Voyages*.

Raised in Austin, Texas, Gretchen's dance education includes Tapestry Dance, Boston Ballet School's Pre-Professional Program and Pacific Northwest Ballet's Professional Division. While at PNB, she danced in many company productions and was an exchange guest apprentice with Dresden Semperoper Ballet. Prior to joining the RNZB, Gretchen spent five seasons with Grand Rapids Ballet in Michigan, USA.

FIRST ARTISTS



CADENCE BARRACK | *Sponsored by Avis*

Cadence joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet as a guest dancer in 2018. In 2019, she became one of the RNZB's first apprentices and was promoted to Artist later that year. She was promoted to First Artist for 2026.

Cadence's recent featured roles include Clara and Pavlova in *The Nutcracker* (2025), Aunt Helen in *My Brilliant Career* (2025), the Pas de Trois, Cygnets and the Neapolitan Dance in *Swan Lake* (2024), Helena and Mustardseed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024) Little Russian Girls in *Serenade* (2023 and 2019), Step-Sister Nicolette in Loughlan Prior's *Cinderella* (2022), Shaun James Kelly's *The Ground Beneath Our Feet* (2022), Moyna in *Giselle* (2021), the First Variation in *Paquita* (2021) and the Fairy of Joy and the White Cat in *The Sleeping Beauty* (2020).

Born and raised in Auckland, Cadence trained pre-professionally at the Philippa Campbell School of Ballet. She participated in the RNZB's National Mentor Programme in 2015 and in 2016, competed in the Youth America Grand Prix Finals in New York, and the Royal Academy of Dance Genée Award in Sydney.

Cadence entered the New Zealand School of Dance in 2016 and graduated from the classical programme in 2018.



CATARINA ESTÉVEZ-COLLINS | *Supported by Isaac Hikaka and Jessica Miles*

Catarina joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet as an Artist in June 2022. She was promoted to First Artist for 2026.

Catarina's featured roles to date include Clara, Tūi and Hokey Pokey in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025), the Pas de Trois, Cygnets and Neapolitan Dance in *Swan Lake* (2024), Sarah Foster Sproull's *To Hold* (2024), Moth in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024) and the Act III pas de deux from *Coppélia* (Tutus on Tour, 2025). In 2023, roles included Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Requiem for a Rose* (2023), the *Flower Festival in Genzano* pas de deux for the Platinum Gala, and Gretel in *Hansel & Gretel*.

Originally from Spain, Catarina's training spans the globe, with her ballet education starting at the Ballet Esperanza Arrondo and the Escuela Profesional Castilla y León in Spain. She received a full scholarship for the Royal Ballet School Antwerp in Belgium from 2016-2019. Catarina was a trainee at the Joffrey Ballet Academy in Chicago, USA, from 2019 to 2021, becoming a company artist in 2021. Her repertoire in Chicago included works by Christopher Wheeldon and George Balanchine as well as contemporary works.



JENNIFER ULLOA | *Supported by Bruce Rae and Margaret Mabbett*

Jennifer joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2023 and was promoted to First Artist for 2026. Her featured roles have included the Nurse in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023), Alice Topp's *High Tide* (2024) and the 'Rain' pas de deux from her *Logos* (2023), Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024), Peaseblossom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024), the Pas de Trois and Spanish Dance in *Swan Lake* (2024), Sybylla Melvyn in *My Brilliant Career* (2025) and Clara in *The Nutcracker* (2025).

From 2016 – 22, Jennifer was a member of Ballet Nacional de Sodre in Uruguay, where her repertoire included principal roles in *Carmen*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Mauricio Wainrot, as well as works by Jiří Kylián, Kenneth MacMillan, Anna Marie Holmes, Nacho Duato, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, George Balanchine and John Cranko.

