



Position Specification

American Ballet Theatre

Artistic Director

Our Client

Designated America's National Ballet Company by a landmark Act of Congress, American Ballet Theatre (ABT) is considered one of the greatest dance companies in the world. With a reach that extends far beyond its home in New York City, ABT works to create, present, honor, and extend the repertoire of classical dance.

ABT is headquartered in New York City, with studios and offices at 890 Broadway and regular performance seasons at Lincoln Center. It is the only cultural institution of its size and stature to extensively tour, engaging and inspiring audiences for eight decades in 50 U.S. states, 45 countries, and over 480 cities worldwide. ABT just completed an eight-city "ABT Across America" tour from Lincoln, Nebraska, to New York, New York, offering world-class ballet performances for free for thousands of fans outdoors in parks and public plazas.

ABT's repertoire includes full-length classics from the nineteenth century, the finest works from the early twentieth century, and diverse and dynamic contemporary work by the leading choreographers of today. In 2006, by an act of Congress, ABT became America's National Ballet Company®. Pre-pandemic, ABT reached approximately 300,000 audience members per year in traditional performance venues. In the past year, ABT's digital content has surpassed 9.9 million views, and ABT has an engaged fan base of 1.7 million across its social media platforms.

All members of the ABT team – dancers, staff, the Board of Trustees, and dedicated volunteers – work tirelessly to produce innovative performances, reach the widest possible audiences, and provide the highest quality education in classical dance. Since ABT's founding in 1939, these collective efforts have made a lasting mark on the cultural fabric of the world. By sharing art of exceptional quality, ABT believes it is possible to develop a global artistic community that transcends cultural boundaries.

ABT's 84 extraordinary dancers hail from 14 countries and 24 states. In addition to its professional company dancers, ABT has a highly committed and talented staff over 120 individuals as well as more than 80 JKO School Faculty, Accompanists, and Guest Faculty. ABT is governed by 47 dedicated members of the Board of Trustees. Additional support is provided by many volunteers including Chairmen and Trustees Emeriti, Honorary Trustees, ABT's Golden Circle, RISE Advisory Council, Global Council, Chairman's Council, and others.

ABT had a pre-pandemic annual operating budget of approximately \$45 million with a 55/45 percent split between earned revenue and operating support. Operating revenue is earned primarily from ticket sales, touring fees, and dance education programs. ABT's endowment net assets are over \$28 million.

In pursuit of achieving its mission, ABT's work centers primarily around the following endeavors:

Exciting performances of the highest caliber

- **Repertoire:** In the Autumn of 1939, ABT was launched with the mission of developing a repertoire of the best ballets from the past as well as the creation of new works by gifted choreographers, wherever they might be found. Perhaps unmatched in the history of ballet, ABT's repertoire includes full-length classics from the nineteenth century (e.g. *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Giselle*), the finest works from the early twentieth century (e.g. *Apollo*, *Les Sylphides*, *Jardin aux*

Lilas and Rodeo), and acclaimed contemporary masterpieces. ABT is proud to have commissioned over 180 new works, including those by many of the choreographic geniuses of the twentieth century: George Balanchine, Antony Tudor, Jerome Robbins, Agnes de Mille and Twyla Tharp, among others.

- **Dancers:** Made up of some of the world's most talented dance artists, ABT's Company consists of 16 Principal Dancers, eight Soloists, 55 members of the Corps de Ballet, and six apprentices. In total, these 85 dancers come from 14 countries and 24 states. Their performances are supported by the excellence of the ABT Orchestra.

