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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL *of* ARTS MANAGEMENT



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Karen Kain and the National Ballet of Canada

Jacqueline Cardinal, Laurent Lapierre

I hate the superficiality of small talk. I have dedicated my career to getting to the heart of communication in body language, stripping off whatever is superfluous. Embellishment isn't my style; I try to distil the essence, and remain uncomfortable with frills and excesses in language and movement alike.

Karen Kain¹

Karen Kain is a living legend in English Canada. When she walks down the street in Toronto, she turns heads. People recognize her delicate silhouette and easily fall under the charm of her serene smile. Little girls attending performances of the National Ballet of Canada, of which Karen Kain is currently Artistic Director, dream of catching a glimpse of her, securing her autograph, hearing her voice, or perhaps, if they are lucky, even touching her dress.

The dancer who has come to be the darling of Canada has had a brilliant career as a prima ballerina. At the age of 22, after winning the women's silver medal and, with her Canadian partner Frank Augustyn, the award for best *pas de deux* at the prestigious

Moscow International Ballet competition, Kain was invited to perform on the world's most celebrated stages. Beautiful inside as well as out, endowed with an extraordinary dramatic intensity and trained for seven years in the demanding Cecchetti technique, she had always dreamed of dancing the part of Giselle in the ballet of the same name. Kain's mother took her to see *Giselle* on her eighth birthday, and her future was decided that day.

Leading choreographers such as Eliot Feld, John Neumeier, John Alleyne and James Kudelka have all created works especially for Kain. Rudolf Nureyev chose her as his partner, replacing Margot Fonteyn. Roland Petit invited her to dance with his Ballet National de Marseille and Mikhail Baryshnikov joined her at the National Ballet of Canada following his defection from the Bolshoi Ballet in 1974. Always unsure of her talent and insecure to the end about her ability to achieve perfection in movement, Kain retired from dance in 1997. However, she remains deeply attached to the National Ballet of Canada.

The National Ballet of Canada

The National Ballet has experienced remarkable growth since its founding in 1957. Supported throughout the years by generous patrons and by the Canada Council

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for the Arts, it is the country's foremost classical ballet company. The National Ballet boasts a complement of 68 professional dancers, its own 62-piece orchestra, 74 permanent employees and 225 volunteers. Its current home is the Walter Carsen Centre for the National Ballet of Canada, a modern structure located close to Lake Ontario, built in 1996 thanks in part to the generosity of Walter Carsen. The building houses offices, rehearsal studios and workshops. From 1964 to 2006 the company's performance home was the 3,200-seat theatre at Toronto's Hummingbird Centre (formerly named the O'Keefe Centre). Today, the National Ballet is at a turning point in its history: in September 2006 it moved, along with the Canadian Opera Company, to its new home at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. Although equipped with improved sight lines, acoustics and back-of-house space, the new venue has only 2,000 seats. This move will have an important strategic impact on the company.

Artistic Direction

The National Ballet of Canada continues to bear the hallmark of its founder, Celia Franca, in terms of its vision, its repertoire and its programming. In accordance with Franca's wishes, the institution is predominantly identified with the four major ballets of the classical repertoire: *Swan Lake*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. In addition to these seminal works, traditional secondary ballets such as *Giselle*, *Don Quixote*, *Onegin* and *Pétrushka* are staged. *The Nutcracker* belongs in a category all its own. Ever since Franca's first choreography

of the work in 1967, *The Nutcracker* has been a fixture of the holiday season.

In addition to these lavish productions of classical works, the National Ballet offers programs featuring shorter works. By drawing on less well-known works by eminent choreographers such as George Balanchine, Michael Fokine, Frederick Ashton, William Forsythe, John Neumeier, Glen Tetley and the National Ballet's resident choreographer, James Kudelka, the company is able to offer a very diverse program from one year to the next. Throughout its history, the National Ballet has supplemented its standard classical repertoire by commissioning new works from both Canadian and foreign choreographers, including artists such as David Adams and Grant Strate in the 1950s and 1960s, and, from the 1970s on, Anne Ditchburn, Constantin Patsalas, John Alleyne, Robert Desrosiers, Danny Grossman and James Kudelka.

A number of renowned figures in the dance world have influenced the style of the National Ballet throughout its 55-year history. In addition to the indelible mark of Celia Franca, there is the unmistakable influence of Rudolf Nureyev, who made a brief passage in 1965, shortly after his spectacular defection to the West, and returned in 1972 to stage his magnificent version of *The Sleeping Beauty*, with Kain in the starring role.