Prior to her role in Uruguay, Jennifer was a member of the Ballet Nacional Dominicano in the Dominican Republic from 2013 – 15. She trained at the ENDANZA National School of Dance in the Dominican Republic and participated in summer schools in Cuba, Grand Rapids Ballet in Michigan, USA, and with Alvin Ailey, the Joffrey Ballet School and The Royal Ballet School. Jennifer has also appeared as a guest artist in Argentina and the Dominican Republic and participated in international festivals in Cannes and Colombia. Jennifer was born and raised in the Dominican Republic.



ROSE XU

Rose joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet as an Artist in January 2023 and was promoted to First Artist for 2026. Rose's roles to date include the Sugar Plum Fairy in Ty King Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025), Mustardseed in Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024), Melissa in Sir Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024), Alice Topp's *High Tide* (2024), and the Cygnets in *Swan Lake* (2024).

Rose trained at the Australian Conservatoire of Ballet, where she undertook the professional coaching programme in 2022. Her early training was complemented by classes through The Australian Ballet's after school programme, and from 2017 - 2020 she attended the Shanghai Theatre Academy Affiliated Dance School. While training in China she had the opportunity to appear in the corps de ballet for *Swan Lake* with the Suzhou Ballet Company.

ARTISTS



TIMOTHY MICHAEL CHING

Timothy joined the RNZB in mid-2023 for *Hansel & Gretel*. His featured roles to date include Lolly Slice in *The Nutcracker* (2025), the Jester in *Swan Lake* (2024), and Pig in children's ballet *Dazzlehands* (2024). In 2025, Tim performed *Te Ao Mārama* by Moss Patterson in Melbourne as part of The Australian Ballet's DanceX Festival of Dance.

Timothy was born and raised in Singapore. He started his training at Singapore Ballet Academy at the age of 13, before joining School of The Arts Singapore to further his studies. As a prize winner at the Asian Grand Prix, he received the opportunity to train full-time at the New Zealand School of Dance under the tutelage of Qi Huan and Nadine Tyson. In his second year at NZSD, he competed in the Alana Haines Australasian Awards and was awarded a full scholarship to train for six weeks at the Houston Ballet Academy.

In 2020, Timothy performed as a member of Ballet Collective Aotearoa and, after returning to Singapore, with Singapore Ballet. At the end of his mandatory national service in Singapore, Timothy returned to New Zealand and the RNZB.



JOSHUA DOUGLAS

Joshua joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2025 as a Friedlander Foundation Scholar, and was promoted to Artist for 2026. His featured roles to date include Lolly Slice and Chocolate Fish in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025).

Josh was born in Auckland, New Zealand. He started ballet at the age of 12, training at Philippa Campbell School of Ballet, and moved to full-time training at the New Zealand School of Dance in 2022, graduating at the end of 2023. In October 2023, he represented the School with a solo performance of Val Caniparoli's *Aria* at the Royal New Zealand Ballet's 70th Anniversary Gala. The same year, he participated in a student exchange programme with Canada's National Ballet School.

Joshua spent 2024 as a member of Queensland Ballet's Jette Parker Young Artists programme.



ETHAN DWYER

Ethan joined the RNZB as an Artist in January 2026. Ethan grew up in Mildura, Australia, and started dance at age 10. He moved to Melbourne in 2021 where he studied at The Jane Moore Academy of Ballet, before joining The Australian Ballet School at Level 6 in 2023.

In his graduate year at the School, Ethan thoroughly enjoyed performing the principal male role in George Balanchine's *Scotch Symphony*, and Basilio in Rudolf Nureyev's *Don Quixote*. Another highlight was going on National Tour with The Australian Ballet, performing George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante* and *The Nutcracker Act II*.



EMMA GAVAN

Emma joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet as an Artist in January 2025.

Some of Emma's recent roles in 2025 include a Wastelander in Loughlan Prior's *The Firebird*, performing in Cathy Marston's *My Brilliant Career*, and Pavlova, Mānuka, a Snowflake and a parent in *The Nutcracker*.

