



**DANCE
VICTORIA**

25 YEARS OF THE WORLD'S BEST DANCE

111 – 2750 Quadra Street
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dance Victoria Producer Stephen White to Retire in 2022

VICTORIA, B.C. – Dance Victoria's 2021/22 Season promises to be significant. Not only is the organization marking its 25th year of operations with planned celebrations, but it will *Return to the Royal* with three compelling presentations of *The World's Best Dance* in early 2022. Single tickets go on sale in mid-November.

And another event of significance: after 22 years at the helm of Dance Victoria, Executive Producer Stephen White will retire in June 2022.

"It has been my privilege and honour to lead this organization since 2000. I leave with many treasured memories of artists, supporters, performances and special events," says White.

In 2000, White assumed the contract to manage a modest \$30,000 marketing project called *Victoria Dance Series* that promoted a subscription series of four touring dance performances annually. Today, Dance Victoria's *Dance at the Royal* series features leading national and international dance companies for 14 to 16 performances at the Royal Theatre, and an annual *Dance Days* festival with approximately 70 free dance classes and events over 10 days.

With an annual participation of more than 22,000, Dance Victoria is Canada's third largest dance presentation organization. In 2010, Dance Victoria Society assumed the head lease at its 12,000 square-foot studio space in Quadra Village, that draws approximately 5,000 children, youth, and adults to a variety of dance classes each month. Recently, Dance Victoria renewed the lease for another 10 years, completed renovations and invested in high-tech equipment to make one of the dance studios adaptable for filmmaking.

For the past 15 years, Dance Victoria has invested significantly in the development of new dance works through commissions and dance artist residencies. In addition, it develops touring schedules for visiting dance companies with its presenter colleagues in North America and Europe.

In 25 years, Dance Victoria has become a valued community asset with an annual budget of almost \$2 million annually and built a strong international profile.

White is quick to acknowledge the countless volunteers, staff and Board Members that have had a significant impact on Dance Victoria's growth and development during his 22-year tenure:



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"I would particularly like to thank four Board Presidents I have had the honour to work with: Robert Milne; Colleen Gibson; Mariann Burka; and Susan Howard. And there have been many brilliant staff members over the years including Yolanda Meijer, Elise Wren, and of course the current team of Bernard Sauv , Shireen McNeilage, Tracy Smith, Holly Vivian, Kiera Shaw, and Julie Collins. "I really could not have a better team to work with every day," says White. "I will be sad to leave them."

Some of White's proudest achievements include the engagement of companies like the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, The National Ballet of Cuba, The National Ballet of Canada, Kidd Pivot, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Les Ballets Jazz de Montr al, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, Jessica Lang Dance, The Royal Winnipeg Ballet, BalletBoyz and many more. In addition, the establishment of the Chrystal Dance Prize, a bequest from local pediatrician Dr. Betty "Chrystal" Kleiman, held at the Victoria Foundation. The fund's annual disbursement supports two awards (Training and Projects) for a total of \$50,000. In 2022, the inaugural Arabella and Robert Dance Award will support a young Canadian dancer continuing their training at an international institution.

Over many years, White and his husband Bill Hamar, hosted 26 cultural tours to the US, Cuba, South America and Europe with walking tours, museum visits, culinary experiences, and tickets to see the world's premiere dance, opera, and theatre companies. The popular tours often sold out in hours, and the shared experiences helped cultivate a core of committed, loyal Dance Victoria supporters.

White served as president of the CanDance Network (Canada's national dance presenter organization) for two, two-year terms in the past decade. He is a respected leader in Canadian dance.

"I was very fortunate to be welcomed into the dance community in my early tenure, benefitting from the knowledge shared at the annual CanDance Network meetings. I learned so much from colleagues like Mimi Beck (DanceWorks, Toronto); Cathy Levy (National Arts Centre, Ottawa); Pierre des Marais (Danse Danse, Montr al); and many others. To them, I extend a big thank you."

White leaves Dance Victoria at the end of its 25th Anniversary Season, with the organization coming through the recent pandemic in a strong financial position. Dance Victoria is planning several events to mark its anniversary including launching an interactive online dance archive this fall. White plans to spend some of his retirement contributing to the online archive periodically with stories from the first 25 years and traveling with his husband.

"Thank you, Victoria, for being so supportive of me and of Dance Victoria over the past quarter century," he says. "In the meantime, see you at the Royal Theatre!"

About Dance Victoria



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Dance Victoria brings the *World's Best Dance* to the Royal Theatre and supports the development of new dance for the international stage from its studios in Quadra Village. Dance Victoria is a non-profit charitable society.

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