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Kansas City Ballet Announces New Executive Director

KANSAS CITY, MO (May 9, 2023) — CiCi Rojas, president of the Kansas City Ballet Board of Directors, announced today that **David Gray** has been selected as the new Executive Director, effective July 1, 2023. Mr. Gray will succeed **Jeffrey J. Bentley**, who has served Kansas City Ballet since August 1998. During Mr. Bentley's tenure, the company experienced dramatic growth in resources, national reputation, fiscal security, and community awareness.

"In keeping with the successful history of the organization, the Board of Directors conducted a thorough search for its new Executive Director. Guided by **Jack D. Rowe**, Search Committee Chair, it was extensive both in its reach to identify a pool of high-quality arts leaders in the profession and in its breadth in terms of the depth of the individual interviews. The result was a resounding success." Rojas continued, "Mr. Gray's experience as Executive Director of Pennsylvania Ballet and American Repertory Ballet, as well as his rich history with New York City Ballet coupled with his early international reputation as a finance and nonprofit management consultant will serve Kansas City Ballet well as it continues to move forward as a national force in dance." Rojas said.

Chairman of the Ballet's Board of Directors **Julia Irene Kauffman** shared: "I am delighted to welcome Mr. Gray into our Ballet family. I have no doubt that under Mr. Gray's leadership, Kansas City Ballet will continue its forward trajectory, further deepening its connections within the community and raising the bar of artistic excellence. Kansas City Ballet is poised for a successful and invigorating future with Mr. Gray at the helm."

About David Gray

David Gray was raised in Princeton, NJ, and attended Johns Hopkins University. Following graduation, he moved to New York and worked in the Publicity Department of Doubleday Publishing before joining the Press Office of New York City Ballet where he soon became Press Director. He also met and married New York City Ballet Principal Dancer **Kyra Nichols**.

Upon the birth of their first child, Mr. Gray became a full-time parent so that his wife could return to her performing career. Later, Mr. Gray became the Executive Director of American Repertory Ballet and their Princeton Ballet School.

Mr. Gray then opened a consulting firm, Finance Arts LLC, where he combined his interests in finance and nonprofit management. He served as an itinerant Interim Executive Director for several nonprofits including the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault, The New Brunswick Cultural Center (where he was landlord for 3 theaters), and the Princeton Symphony Orchestra. In addition to teaching classes on nonprofit management and finance, he wrote the *Finance Arts Guide to Nonprofit Cash Flow*, published in 2010.

What began as an interim position with the Pennsylvania Ballet (now Philadelphia Ballet) became a permanent one. While there, he oversaw the implementation of the new strategic plan. He later moved to Bloomington, Indiana when his wife was offered a tenured faculty position at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and continued his writing and nonprofit consulting. A complete bio and headshot can be found at <https://kcballet.org/media-center/>.

Mr. Gray stated, "There are three reasons I am excited about becoming part of Kansas City Ballet. The first is Devon Carney and the fantastic artists he has assembled in the company and in the school. I don't think there is a more passionate, talented, or kinder Artistic Director anywhere and I'm thrilled that I'll get to work with him. The second reason is Jeff Bentley and the amazing administrative team. The organization has done extraordinary things during Jeff's tenure." Mr. Gray continued, "Of course, there is the Todd Bolender Center for Dance and Creativity, one of the most fabulous dance facilities in the world, but there is also a long history of prudent fiscal management which I plan to continue. Third is the amazing community support, exemplified by the commitment and passion shown by the Board of Directors. I am looking forward to getting to know them and working with them in the years ahead."

Executive Director Jeffrey Bentley was thrilled with the board's selection. "When you spend a quarter century with a company as part of its leadership team, it is extremely important and personal that your successor be someone who can confidently take the organization you love and guide it to its next moment in time. David Gray is clearly such an individual. His experience, skill set, and personal charm will serve him well as the company continues to grow under his and Devon Carney's leadership. I have no doubt that the company is destined for huge advances under the guidance of

these two extraordinary leaders, a dynamic board of directors, and the highly committed and excellent support staff that will be their team.”

Kansas City Ballet Artistic Director Devon Carney had this to say: “Transitions are always filled with excitement about what the future may bring. I am thrilled that someone with such seasoned arts management expertise as David Gray will be stepping into this pivotal position within our organization. David has a broad spectrum of experience upon which to draw and will be an invaluable resource in the years ahead. I’m excited for the promise the future holds as we continue to move our company forward.”

Search Committee Chair Jack D. Rowe stated, “Identifying a new executive leader for an organization is absolutely one of the most significant decisions a board of directors ever must make. Kansas City Ballet has an excellent history in choosing its leaders and the selection of David Gray certainly continues in that tradition. He is totally devoted to moving this company forward to its next moment. I am so pleased to have the legacy of Jeff Bentley’s work for these past 25 years in such capable hands.”

Media

Visit kcballet.org or kauffmancenter.org for a downloadable media kit about Kansas City Ballet and the Kauffman Center. Find high-resolution photos at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/67555847@N06/sets/>.

About Kansas City Ballet

MISSION: To Inspire and Engage Through the Beauty, Power & Passion of Dance

VISION: Outstanding Dance Experiences Accessible to All

Founded in 1957, Kansas City Ballet is a professional ballet company led by Artistic Director Devon Carney and Executive Director Jeffrey J. Bentley. Kansas City Ballet is an indispensable community asset through exceptional performances, excellence in dance training, and quality community engagement and education programs for all ages. Kansas City Ballet is home to Kansas City Ballet School which, with an enrollment of more than 1,000 children and adults, offers 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 Engagement and Education Department, Kansas City Ballet seeks to nurture and develop artists, audiences, and students in the values inherent in the creativity, diversity, and joy of dance. The company’s home, the Todd Bolender Center for Dance and Creativity, in conjunction with our Resident Company status at the world-class Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, positions Kansas City as a destination for dance. Visit www.kcballet.org/kansas-city-ballet-press-releases/ for more info.

Kansas City Ballet's website is mobile and ticket-purchase friendly. Receive daily updates by joining the KCB Fan Page, www.facebook.com/kcballet, and following @kcballet on Twitter. Follow our blog at www.kcballet.org/blog. Watch videos at www.youtube.com/kansascityballet or <https://vimeo.com/kcballet> and on TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@kansascityballet> and view photos at <https://www.instagram.com/kc.ballet/>.

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