Emma grew up in Wollongong, Australia and began her dance training by learning multiple styles at her local dance school. In 2017, Emma had the opportunity to perform with The Australian Ballet in their production of Graeme Murphy's *Nutcracker: The Story of Clara*, where she took on the role of Young Clara.

Emma joined The Australian Ballet School in 2019. In her graduating year, 2024, Emma had the chance to be a part of an exchange programme with Canada's National Ballet School. She also performed with The Australian Ballet on their National Tour where she danced *The Sleeping Beauty* Act 3 and George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante*.



JAKE GISBY

Jake joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet as one of two 2022 Friedlander Foundation Scholars and became an Artist in 2023. He was a guest artist in the Royal New Zealand Ballet's *The Sleeping Beauty* in October 2020. Jake later re-joined the company as a guest artist for *Giselle* (2021), and in July-August 2021 performed in *Paquita* and Loughlan Prior's *The Firebird*.

In 2024, Jake made his debut as the Jester in *Swan Lake* and created the role of Pig in children's ballet *Dazzlehands*. Other featured roles include Benvolio in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023) and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024).

Jake grew up in Putaruru and began his dance training at the Dance Education Centre in Tauranga. In 2017 he was selected as a finalist for the Youth America Grand Prix in New York. Jake's full-time training was at New Zealand School of Dance, and he also attended summer programmes at The Royal Ballet School in London, and San Francisco Ballet School. Jake began 2020 with Oklahoma City Ballet before returning home to New Zealand.



TESSA KARLE | *Supported by Gaye Gardner*

Tessa joined the RNZB as a guest dancer in 2021 and was the 2022 Todd Scholar. She was promoted to Artist for 2023.

Tessa's featured roles include Pavlova in *The Nutcracker* (2025), Cobweb in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2021 and 2024), Cygnets in *Swan Lake* (2024), Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024), 'Little Russians' in George Balanchine's *Serenade* (2023), Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Requiem for a Rose* (2023), the 'Storm' trio in Alice Topp's *Logos* (2023) and Juliet's Friends in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023). Tessa also choreographed a work, *Introspection*, for the RNZB's 2024 in-studio choreographic workshop, *Voyages*.

Tessa grew up in Canberra, Australia, and trained at the Dance Development Centre under Jackie Hallahan and Paul Knobloch whilst also training with The Australian Ballet School through their interstate and invitee training programmes. In 2018, Tessa moved to Wellington to join the New Zealand School of Dance as a Classical Major. While at the School she had the opportunity to train for four weeks at Canada's National Ballet School on full scholarship.

Tessa holds a Bachelor of Communication majoring in Digital Marketing from Massey University, which she completed alongside her work with the RNZB. She now combines her two passions by creating short form video content for the RNZB's Instagram, Facebook and TikTok pages, connecting the company with viewers across the globe.



CALLAHAN LAIRD | Partnered by the AA

Callahan joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet as the Todd Scholar in 2020. He was promoted to Artist in 2021.

Callahan's featured roles include the Mouse King and Pavlova in *The Nutcracker* (2025), Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024), the Hungarian Dance in *Swan Lake* (2024) and Lord Montague in *Romeo & Juliet* (2023), as well as Wayne McGregor's *Infra* (2024) and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Requiem for a Rose* (2023). His roles in children's ballets include the Sheep in *Dazzlehands* (2024) and Tūi in *Tāne and the Kiwi* (2022).

Callahan grew up in Christchurch and trained at Levings School of Dance for ten years under Avril Levings (2006-2015) before attending the Southern Ballet Theatre for two years under Glen Harris and Lioudmila Solovieva (2016-2017). He also participated in the RNZB's National Mentor Programme. Prior to joining the New Zealand School of Dance in 2018, Callahan was an NZSD Scholar and Associate for three years. While at the School, Callahan took part in a six-week exchange with Canada's National Ballet School.



PADRAIC (PADDY) LUM

Padraic (Paddy) joined the RNZB as an Artist in January 2026. Paddy was born in Sydney, Australia, and began his ballet training at The McDonald College in Sydney. He then relocated to Melbourne in 2020 after being accepted into The Australian Ballet School.

