



PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET SCHOOL

PETER BOAL DIRECTOR

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## **Pacific Northwest Ballet School Welcomes New Managing Director, Lauri-Michelle Houk.**

**Former PNB Company dancer most recently ran San Elijo Dance and Music Academy.**

**SEATTLE, WA** — Pacific Northwest Ballet School has welcomed Lauri-Michelle Houk back to Seattle as the School's new Managing Director. Coming most recently from San Diego where she served as Founder, Director, and CEO of the San Elijo Dance and Music Academy, Houk is also a former soloist with Pacific Northwest Ballet (1987– 1995) and faculty member with the PNB School.

The PNB School Managing Director is responsible for the overall administrative and operational functions of the School, including enrollment, finances and fundraising, marketing, facilities maintenance, scheduling classes and overseeing instructors (in collaboration with the School Principal), engaging with PNB School families, and embracing and driving the organization's I.D.E.A initiatives. Houk replaces departing Managing Director Denise Bolstad, who is retiring after an impressive 45 years with PNB.

"It gives me great pleasure to welcome Lauri-Michelle as PNB School's new Managing Director," said Peter Boal, PNB School Director. "She leads with an extensive knowledge of ballet and a focus on each individual student and their family. I'm excited to reintroduce her to our PNB community."

"I am thrilled to be joining Pacific Northwest Ballet School as the incoming Managing Director," said Houk. "As I take this next big step, I'd like to thank my husband Ben, our five children Madeline, Katherine, Elizabeth, Michael, and Alexandra, and all of my teachers, fellow administrators, and company and school directors who have come before me and inspired me over the years."

As Houk gets reacquainted to Seattle, PNB School is also promoting two familiar faces into new positions with the School: Former Assistant Principal Marisa Albee, on the School faculty since 2001, has been promoted to Principal. And Deborah Kenner, who joined the PNB School faculty and PNBConditioning staff in 2010, takes over Albee's former position as Assistant Principal, primarily focused on the School's Eastside location, the Francia Russell Center.

Founded in 1974, **Pacific Northwest Ballet School** is recognized as one of the top ballet training institutions in the United States. The School offers a wide range of classes and programs designed for

students ages two through adult, offered through its two locations in Seattle and Bellevue, WA. Under the direction of Peter Boal, PNB School offers a complete curriculum in the Balanchine tradition. As the first ballet school in the US to have a therapist, dietician, and physical therapist available for all students, PNB School combines professional guidance with mental, physical, and emotional support to wholistically prepare ballet students for the demands of professional dance and beyond. PNB School's faculty includes former members of Pacific Northwest Ballet, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and more, who bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their teaching. For more info, visit [PNB.org/School](http://PNB.org/School).

**Lauri-Michelle Houk** began her formal training with Marjorie Tallchief and George Skibine at the Dallas Ballet Academy. She spent summers studying at the School of American Ballet in New York City and with Suzanne Farrell at the Cedar Islands Ballet Camp in upstate New York. At age 15 Lauri-Michelle was invited to be a winter student at SAB where she completed her training and graduated from the Professional Children's School. After an apprenticeship with the Dallas Ballet at age 17, Ms. Houk joined the Chicago City Ballet where she danced for four seasons. While at CCB Lauri-Michelle can be seen in the PBS documentary *Balanchine's Ballerinas* being coached in *The Four Temperaments* by the legendary Maria Tallchief.

From 1987-1995 Lauri-Michelle was given the opportunity to dance for Kent Stowell and Francina Russell at Pacific Northwest Ballet where she performed a full repertoire of roles. During her time at PNB Lauri-Michelle was coached by Russell in many Balanchine ballets, most memorably in *Rubies*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Concerto Barocco*, and *Apollo*. She also performed principal roles in works created by Stowell including *Duo Fantasy*, *Hail to the Conquering Hero*, and as the Peacock in the Stowell/Sendak *Nutcracker*. She expanded her repertoire in works created by noted choreographers such as Mark Dendy, Clark Tippet, and Lar Lubovitch.

From 1996-1998 Lauri-Michelle was a principal dancer with the Nashville Ballet under the direction of Benjamin Houk. Lauri-Michelle taught on the faculty of the Nashville Ballet School, and later on the faculty of the Fort Worth Dallas Ballet School. While in Fort Worth she was the Children's Cast Director for the Dallas cast of FWDB's *Nutcracker*, and assisted in the staging of Stowell's *Carmina Burana* for FWDB. While in Texas she also served as company teacher for Dallas Black Dance Theater. She later taught as a full-time faculty member at PNB School under the direction of Peter Boal, and she most recently returned to PNB School as a guest teacher in 2024.

In 2001 Lauri-Michelle became the CEO and Founding Director of San Elijo Dance & Music Academy with her husband Ben, which has grown to be the preeminent dance academy in San Diego County, and subsequently expanded to a second location in 4S Ranch. She also became the founder and CEO of West Coast Ballet Theatre, San Elijo Dancewear, and San Diego Performing Arts in Education.

Former students are choreographers, teachers, school directors, and contemporary and ballet company members nationally and internationally. Alumni have also gone on to film, musical theater, and to outstanding schools, universities, and companies, including PNB School Professional Division, SAB, ABT School, San Francisco Ballet, Los Angeles Ballet, American Contemporary Ballet, Ballet Idaho, Ballet West, Israel Ballet, Utah Metropolitan Ballet, Hubbard Street, Azsure-Barton, Julliard, Stanford, Columbia, University of Washington, UCLA, and others.

**Marisa Albee** joined Pacific Northwest Ballet School's faculty in 2001. She trained with her parents at the Albee School of Dance and later the School of American Ballet. Albee first joined Pacific Northwest Ballet as an apprentice and later got promoted to Soloist, dancing for eight seasons. Teaching since 1998, she previously taught at Washington Academy of Performing Arts. At PNBS, she serves as Assistant Principal. Albee focuses on engaging younger students through encouragement, fun, and instilling confidence. Albee is also the founder of Ballet in Form, an educational website for teachers and dancers.

**Deborah Kenner** joined Pacific Northwest Ballet School's faculty and PNBConditioning staff in 2010. She holds a B.F.A., an M.S. in Kinesiology, and PhD ABD in Health and Human Performance. Trained at the University of Arizona (as a Full Dance Scholarship recipient) and Colorado Ballet, she danced professionally with Colorado Ballet and David Taylor Dance Theatre for ten years. She is an NCPT certified Pilates instructor and Balanced Body Educator, and has previously taught at Academy of Colorado Ballet and Tucson Regional Ballet. Kenner has created PNBS conditioning videos and curriculum for Dance for All, which she currently teaches. In addition, Kenner serves as a teaching artist for Dance for Parkinson's.

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*Everything is subject to change. For further information, please visit: PNB.org.*

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