

FROM: **AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE**
890 Broadway
New York, New York 10003
(212) 477-3030

COLLEEN NEARY

With stellar credentials in performing, teaching, and staging ballet, Colleen Neary brought a wealth of professional experience and expertise when she and her husband Thordal Christensen co-founded Los Angeles Ballet in 2004 and directed the company until 2022.

Born in Miami, Florida, Neary trained in New York at the School of American Ballet and Harkness House. From 1969 to 1979, she danced as a soloist with New York City Ballet under the direction of George Balanchine, becoming one of his quintessential ballerinas. Balanchine personally selected Neary to stage his ballets for other companies as a répétiteur for The George Balanchine Trust, the official guardian of the choreographer's style and celebrated choreography. From 1975 to 1979, Neary honed her teaching talents as a faculty member at School of American Ballet and company teacher for the New York City Ballet. In 1979, Neary's career path led to Europe where she became rehearsal director and choreographic assistant at Switzerland's Zurich Ballet. She also continued to perform internationally as a guest artist, and staged Rudolf Nureyev's *Don Quixote* and *Manfred* for Zurich Ballet, La Scala de Milan, and in Arena di Verona.

In 1984 choreographer Maurice Bejart recruited her as guest principal artist and company teacher for his Ballet du Deuxieme Siecle. Neary accepted the position of principal dancer with Pacific Northwest Ballet in 1986, but returned to Europe in 1992 to spend a decade with The Royal Danish Ballet as rehearsal director, company teacher and First Instructor in charge of productions. Neary and her husband, Thordal Christensen, moved to Los Angeles in 2002, where they founded Los Angeles Ballet in 2004, with the first production debuting in 2006, with an original production of *The Nutcracker* choreographed by Neary and Christensen. Throughout their tenure they choreographed *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Don Quixote* and *Giselle* together, and Neary staged over 30 Balanchine ballets for the company.

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As a répétiteur, Neary remains in demand, continuing to stage Balanchine ballets for major U.S. and international ballet companies including Pacific Northwest Ballet, Boston Ballet, Philadelphia Ballet, Miami City Ballet, Ballet West, American Ballet Theatre, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Philadelphia Ballet, The Royal Danish Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, Maryinsky Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, Norwegian National Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet, Korean National Ballet, and New National Ballet of Tokyo. Her commitment to ballet education also resulted in co-founding Los Angeles Ballet School and LA Ballet's many community outreach programs.

In 2012, Thordal Christensen and Colleen Neary received The Lifetime Achievement Award from the McCallum Theatre.

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