Paddy was fortunate to go on National Tour with The Australian Ballet in 2024 and 2025, performing renowned works like George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante*, *The Sleeping Beauty* Act III, and *The Nutcracker* Act II. In his graduate year at the school, he performed George Balanchine's *Scotch Symphony* as the Demi-soloist, The Arabian Dance in *The Nutcracker* Act II, Solor in *La Bayadere* Act III, and Lead Fandango in Rudolph Nureyev's *Don Quixote*.



ANGUS O'CONNELL

Angus joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2025 as one of two Friedlander Foundation Scholars, and was promoted to Artist in 2026.

During his time with the RNZB, he has performed as a Solider and Lolly Slice in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker*, a sibling in Cathy Marston's *My Brilliant Career*, and a Wastelander in Loughlan Prior's *The Firebird*. While a student at the New Zealand School of Dance, Angus was seconded to the RNZB for *Romeo & Juliet* (2023), *Swan Lake* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024).

Angus began ballet at the age of nine in Christchurch, New Zealand, training under Ann Judson. He continued to develop his skills at Southern Ballet under the guidance of Glen Harris and Lioudmila Solovieva. In 2022, Angus joined the New Zealand School of Dance (NZSD), graduating in 2024.



OLIVIA PLATT

Olivia joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet in 2025 as the Todd Scholar and was promoted to Artist for 2026.

In 2025, Olivia performed as Mrs Stahlbaum in Ty King-Wall's *The Nutcracker*, as well as roles in Cathy Marston's *My Brilliant Career* and a Wastelander in Loughlan Prior's *The Firebird*. She also joined the company on secondment in 2023 for George Balanchine's *Serenade* and in 2024 for Russell Kerr's *Swan Lake*.

Olivia, who is of Ngāti Whātua and Ngāpuhi descent, grew up in Mangawhai and began her dance training under Lisa Johnson before continuing her training at the Mount Eden Ballet Academy and Anneliese Gilberd Academy. In 2022 she moved to Wellington to commence training as a Classical Major at the New Zealand School of Dance. During this time, she attended Assemblée Internationale 2023 in Toronto.



RUBY RYBURN | Supported by Julia Cuthbert

Ruby joined the RNZB as the 2024 Todd Scholar and was promoted to Artist for 2025. Ruby's featured roles with the RNZB to date include Cygnets in *Swan Lake* (2024), Elizaveta in *The Firebird* (2025), and Hokey Pokey in *The Nutcracker* (2025). She has also choreographed two works for the company's in-studio choreographic workshop, *Voyages – Thirst* (2024) and *You like Jazz?* (2025).

Ruby undertook her early dance training at Mount Eden Ballet Academy in Auckland in various genres such as Ballet, Tap, Jazz and Contemporary before moving to the New Zealand School of Dance for full-time training in 2022. Here under the guidance of Christine Gunn, Ruby was awarded her RAD Solo seal, the highest level of achievement in the RAD syllabus. She also performed as a soloist in *BOLD* by Goyo Montero, while representing the NZSD in the 2023 Prix de Lausanne Partner School Project.

Ruby was seconded from the New Zealand School of Dance for the RNZB's 70th Anniversary *Lightscares* tour in July – August 2023, performing in George Balanchine's *Serenade* in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch.



JORDAN SAWTELL

Jordan joined the Royal New Zealand Ballet as an Artist in January 2025.

Jordan grew up in Sydney, Australia where he started dancing at his local dance school at the age of eight. In 2016 Jordan performed in The Australian Ballet's *Coppélia* and later Graeme Murphy's *Nutcracker: The Story of Clara* in 2017. Jordan joined The Australian Ballet School in 2020 and continued his training there until 2024, his graduate year. During his graduate year Jordan performed with The Australian Ballet on their National Tour, dancing George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante* and *The Sleeping Beauty* Act III. In 2024, Jordan was also privileged to dance with The Australian Ballet in the world premiere of Christopher Wheeldon's *Oscar*.



