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***Creative Team for
Kansas City Ballet's
all new co-production of
The Wizard of Oz
Nominated for
Prix Benois de la Danse***

***Choreographer Septime Webre, Composer Matthew
Pierce and Designers Michael Raiford and Liz Vandal
Nominated***

***for most prestigious international ballet award
KCB Dancers Lilliana Hagerman, Lamin Pereira dos
Santos, and Jeremy Hanson to perform in
Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow May 21st***

KANSAS CITY, MO (May 20, 2019) — Kansas City Ballet Artistic Director Devon Carney today announced that the creative team for *The Wizard of Oz* including Septime Webre (choreography), Matthew Pierce (composer), Michael Raiford (set design) and Liz Vandal (costume design) have been nominated for the [Prix Benois de la danse](#), considered to be the most prestigious ballet award in the world. Awards will be given in Moscow, Russia on May 21st during which Kansas City Ballet Company

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dancers Lilliana Hagerman (Dorothy), Lamin Pereira dos Santos (Tin Man), and Jeremy Hanson (Toto puppeteer) will perform a short excerpt from the production at the historic Bolshoi Theatre. High resolution photos of the production can be found [here](#). B-Roll can be found [here](#). Further information about the production can be found [here](#).

Carney stated, “I am so honored by this recognition by such an esteemed organization and cannot wait to share this incredible production with others in the dance world this May. I have long loved Septime’s work. His extraordinary fresh take on this classic tale alongside the work of the rest of the creative team including the glorious music of Matthew Pierce, the stunning sets by Michael Raiford and the deliciously fun costumes of Liz Vandal was an instant hit when it debuted on the Kauffman Center stage last October. His unique artistic vision, along with this deeply talented creative team, offered our audiences a refreshingly original spectacle. The sheer artistry and the level of detail on every design element absolutely astonished audiences. To have this level of artistry recognized by the Benois de la danse is remarkable.”

This co-production with Canada’s Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Colorado Ballet debuted in Kansas City on Oct. 12th at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. This first ever collaboration between these companies was enhanced by a team of outstanding creative artists in choreography, music, design, video and puppetry creating a magical tour de force production of an international classic story.

“This creative team that was assembled for OZ was an amazing collection of talent, ingenuity, and collegiality. Each of these artists was dedicated to the success of this project in very personal ways. The generosity of spirit that was exhibited at every turn during the creation process was inspiring. We are so thrilled to be able to congratulate Septime, Matthew, Michael and Liz for receiving this nomination. Our collaboration with Colorado Ballet and Canada’s Royal Winnipeg Ballet was a splendid experience from beginning to end and to be able to layer on top of that this extraordinary Prix Benois de La Danse recognition is so very satisfying,” stated Jeffrey J. Bentley, Executive Director of Kansas City Ballet where *The Wizard of Oz* enjoyed its world premiere.

Story lines and visual elements from the classic motion picture provided by Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures.

The complete design team includes: **Septime Webre** (choreography) **Matthew Pierce** (composer), **Michael Raiford** (set design), **Liz Vandal** (costume design), **Trad A Burns** (lighting design), **Nicholas Mahon** (puppet design), and **Aaron Rhyne** (projection design).

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Meet the Nominated Designers

Septime Webre

Septime Webre is the Artistic Director of Hong Kong Ballet and the Washington DC-based S&R Foundation which launched Halcyon Stage in 2017, a new interdisciplinary performance and dialogue series. From 1999 until 2016, Mr. Webre served as the Artistic Director of the Washington Ballet and from 1993 to 1999 was the Artistic Director of the American Repertory Ballet based in Princeton, NJ. During his tenure at The Washington Ballet, the institution enjoyed unprecedented growth in the scope and quality of its work on stage, its school grew from 325 students to 1,500 students, and the organization developed impactful community engagement initiatives including the award-winning Dance DC and TWB@THE ARC, both of which he founded.

