

LOS ANGELES BALLET

Melissa Barak Named New Artistic Director of Los Angeles Ballet

Los Angeles – August 24, 2022 – Los Angeles Ballet (LAB) today announced that Melissa Barak has been appointed as Artistic Director by its Board. Barak, an accomplished ballet dancer and choreographer, will serve as the first solo artistic director in the Company's history. Until her appointment she has led Barak Ballet, the Los Angeles-based contemporary ballet company that she founded in 2013. Founding Co-Artistic Directors Thordal Christensen and Colleen Neary have left the Company.

Barak is a former leading dancer with Los Angeles Ballet where she performed for five seasons commencing in 2006 and choreographed *Lost In Transition*, the company's first choreographic commission, performed by the Company in 2008. Her career also includes New York City Ballet (NYCB), where she performed in numerous works by George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins, as well as originating roles in new ballets by Christopher Wheeldon, Elliot Feld and Robert Garland. She was also a member of Morphoses, The Wheeldon Company, formed by renowned choreographer Christopher Wheeldon.

Jennifer Bellah Maguire, the Board Chair of Los Angeles Ballet, said "We are delighted to welcome Melissa Barak as our new Artistic Director. Melissa's vision for the Company is bold and timely. She brings us a formidable artistic talent and vision together with the practical experience of leading an innovative ballet company. We are honored that she will commit her passion to Los Angeles Ballet, and we are excited to see our shared future unfold."

Barak Ballet, acclaimed both locally and nationally, has focused on developing new works, collaborating with artists of all media, and commissioning work from ground-breaking dance makers. Barak Ballet has been presented by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, BroadStage, the Joyce Theater, and Jacob's Pillow. Barak will transition works in progress to Los Angeles Ballet for the upcoming season.

"Barak Ballet has proven to be an incredible vehicle for my choreographic and artistic goals; however, my ultimate desire has always been to lead a dance institution that would allow me to forge new paths for both the ballet art form and its culture. I believe that infusing Los Angeles Ballet with the strengths and spirit of Barak Ballet can result in something extraordinary, further cementing Los Angeles as a major dance player on the national level," said Barak.

[Melissa Barak headshot](#)

ABOUT LOS ANGELES BALLET

Los Angeles Ballet is known for its superb stagings of the Balanchine repertory, stylistically meticulous classical ballets, and its commitment to new works. With a history of presenting 21 productions encompassing 43 works, including 13 commissioned world premieres, Los Angeles Ballet 'tours' throughout LA County, regularly appearing at multiple venues. Since its inception in 2006, LAB's *Power of Performance (POP!)* program has provided thousands of free tickets to underserved communities across LA County. LAB's *A Chance to Dance Community Days*

outreach program was launched in October 2012 and provides free ballet classes, alternative dance/fitness classes, and lectures/demonstrations both in person and streamed live online.

ABOUT MELISSA BARAK

Melissa Barak is a choreographer and former professional dancer with New York City Ballet (NYCB) and Los Angeles Ballet. Born and raised in Los Angeles, CA, Barak began her ballet training at the age of eight at Westside School of Ballet in Santa Monica, CA under the direction of Yvonne Mounsey and Rosemary Valaire. Her training continued in New York City at the School of American Ballet (SAB), the official school of NYCB. In 1998, Barak was invited to join NYCB where she performed in numerous works by George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins as well as originating roles in new ballets by Christopher Wheeldon, Elliot Feld, and Robert Garland among others.

Barak began exploring her choreographic talents throughout her time at SAB and NYCB. At the age of 21, she premiered her work Telemann Overture Suite in E Minor at the SAB June Workshop performance that quickly followed up with encore performances on NYCB the following season. Later that year another choreographic commission was offered by NYCB for their prestigious Diamond Project making her, at the time, the youngest choreographer to create an original work on the company. She has created new works for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Richmond Ballet, Dayton Ballet, American Repertory Ballet, Sacramento Ballet, Los Angeles Ballet, and Barak Ballet, a Los Angeles based contemporary ballet company she founded in 2013. Barak Ballet has been presented by The Los Angeles Philharmonic, BroadStage, The Joyce Theater, and Jacob's Pillow.

She has had the honor of choreographing on dance luminaries including Sara Mearns, Tiler Peck, Justin Peck, Benjamin Millepied, and Robert Fairchild. In 2009 and 2010, she was invited to return to the New York City Ballet where she created two more works, A Simple Symphony and Call Me Ben respectively. Her film and commercial credits include original choreography for Mattel's feature film Barbie in the Pink Shoes, Xayron in Hungary, Illusions in China, and a Samsung commercial working alongside director Mark Romanek. Melissa has been awarded the Mae L. Wein and Choo San Goh awards for Outstanding Choreography and has been named a Dance Magazine "Top 25 to Watch". She was also the inaugural recipient of the Virginia B. Toulmin Fellowship for Women Choreographers through Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU.

For more information, please visit losangelesballet.org

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