Franca served as the company's Artistic Director for more than 25 years. She was followed by Alexander Grant, who held the reins from 1976 to 1983. Grant breathed new life into the troupe by substantially expanding the performance season and by nurturing the development of several remarkable

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ABSTRACT

Karen Kain is a living legend in English Canada. When she walks down the street in Toronto, she turns heads. People recognize her delicate silhouette and fall under the charm of her serene smile. Little girls attending performances of the National Ballet of Canada, of which Kain is currently Artistic Director, dream of catching a glimpse of her, securing her autograph, hearing her voice or touching her dress. As a dancer, Kain has had the opportunity to work with several of the National Ballet's Artistic Directors, from Celia Franca to Reid Anderson, by way of Erik Bruhn and Valerie Wilder. A keen observer of management styles, she noticed over the years that her instincts always served her well. Kain had concluded that no matter what decisions or visions the Artistic Director put forth for the company, the outcome was "nearly always" what she had expected. In her new role as Artistic Director, Kain vows to remain true to herself and follow her instincts in performing her new management duties.

KEYWORDS

Ballet, arts management, leadership, management, career

young dancers, including Veronica Tennant and Frank Augustyn. He welcomed young Canadian choreographers on to the stage and, in a controversial move, mounted a forgotten work by August Bournonville, *Napoli*, created in 1842. Augustyn fought hard to secure the performing rights to Cranko's *Onegin*, which is still part of the company's repertoire.

Grant was succeeded in 1983 by Erik Bruhn, a powerful and beautiful dancer who had drawn Nureyev to the company in 1965 and 1972. Having first served as guest artist, teacher and choreographer/producer, Bruhn held the position of Artistic Director from 1983 to 1986. In three short years he succeeded in revitalizing the company by modernizing its image and enriching the repertoire through a wide range of commissions of both contemporary works and modern adaptations of classical ballets. Bruhn died of lung cancer in 1986. He was succeeded by his former colleagues Valerie Wilder and Lynn Wallis, who invited the choreographer Glen Tetley to become their Artistic Associate for three years. Tetley opened up the repertoire to include more modern works.

The year 1989 marked a return to a more traditional style with the arrival of Reid Anderson, who served as Artistic Director until 1996. In addition to reviving the classics, Anderson commissioned original works from established choreographers such as Tetley, Alleyne, Forsythe and Kudelka. He offered Kudelka the position of artist-in-residence, no doubt seeing in him a possible successor. Kudelka did not disappoint, producing a new staging of *The Nutcracker* in 1995, to replace that of Franca. The production was a triumph.

In 1996 Anderson resigned as Artistic Director to protest cuts in government funding, and Kudelka took the reins.

James Kudelka's Artistic Management

Kudelka's years at the helm of the National Ballet of Canada were characterized by deep introspection on the nature of the company. Known for his creative imagination and his audacity, Kudelka had no qualms about questioning the venerable institution's traditional ways of doing things. He set out to rethink the concept of what a classical ballet company should be. To mark the National Ballet's 50th season, Kudelka held an international conference to which he invited artistic directors from leading ballet companies around the world to discuss the aesthetic challenges they faced at the dawn of the 21st century.

Eager to implement his vision of renewal and to boost the company's international profile, Kudelka set about creating bold new choreographies and sending the troupe to various North American cities, including New York, where the National Ballet of Canada had not performed for several years. Despite scarce resources, Kudelka constantly added new works to the company's repertoire. On the administrative front, he retained Reid Anderson's idea of having an artist-in-residence on the team.

Executive Management

During the first part of Kudelka's term as Artistic Director, Valerie Wilder held the position of Executive Director. As a dancer with the company, Wilder had moved into artistic

