

On the Edge...and Beyond!



Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirant Program student | Photo by David Cooper

“We are beyond excited to bring our On the Edge performance to 12 communities throughout Manitoba. The Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirants have been rehearsing and refining an incredible program that highlights their versatility with various styles of dance that promise to delight all audience members.”

– Vanessa Léonard, Director of the Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirant Program

WINNIPEG - April 13, 2023. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet School's Professional Division is thrilled to be visiting Manitoba communities and performing stunning, powerful repertoire that highlights the extraordinary talent of the students of the Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirant Program for the On the Edge Tour.

The tour, which runs from **April 17 to April 28, 2023**, recalls the early days of the RWB, when co-founders Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Farrally would take their fledgling ballet company on the road throughout the province. In many ways, the early tours helped establish the RWB in Manitoba and today, the tour takes our Aspirants to cities and towns where they can spread their wings and imagine being on the edge of their budding careers... and beyond. *“We look forward to being able to experience the ballet in the comforts of our ‘northern home.’*”

– Delanie Allan, Recreation and Community Services Manager, Town of Gillam -

This year's dynamic and intimate series of performances will engage audiences of all ages with repertoire ranging from classical ballet to contemporary and neo-classical. The shows will feature several world premieres by the RWB School Resident Choreographer **Gabriela Rehak**, guest choreographer **Portia Adams**, award-winning choreographer **Lesley Telford**, the RWB School Artistic Faculty member **Maritel Centurion**, and up-and-coming Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirant, **Myles Mackesy** who will create a neo-classical piece. The Aspirants will perform excerpts from the classical ballet *La Bayadère*, and the charming and comedic *Fairy Doll*.

Gabriela Rehak has been a teacher and choreographer with the RWB since 2005 and was named the RWB School Resident Choreographer during the 2021-22 season. She also coordinates the RWB School's *First Steps*, an exhilarating competitive showcase of work choreographed on and by the RWB School Professional Division students.

Not only is Portia Adams an accomplished ballet dancer with Les Ballets de Monte Carlo in Monaco, she is also a formidable choreographer that the RWB School worked with through *Pathways to Performance* (Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet), an initiative that provides Black choreographers with the opportunities and mentorship to present their work in companies around the globe.

Vancouver-based Lesley Telford created a piece entitled *Catching Air* that speaks to the excitement of new dancers as they step out onto the stage: "Ultimately, this piece is about getting comfortable with the uncomfortable and (dancers) finding their own way to take their moment further into the next phase of their development", says Telford.

Originally from Argentina, Maritel Centurion has worked for many years with the RWB as a dance instructor and choreographer for several shows, including *On the Edge*.

Olivia Kowalchuk, one of the RWB School's Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirant Program students sums it up best: "I'm thrilled to be touring and performing across Manitoba this year, with our *On the Edge* shows. I can't wait to share our art and passion with the audiences."

Special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor **Manitoba Hydro**, and our Student Performances Supporter, the **Richardson Foundation**.

Be sure to contact the host venue in your city to reserve your seat and visit rwb.org for more information.

About On the Edge Tour

The RWB School's touring program has sent dancers on the road to share the power of ballet and other dance forms with new audiences in schools and community spaces for almost 50 years. Pioneered by the RWB in 1945, the famous 'one-night stand' model of touring the Prairies in a single 48 passenger bus was adopted by the School in the early 1970s. The touring rig includes lighting and sound equipment and a portable dance floor framed by 20' black velour legs. It's all-hands-on-deck as three production crew, two artistic faculty members, one company manager, and a large group of dancers work together to transform the venue, sometimes a school gymnasium, into something resembling a theatre space in less than one hour. One thing that distinguishes the RWB School's touring program is its impressive visual impact. The School features a large ensemble of 10-18 dancers front and centre, creating a spectacular performance experience.

The On the Edge Tour will visit the following cities and towns. Please note that public tickets are **only** available for community shows in cities where indicated below:

- P.W. Enns Centennial Concert Hall, Winkler, MB – April 17, 2023 (**community show**)
- Prairie Fusion, Portage La Prairie, MB – April 18, 2023 (**community show**)
- Barker School, Dauphin, MB – April 19, 2023
- Grand Rapids School, Grand Rapids, MB – April 20, 2023
- Letkeman Theatre, Thompson, MB – April 21, 2023 (**community show**)
- Gillam Rec Centre, Gillam MB – April 22, 2023 (**community show**)
- Mel Johnson School, Wabowden, MB – April 24, 2023
- Mosakahiken School, Moose Lake, MB – April 25, 2023
- Kelsey School, The Pas, MB – April 25, 2023 (**community show**)
- Swan Valley School, Swan River, MB – April 26, 2023
- Minegozibe School, Pine Creek, MB – April 27, 2023
- Maryland Park School, Brandon, MB – April 28, 2023

About Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet School 's Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirant Program

The Anna McCowan-Johnson Aspirant Program is the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School Professional Division's fulltime intensive two-year post-secondary training curriculum, designed for advanced level classical ballet dancers (Aspirants) who are making the transition from student to professional dancer. The Program provides dancers with specially designed classes in ballet and pointe technique, modern, and classical variations, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with new and established choreographers and to create new works of their own. The most important advantage of the Program is the close, daily contact with the world-renowned Royal Winnipeg Ballet Company. Aspirants regularly attend Company classes and are frequently cast in the Company's full-length classical ballet productions, both in Winnipeg and on worldwide tours.

www.rwb.org

For further media information and to arrange interviews, please contact:

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