

# BOSTON BALLET

MIKKO NISSINEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Media Contact:

Toni Geheb, 617.456.6236, [tbgeheb@bostonballet.org](mailto:tbgeheb@bostonballet.org)

Lillian I, 617.456.6235, [li@bostonballet.org](mailto:li@bostonballet.org)

## MIKKO NISSINEN ANNOUNCES 2016–2017 ROSTER OF 70 DANCERS REPRESENTING 18 NATIONALITIES

### PRINCIPAL DANCER ERICA CORNEJO TO RETIRE FROM THE COMPANY AT END OF SEASON

AUGUST 29, 2016 (BOSTON, MA)—Boston Ballet Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen has announced the 2016–2017 season roster. A total of 70 dancers make up the Company roster, with 57 in Boston Ballet, the main professional company, and 13 in Boston Ballet II (BBII), the second company. A total of 18 nationalities are represented, with dancers from Brazil, South Korea, France, Georgia, and Australia, to name a few. More than 32 percent of the main company are BBII alumni and 18 percent are Boston Ballet School alumni. This year marks Principal Dancer Erica Cornejo's final season with Boston Ballet after dancing with the Company for 11 seasons. Cornejo will retire from Boston Ballet in May 2017 with final performances in *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Boston Ballet welcomes **Florimond Lorieux** (Paris, France) from Paris Opera Ballet as a soloist. **Daniel Cooper** (Winston-Salem, North Carolina) from Pennsylvania Ballet; **Mamuka Kikalishvili** (Poti, Georgia) from Hong Kong Ballet; **Seung Hyun Lee** (Seoul, South Korea) from Korea National University of Arts; **So Jung Lee** (Seoul, South Korea) from Korea National University of Arts; **Nina Matiashvili** (Tbilisi, Georgia) from Hong Kong Ballet; **Alec Roberts** (Adelaide, Australia) from The National Ballet of Canada; **Reina Sawai** (Urayasu, Japan), formerly with Vienna State Ballet; and **Erik Thordal-Christensen** (Copenhagen, Denmark) from Los Angeles Ballet join as artists of the Company.

"As Artistic Director, every new season brings an opportunity to shape the Company in its evolution. I aim to hire talented, motivated dancers, to continuously develop them as artists, and to expand their horizons to master our three different styles—from classical, neo-classical and contemporary works," said Mikko Nissinen, Boston Ballet Artistic Director. "It is a lot to ask of them, but also so exciting! The next big phase of the Company's development is our William Forsythe partnership. Working directly with Bill will bring a whole new dimension to their work and I cannot wait to see all the dynamic energy that's coming."

#### New Company Dancers

**Florimond Lorieux** of Paris, France, joins Boston Ballet as a soloist. He trained at Paris Opera School under the direction of Claude Bessy and Élisabeth Platel. In 2005, Lorieux joined Paris Opera Ballet, the oldest national ballet company in the world, as *quadrille*. He was promoted to *coryphée* in 2008 and *sujet* in 2009. Lorieux has performed in galas around the world as a guest artist.

**Daniel Cooper** of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, returns to Boston Ballet as an artist of the Company. Cooper began his training at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. After completing the San Francisco Ballet School Trainee Program in 2005, he joined Boston Ballet where he danced for three seasons. In 2008, he joined the corps de ballet of Pennsylvania Ballet.

**Mamuka Kikalishvili** of Poti, Georgia, joins Boston Ballet as an artist of the Company. He studied at Vakhtang Chabukiani Tbilisi Ballet Art School before joining State Ballet of Georgia as a *coryphée*. In 2013, he joined Hungarian National Ballet and then joined Hong Kong Ballet in 2014. Kikalishvili won the gold medal in the Riga Spring in 2012, and was also a finalist of the Helsinki International Ballet Competition.

**Seung Hyun Lee** of Seoul, South Korea, joins as an artist of the Company. He is a recent graduate of the highly respected Korea National University of Arts. He won the Senior Male gold medal at the Valentina Kozlova International Ballet Competition last month and was recognized for the Best Interpretation of the Classical Compulsory. Lee won first place at the 2014 Seoul International Dance Competition and a silver medal at the Korea International Ballet Competition. Lee has appeared as a guest artist around the world.

**So Jung Lee** of Seoul, South Korea, joins as an artist of the Company. Lee trained at Seoul Arts High School and Korea National University of Arts. She has received an array of honors and awards at international ballet competitions, including gold medal at the Youth America Grand Prix and junior gold medal at the Seoul International Dance Competition in 2009; bronze medal at the Youth America Grand Prix in 2013; finalist at the 2014 International Ballet Competition in Jackson, Mississippi; and gold medal at the 2015 Valentina Kozlova International Ballet Competition in New York.