RÉSUMÉ

Au Canada anglais, Karen Kain est une légende vivante. Lorsqu'elle se promène dans les rues de Toronto, les gens se retournent sur son passage. Ils reconnaissent sa frêle silhouette et tombent volontiers sous le charme de son sourire serein. Les fillettes qui assistent aux spectacles du Ballet national du Canada, dont elle est dorénavant la directrice artistique, rêvent de l'entrevoir, d'obtenir d'elle un autographe, d'entendre sa voix et, qui sait, de toucher sa robe. Comme danseuse, Karen Kain a connu plusieurs directeurs artistiques au Ballet national du Canada. Fine observatrice des différents styles de gestion, elle a eu longuement l'occasion de constater que son instinct l'avait toujours bien servie. Depuis Celia Franca jusqu'à Reid Anderson, en passant par Erik Bruhn et Valerie Wilder, elle en est arrivée à la conclusion que, quelles que soient les décisions prises ou les visions mises de l'avant, les résultats obtenus par la compagnie correspondaient « presque toujours », nuance-t-elle, à ce qu'elle avait pressenti. Maintenant que son rôle a changé, Karen Kain prend le parti d'être fidèle à elle-même et de se fier à son instinct dans ses nouvelles fonctions de direction.

MOTS CLÉS

Ballet, gestion des arts, leadership, management, carrière

administration with Erik Bruhn and later Reid Anderson. She and Kudelka were appointed by the board to run the company together. Upon her resignation in 2002, Wilder was followed by another woman, Kevin Garland, who had served on the board of directors for 10 years.

Garland's appointment came as a surprise to both Toronto's artistic milieu and its business community, where she was a well-known figure, having spent four years working to establish the new opera ballet house at the Canadian Opera Company. An urban planner by training, Garland was attracted to the position by her life-long love of ballet and her interest in arts administration.

As a board member of the National Ballet, Garland had been involved in the process of finding a replacement for Wilder. A search committee was formed. However, after only two meetings, Garland had a revelation upon seeing the job description and responsibilities of the Executive Director: she wished to apply for the position herself, and that is what she did.

Upon assuming the role of Executive Director in 2002, Garland joined Kudelka, who had been Artistic Director for six years, and Kain, who had been artist-in-residence for one year before holding the title of Artistic Associate for three.

Ballet. As artist-in-residence and, beginning in 1998, Artistic Associate, she was free to attend the company's management and board meetings. Although she had no official status at these meetings, she felt comfortable being there as this was not her first experience as a board member. She had been the dancers' official representative on the board several years earlier. Moreover, with founder Joysanne Sidimus, Kain was co-chair of the Dancers Transition Resource Centre, an organization dedicated to helping dancers redirect their careers after retiring from the stage. She had held this position for 12 years and was responsible for facilitating meetings and overseeing day-to-day operations. Kain was therefore no neophyte in matters of management.

When Kudelka suddenly decided to resign as Artistic Director in 2005, nobody was more surprised than Kain. Although he had announced his resignation several times in the past, only to immediately change his mind, this time Kudelka seemed intent on leaving the position for good.

Throughout these years, Kain confined herself to the role of observer, while doing her best to support her beloved ballet company. She formed opinions on events and issues, but kept her focus on improving the dancers' working conditions and soliciting private donations, an area where she played an important role.

Karen Kain

Before Garland's arrival as Executive Director, Kain had on more than one occasion observed and participated in the administrative functioning of the National

A Feeling of Competence

As soon as Kudelka announced his resignation, Garland and the board of directors launched a search for a new Artistic Director. Kain's reaction was immediate. Just as Garland had done, she asked herself, Why not me? Her challenge

RESUMEN

En el Canadá de habla inglesa Karen Kain es leyenda viva; en las calles de Toronto la gente se vuelve al verla pasar al reconocer su fina silueta y cae bajo el encanto de su sonrisa. Las niñas que asisten a los espectáculos del Ballet Nacional de Canadá, del cual ella es directora, sueñan con verla, obtener un autógrafo, escuchar su voz y, por qué no, tocar su traje. En su época de bailarina Karen Klein conoció varios directores artísticos en el Ballet Nacional de Canadá. Excelente observadora de los diferentes estilos de gestión, tuvo numerosas oportunidades de ver que su instinto no la engañaba. Su experiencia con Celia Franca, Reid Anderson, pasando por Eric Bruhn y Valerie Wilder, la llevó a la conclusión de que sean cuales sean las decisiones o las visiones que cada uno presentaba, los resultados que lograba la compañía correspondían "casi siempre", precisa ella, a lo que había intuido. Ahora que cambió de papel, Karen Klein opta por ser fiel a sí misma en sus nuevos cargos de dirección y por seguir dejándose guiar por su intuición.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Ballet, gestión de las artes, liderazgo, administración, carrera

was to prove that she had the ability, motivation and temperament necessary for the role. Having spent 35 years of her life with the company, including eight years on the sidelines of management, Kain wished to make her mark as Artistic Director and to realize her vision for the company. She wanted the job.