The highest quality education in classical dance

- **ABT Studio Company:** ABT's Studio Company seeks to develop the next generation of ballet dancers, choreographers, and audiences. The central mission of the Studio Company is to prepare its exceptionally promising dancers (ages 17-21) for careers in American Ballet Theatre's main Company or other leading ballet companies worldwide. ABT's Studio Company serves as the crucial vehicle for transitioning from student to professional performer. Nearly 80% of current American Ballet Theatre dancers are alumni of ABT Studio Company. Each season, ABT Studio Company commissions emerging and established choreographers to create new works with Studio Company dancers, serving as a platform for new choreography. The Studio Company engages the broadest possible ballet audience by performing classical, neoclassical and contemporary repertoire in a range of venues around the globe.
- **ABT Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School:** The ABT Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School (JKO School), named after the prior First Lady and longtime ABT Honorary Chairman, is a ballet training program for young dancers that promotes creativity and discipline, enabling children to reach their highest potential. Not only do students receive the best technical training with ABT's National Training Curriculum, but they are guided by caring instructors who nurture their students' love for dance. At its inception, the JKO School had only 10 students and has since grown to enroll over 430 dancers per academic year.
- **ABT William J. Gillespie School:** The ABT William J. Gillespie School was founded in 2015 and combines the traditions of American Ballet Theatre with the resources of Segerstrom Center for the Arts, where the program is located. The Center is one of the world's leading presenters of dance and provides unrivaled opportunities for training and nurturing future dancers.
- **Teacher Training and Open Division:** ABT is committed to taking a leadership role in dance training both in the United States and globally. Through the creation of the ABT National Training Curriculum, ABT has certified over 1,400 teachers in a program that incorporates elements of classical ballet training with scientific principles. Additionally, New York University and American Ballet Theatre partner to offer the original graduate program in dance education. In this program, graduate students work toward their Master of Arts Degree in Teaching Dance in the Professions with a certificate in ABT Ballet Pedagogy. ABT's open division provides more opportunities for community education through adult ballet classes and children's online community classes.

Developing a global artistic community

- **ABT RISE:** It is ABT's belief that Representation and Inclusion Sustain Excellence. In other words, ABT's continued excellence and maintenance of its world class stature will depend upon the inclusion of diverse individuals and viewpoints in all that it does. ABT RISE is built upon the efforts

of the generous and dedicated champions who did groundbreaking work to launch Project Plié in 2013, which was ABT's industry-leading initiative to advance diversity in the training pipeline for ballet students, teachers, and administrative interns. Through initiatives existing and growing under the ABT RISE umbrella, ABT will champion, enhance, and support inclusion and diversity on its stages, in the studios and classrooms where ABT operates, behind the scenes in ABT's administrative staff and creative teams, as well as in the audiences and communities ABT serves in New York City and around the world.

- **Community Education Programs:** Partnering with schools and local organizations, ABT provides an array of accessible opportunities to experience world-class repertory and artistry. The centerpiece of American Ballet Theatre's education and outreach initiatives is its award-winning Make a Ballet program. Helping to meet the need for arts education in underserved schools and communities, this model program introduces students to all aspects of the creative and administrative theatrical experience. Each year approximately 6,500 students from the New York metropolitan area attend ABTKids: Schools (formerly Young People's Ballet Workshop). In this program, Company members perform excerpts of ABT repertory with narration by ABT's artistic staff.

The spring Workshops also feature pieces by students participating in ABT's Make a Ballet program, providing the young dancers the opportunity to perform at the Metropolitan Opera House in front of an audience of their peers. American Ballet Theatre proudly offers world-class artist-in-residency programs to schools in New York City and across the country. Each year, ABT distributes thousands of complimentary tickets to New York City public schools, for use by their students and families. Ballet for the New Audience (BNA) is ABT's program for private schools: a workshop series to promote, educate and develop young audiences.

- **Family and Audience Programs:** ABT offers a wide array of family programs, including *ABTKids*, a one-hour performance designed to introduce young audiences to the magic and beauty of dance. Pre-performance workshops allow children to participate in ballet warm-ups or small pieces of choreography. In addition to its family-oriented programs, ABT also offers school groups and studios Master Class opportunities.

