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For immediate release

David Nixon OBE steps down as Artistic Director of Northern Ballet after 20 years



David Nixon OBE. Photo Simon Lawson.

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Northern Ballet announced today that David Nixon OBE, its longest serving Artistic Director, will step down from his role in December 2021 after 20 hugely successful years of artistic leadership.

Canadian-born David Nixon took up the post of Artistic Director of Northern Ballet in 2001. During his time with the Company, 29 full-length ballets and 23 one-act works have been added to the repertoire, as well as 14 original full-length musical compositions. As a choreographer and designer, David has created 13 original full-length ballets for Northern Ballet, including [Wuthering Heights](#), [A Midsummer Night's Dream](#), [The Great Gatsby](#) and [The Little Mermaid](#), and has restaged and adapted a further six productions.

Artistic Legacy

Northern Ballet's reputation as a world-class dance company has grown exponentially during David's directorship. Multiple Northern Ballet productions have been shown on TV, and the Company made its cinema debut during his tenure, with several works including children's ballets shown in cinemas nationally and internationally. In October 2019 David Nixon's [Dracula](#) became the first Northern Ballet production to be live-streamed to cinemas.

In 2020, Northern Ballet celebrated its 50th anniversary, a significant milestone marked by a celebratory gala devised by David Nixon to show the history and development of the Company. Senior dancers from all of the major UK ballet companies plus Chicago's Joffrey Ballet performed works from Northern Ballet's repertoire, testament to the regard in which David is held in the ballet world.

Northern Ballet's success has been recognised with the Taglioni European Ballet award for Best Company. David has been awarded Dance Europe Director of the Year twice, and in 2010 was awarded an OBE for services to dance.



Abigail Prudames as Marilla and Joseph Taylor as Prince Adair in David Nixon OBE's *The Little Mermaid*.

Photo Emma Kauldhar

A new home for Northern Ballet

Under David's leadership, Northern Ballet moved from West Park, Leeds, into its purpose-built headquarters in Quarry Hill in 2010. With seven dance studios, a 230-seat studio theatre and a health suite, the move enabled the Company to grow artistically and physically from 34 dancers to 44 and also furthered the development of the Academy of Northern Ballet.

Talent Development

David's legacy is also in developing talent. He is responsible for nurturing many dancers who have risen through the ranks of Northern Ballet over the course of his leadership.

Supporting the work of young choreographers, David commissioned eight full-length works including first full-length commissions to talents such as Cathy Marston (*A Tale of Two Cities*, *Jane Eyre*, *Victoria*) and Kenneth Tindall (*Casanova*, *Geisha*). He has given Northern Ballet's young dancers opportunities for their choreographic debuts with children's ballets, mixed programmes and Choreographic Labs. Most recently he has supported Northern Ballet's growing digital platform, under the directorship of Kenneth Tindall.

Under David's leadership with the assistance of Academy Associate Director Yoko Ichino, the Academy of Northern Ballet has grown exponentially offering classes for all ages. The Academy's Centre for Advanced Training (CAT) programme, the only CAT in the country with a focus on classical ballet, has produced several professional dancers across many companies.



David Nixon OBE with students from the Academy of Northern Ballet. Photo Emily Nuttall

David Nixon said: 'The time afforded for reflection during the Covid-19 pandemic made it clear that the time for me to pass the Company on to new leadership had come. I wish to thank my dancers past and present, all those who work on the artistic side of the Company and all the creative collaborators I have had the privilege to work with over these years for their priceless contribution towards the Company's many artistic achievements. I wish to thank the Board for the opportunity they have afforded me for over 20 years of directing Northern Ballet and I am grateful to all those who have worked for Northern Ballet, our supporters and audience members, without whose support nothing would have been

possible. Finally, my deep gratitude for the extraordinary, never-failing support of my wife, without whom I could never have done any of this.'

Sir David Wootton, Chairman of Northern Ballet, said: 'David took the legacy of Christopher Gable and built on it to transform Northern Ballet into the internationally-renowned, commercially-thriving company it is, recognised around the world for artistic excellence. David's talent as an artistic leader and the loyalty and dedication he has created in his dancers is shown by the cohesion and performance levels which the Company has maintained during the pandemic and which will be evident when we return to performing on 1 June.'

Northern Ballet will begin the process to recruit a new Artistic Director shortly.

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors

David Nixon OBE

Read David Nixon's full biography [here](#)

Northern Ballet

Northern Ballet is one of the UK's leading ballet companies and the widest touring ballet company in the UK. Bold and innovative in its approach, Northern Ballet is prolific at creating new full-length work with a unique blend of strong classical technique and impressive storytelling. Northern Ballet's repertoire embraces popular culture and takes inspiration from literature, legend, opera and the classics, pushing the boundaries of what stories can be told through dance.

A champion for the cultural exports of the North, Leeds-based Northern Ballet is dedicated to bringing ballet to as many people and places as possible, under the leadership of Artistic Director David Nixon OBE. Northern Ballet's Company of dancers performs a combination of

its full-length ballets and specially created ballets for children at more than 40 venues annually.

For more details of Northern Ballet's tour, on sale dates and booking information, please visit northernballet.com/whats-on

