



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mirna Zagar, Executive Director of The Dance Centre

Mirna Zagar's career in dance spans over 40 years. Originally from Zagreb, Croatia, she has been an active member of the Croatian dance scene and has contributed substantially to developments across the region. She has been a vital member of the international dance community, working as a juror, curator, project manager, producer, and mentor across the European Union and beyond. Since moving to Canada in 1994, she has continued to contribute to international developments.

Mirna's career started as a dance artist in one of the region's foremost repertory companies, Zagreb Dance Company, becoming its Artistic Director in 1980. In 1981 she founded Dance Week Festival (Tjedan Suvremenog Plesa), now one of Central Europe's leading dance festivals. Other significant pan-European projects include MAPA (Moving Academy for Performing Arts, based in Amsterdam and co-founded with Ide van Heiningen in 1991) which contributed to increased collaboration among independent performing artists across borders; and she was founder of the Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance, which has been at the forefront of the development of dance infrastructure in Croatia, supporting independent dance artists and productions, and Zagreb Dance Centre (opened 2009).

More recent projects which have ignited significant advances in dance across Europe include Migrant Bodies – Moving Borders, Communicating Dance, Empowering Dance, and Moving Balkans. She was also a member of the Artistic Council of the Rencontres Chorégraphiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis in France (Bagnole) 1988-1999. As an internationally recognized presenter, arts producer and promoter she has presented over 500 acclaimed artists and companies, produced over 50 dance works, and has collaborated on numerous projects in Europe and North America.

Since her move to Canada in 1994, Mirna has worked for Kinesis Dance and Katherine Labelle Dance, and as consultant to The Dance Centre before becoming its Executive Director in 1998. She was the founding director of the Canadian Dance Alliance, serving on the Board for four years; she has also served two terms on the Board of the BC Alliance for Arts and Culture. She

was instrumental in facilitating the creation of Canada's first purpose-built, shared-use dance facility which opened in downtown Vancouver in September 2001.

Today, The Dance Centre is a key resource for BC's professional dance community. It builds interest in dance among the public, connects communities, and supports diverse voices and new talents, contributing to the development of the art form in BC and its connectivity to the world.

Under her leadership, The Dance Centre has become a driving force behind British Columbia's vibrant dance scene, and grown into one of Canada's most dynamic hubs for creation, performance, training, and community engagement.

Mirna finds inspiration for her work in the strong belief that dance is transformational and impactful to the well-being of society. She often engages in the mentoring of emergent artists, helping them develop sustainable dance careers. She believes in the interaction among art disciplines and sectors to advance dance, positioning it more globally. Mirna works with her dynamic team at The Dance Centre to initiate new pathways and opportunities for BC dance across Canada and beyond.

In 2009 she was presented with a commemorative medallion by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, for her work in the furthering of cultural relations between Canada and Croatia. In 2015 longstanding Dance Centre donor Louise Cecil dedicated a studio at The Dance Centre to Mirna, renaming it the Mirna Zagar Studio in recognition of her work.

Information: 604.606.6400 thedancecentre.ca

Social Media:

Facebook @thedancecentre

Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Threads @thedancecentrebcc

The Dance Centre is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xwməθkwəy'əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl'ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

The operations of The Dance Centre are supported by the Government of Canada, Canada Council for the Arts, the Province of British Columbia, the BC Arts Council, and the City of Vancouver through the Office of Cultural Affairs.

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