EMA TAKAHASHI

Ema joined the RNZB as the Royal New Zealand Ballet Foundation Scholar in 2023, after performing with the company as a guest dancer in 2022. She was promoted to Artist for 2025. Ema's featured roles include Cygnets and the Neapolitan Dance in *Swan Lake* (2024), the Chicken in children's ballet *Dazzlehands* (2024), Aunt Helen in *My Brilliant Career* (2025), *Chrysalis* by Shaun James Kelly (2025), and the Chocolate Fish and Hokey Pokey divertissements in Ty King Wall's *The Nutcracker* (2025).

Ema was born in Japan and moved to New Zealand at the age of three, starting dance in Christchurch the same year. In 2020 she began full time training through Convergence Dance Studio's 'Aspire' Programme, and was accepted into the New Zealand Youth Ballet Company in 2021, where her tutors included former RNZB Principal Abigail Boyle. In 2022 she was awarded her RAD Solo Seal and was also runner up in the National Young Performer Awards. Ema was a member of the Royal New Zealand Ballet's National Mentor Programme in 2021 and 2022.



HANNAH THOMSON

Hannah joined the RNZB as the 2023 Todd Scholar, after performing with the company as a guest dancer in 2022. In 2024 she was one of two Friedlander Foundation Scholars, and she was promoted to Artist for 2025.

Hannah's recent roles include Sybylla Melvyn in Cathy Marston's *My Brilliant Career* (2025), Cygnets and the Hungarian Dance in *Swan Lake* (2024) and Fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2024).

Hannah was born and raised in Christchurch, New Zealand. Her early training was at Garden City Dance Academy and the Anneliese Gilbert Dance Academy before joining the New Zealand School of Dance as a classical major. While at the School she worked with tutors including Turid Revfeim, Medhi Angot, Nadine Tyson and Loughlan Prior.



SCHOLARS

LYN LIN | *Supported by the Todd Trust*

Lyn Lin joins us as our 2026 Todd Scholar.

Lyn grew up in Auckland, undertaking her early training at Mt Eden Ballet Academy, and has recently graduated from her second year at the New Zealand School of Dance. Lyn was seconded to the RNZB for *The Nutcracker* in 2025, dancing in the Snowflakes and Waltz of the Flowers, before joining the company in 2026 as a Scholar.



BREYAH TAKITIMU | *Supported by the Friedlander Foundation*

Breyah, who is of Ngai Tahu and Ngāti Porou descent, grew up in Invercargill, where she began dancing at the age of 3 with Hana Skeggs and Gina Stevens at La Muse. Throughout these years she was a Scholar and Associate with the New Zealand School of Dance, an ITP at The Australian Ballet School and the Junior winner of the South Island Ballet Awards.

At age 15, Breyah moved to Christchurch to train full-time at Canterbury Ballet. She was a member of the RNZB's National Mentor Programme and performed with the New Zealand Youth Ballet Company, where she was tutored by former RNZB principal Abigail Boyle. She was a guest dancer for the RNZB's *Nutcracker* in 2025 and joins the company as one of two Friedlander Foundation Scholars for 2026.

In 2022, after attending the Joffrey Ballet Academy's summer intensive in Chicago, Breyah was invited to join as a trainee for the following year, and she has recently graduated following two years of training and performing with the Academy.



CHARLOTTE WILLIS | *Supported by the Friedlander Foundation*

Charlotte Willis is one of two 2026 Friedlander Foundation Scholars.

Charlotte grew up in Wellington, receiving her early training at Chilton Ballet Academy, and is a recent graduate from the New Zealand School of Dance. She was seconded to the RNZB for *Swan Lake* (2024), *Dazzlehands*, and *The Nutcracker* in 2025, dancing in the Snowflakes and Waltz of the Flowers, before joining the company in 2026 as a Scholar.