As a choreographer, Mr. Webre's works appear in the repertoires of ballet companies throughout North America, including Pacific Northwest Ballet, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Colorado Ballet, Ballet West, Atlanta Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet, Ballet Austin, Ballet Memphis, Milwaukee Ballet, Kansas City Ballet, Ballet Concierto de Puerto Rico, and many others. He has served on the boards of Dance/USA and Dance Metro DC and his work has received numerous honors, grants and awards. He holds a degree in History/Pre-Law from the University of Texas at Austin.

Matthew Pierce

Composer-Violinist Matthew Pierce is celebrated for his new classical scores commissioned by major American ballet companies. He has written ballet scores for Joffrey Ballet, American Ballet Theater, Atlanta Ballet, Ohio Ballet, Ballet Met, Cincinnati Ballet, Miami Ballet, Ballet Memphis, Ballet Hawaii, Post Ballet, Ballet Coeur d'Alene, Colorado Ballet, Kansas City Ballet, New York City Ballet, Houston Ballet, Ballet Austin and the San Francisco Ballet. *Night*, a full orchestra score set to a Chagall inspired dreamscape ballet has been seen at the Opera Garnier in Paris, Covent Garden in London and City Center in New York. Sarah Kaufman of the *Washington Post* called his 2012 score for Washington Ballet's *Alice (in wonderland)*, "The cherry on top: Pierce's visionary result, a shimmering landscape that weaves together bits of our own world—Asian, Middle Eastern, pop riffs, jazz—with a contemporary edge and a spirit of discovery. And, yes, wonder."

Michael B. Raiford

Michael B. Raiford is a scenic and costume designer based in Austin, Texas. In Austin his work has appeared at Ballet Austin including world premieres of *Exit Wounds (costume and set)*, *Belle Redux (costume set and video direction)*, *Mozart Project* Kansas City Ballet Creative Team for *The Wizard of Oz* Nominated for Prestigious Prix Benois de la Danse

(Scenic design), Magic Flute (scenic and puppet design). Also, in Austin: Austin Lyric Opera, ZACH Theatre and the Rude Mechanicals. Mr. Raiford's work also has been seen at: Opera Boston, Central City Opera (Colorado), The Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, South Coast Repertory, Cleveland Playhouse, Geva Theatre Center, Playmakers Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Maltz Jupiter Theatre, Ford's Theatre (Washington, D.C.), New Victory Theatre (New York), Merrimack Repertory Theatre, The Lyric Theatre (Oklahoma City), and Actors Theatre of Louisville where he designed 20 productions including twelve world premieres for Humana Festival of New American Plays. Mr. Raiford's most recent adventure: Director of "Blast: The Music of Disney," Tokyo and National Tour of Japan. He is a creative consultant/director in architecture, advertising, and marching band/DCI and WGI. Education: M.F.A. from The University of Texas at Austin, where he taught for 10 years.

Liz Vandal

Liz Vandal started her career as a fashion designer. Self-taught, she entered the universe of clothing more than 25 years ago. From dazzling beginnings, she brought her originality to the rigorous domains of dance, circus, cinema and special projects, building a company of excellence.

Great partnerships link Ms. Vandal with numerous choreographers and dance companies around the world: Edouard Lock; Compagnie Marie Chouinard; Margie Gillis; José Navas; Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal; Le Ballet National du Canada; The Washington Ballet; Mannheim Theater; Stuttgart Ballet (Germany), l'Opéra de Paris; Göteborg Theater (Sweden), Hong Kong Ballet.

Collaborating with multi-national IGT (International Gaming Technology) in Las Vegas, Ms. Vandal created AVATAR costumes approved by Jon Landau and 20th Century Fox. As a design, innovation, production and team synergy consultant, Ms. Vandal offers her services to Sportswear multinational Oxylane, owner of Decathlon stores to develop avant-garde products. As the company continued to expand, an incomparable opportunity led Ms. Vandal's creativity to Azerbaijan for the first European games in 2015 where she designed an incredible 3,000 costumes for the closing ceremony. Since 2017, Cirque du Soleil floats onto the sea, on Cruise ship Meraviglia with Ms. Vandal's costumes dressing up two shows: 'Viaggio' and 'Sonor'.