For the last 80 years, ABT has delivered the beauty and art of dance to stages all over the country and the world. As they reflect upon the Company's history, they recommit to addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within the organization and through its programming. This includes investing in DEI across all aspects of the institution, as well as working collaboratively to develop policies and practices that eliminate marginalization. ABT strongly believes in fostering, preserving, and advancing a culture of equity in order to ensure an inclusive atmosphere both onstage and behind the scenes.

Further, ABT condemns racism and discrimination. They are committed to building and promoting an antiracist and anti-discriminatory community through active introspection and self-awareness. ABT is actively engaged in becoming a more equitable institution by continuing to create consistent opportunities for open and safe discussions amongst our colleagues and with the guidance of experts, by facilitating ongoing anti-discrimination and antiracist training, and by using the art form to amplify marginalized voices. In doing so, ABT will promote awareness, acceptance and understanding within the organization and in the communities we serve.

The Opportunity

Under Kevin McKenzie's leadership as Artistic Director, ABT has achieved substantial artistic, programmatic, and institutional strength. ABT has a remarkable heritage and, at the same time, the opportunity for evolution is significant in using tradition to fuel innovation. The role of ballet in society is changing, and ABT recognizes the need for a leader who will help the organization build on its history and core values as it moves boldly into the future. To this end, the next Artistic Director will have a once-in-a-generation chance to set artistic vision and strategy for ABT during a time of unparalleled opportunity. The next artistic leader of ABT will set a tone of innovation, collaboration, inclusion, and impact that will echo throughout New York, America, and the world.

The Role

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, and working in close partnership with the Executive Director, the Artistic Director is responsible for conceiving, developing, and implementing all aspects of ABT's artistic vision. They will ensure and provide the highest level of excellence in implementing this vision through programs and performances, as well as the recruitment, development, and management of exceptional dancers and artistic staff.

Key responsibilities of ABT's next Artistic Director role include:

- **Setting & Implementing Artistic Vision:** The Artistic Director will oversee the development of a compelling artistic vision for the company. This vision will define what it means to be America's national ballet company for the future, and promote ABT's reputation for excellence internationally. Inherent within this visioning process will be an exploration and articulation of how ABT can use its history and legacy to both champion classical ballet and serve as a springboard into the future.

The Artistic Director not only enable ABT to exceed expectations on the stage, but also to shatter assumptions in the world through its artistic vision and program. The Artistic Director will honor the core values of the company: excellence, compassion, equity, and inclusion. They will continue to celebrate and perform great classical ballet, and also forge new pathways which will include commissioning new works from choreographers and creative collaborators who bring new and important voices, stories, and styles of ballet to ABT.

- **Internal Leadership & Management:** The Artistic Director will partner effectively with ABT's Executive Director and lead the organization's artistic staff, dancers, and a wide range of choreographers, designers, directors of repertoire, and coaches. The Artistic Director is responsible for facilitating the continued development of a healthy work environment, promoting strong and respectful internal communication between artistic staff and dancers, and managing the company with confidence and care. ABT looks to its Artistic Director to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of the company's team, culture, repertoire, and community. The Artistic Director and Executive Director will work together to prepare ABT's annual priorities and budget for Board approval.

The Artistic Director serves as chief artistic talent scout for ABT, and critical to the Artistic Director's success will be their ability to recruit and develop a talented and diverse company of dancers and artistic staff, as well as choreographers. With a deep commitment to the company's future talent, the Artistic Director will collaborate actively with ABT's JKO School and Studio Company to promote a unified vision of the artistic values of the company.

- **External Leadership & Building Community:** The Artistic Director will serve an enthusiastic champion for the art form as the external artistic face of ABT in New York City, throughout the United States, and beyond. They will raise ABT's profile by promoting the company's artistic vision and building key partnerships with other relevant organizations and creative visionaries.

The Artistic Director will serve as a cultural ambassador in representing America through ballet around the globe. It is expected that the Artistic Director will partner with the Executive Director, Board, and development team to inspire financial support for ABT through philanthropy and innovative partnerships.