THE

Haythorne Circle

The Royal New Zealand Ballet has embarked on a five-year project to invest in major new repertoire, with a focus on full-length 'story ballets' which have the potential to attract large audiences, and to be toured or performed internationally.

The aim is to build the classics of the future, ballets which are entertaining, inspiring, thought-provoking and engaging for audiences of all ages, and so investing in the development of choreographers, dancers, designers and composers from New Zealand and around the world as they create memorable new work for stages from Auckland to Invercargill – and the world stage.

To turn this vision into reality, we have established a group of supporters, who together are making a substantial financial contribution towards the creation of one new major production each year. The first production to be supported by this group was 2025's new production of *The Nutcracker*, followed by *Macbeth* in February 2026.

It is with great aroha and pride that we acknowledge the founding members of the Haythorne Circle:

The Bell Family

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Catherine and Steven Fyfe

Anna Gibbons

Erica McLean

Lyn and Wayne Norwood

Kevin Ramsbottom-Isherwood



The Circle is named in honour of the late Harry Haythorne (1926 – 2014). Harry was the RNZB's longest-serving Artistic Director (1981 – 92) and invested in distinctive repertoire during his tenure, including major productions of *Swan Lake* and *Romeo & Juliet* as well as robust commissions and acquisitions from local and international choreographers.

'Our aim was always to bring The World of Dance to New Zealand and take New Zealand Dance to the World.'

HARRY HAYTHORNE MBE, 2013

If you are interested in contributing to the Haythorne Circle, please contact Susannah Lees-Jeffries, susannah@rnzb.org.nz.



Image / Artist Ruby Ryburn, photograph by Ross Brown

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All supporters play an important role at the RNZB. Whether you're 'topping up' your ticket purchase with a donation or supporting a project close to your heart, every gift makes a difference. Here – with thanks from us all – are some ways that your gift can help the RNZB.

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Every year, our dancers go through hundreds of pairs of pointe shoes, boots and flats, costing more than \$100,000 each year. A gift to our Pointe Shoes Appeal supports our dancers with the most vital tool of their profession, and is an immensely practical way of supporting the dancers and showing your appreciation of their work.

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Our flagship giving programme, with opportunities from \$300, \$600, \$1,250 and above, including regular newsletters and exclusive content, priority booking for all performances, recognition in our programmes and invitations to special events.

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An opportunity for individuals and organisations to play a pivotal supporting role. Champion one of our gifted dancers for \$10,000 annually and gain insights into their professional life and a deeper understanding of their art.

INVEST IN NEW WORK

The Haythorne Circle brings substantial investment, from a small group of generous, visionary individuals to the creation of new work, supporting one new ballet each year. 2026 marks the second year of the programme, with the Circle making a significant contribution towards *Macbeth*.

Start your
JOURNEY

We have a range of supporter programmes to suit many special interests and levels of giving. Start your journey as a member of the RNZB family by contacting Elizabeth Isaacs, Philanthropy Manager, elizabeth.isaacs@rnzb.org.nz or visit rnzb.org.nz/support.

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The support waiting in the wings – balletfoundation.org.nz

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DANCING AT SCHOOLS

AROUND AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Our primary aged children are thrilled to be able to work alongside a professional dancer and particularly liked that they learnt a piece from a current Ballet.

– TEACHER 2025

They loved learning an actual piece from Dazzlehands, especially when they saw it again on stage.

– TEACHER 2025

It's always so good to watch great performers come through the little towns and our students getting exposed to the arts.

– TEACHER, 2025

This is a valuable and affordable opportunity for primary students which we hope to continue with annually.

– TEACHER, 2025



Over the course of the year, RNZB Dance Educators clock up thousands of kilometres travelling to deliver dance workshops in kindergartens, pre-schools, primary and secondary schools across the length and breadth of Aotearoa New Zealand.

From secondary schools with specialist NCEA dance programmes to tiny rural schools where all ages come together to dance in the school hall, RNZB Dance Educators share the magic of moving to music – and support classroom teachers with resources so that they can make the most of what they've learned.



