



DAWN WELLER – BALLET SCHOOL DIRECTOR

Dawn Weller brings to The Graduate College of Dance over 35 years of experience in the international ballet world. Trained in South Africa and abroad by prominent figures in the field of dance, Dawn joined The State Theatre Ballet in 1965 and moved rapidly through the ranks to principal dancer status by the age of 19. During her career as a dancer, she built up an extensive repertoire that included all the major classics, full-length dramatic works, shorter ballets and works created for her by leading 20th century choreographers. She was the first South African ballerina to be the subject of a book (*Dawn Weller: Portrait of a ballerina*) and was the subject of several national TV documentaries. On many occasions Dawn was the recipient of leading awards for dancers. Her contribution to dance was acknowledged by South Africa when she was awarded the *Order of Meritorious Service Silver* (O.M.S.S.), having the *Dawn Weller* floribunda rose named after her in 1994 and receiving the *Nederberg Award* in 1996 for "her contribution to Ballet and creating a company of international standard".

Appointed Artistic Director in 1983 while continuing to perform for the next 8 years as ballerina with the company, she acquired for the company works by many of the world's leading choreographers. During her 17 years as Artistic Director Dawn was responsible for the staging of over 80 performances annually, taken from the company's repertoire of some 60 ballets whilst continuing to add new and challenging works by contemporary choreographers. As dancer and director Dawn had the opportunity of working with some of the greatest dancers and choreographers of our time, including Natalia Makarova, Dame Margot Fontyn, Sir Anthony Dowell, Dame Merle Park, Sir Frederick Ashton, Sir Robert Helpman, Stephen Jefferies, Lucette Aldous, David Bintley, Ronald Hynd & Val Caniparoli.

Dawn was the founding Director of the contemporary State Theatre Dance Company, The State Theatre Ballet School and a founder trustee of President Nelson Mandela's Arts & Culture Trust. Dawn was a member of the Artistic Committee for Nelson Mandela's Inaugural Gala in 1994 and during that time launched ballet and movement classes for historically disadvantaged & terminally ill children.

She has served on the jury of various international competitions including the VIII Moscow International Ballet Competition chaired by Yuri Gregorovich and headed by the legendary Galina Ulanova. Dawn's lifelong contribution to dance has been acknowledged by both the South African and Australian Cecchetti Societies (honorary memberships) and the Royal Academy of Dance (life membership)

In August 2000 Dawn was invited to stage her full length *La Bayadere* for the Hong Kong Ballet, this being the third major company to stage this lavish 3 Act ballet since its world premiere in 1996.

On emigrating to Australia in 2001 with her family Dawn took up a position with the Queensland University of Technology as guest Lecturer with the Dance Department.

In 2002 Dawn was appointed Director of The Graduate College of Dance. She has since introduced an all-encompassing syllabus, staged her own highly-acclaimed productions of *The Nutcracker*, *La Sylphide* and *La Bayadere*, and has consolidated the standing of The Graduate College of Dance as one of Australia's leading dance institutions.

http://www.tgcd.com.au/the_director.html