Candidate Profile

ABT seeks an Artistic Director who is grounded in classical ballet, inclusive of new voices and open to new approaches, and captivated by the opportunity to lead ABT forward through this next phase of artistic growth and excellence. They are looking for someone visionary, inspiring, strategic, and highly collaborative.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

Artistic Strategy & Vision

- The ability to create and articulate an inspiring artistic vision for the organization which brings ABT's mission to life, serving as the artistic heart and soul of the organization.
- Has an acute awareness of where ballet has been, is today, and what it has the potential to become in future; understands the continuum between tradition and innovation in ballet and sees the unique opportunities that lie therein.
- Has demonstrated an entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new and innovative artistic approaches that will stretch the company and push the boundaries within the industry, while also continuing to champion and perform classical and story ballet of the highest quality.
- Has deep and broad connections throughout the classical and contemporary dance communities and larger performing arts arenas; will be able to call upon a truly global network to further ABT's artistic vision, and to seek inspiration and influence from beyond the classical ballet world.

Executing for Results

- The ability to set clear and challenging artistic goals for ABT while committing the organization to improved communication, process management, and collaboration; holds the team accountable with a spirit of transparency and fairness.
- A smart risk-taker who seeks input from others to foresee possible threats or unintended consequences of decisions; makes hard decisions, admits mistakes, learns, and adapts.
- A leader who is viewed by others as having a high degree of integrity, humility, and forethought in their approach to making decisions; the ability to act in a transparent and consistent manner while always taking into account what is best for the company.

- Evidence of experience in and/or deep curiosity about digital media and video storytelling, including digital performance content capture strategy; open to piloting new approaches to build audience reach, resonance, and engagement.

Leading and Managing Teams

- The ability to attract and recruit top artistic talent, motivate the team and company, delegate effectively, celebrate diversity, and manage performance; widely viewed as a strong developer of others with a track record of coaching and nurturing within their organization.
- Sets a tone of open communication, trust, and respect in all aspects of management, coaching, rehearsals, etc. as well as between staff and the company; known for making others feel heard while still being able to make executive decisions.
- Equitable approach to dancer development and advancement, which entails deep engagement with dancers at all levels of the company as well as with ABT's JKO School and Studio Company.
- The ability to persevere in the face of challenges and exhibit a steadfast resolve and relentless commitment to high standards of artistic quality, which commands respect within the company and beyond.
- Will have earned a reputation for effectiveness in partnering with a Board or a senior management team, and will be able to guide and effectively delegate to others.

Communication & Building Relationships

- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.
- An ability to inspire trust and followership in others through compelling energy, passion for the art form, and a spirit of positivity.
- Encourages others to share the spotlight and visibly celebrates and supports the success of the team, dancers, and others around them.
- Exuberance and enthusiasm to partner with the Board of Trustees and development team around fundraising and broader resource development activities.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

- Brings deep personal commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of their work and leadership; seeks to build an organization that is substantively diverse and reflective of the diversity of ABT's communities.
- Demonstrated ability to listen to others who have had different experiences than they did in the ballet world, and to create and open and inclusive spaces and platforms for those voices.
- Continuously opens lines of communication and sponsorship with historically excluded communities to broaden access to and engagement with ABT.
- Embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion as cornerstones of all organizational and artistic decisions.

Personal Competencies & Character

- A leader who is self-reflective and aware of their own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback.
- Confidence balanced with self-awareness and humility; possesses strong empathy, a keen sense of humor, and kindness; makes others feel welcome, heard, and at ease.
- Cares for the quality of the art being created and the well-being of the company above their own ego.

Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search. Given the need for confidentiality throughout this process, prospective candidates are invited to reach out directly to Russell Reynolds Associates at ABTArtisticDirector@russellreynolds.com with a CV and brief explanation of interest. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

ABT is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a protected veteran.