While preparing for her interview, Kain had, in her words, an “epiphany.” After dedicating 35 years of her life to her art, first as a student at the National Ballet School and then as principal dancer of the National Ballet, and after eight years of discreet and loyal service to the Artistic Director, she saw an opportunity to make decisions concerning the dancers, performances, board membership, donors, programming, the company’s image – in short, to leave her mark based on the expertise she had acquired over the years.

Kain realized that the rules of the game were different now. To move from the role of Artistic Associate to the official position of Artistic Director represented an enormous step, both for her and for those accustomed to viewing her as an unobtrusive collaborator. When she was a dancer, it was the whim of the Artistic Director that determined what roles she was given. Her most ardent wish, as a young artist, was to dance the part of Giselle, but she had to wait patiently until Franca noticed her and deemed her ready for the part.

Faced with the new job prospect, Kain was overcome by a sense of urgency and duty. As Artistic Director, she would have the power not only to express her opinions on the future of the National Ballet but to implement her priorities for the company. She nervously prepared for the job interview.

The search committee had two alternatives: it could either settle on Kain immediately, or broaden the selection process and choose the best candidate, in which case Kain would be on an equal footing with the other applicants. Since this process would take time, the board would have to appoint an interim Artistic Director, a position it offered to Kain.

To the board’s surprise, Kain turned down the offer – with every ounce of her energy. She knew the temporary position was devoid of any decision-making power. For eight years she had observed the dancers’ situation and working conditions without being able to do anything about them; for eight years she

had silently worried about the direction being taken by the National Ballet, which she judged incompatible with the company’s profound culture and roots; for eight years she had witnessed the erosion of the National Ballet’s financial resources, a sine qua non condition of achieving the long-term outreach she envisaged for the company. This dancer devoted to her art, this discreet woman, this resource person who could always be counted on to perform public relations tasks, simply refused the job. Kain gave the search committee an ultimatum: if they wanted to offer her a position, the only one she would accept was that of permanent Artistic Director.

There’s one thing I learned from my own personal experience and that I believe in strongly, and that is to trust my instincts.

Her determination both surprised and convinced the board. Her firm resolve proved beyond a doubt that she had what it takes to be an Artistic Director who knows where she is going. Kain won her gamble: in 2005, in a unanimous decision, the board appointed her officially as Artistic Director of the National Ballet of Canada. Kudelka would have the title of Resident Choreographer for a period of two years.

Management by Intuition and Presence

As a dancer, Kain had worked with all the previous Artistic Directors of the National Ballet – from Franca to Anderson, by way of Bruhn and Wilder. A keen observer of management styles, she had noticed over the years that her instinct always seemed to serve her well. She had arrived at the conclusion that, no matter what decisions or vision each director put forth, the outcome was “nearly always” what she had expected. Now that her role had changed, Kain vowed to remain true to herself and follow her instincts: “I learned, as a young dancer, that I had really good instincts, and I had much

success because I followed my instinct. Then I got to a certain point as a dancer where I criticised everything and I analysed everything and I reworked everything and I tried so hard to address my weaknesses. The result of all that is that I danced worse. I went through a very bad period of my life because of this. There's one thing I learned from my own personal experience and that I believe in strongly, and that is to trust my instincts."²

As Artistic Director, she decided to stick with the same winning formula. "My instincts were not 100% right all the time, but I had watched James Kudelka, just as I had watched many directors. I've worked with every [Artistic Director] this company ever had, from the first one, from Celia Franca, through. I knew their style with people, I knew their style in the studio, I knew their style with the stakeholders. I knew all that. As a dancer, I knew what I wanted to follow, who I believed and what worked for me. I knew that. And I knew that my instincts, while not infallible, are for the most part pretty good. When I became Artistic Director, I thought to myself: You have to trust yourself now. You're 54 years old. If you don't know anything now, it's a little bit late. I had those eight years of being an observer in this organization from another point of view. And I absorbed."