Neve, from the RNZB team, visited and delivered four highly successful ballet workshops to children ranging in age from 5–12 years. Each session was fast paced, engaging, and well structured, with students learning a short routine in a surprisingly short time. Neve's enthusiasm and positivity really made an impact on the tamariki.

– TEACHER, AVONHEAD SCHOOL

The value of the RNZ Ballet's programmes extends far beyond entertainment; they are essential to the holistic development of our students, particularly in our lower socioeconomic community where access to a variety of arts education is severely limited

– TEACHER, CLENDON PARK SCHOOL

The engagement and excitement we have seen from our students shows the real impact of these programmes. Without them, many children would miss out on the chance to connect with professional dancers and experience ballet in an accessible and relevant way

– TEACHER, SOUTH HORNBY SCHOOL

Distance is no barrier to participation, and schools pay just \$5 per participating student, regardless of their location.

For pre-schools and primary schools, in addition to in-person visits, a free digital resource, Dance for Tamariki, is available year-round. Teachers can draw on video including performance excerpts from recent repertoire and dance tutorials to use in the classroom.

For secondary schools, teaching resources for NCEA levels 1 – 3 are available to purchase, with detailed teaching materials based on exploration of ballet as a dance genre.

The students absolutely adored learning Dazzlehands through the RNZB digital resource. It gave them the opportunity to watch the snippet and learn the piece straight away, while keeping everything age-appropriate and fun. It also introduced some of the students to the world of ballet and mime. I would definitely use the Primary digital resource in class again.

– TAYLA BEST, CHILTON ST JAMES SCHOOL



TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THESE RESOURCES, SCAN THE QR CODE HERE.

RNZB Education Team

Every year, our RNZB Education Team connect with more than 40,000 New Zealanders in person, in a multitude of ways, and regardless of age, ability or location. From in-person workshops, performances and experiences, to a growing digital programme, we want everyone's experience with dance to be a positive one. To find out more about the RNZB in the community, and opportunities to get involved, [see rnzb.org.nz](https://www.rnzb.org.nz).





Images / All images are of students at Johnsonville School participating in workshops with RNZB Dance Educator Neve Pierce in 2025, photographs by Stephen A'Court.

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RNZB Education also acknowledges the generosity of the Fehl Charitable Trust, the Kelliher Charitable Trust, the Four Winds Foundation, Potter Masonic Trust, the Walker & Hall Trust, the Royal New Zealand Ballet Foundation, Rotorua Energy Trust, Tauranga Western Bay Community Event Fund, the Pamela Webb Charitable Trust and the Farina Thompson Charitable Trust, both administered by Perpetual Guardian.



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The Royal New Zealand Ballet Foundation is committed to building a sustainable fund to provide long-term stability for ballet in Aotearoa.

Gifts made to the Foundation ensure that today's budding dancers can dream of representing New Zealand on the world stage, and that tomorrow's audiences will enjoy international talent right here at home.

For more information, such as how to include the Foundation in your will or how to become an En Pointe Patron, visit www.balletfoundation.org.nz

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NZSD contemporary dance graduate Gabrielle Arnold. Photo by Stephen A'Court.



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Principals Mayu Tanigaito and Laurynas Vėjalis and Artists of the Royal New Zealand Ballet in Act II of Swan Lake, 2024, photograph by Stephen A'Court.

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Principal Laurynas Vėjalis in
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Photo by Stephen A'Court.



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Thank you to Mel Bremner and the team at Rembrandt for the men's dinner suits worn in Act II. Steel and Aluminium Set Construction supplied by Steel E.D & Patton – Custom Architectural Metalwork. Production freight supplied by NZ Van Lines. All lighting equipment supplied by Grouse Lighting. Thanks to Bunnings.

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RNZB Principals Mayu Tanigaito and Laurynas Vėjalis in *Swan Lake*, 2024, photograph by Stephen A'Court.

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