The Making of *The Wizard of Oz*

The scale and grandeur of the production is impressive.

- At least 120 people, not including dancers, were part of this collaboration team including designers and makers.

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- In Kansas City, 30 company dancers and 15 second company dancers made up the cast, not counting children.
- There are 23 children's roles and two casts for a total of 46 children performing in *The Wizard of Oz*, providing a huge asset to the development and growth of the Kansas City Ballet School.
- The musical score composed by Matthew Pierce, the same composer for *Alice (in wonderland)*, is 471 pages long and features three percussion players playing 35 different percussion instruments.
- There are 120 stunning costumes and 112 hats in the production and our costume shop painted 220 shoes. There are at least 60 costume changes throughout the production.
- There are upwards of 20 puppets including a mechanical Toto.
- More than 300 light cues take place using over 1000 channels of lights.
- There are eight flying effects by FOY executed by multiple characters.
- The animated projections, using a combination of three state-of-the-art projectors, add an integral design element that helps provide atmosphere and dimensionality, and enhances the experience.
- There are oval shaped portals, a first for Kansas City Ballet.
- A total of 100 yards of LED lights run along the stage.

The Prix Benois de la Danse

The Benois de la Danse is one of the most prestigious ballet competitions. Founded by the International Dance Association in Moscow in 1991, it takes place each year on or around April 29 and is jury-based in its judging. The members of this jury change every year and consist of only top ballet personages.

Statuettes are given to the winners in the categories of lifelong achievement, ballerina, danseur, choreographer, composer and designer.

On May 21st and 22nd, the 27th International Ballet Festival Benois de la Danse, supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation will be celebrated on the historic stage of the Bolshoi Theatre. Those attending will be shown the world's most spectacular dance works of the past year. Dancers from 18 of the world's leading ballet companies and contemporary troupes will take part in the event.

A gala concert starring Benois-2019 nominees and the award ceremony will take place on May 21st, whereas on May 22nd dance lovers will be treated to "Benois de la Danse to the Year of Theatre", a gala concert of ballet stars and Benois laureates of the previous years. Further information can be found at <http://benois.theatre.ru/en/>.

About Kansas City Ballet

Making Kansas City a destination for dance

Founded in 1957, Kansas City Ballet is a 30-member professional ballet company under the leadership of Artistic Director Devon Carney and Executive Director Jeffrey J. Bentley. The company's mission is to establish Kansas City Ballet as an indispensable asset in its community through exceptional performances, excellence in dance training and quality community education programs for all ages.

Kansas City Ballet is home to Kansas City Ballet School with an enrollment of 2000+ children and adults offering professional training for the career-minded student as well as for those simply seeking a healthy lifestyle.

Through the professional company, second company (KCB II & Trainees), and community programs for all ages, we seek to nurture and develop our artists, audiences and students in the values inherent in the creativity, diversity and joy of dance.

Our home, the Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity, in conjunction with our Resident Company status at the world-class Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, truly has positioned Kansas City as a destination for dance.

Kansas City Ballet

2019-2020 Season at a Glance

Kansas City Ballet ticket office 816.931.8993

Single tickets for all performances are on sale now. Purchase tickets online at kcballet.org.

Kansas City Dance Day

Saturday, August 24, 2019, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. | Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity

Kansas City Ballet's 9th annual celebration of dance and movement features FREE dance performances, dance and fitness classes, demonstrations and FUN for the whole family.

New Dance Partners

Sept. 27-28, 2019 | Johnson County Community College

New Dance Partners, a project for new work in dance, has been produced by the Performing Arts Series at Johnson County Community College since 2013 to further

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artistic growth in dance by creating new work and encouraging collaboration between Kansas City arts organizations. Local, professional dance companies are featured, and new works, commissioned on their behalf, are set by renowned choreographers.

