

NEWS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

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Benedicte Bemet and Dimity Azoury, Photo Georges Antoni

The Australian Ballet promotes two dancers to its highest rank during the *Sylvia* season on the Sydney Opera House stage

Following stand-out performances in *The Nutcracker*, *Sylvia* and *Giselle* this year, Dimity Azoury and Benedicte Bemet have been promoted to principal artists of The Australian Ballet.

The two dancers were promoted on the same evening following their performances in Stanton Welch's *Sylvia*, securing a well-deserved spot in The Australian Ballet's highest rank.

Artistic Director David McAllister made the surprise announcement on stage, following the performance at Sydney Opera House last night. Dimity's parents and husband were in the audience for the special announcement while Benedicte's parents and partner were waiting in the wings.

"Since joining the company in 2008 Dimity has been a dancer that choreographers have loved to create on. Her performances are always filled with passion, as we saw in her fiery and complex Baroness in Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake* but equally in her haunting and delicate Giselle in Maina Gielgud's production. I know these qualities will continue to fuel her work as she joins the principal rank," said McAllister.

Dimity began dancing at the age of four in her home town of Queanbeyan, New South Wales. She studied at the Kim Harvey School of Dance in Canberra for 11 years before moving to The Australian Ballet School in 2005. Dimity joined The Australian Ballet in 2008 and has worked with acclaimed choreographers throughout her career, including Nicolo Fonte, Graeme Murphy, Tim Harbour, Stephen Page and Stephen Baynes. Dimity was promoted to soloist in 2015 following her debut as Baroness von Rothbart in Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake*, and to senior artist in 2017.

Mackay-born Benedicte started ballet at the age of three, eventually moving to the Gold Coast where she trained at the Ransley Ballet Centre. When she was 10 her family relocated to Hong Kong where she continued her ballet training at the Jean M. Wong School of Ballet; she was subsequently accepted into The Australian Ballet School at age 14. In 2012, Benedicte joined The Australian Ballet's corps de ballet and one year later was promoted to coryphée. In 2016 she was promoted to soloist and became a senior artist in 2018.

"Benedicte has always had a natural quality and a joyful radiance on stage, and she has danced a number of principal roles with great distinction," said McAllister. "After an injury a couple of years ago her personal growth has added even greater depth to her innate ability and has been evident in her recent performances of the Sugarplum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, Flavia in Lucas Jervies' *Spartacus* and the title role in Stanton Welch's *Sylvia*.

"Dimity and Benedicte started their ballet journeys in regional Australian towns, which showcases the breadth of talent we have in our country. They have been nurtured and supported by many people along the way to be where they are now. I am sure their stories will be aspirational for young budding dancers across the county," said McAllister.

Dimity and Benedicte are performing in the current season of *Sylvia* at Sydney Opera House and will take on lead roles in the upcoming season of *The Nutcracker*. Tickets and casting details are available through australianballet.com.au.

"Both dancers will bring unique and wonderful strengths to our fantastic line-up of principal artists and have exciting futures ahead of them," said McAllister.

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CRITICS' COMMENTS

The Australian, Deborah Jones (*Cinderella* 2018)

"Dimity Azoury was a glowing Cinderella at Saturday's matinee, luxuriating in the sensuous twists and swooning bends of Ratmansky's intricate choreography. Dimity's warm, expansive dancing filled the stage."

"The main memory, though, is of Dimity Azoury's delectable Cinderella. With room at the top coming very soon with the retirement of principal artist Leanne Stojmenov and Lana Jones, Dimity must be a hot contender."

The Herald Sun, Stephanie Glickman (*The Nutcracker* Melbourne 2019)

"Five years ago rising star Benedicte Bemet turned heads in the lead role of wide-eyed Clara. She was great then, but she's even better now, so comfortably full of wonder."

Dance Australia, Susan Bendall (*Sylvia* Melbourne 2019)

"[Benedicte] is ethereal, fluid and light as air, channeling softness and grace"

Stage Whispers, Liza Bermingham (*Sylvia* Melbourne 2019)

"Psyche [was] impeccably danced by Benedicte Bemet. It's not surprising that Eros falls in love with this beautiful mortal; Benedicte dances her with lashings of whimsy and an unabashed love for life."

Dimity Azoury's repertoire highlights

- The Sugarplum Fairy in Peter Wright's *The Nutcracker*, 2019
- Giselle in Maina Gielgud's *Giselle*, 2019
- Cinderella in Alexei Ratmanskys's *Cinderella*, 2018
- Alice in Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*®, 2017
- Aurora in David McAllister's *The Sleeping Beauty*, 2017

- Clara in Graeme Murphy's *Nutcracker – The Story of Clara*, 2017
- Wayne McGregor's *Infra*, 2017
- Swanilda in Peggy van Praagh's *Coppélia*, 2016
- Baroness von Rothbart in Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake*, 2016

Benedicte Bemet's repertoire highlights

- The Sugarplum Fairy in Peter Wright's *The Nutcracker*, 2019
- Giselle in Maina Gielgud's *Giselle*, 2019
- Sylvia in Stanton Welch's *Sylvia*, 2019
- Alice in Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*®, 2019
- Flavia in Lucas Jervies' *Spartacus*, 2018
- Valencienne in Sir Robert Helpmann's *The Merry Widow*, 2018
- Swanilda in George Ogilvie and Peggy van Praagh's *Coppélia*, 2016
- Aurora in David McAllister's *The Sleeping Beauty*, 2015

FOR MORE INFORMATION

australianballet.com.au

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