



Northern Ballet media release
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For immediate release

Northern Ballet endorsed as key organisation in Arts Council England's National Portfolio

Northern Ballet has received a 23% increase in its funding from Arts Council England and has secured a place as a National Portfolio Organisation for 2015-18. The increase represents an additional £550,000 for the Leeds-based company. Northern Ballet currently tours full-length ballets, mixed programmes and ballets for children to more than 30 venues across the UK reaching in excess of 146,000 people. From 2015, as the Company celebrates its 45th anniversary, the increased funding will allow Northern Ballet to extend its tour to include nine additional venues, adding a further 55 performances, with the potential to reach more than 36,000 additional people. In 2015/16 Northern Ballet will give more than 220 performances reaching almost 200,000 people.

The additional strand of touring will target mid-scale venues to complement the already established large scale and small scale tours. The artistic programme will include a one act version of a narrative ballet coupled with a short contemporary ballet piece. Performances will take place in theatres in geographical proximity to venues where Northern Ballet tours its full-length narrative ballets. It will aim to develop audiences for the Company's established artistic programme as well as contribute to audience development for dance throughout the different regions of the UK it tours to.

In addition the Company is establishing an annual programme of new choreographic laboratories. This programme will provide opportunities for a number of international choreographers, at the start of their choreographic careers, to work with Northern Ballet dancers to explore creativity in narrative dance without the pressure to create a finished work.

Mark Skipper DL, Northern Ballet's Chief Executive says, "We are delighted to have received a significant increase in funding from Arts Council England and to remain a National Portfolio Organisation for a further three years.

We received substantial cuts in the last spending round but over the past three years we have shown how resilient we are as a company. Since 2011 we have transformed our fundraising strategy

and worked with a consortium of trusts and foundations to ensure we continue to create new full-length ballets: *Beauty & the Beast*, *The Great Gatsby* and *Cinderella*. We launched a new fundraising campaign, Sponsor a Dancer, to protect the 40 dancers we employ. Sponsor a Dancer has raised in excess of £600,000 for the Company.

The ballet and opera analysis carried out by Arts Council England confirmed that we were a lean company with a robust business model. This increase in funding represents an endorsement from Arts Council England of both our business model and our artistic programme. With the funding in place we can now look to the future with a great deal of certainty and we will not rest on our laurels. In addition to our NPO funding, we will also increase our fundraising to more than £1 million annually by the end of the three year funding period and earn more than £3 million in ticket sales at the box office each year. I would like to thank Arts Council England for their continued support of the Company.”

Sir David Wootton, Chairman of Northern Ballet adds, “Northern Ballet’s ethos of taking high quality dance to places which otherwise would not have access to it, and of making ballet accessible through the reimagining of popular stories, has inspired generations of dance fans and has undoubtedly contributed to the growth of dance audiences in the UK as well as its profile on the world stage.

The Company has historically been funded at a lower level than its contemporaries, the other large ballet and opera companies. The increased funding for 2015-18 will go some way to redress this imbalance. Most importantly it will ensure that the Company is able to inspire many more people and continue its role as a cultural ambassador for Leeds, the north and the whole of the UK. I would like to add my thanks to Arts Council England and to all the businesses, trust, foundations, fans and audiences who continue to support this wonderful company.”

In March this year Northern Ballet spearheaded the campaign for Leeds to become the best city for dance outside London (www.cityofdance.co.uk). The increase in funding to Northern Ballet is an indication that Arts Council England recognises the importance of dance in the city as well as the contribution it makes to the wider region. In January 2014 city development agency Leeds and Partners supported Northern Ballet’s international tour to China and the Company became the first cultural organisation to tour the country following the signing of a cultural agreement between the UK and China.

In October 2010 Northern Ballet opened its world-class headquarters in Leeds, purpose built for the Company and Phoenix Dance Theatre. The building has seven large dance studios and a studio theatre in which it performs its children's ballets and mixed programmes and also presents performances by a range of dance companies such as Ballet Black and National Dance Company Wales. The Academy of Northern Ballet provides open dance classes for hundreds of children and adults each week as well as training for young people who wish to pursue a professional dance career. In 2013/14 Northern Ballet's programme of education and engagement reached 36,000 people and included opportunities for people with disabilities and for the visually impaired to experience high quality dance as well as communities around the country to get closer to the work of the Company.

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Press contact: Laraine Penson, Director of Communications, Northern Ballet

Tel: 0113 220 8000 / 0113 236 8141 (direct line)

laraine.penson@northernballet.com

www.northernballet.com

Northern Ballet is one of the UK's five large ballet companies. Based in Leeds it performs throughout the UK as well as overseas. Northern Ballet's productions mix classical dance and theatre, embracing popular culture and taking inspiration from literature, opera, or reimagining popular classical ballets.

In the past 12 months Northern Ballet's work has been recognised through a raft of awards and nominations. Artistic Director David Nixon OBE was nominated for a National Dance Award, Best Classical Choreography for *The Great Gatsby*. He was also nominated for a UK Theatre Award for Achievement in Dance. The Communications campaign for *The Great Gatsby* won the UK Theatre Award for Achievement in Marketing. The Company received the 2013 White Rose Tourism Award for Arts and Culture organised by Welcome to Yorkshire. The Company was described as "great ambassadors for Yorkshire." The CBeebies television adaptation of Northern Ballet's *Ugly Duckling* received a Children's BAFTA in the Pre-School Live Action category and was nominated for a Royal Television Society award in the Children's Fiction category. The Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre was voted as the Netmum's Best Family Friendly Theatre in Yorkshire. Northern Ballet received a Best Family Venue Award, Best Family Event Award and Best Family Welcome Award for the 2013 Family Arts Festival, with their performances of *Three Little Pigs* at the Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre.

November 2014 marks the start of Northern Ballet's 45th anniversary year. In March 2015 the Company will give a Gala performance at Leeds Grand Theatre. Guest artists from dance companies around the world will be invited to join Northern Ballet dancers for a unique performance.