WORLD PREMIERE

Carmina Burana

October 11-20, 2019 | Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

Choreography: Adam Houglan

Music: Carl Orff performed by Kansas City Symphony

Hugely popular and an insatiably indulgent celebration of life and love, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* is a pulsating choral work that provides an incredible landscape for choreographed spectacle. Most have experienced *Carmina Burana* in choral presentation, but too few have seen it as it was originally imagined. This program also includes *Tulips & Lobster* by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa (which premiered at New Dance Partners at Johnson County Community College in September 2018), music by Purcell, Albinoni, Lambert and Vivaldi, and *Petal* by Helen Pickett, with the music of Philip Glass and Thomas Montgomery Newman.

Carmina Burana

Choreography: Adam Houglan

Music: Carl Orff

Tulips & Lobster

Choreography: Annabelle Lopez Ochoa

Music: Peter I. Tchaikovsky

Petal

Choreography: Helen Pickett

Music: Philip Glass &

Thomas Montgomery Newman

The Nutcracker

December 5-24, 2019 | Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

Choreography: Devon Carney

Music: Peter I. Tchaikovsky performed by Kansas City Symphony

Sponsored by Bank of America

Kansas City Ballet's *The Nutcracker* awed Kennedy Center audiences in Washington, D.C., was hailed as "positively oozing charm" and called "especially lovely with its bright, fresh décor" by *The Washington Post*. The classic, Victorian-era story by E.T.A. Hoffman featuring Clara, the Nutcracker Prince, Dr. Drosselmeier and the Sugar Plum Fairy is a magical theatrical experience wrapped with exquisite costumes, grand sets and captivating choreography.

Swan Lake

February 14-23, 2020 | Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

Choreography: Devon Carney after Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov

Music: Peter I. Tchaikovsky performed by the Kansas City Symphony

THE MOST ENCHANTING LOVE STORY EVER SEEN

Perhaps the most recognized ballet of all time, *Swan Lake* makes its highly anticipated return to Kansas City Ballet after breaking box office records in 2016. This immortal love story involves a wicked sorcerer who captures the beautiful Princess Odette and

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turns her into a swan. His evil spell can only be broken when a young prince pledges his love and marries her. Should he betray her, she will remain a swan forever.

New Moves

March 26-29, 2020 | Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity

New Moves, one of Kansas City Ballet's most popular performances, showcases contemporary ballet in an intimate setting. This limited-run production gives audiences a chance to see tomorrows sought-after choreographers today! It is a very up close and visceral experience for audience and dancer alike, with all performances held in the Bolender Center's Michael and Ginger Frost Studio Theater. Come see our Kansas City Ballet artists and emerging choreographers discover bold new ways of expression and feel the athleticism, beauty, power and passion of never-before seen dance creations!

KANSAS CITY PREMIERE

Celts

May 8-17, 2020 | Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

Lila York debuted *Celts* at Boston Ballet — a year before Michael Flatley's *Riverdance* became a sensation — and was hailed by *The Boston Herald* as “a riveting, imaginative marriage of ballet and Irish folk dance with a modern sensibility.” Set to the music of The Chieftains and more, this celebration of Irish culture has brought audiences to their feet with its choreographically intense jig and captivating energy. This program also features George Balanchine's *Serenade* with the music of Peter I. Tchaikovsky and Edwaard Liang's *Wunderland*, set to the music of Philip Glass, last performed by Kansas City Ballet in May 2015.

<i>Celts</i>	Choreography: Lila York	Music: The Chieftains; William J. Ruyle; Bill Whelen; Mason Daring
<i>Serenade</i>	Choreography: George Balanchine	Music: Peter I. Tchaikovsky
<i>Wunderland</i>	Choreography: Edwaard Liang	Music: Philip Glass

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