She also relied on her intimate knowledge of the institution, acquired not only over the course of her dancing career but also during the eight years when she had been confined to a role that she shaped into that of keen observer of crucial issues. She may not have spoken out, but she was thinking. Her actions today are influenced by this experience: "I know many of the main players who run the departments and I know their style and I know what we did for the eight years that James Kudelka was Artistic Director. I know how that worked very well sometimes and when it was less good. I didn't agree with everything, but I watched and I listened and I always tried to do what I thought was the best thing for this organization."

The other part of Kain's job as Artistic Director is her role with the dancers, which she strives to make as inspiring and serene as possible. She is reminded of her own experience as a dancer with choreographers who were always passing through and Artistic Directors who were a constant presence. She recalls the

example set by Franca as founder: "In an institution like this, choreographers come and go. They rotate. You invite them, they do something new or successful, but their presence is strongly felt while they create and then they're gone. But an Artistic Director is an ongoing presence that dancers need to feel. Because as a member of a company like this, you want to feel there's a captain of the ship and you want to feel that that captain notices each person in the organization and each artist, and watches their progress, because that person is responsible for giving opportunities... That's my job."

Since roles are assigned based on criteria set by the Artistic Director, the dancers are in a constant state of expectancy. They dream of roles equal to their talents but have no choice but to wait to be noticed in order to leave the corps de ballet and achieve the rank of principal dancer. To preserve the cohesion, motivation and solidarity among the dancers, the Artistic Director has to have their full confidence that he or she has the company's interests at heart while at the same time caring about their advancement and progress. They have to feel that the Artistic Director is making fair decisions based on what she sees during rehearsals and performances. The Artistic Director's constant presence is, therefore, extremely important: "I have 62 dancers and I'm responsible for their careers, and they know that. And they care. They notice, at each performance, if I'm in the theatre or not. They notice if I go into the studio or not. And I know how they feel. When I was a dancer, I noticed every time the Artistic Director came in and watched us. They do the same. As the Artistic Director, I know I have to be there. I'm the one who does the casting. I'm the one who decides which performance they get. I decide which repertoire comes next year. They notice if I'm not here for one day."

Kain's attitude vis-à-vis the dancers runs in two directions: on the one hand she has high expectations of them and on the other she cares about their health. When it comes to the quantity and quality of the work they are expected to deliver, she is uncompromising. "One of the criticisms was that I have no patience for people who don't want to work as hard as I did. This is a profession where you work very hard physically. If you don't want to work hard physically, go to another profession."

I let five dancers go in December. I had to give them six months notice – that's the rule. If people thought that I'm not able to make tough decisions, now they know that I am. But I also have such affection and empathy that I think they know I care about them."

One of her first decisions as Artistic Director was to implement a program to help dancers with injuries such as sprains, fractures or torn ligaments, which are common in the profession. Kain's setting of high performance standards for her dancers is offset by her empathy for their physical problems, which prompted her to convince management to allocate more of the budget to looking after the dancers' physical health. "I have...put into place a dancer health initiative to look after the company's artists better. We were already spending close to \$100,000 on physiotherapy, massage therapy, machines and equipment. I made sure we put more money into the budget to look after the artists. This was something I said I wanted right from the beginning. I know how short and how hard their careers are, but I expect them to work really hard. And I want to look after them as best we can."

Kain points out that the Artistic Director must be prepared to deal with countless details. In her view, the success of a performance and of the company in general depends on how well these myriad details are attended to. And she has every intention of seeing to this. She uses the metaphor of a ship's captain to illustrate her point. "The good captains have a constant presence. They are able to artistically direct, to come in a room and help mobilize all those personalities and individuals in a stylistic way, in a emotional way, so that everybody understands the era they are working in, the costumes they are going to wear, the attitude toward this particular work. They can sort of mobilize all the artistic forces present."

She also says the Artistic Director must be able to bring together all the disparate elements of a production and unite them in a coherent, artistic whole. "With these big works, we separate them all into little sections, in different studios, and then, when it gets closer to the performance, you bring everybody back and you start to knit everything together. Like in a play, you do all the scenes with the separate actors alone and then you have to bring them in, and when you do so, somebody has

to be looking at the big picture. It's a matter of looking at this person's performance or this costume, of putting this dancer's performance in the same style as that one. You have to be able to say, 'This one is too small, this is too big,' and so on... This is my job as Artistic Director."

Kain adds that the Artistic Director must be able to rally all the other stakeholders, including those more concerned with management. "I also noticed the people who could handle...not just the artists, but the patrons, the members of the board, the many groups that we have and that need to feel important to the organization and cannot be ignored. So, I noticed the people who could do that."

