

November 16th 2017

Greetings guests of the 11th Annual Egerton Ryerson Award,

I am disappointed to not be with you today for this wonderful celebration in honour of our dear friend Avie Bennett.

Avie was an exemplary Canadian. His leadership inspired countless individuals and organizations in Canada's literary and cultural sector to strive for excellence and to believe that we have important stories to tell, and a unique voice that the world wants to hear.

As Artistic Director of The National Ballet of Canada, it has been my vision to position our company internationally as one of the finest dance companies on the world stage. To realize this dream, we have searched out the absolute best dancers from Canada and around the world; we have collaborated with the leading choreographers of our time; and we have invested in developing new ballet repertoire that is distinctly ours, and proudly created right here in Canada.

In this journey, and indeed throughout my career as an artist, I have been blessed to have an extraordinary partnership with Avie and Beverly Bennett, both of whom have been steadfastly committed to our work and the importance of ensuring the future of dance in Canada is vital and relevant. Together, Avie and Beverly helped to bring numerous new creations to the stage, delighting our audiences, inspiring our dancers and propelling the National Ballet to new heights. All the while, Avie remained a curious, insightful and supportive friend, whose trust I valued deeply.

I will always cherish my memories of Avie – his intelligence, charm, and humour. An unassuming altruist, Avie was nevertheless a giant among us, and his influence on the cultural life of our country cannot be overstated. Avie was unfailingly generous in his every association with the company and our artists, and we miss him dearly.

Karen Kain

