

Tara Birtwhistle

Associate Artistic Director

Tara Birtwhistle is a highly accomplished and celebrated leader in dance. As a graduate of Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet School Professional Division, Birtwhistle joined the RWB in 1991, dancing as a Principal artist on stages around the world, her career spanning over 20 years. During that time, she received the Golden Jubilee Medal and the Diamond Jubilee Medal from her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth in recognition for her stage career and contribution to dance in Canada.

Among the many roles she has danced, Birtwhistle's favourites include Lucy in Mark Godden's *Dracula*, Rita Joe in Vesak's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, The Cowgirl in Agnes de Mille's *Rodeo*, Myrtha in *Giselle* and Juliet in Rudi van Dantzig's *Romeo & Juliet*. She has been lauded for her Soloist performances in Mauricio Wainrot's smash sensation *Carmina Burana*. Birtwhistle also left her mark as the evil yet charismatic Stepmother in Val Caniparoli's *A Cinderella Story*.

In 2002, Birtwhistle was nominated for a Gemini Award for her stunning performance in Guy Maddin's *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary*, a screen adaptation of the ballet. In this same year, she had the opportunity to perform with Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer and The London Philharmonic Orchestra on a 21-city tour of *A Royal Christmas*. Birtwhistle danced in *A Royal Christmas US Tour* in 2005, which included Andrea Bocelli and dancers from London's Royal Ballet and Russia's Bolshoi Ballet. In January 2006, Birtwhistle partnered with Jaime Vargas at the International Stars of Ballet 2006 in Tokyo, Japan. In 2008 she performed *Belong* with Soloist Dmitri Dovgoselets at the Gala des Etoiles. Among the many accolades associated with her name, Birtwhistle was designated one of "100 Young Canadians to Watch in the New Millennium" in Maclean's magazine. As her farewell performance in May 2010, she selected the poignant and heartrending ballet *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*.

Upon retiring from the stage, Birtwhistle has been an integral part of the artistic team at the RWB. As Ballet Master for 11 years, she oversaw RWB productions at home and abroad, assisting highly acclaimed choreographers in their creative processes. In 2018, Birtwhistle assumed the senior role of Associate Artistic Director and is a member of the leadership team of the organization. Among managing the artistic operations of the Company and her work in the studios supporting the dancers, she is also a significant contributor to the Development and Marketing departments, helping to build connections between the RWB and its donors, supporters, and patrons. She also takes a prominent role in the RWB's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as the commitment to reconciliation work within the Indigenous community. Birtwhistle is currently Council Chair, Artistic Directors Dance/USA.

Approaching 32 years of working with the RWB, Tara Birtwhistle's passion for dance is mirrored by her passion for supporting all artists in an environment that reflects a community and culture that is built on trust and mutual respect.