In her approach to all these fundamental aspects, Kain has much in common with Garland, who shares her concern for excellence through attention to detail as well as her conception of team-based management.

Management Team

In July 2005 Kain and Garland formed a management team, with each member reporting directly to the board of directors. The team includes the Directors of Communications and Marketing, Finance, Development, Production, and Music and the Artistic Associate for matters related to scheduling and financial planning and budgeting. Well aware of the fact that the most ambitious dreams are limited by budget constraints, Kain knows the importance of sound financial management and is prepared to lower her expectations – without, however, compromising on quality. She gets along well with Garland, relying on her in administrative and financial matters, as well as with the Director of Communications and Marketing, Julia Drake. Kain and Garland both value Drake's opinions. Based on her experience with the National Ballet's public, Drake can tell them which productions will sell out and which will run a deficit. She is systematically consulted on decisions about which productions to include in a program and how much space to give them. For Kain and Garland, the important thing is a balanced program, so that

they can speak with one voice before the board when programming the next four years.

Each of the directors has well-defined responsibilities and each respects the jurisdiction and activities of the other. The same holds true for the people in charge of marketing and other management functions. The members of the board of directors also know exactly what is expected of them when they accept a position on the board.

Board of Directors

In addition to being responsible for raising private-sector funds and hiring (or firing) the Executive Director and Artistic Director, under the new rules of governance the 35 board members are required to serve on one or more of the following committees: Audit/Finance, Human Resources, Marketing, Nominating, Development, Corporate, Major Gifts or Patron's Council.

Several board members are appointed *ex officio*. These include a representative of Toronto City Council, which provides funding for the company, a member of the orchestra, two dancers, a representative of the National Ballet School, a representative of the Volunteer Committee and the Chair of the Patron's Council. The other members, who sit on the board in a private capacity, must agree to fulfil five obligations, which are clearly spelled out for them before they agree to join the board. Usually it is Garland, sometimes accompanied by the board Chair, who explains the situation and spells out the requirements for the candidate once the Nominating Committee has submitted his or her name. Kain describes the process: "The Nominating Committee tells me the names and who they are, and sometimes I go to the lunch. Kevin goes to all the lunches. She tells them what is expected, so then they can make up their mind knowing what is involved. You ask them if they're interested, then you tell them what they have to know. And then they can decide to accept or not, knowing that they're expected to give a certain amount of money, that they're expected to attend performances and that they're expected to attend meetings. You have to be very clear nowadays with people."

The directors must fulfil the following five obligations: make an annual donation of \$5,000, raise \$25,000 over three years, take out a full-series subscription, attend board meetings and ballet events, and sit on one or more committees.

The company has an endowment fund evaluated at \$15 million, which generates income of \$500,000 to \$600,000 per year. This fund is managed by the NBOC Foundation, an independent entity that has its own board of directors comprising six members.

Volunteer Committee

The National Ballet is one of Canada's largest cultural organizations by virtue of its large number of artists and the scale of its productions. In addition to its 64 dancers, the company has 62 musicians with the National Ballet of Canada Orchestra, whose contract guarantees the National Ballet 100 performances per year effective September 2006. The company's other permanent staff consists of 75 employees who perform various administrative, artistic and technical functions.

The National Ballet also has a team of 225 volunteers, who are called upon to perform ad hoc tasks, such as mailings for special events or for fundraising campaigns. Some of the volunteers report to the company's offices every day, where they work at a variety of tasks, mostly in the Marketing Department.

The Volunteer Committee operates two boutiques, one at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts and one on Yorkville Avenue in an upscale Toronto neighbourhood. The Four Seasons Centre boutique offers merchandise such as T shirts, dancewear, CDs, books and other dance-related items, including Nutcracker dolls in all sizes. Unlike some arts companies, the National Ballet does not sell videos of its performances, due to prohibitive union costs. (The company's dancers, musicians and stage technicians are subject to labour conditions negotiated by three unions: Actors Equity, the American Federation of Musicians, and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators, or IATSE, although the latter negotiates directly with the-

atre management rather than with the National Ballet.) The Yorkville Avenue boutique, which is the larger of the two, opened in 2002 and is called Paper Things. It sells wrapping paper, cards and gifts, and fine stationery and has a printing service for customized stationery that is particularly popular for weddings. In addition to the store's two full-time employees, volunteers alternate for two or three hours a day, two or three days a week. On average, the Volunteer Committee donates \$200,000 a year – sufficient to sponsor a major ballet or several small-scale productions, shorter ballets that can be added to a mixed program. The contributions of the Volunteer Committee are always acknowledged prominently.

