

11 June 2009

Kirsty Martin wins Prix Benois de la Danse

Major international acclaim for The Australian Ballet

The Australian Ballet is thrilled to announce that Principal Artist Kirsty Martin has been awarded the prestigious Prix Benois de la Danse for outstanding ballerina in the title role of *Manon*.

The Prix de la Benois is an international ballet competition founded by the International Dance Association in Moscow.

First awarded in 1991, the event takes place annually and is considered the 'Oscars of Ballet'.

David McAllister, Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet, said it was a huge honour for Kirsty to win the award.

"Every Australian dance lover should be extremely proud of this country's national ballet company and our presence at such a prestigious event," McAllister said.

"For Kirsty to take out the title of most outstanding ballerina is a testament to her stunning skill on the stage."

Kirsty shares her prestigious acclaim with previous winners including Aurélie Dupont, Sylvie Guillem, Alessandra Ferri, Lucia Lacarra and Tamara Rojo.

Members of the jury consist of top ballet personalities and change each year.

Previous members include Rudolph Nureyev, Peter Schaufuss, Karen Kain, Galina Ulanova and Carla Fracci. Head of the 2009 jury is the famous Russian maestro Yuri Grigorovich.

The Australian Ballet was very strongly represented at the awards this year with Adam Bull also nominated for his performances of Siegfried in Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake*.

The winners are usually announced at a gala night in Moscow to which Kirsty and Adam had been invited to perform but due to a funding shortage, the event was cancelled.



Kirsty Martin and Robert Curran in *Manon*. Photo Jim McFarlane.

Kirsty's 2008 portrayal of the title role in Sir Kenneth MacMillan's sumptuous and emotional ballet *Manon* was critically acclaimed during The Australian Ballet's Melbourne season at The Arts Centre (12–23 September) and Sydney Opera House season (28 November–17 December):

"Kirsty Martin shines ... bringing performance maturity and depth to a complex character." *The Age* 15 Sept 2008

"[Martin] is centered, strong and shows a command of her body that comes with experience and maturity. It is a pleasure to witness." *Sunday Herald Sun* 21 Sept 2008

"As *Manon*, Martin is strong and vulnerable, feisty and delicate, transforming from lover to waif with seemingly effortless technique." *The Sun-Herald* 7 Dec 2008

Since the season's close in Sydney, Kirsty has been exploring life off the stage and out of the studio at The Australian Ballet as she is expecting her second child to husband and fellow Principal Artist, Damien Welch. She will commence maternity leave from tomorrow.

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