

Backgrounder

Since its founding in 1970, North Carolina Dance Theatre has become one of the premier mid-sized companies in the nation. President and Artistic Director Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux and Associate Artistic Director Patricia McBride joined the company in 1996, and under their leadership, NC Dance Theatre has built a diverse and exciting repertoire, toured extensively and attracted international dancers and choreographers.

Robert Lindgren, former New York City Ballet dancer, founded NC Dance Theatre in Winston-Salem, NC, in 1970. Salvatore Aiello, an alumnus of the Joffrey, Harkness, Royal Winnipeg and Hamburg ballets, served the company for more than a decade, became artistic director in 1985, and relocated the company to Charlotte, NC, in 1990. Aiello's choreography credits total 36 ballets, including his critically acclaimed versions of *The Rite of Spring*, *The Nutcracker*, *Satto*, *Afternoon of a Faun* and *Coppélia*. Support and the company's reputation quickly grew in its early years, and NC Dance Theatre was the number one touring repertory company in the nation in the early 1980s.

NC Dance Theatre's breathtaking beauty, boundless energy and amazing athleticism have dazzled audiences and critics the world over. The artists of NC Dance Theatre are known for their high energy, precision and speed, as well as their ability to perform a versatile repertoire ranging from full-length classical ballets to innovative contemporary works. *The New York Times* called the company "unstinting in range and thunder...a pleasure to behold," and acclaimed *New York Post* dance critic Clive Barnes called Dance Theatre "...one of the liveliest and most brilliant troupes in North America."

The top leadership of NC Dance Theatre has garnered international accolades. Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux has performed with the Paris Opera Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, Kirov Ballet and New York City Ballet, and has works commissioned by the New York City Ballet, Metropolitan Opera Ballet Company, Pennsylvania Ballet and Munich Opera, among others. Bonnefoux has served as choreographer and ballet master of the Pittsburgh Ballet and as chairman and artistic director of the Ballet Department at Indiana University. He has been artistic director, resident choreographer and principal teacher for the dance program at the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, NY, since 1983.

Associate Artistic Director Patricia McBride is celebrated as the outstanding American ballerina of our day and a star of international stature. Her remarkable virtuosity and artistic range have been demonstrated in more than 100 ballets with the New York City Ballet. She has worked with many of ballet's "greats" including George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Andre Eglevsky, Edward Villella, Helgi Tomasson, Rudolph Nureyev, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Peter Martins.

NC Dance Theatre announced plans in March 2009 to begin construction on a new 34,000 square-foot facility located at 701 North Tryon Street, next to the McColl Center for Visual Art. The Patricia McBride & Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux Center for Dance will include six dance studios, a costume shop, administrative offices and meeting spaces. NC Dance Theatre expects to move into its new facility in spring 2010, with a grand opening scheduled for fall 2010.