



NATIONAL DANCE INSTITUTE OF NEW MEXICO
TEACHING CHILDREN EXCELLENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 10, 2006

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NATIONAL DANCE INSTITUTE OF NEW MEXICO
ANNOUNCES NEW ARTISTIC STAFF POSITIONS

SANTA FE, NM – Catherine Oppenheimer, co-founder of National Dance Institute of New Mexico, announced today the appointment of Russell Baker as artistic director. Oppenheimer, who held that position for 12 years, will become founding artistic director. Both positions will report to the NDI-NM Board of Directors. Oppenheimer also announces the appointment of Donna Scheer to the newly-created position of School for the Performing Arts (SPA) director. Donna will report directly to Russell Baker and will supervise SPA administrative staff and instructors.

Catherine Oppenheimer was born and raised in New York City. She has danced professionally with New York City Ballet and Twyla Tharp Dance Company. From 1989 through 1994, she taught for Jacques d'Amboise's National Dance Institute (NDI) in public schools throughout New York City. Through her work at NDI, she co-founded a ballet program for children at The Lighthouse for the Blind in New York City, and, soon after, in 1991, she was the lead instructor for a program at the Ittleson Center for Child Research, a residential center for emotionally challenged children. In 1994, with the help and guidance of d'Amboise, she co-founded National Dance Institute of New Mexico (NDI-NM). Oppenheimer is NDI-NM's founding artistic director, and maintains her position as in-school and School for the Performing Arts instructor.

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Russell Baker joined NDI-NM in 2003 after a 10-year professional career with Kansas City Ballet. Born in California, Baker began dancing in college and has taught and choreographed dances for a wide range of dancers and venues in the Midwest. In 1999, he founded Kansas City Contemporary Dance Ensemble, a performance group who presented free outdoor concerts throughout Kansas City, and in 2002, Kansas City Ballet premiered his original ballet *The Cloud Chamber*. Upon retirement from the professional company, Baker joined the faculty at Kansas City Ballet's R.O.A.D. program (Reach Out and Dance), and in 2001 Russell attended NDI-NM's Teaching Excellence® Teacher Training program. Baker served as NDI-NM's north artistic director and Santa Fe artistic director before assuming the role of artistic director for the organization. Baker maintains his position as in-school and School for the Performing Arts instructor. Baker holds a B.A. in English from Vassar College, and an M.F.A. in Ballet Teaching and Choreography from the University of Utah.

Donna Scheer is NDI-NM's new director of the School for the Performing Arts. Originally from San Francisco, California, Scheer has spent the last 11 years performing, teaching and directing in New York and throughout the country. An actress, singer and dancer, her principal roles include Anita (West Side Story); Velma (Chicago); Patsy (Always, Patsy Cline) and Katherine (The Taming of the Shrew) as well as many others. She appeared in the New York premiere of Dear Esther (Esther) and in the regional premiere of Angels in America: Perestroika (Harper). Her choreography in everything from dinner theatre musical revues to modern dance pieces to musical theatre has been seen in regional and stock theatres in California, across the midwest, Georgia, Vermont and New York. She has directed or choreographed, among others, Damn Yankees, And the World Goes 'Round, Carousel, and A Little Night Music. As a teacher of all forms of dance from ballet and modern to tap and musical theatre, as well as American musical theatre history and acting courses, she has taught master classes at regional American College Dance Festival Conferences and has served as a master teacher and adjudicator at The Tilles Dance Conference for High School Dancers in Long Island, New York. She has been on theatre and dance faculties at several universities in New York and California and holds bachelor's and master's degrees in theatre and dance.

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Founded in 1994, National Dance Institute of New Mexico (NDI-NM) reaches 6,100 underserved children from kindergarten through high school annually throughout the state. NDI-NM's highly-trained instructors bring award-winning arts and physical education programs to these students and to 784 public school teachers in urban, rural and Native American communities. NDI-NM is located at 1140 Alto Street in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Further information is available at www.ndi-nm.org or by calling 505-983-7646.
INTERVIEWS AND FURTHER INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.