**Nina Matiashvili** of Tbilisi, Georgia, joins as an artist of the Company. She trained at the V. Chabukiani Tbilisi Ballet Art State School. In 2007, Matiashvili joined State Ballet of Georgia where she was promoted to soloist in 2012. She joined Hong Kong Ballet in 2014 as a *coryphée*.

**Alec Roberts** of Adelaide, Australia, joins Boston Ballet as an artist of the Company. He trained at the Australian Ballet School where he was chosen to represent the school on exchange to Canada's National Ballet School. Upon graduation in 2012, Roberts joined Queensland Ballet where he performed both classic and contemporary ballets. He joined The National Ballet of Canada in 2015.

**Reina Sawai** of Urayasu, Japan, joins the Company as an artist of the Company. She began training at the age of 4, studying in Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Portugal. Upon graduation, Sawai joined National Ballet of Portugal and in 2010, joined the Vienna State Ballet under the direction of Manuel Legris. She was promoted to demi-soloist in 2012. During her fifth season with the Company, she left to pursue other types of dance and further expand her knowledge of the field.

**Erik Thordal-Christensen** of Copenhagen, Denmark joins as an artist of the Company. He began training at age 9 at the Los Angeles Ballet. Thordal-Christensen joined the Company as an apprentice in 2012, and was promoted to the corps de ballet in 2013.

### **Previously Announced**

Nissinen also previously announced the following promotions for the 2016–2017 season: **Anaïs Chalendard** (Renaiss, France) and **Seo Hye Han** (Seoul, South Korea) have been promoted to the rank of principal dancer, **Junxiong Zhao** (Chongqing, China) to soloist, and **Corina Gill** (Fallbrook, California)

to second soloist. **Samivel Evans** (Santa Fe, New Mexico) and **Desean Taber** (Salisbury, Connecticut), two dancers from BBII, have joined as artists of the Company.

More than 40 percent of BBII dancers are Boston Ballet School (BBS) alumni. Previously announced new hires joining BBII from BBS after completing the Trainee Program are: **Graham Johns** (Glen Ridge, New Jersey), **Abigail Merlis** (Westport, Connecticut), and **Christian Pforr** (Watertown, Massachusetts). Additional new hires in BBII are: **Gabrielle Beach** (St. Petersburg, Florida) from The Royal Ballet School, **Derek Drilon** (Vancouver, Washington) from Joffrey Studio Company, **Thomas Harrison** (New Hope, Pennsylvania) from the American Ballet Theatre Jackie Kennedy Onassis School, **Sage Humphries** (Seal Beach, California) from Sarasota Cuban Ballet School, **Clay Murray** (Hattiesburg, Mississippi) and **Bella Ureta** (Seattle, Washington) from Pacific Northwest Ballet School, and **Gabriela Schiefer** (Tampa, Florida) from School of American Ballet.

For previous press releases with details of the 2016–2017 promotions and BBII roster, visit [bostonballet.org/press-room](http://bostonballet.org/press-room). For full biographies and a complete roster, visit [bostonballet.org/company-roster](http://bostonballet.org/company-roster).

### **About Boston Ballet**

*Since 1963, Boston Ballet's internationally acclaimed performances of classical, neo-classical, and contemporary ballets, combined with a dedication to world class dance education and community initiative programs, have made the institution a leader in its field, with a 53-year history of promoting excellence and access to dance.*

*Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen and Executive Director Max Hodges, the Company maintains a diverse repertoire, ranging from full-length ballets to new works by some of today's finest choreographers. Boston Ballet's second company, Boston Ballet II, is comprised of dancers who gain experience by performing with the Company and independently, presenting special programs to audiences throughout the Northeast.*

*Boston Ballet School, the official school of Boston Ballet, has a long-standing dedication to providing exceptional dance education and ballet training to students across three studios in Boston, Newton, and the North Shore. Led by Director Margaret Tracey, the School reaches more than 5,000 students (toddler to adult) each year through its four core programs: Children's Program, Classical Ballet Program, Adult Dance Program, and Pre-Professional Program.*

*Boston Ballet's Department of Education and Community Initiatives (ECI) provides programming, events, and activities that connect the community to dance. ECI reaches more than 4,000 individuals in Boston, North Shore, and the surrounding communities each year through Citydance, ECI on Location, Adaptive Dance, and other community programs.*

*For more information, please visit [bostonballet.org](http://bostonballet.org).*

*Boston Ballet gratefully acknowledges the following institutional partners:*

*Barr Foundation*

*Boston Cultural Council*

*The Boston Foundation*

*Klarman Family Foundation*

*Massachusetts Cultural Council*

*National Endowment for the Arts*

**###**