



THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION
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MEDIA RELEASE

DAVID McALLISTER REARRANGES MR JOHNSTON'S COLLECTION

The annual William Johnston and his collection house-museum tour

Friday 14 March 2014 – Friday 27 June 2014

David McAllister, Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet, brings the beauty and artistry of dance to The Johnston Collection in his rearrangement of *Fairhall* house-museum in March 2014.

Applying his sensibility and energy to the Collection, ***David McAllister Rearranges Mr Johnston's Collection***, which runs from 14 March to 25 June 2014, will give visitors to *Fairhall* an opportunity to view the Collection through the eyes and aesthetic of this exceptionally talented artistic director and dancer.

It was Melbourne-born antique dealer and benefactor William Johnston's wish that his East Melbourne home, *Fairhall*, be regularly rearranged. Past rearrangements have included those by fashion designer, Akira Isogawa, architect, Pascale Gomes McNabb, fashion-house, Romance Was Born and, most recently, by Melbourne artist Rosslynd Piggott. This series of rearrangements provides an opportunity to reinterpret William Johnston's extraordinary collection in new ways and The Johnston Collection is thrilled to have David McAllister to continue this exciting series.

David McAllister rejects the notion of ballet as an elitist pursuit. As an artistic director, his vision is to make ballet more inclusive and to this end, he is committed to reinterpreting major ballets in new and unexpected contexts. Thus, McAllister was delighted to accept the invitation to interpret William Johnston's collection at *Fairhall*, seeing the collaboration as an opportunity to take ballet to a new more diverse audience.

In ***David McAllister Rearranges Mr Johnston's Collection*** house-museum tour, McAllister will transform the interior of *Fairhall* into a series of enchanting spaces inspired by classical ballets, from *Swan Lake* to *Sleeping Beauty*. McAllister's rearrangement will use *Fairhall* as a site and the pieces in the Collection, to construct representations of nine classical ballets, conveying the stories and exploring the themes of each work.

Each room in *Fairhall* will be based on a particular ballet. The Green Drawing Room on the ground floor, for example, will explore the timeless themes of love and money, based on *The Merry Widow* and its tale of manners and morals in Parisian high-society.

The White Room, will draw its themes of vengeful love, opium dreams and apparitions from *La Bayadere*, a ballet with an exuberant mix of temple dancers, angry gods and scheming villains.

Upstairs in the Study, a woodland sprite and a bewitched man set the scene, based on *La Sylphide* and in the Yellow Room, McAllister will create a dream-like interior based on the *Sleeping Beauty*

Into each of these ballet-inspired rooms, costumes - some quietly opulent, others more richly embellished - designed for the Australian Ballet by Akira Isogawa, Desmond Heeley and John F Macfarlane, will be introduced, bringing *Fairhall* and William Johnston's collection to life.

McAllister says : ***"When I first went to Fairhall I was so inspired. Each room reminded me of certain ballets that I have danced and so the concept came from the House. I think Mr Johnson might have been whispering in my ear?"***

David McAllister Rearranges Mr Johnston's Collection house-museum tour intersects the worlds of classical ballet and the fine and decorative arts and gives visitors to *Fairhall* the opportunity to view William Johnston's collection through the visual imagination of one of Australia's most acclaimed artistic directors and dancers.

For further information, images or interviews, please contact:

Felicity Cook or Fil Natarelli

Telephone 03 9416 2515

Mobile 0412 460 450

Email admin@johnstoncollection.org

About David McAllister AM

A graduate of The Australian Ballet School, Perth-born David McAllister joined The Australian Ballet in 1983. He was promoted to Senior Artist in 1986 and to Principal Artist in January 1989. His many principal roles with the company included those in *Onegin*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *La Fille mal gardée*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Don Quixote*, *The Sentimental Bloke*, *Coppélia*, *Manon*, *La Sylphide*, *Sinfonietta* and *Stepping Stones*. In 1985 he won a Bronze Medal at the Fifth International Ballet Competition in Moscow, which saw him invited to return to the USSR as a guest artist where he made numerous appearances with the Bolshoi Ballet, the Kirov Ballet, the Georgian State Ballet and other companies.

In 1989 David was guest artist with The National Ballet of Canada, dancing John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* as well as *Etudes* and *The Four Temperaments*. He has also been a guest artist with Birmingham Royal Ballet and Singapore Dance Theatre. In London 1992, he took part in the Royal Gala performance of *Coppélia* in the presence of the Princess of Wales.

David has worked as a guest teacher with The Australian Ballet School, The Dancers Company, the Royal Academy of Dancing, the Cecchetti Society, and the Australian Institute of Classical Dance. In November 2000, he completed a Graduate Diploma in Arts and Entertainment Management at Deakin University. David McAllister danced for the final time in *Giselle* on 24 March 2001 at the Sydney Opera House and became Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet in July 2001.

He was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2004 Australia Day Honours List and was elected Vice President of the Royal Academy of Dance in 2005.

About William Johnston and The Johnston Collection

The Johnston Collection is a house-museum of fine and decorative arts centred in an historic Melbourne townhouse.

William Robert Johnston was born in Lilydale, Victoria in 1911, the only child of Robert Alexander Johnston and Louise Friedrichs. His father was a boot-maker and his mother, before her marriage, worked as a maid at Stanford House, East Melbourne.

Around the age of eight, William was given a Minton cup by his grandmother, Mary Theresa Friedrichs (nee Clarke). This became the first piece of his collection and provided the inspiration for a career in antiques that took Johnston around the world.

After an early career in window merchandising in Melbourne, Johnston relocated to London to begin a fulltime business dealing in antiques. He purchased *Fairhall* in 1952 with money made from the sale of antiques brought back from England. Originally named *Cadzow*, built in 1860 and extended ten years later, Johnston renamed it *Fairhall* and remodelled it in order to create the appearance of a late 18th century Georgian-style townhouse. The interior rooms were converted into three rental flats.

By 1972, Johnston decided to return to live part-time in Melbourne, and gathered his expanding collection of Georgian, Regency and Louis XV fine and decorative arts into *Fairhall* and other rental properties he owned in the area. At the same time he opened Kent Antiques in High St, Armadale.

Johnston's house, collection and estate were bequeathed to the people of Victoria after his death in 1986 'as a place of historical and educational interest,' now administered as an independent not-for-profit museum by The WR Johnston Trust. *Fairhall* was converted into the house-museum and a garden was designed in the English manner to highlight Johnston's love of gardening. The Trust also acquires new works for the permanent collection, which now cares for over 1200 items.

For over twenty years, *Fairhall* has displayed works from Johnston's collection, and is currently rearranged for three themed tours per year. Today, The Johnston Collection incorporates a reference library, as well as a dedicated gallery and lecture space offering an active and engaging range of exhibitions, lectures, workshops and events for all.

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PO Box 79 | East Melbourne VIC 8002 | Australia
T + 61 3 9416 2515 | F +61 3 9416 2507
admin@johnstoncollection.org | www.johnstoncollection.org

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