

****EMBARGOED until 12.45pm Thursday 12 March 2009****

Ground-breaking fund for Principal Dancer position

Heart-warming donation supports The Australian Ballet

The Australian Ballet today announced Principal Artist Danielle Rowe as the first recipient of the newly established Dorothy Hicks Fund.

The one million dollar, ground-breaking initiative will fund Rowe's position with the company for the duration of her career at The Australian Ballet.

The welcome announcement was made onstage at the State Theatre as the company began dress rehearsals for its first Melbourne performance of the year - *Firebird and other legends*.

Dorothy Hicks was a passionate and devoted supporter of The Australian Ballet, watching the company perform regularly at home and abroad for many years.

When Dorothy passed away in May 2007 her family established the Fund to honour her memory and keep her love of ballet alive for future generations.

The Australian Ballet's Executive Director Valerie Wilder said the Fund was a wonderful way for the Hicks family to remember Dorothy through generations of performance.

"The Dorothy Hicks Fund will not only support the career of a remarkable Principal Artist, but will help ensure the future of the company she loved so much," Ms Wilder said.

Dorothy and her husband of 35 years, Ian Hicks, began their relationship with The Australian Ballet over 15 years ago as subscribers.

"Dorothy was the driving force behind our family's appreciation of ballet," said Ian Hicks.

"It only seemed appropriate that we honour her in this way."

Five years ago the Hicks family decided to take their relationship with The Australian Ballet further. Their commitment to the company's International Touring Fund helped support overseas performances of Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake* in 2005 and 2008.

On the establishment of the Fund Ian Hicks said: "It's wonderful to be able to support such inspiring talent in memory of someone who has gone."

Danielle Rowe was chosen as the first recipient of the Dorothy Hicks Fund following a swift and impressive rise through The Australian Ballet's ranks, culminating in her promotion to Principal Artist in June of 2008.

Rowe stars in Graeme Murphy's brand-new interpretation of Mikhail Fokine's *Firebird* as part of the triple bill *Firebird and other legends*. This stunning production, opening in Melbourne tomorrow night, is set alongside two of Fokine's best-known works, the sublime *Les Sylphides* and the vibrant *Petrouchka*.

Valerie Wilder said The Australian Ballet owes much of its success to the generosity and commitment of patrons.

"Many people would not be aware that ticket sales account for around half of the true cost of sustaining a ballet company of our standard," she said.

"The generosity of private individuals can make an enormous difference to the continued strength and vibrancy of The Australian Ballet."

For more information about ways to support The Australian Ballet please contact the Private Giving department on (03) 9669 2719.

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For media enquiries:

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Firebird and other legends

MELBOURNE: 13 - 24 March 2009

SYDNEY: 2 - 22 April 2009

Bookings: australianballet.com.au



australianballet.com.au

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