The National Ballet also has a select club known as the Patron's Council, reserved for individuals who donate \$1,750 or more per year. This gives them access to events organized especially for them, including pre-performance private dinners, conferences, and meetings with the dancers, as well as other advantages such as access to a lounge reserved for their exclusive use.

Budget

The National Ballet has an annual budget of \$22 million, significantly larger than that of other ballet companies in Canada. Internationally, it ranks among the top ballet companies in the world. Box office receipts account for 48% of revenue, while government grants and private-sector support account for 24% and 28%, respectively, of the remainder.³ A small portion of revenues (9%) comes from royalties and rentals (sets and costumes) to other ballet companies.

Salaries make up 80% of expenditures, with \$3.7 million going to the dancers and \$1.9 million to the musicians. The remainder goes to pay rights and absorb fixed and variable costs, the latter of which fluctuate according to the scale of the production and sponsorship revenues.

A New Strategy for a New Theatre

In November 2006 the National Ballet officially moved from the Hummingbird Centre to the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, which it shares with the Canadian Opera Company. In terms of the budget, this move represents additional fixed costs of \$1.4 million annually.

The Hummingbird Centre has 3,200 seats and played host to 68 performances in the 2005 season. The new venue has 2,000 seats and will require 83 annual performances. If one excludes performances presented outside of Toronto (as part of the company's tours or its Community Outreach program), the question becomes: how will the company be able to match the revenues generated at its previous home venue?

Garland's plan of attack in this regard can be summarized in a single word: increase. The number of performances will be increased from 68 to 83, which explains the \$1.4 million annual increase in fixed costs.

The number of guaranteed "services," which include rehearsals and performances, of the National Ballet of Canada Orchestra will be increased to 120. In addition, the number of weeks of guaranteed employment offered to dancers will be increased by six weeks for dancers whose contracts do not cover 52 weeks per year.

A decision by the National Ballet's management and board to withdraw from the construction project for the new venue, as proposed by Kudelka in 1996, was reversed when the project's advantages became clear as construction progressed. The adventure involved certain risks, according to Garland, but she is convinced that the new theatre offers a vastly superior experience for all parties – the dancers, the musicians and the audience. The Executive Director is confident that she will be able to convince the National Ballet's customers to accept higher prices in exchange for the enhanced performance quality offered by the new venue.

In addition to the traditional European horseshoe-shaped auditorium, the computer-tested sightlines and the comfortable seats, the new venue features a stunning lobby and reception halls. The impeccable acoustics adds a heightened sense of physicality to the

performance of the dancers and musicians. Management is confident that the combination of all these features, which are designed to produce a thrilling and unforgettable ballet experience, will attract subscribers from among new audiences as well as ardent fans of the company.

The new pricing policy that Garland has been developing over the past months provides for a 50% increase in the average ticket price, from \$50 to \$75. She expects a varied reaction to the increase. In the case of well-heeled ballet lovers for whom money is no object, the increase is not expected to affect attendance – their interest may even be heightened by the novelty of the experience and the social prestige associated with this type of cultural activity. At the other end of the spectrum, Garland is concerned about the reaction of devoted ballet fans of more modest means; management has provided for a certain number of discounted seats to be set aside for this clientele.

The main concern is middle-class people whose leisure budget may not be able to sustain an increase from \$450 to \$700 for two subscriptions, even if a reasonable instalment plan is offered. Garland worries, for example, about the nurse or teacher who may think twice before spending \$700.

Like the directors of the Canadian Opera Company, Garland is counting on the novelty effect of the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts to attract audiences. The Opera Company's spectacular inaugural event is Wagner's complete *Ring Cycle*, presented in four performances per week over three consecutive weeks, from 12 September to 1 October 2006. The four operas making up the *Der Ring des Nibelungen* – *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* – have a total performance time of 20 hours, which audiences will see over four days within a single week at the Four Seasons Centre. Series of tickets have been on sale for several months, and the response in Canada and abroad has been excellent. Each time Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is staged, opera lovers come from all around the world to attend, even though the tickets alone can cost as much as \$2,000. To mark its 50th anniversary in 2004/05, the Lyric Opera of Chicago presented *The Ring* tetralogy to sold-out audiences, and the epic work is to be staged in New York in 2008. The

Canadian Opera Company is counting on this masterpiece of the operatic repertoire to position the new venue immediately upon its inauguration and to help turn Toronto into a major cultural destination.

The National Ballet of Canada, for its part, is inaugurating its first season at the Four Seasons Centre with a spectacular production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the ballet that established Kain's reputation and one of the company's hallmark productions. Management of the National Ballet is also hoping to take advantage of the novelty effect to inaugurate its new season and to boost sales of its own productions, both among its loyal Toronto fans and among international ballet lovers.

A Turning Point

The National Ballet of Canada today stands at a crossroads. Senior management is clear about this. An extensive development plan established in fiscal year 2005 forecast a surplus of \$400,000 as at 30 June 2006 and a more modest \$155,000 for 2007. The budget plan targets a two-year horizon, during which ticket revenues should rise from \$8.8 million to \$10.8 million. The hope is that the accumulated deficit will be reduced to \$290,000 by 2008.

Like the National Ballet, Kevin Garland is arriving at a turning point in her career. Garland confides that she would like to retire within the next few years. She hopes that her last exploit will have been to ensure the success of the National Ballet of Canada's move to the theatre that she had a hand in building during the period 1998 to 2002.

Making a veritable second début will be Karen Kain, the former *danseuse-étoile* of the National Ballet, who traded in her role as Giselle for that of Artistic Director. If Kain's instincts are as good today as they have been in the past, the future of her beloved National Ballet may prove to be even brighter than the company's founder, Celia Franca, and her loyal friend Betty Oliphant could ever have imagined. Indeed, it was intuition that led Franca and Oliphant to accept as an apprentice the shy little girl who stood before them with trembling hands and downcast eyes. Looking back,

there is little doubt that the National Ballet of Canada would not be what it is today but for the arrival, in 1961, of this young recruit by the name of Karen Kain.

Notes

1. Karen Kain, *Movement Never Lies: An Autobiography* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), p. 6.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes by Karen Kain are taken from an interview conducted by the authors on 26 January 2006.
3. 2006/07 budget, National Ballet of Canada.



APPENDIX 1 (A) NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA: SOURCES OF REVENUE						
National Ballet of Canada Selected Statistics						
Years ended June 30 (\$000)	2005		2004		2003	
		%		%		%
Private-sector fundraising revenue						
Capital donors and sponsorship	\$2,869		\$903		\$1,048	
Foundations	114		128		110	
Individuals	2,993		2,047		1,611	
Volunteer Committee	60		350		219	
Total fundraising	\$6,036		\$3,428		\$2,988	
Sources of revenue						
Box office	\$8,000	38	\$8,541	47	\$7,639	46
Fundraising	6,036	29	3,428	19	2,988	18
Government grants	5,013	24	4,985	28	4,652	28
Other	1,834	9	1,777	6	1,250	8
Total fundraising	\$20,883	100	\$18,131	100	\$16,529	100

APPENDIX 1 (B) NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA: FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**Condensed Statement of Operations and Changes in Fund Balances**

OPERATING FUND			
Years ended June 30 (\$000)	2005	2004	2003
Revenue			
Box office			
Hummingbird Centre	\$7,338	\$7,685	\$7,114
Touring	662	856	525
Fundraising	6,036	3,428	2,988
Government grants	5,013	4,985	4,652
Donations from National Ballet of Canada Endowment Foundation and National Ballet Foundation	516	403	511
Creative Capital Fund	265	460	218
Other	286	314	521
Co-production	767	—	—
	\$20,883	\$18,131	\$16,529
Expenditures			
Performance			
Artistic	6,754	6,547	5,688
Production and technical	4,751	4,598	4,166
Marketing and publicity	2,906	2,912	2,421
General administration	1,750	1,761	1,660
Fundraising and development	1,346	985	1,001
Facilities	897	862	811
Sets, costumes and creative costs	2,728	1,084	656
Education and community outreach	199	172	116
	\$21,331	\$18,921	\$16,519
Excess of revenue over-expenditures (expenditures over revenue)	(448)	(790)	10
Fund balance – beginning of year	(692)	98	88
Fund balance – end of year	(\$1,140)	(\$692)	\$98