



# LARGER THAN LIFE

There are few leaders who possess the kind of transformative power that Alun Jones did for Louisville Ballet. Few creative minds are able to embrace an organization – see the talent, the expectations, and potential – and catapult it into a world-renowned success, breaking new ground while honoring tradition. Many artists have grand visions, but few are able to breathe life and motion into those visions, sustaining them for decades, continually transcending the ordinary.

But Alun Jones was far from ordinary.

Jones' legacy as Artistic Director of Louisville Ballet – a position he held from 1978 to 2002 – is unmatched in its impact, and he created the standards that uphold the Company today. While Louisville Ballet was founded in 1952 as a civic ballet, it didn't become a professional company until 1976. And when Jones assumed leadership, he faithfully took the seed of Louisville Ballet and grew it into the multifaceted force of art, movement, and beauty we know today.

Jones came to Louisville with his wife – the esteemed Helen Starr, who was also a Company Artist, stager, and teacher – in 1975 to help establish The Louisville Ballet School. His desire to nourish the potential of young artists and embolden them into powerful dancers, teachers, and changemakers mirrors his 24-year journey as Artistic Director with Louisville Ballet. It is this desire and drive that allowed him to continually push the Company forward – striving for bolder collaborations, a more diverse repertoire, and more dedicated, enthusiastic investment from the Louisville community. “I'm after first-rate works to expand our repertoire. Ballets that will raise our standard of dancing and, at the same time, provide us with a viable mix of classic, contemporary and new works,” Jones said after his directorial appointment. “My ideal is to create a completely cosmopolitan repertoire for us.”

And of course, he succeeded in creating the repertoire he envisioned, presenting 78 world premieres and 65 Louisville premieres, 11 of which were full-length ballets. Naturally, his passion and dedication garnered extraordinary local support. In his first two seasons with the Company, season subscriptions increased from 900 to an astounding 9,000 – the highest per capita subscriptions for any dance company in the United States at that time. But he also reached beyond the borders of our nation, bringing in ballet icon Mikhail Baryshnikov to perform with the Company twice. Jones' ballets have been performed across the States but also in Bermuda, England, Portugal, Spain, India, South Africa, Hong Kong, and Japan.

“Larger than life” is how current Ballet *Mistress* and former Company Artist Helen Daigle described Jones in a 2019 interview with *The Courier-Journal* – and that magnitude is evident in his comprehensive relationship with the Company. His role went far beyond Artistic Director; he was an inventive choreographer, teacher, scenic designer, and costume designer, using his creative resources not to fill gaps, but to augment and enrich Louisville Ballet programming and ensure its success. Current Artistic Director Robert Curran said that Jones' “vast creativity is embedded forever in the history of Louisville Ballet.” Looking back, it's easy to see the structures of that vast creativity that so strongly grounded the Company, but we also know that creativity reaches forward into the future. The dancers he instructed now lead the Company, carrying on his influence to future generations of artists.

“He was a friend, mentor and director,” recalled Delilah Smyth, a former Company Artist and Director of Education with Louisville Ballet, in 2019. “He was an instigator, provoker and all-around merry-maker. He always had a twinkle in his eye and a chuckle under his breath.”

The spirit of Alun Jones lives on with each moment of beauty and innovation at Louisville Ballet, and with each dancer, student, teacher, artist, and friend who had the honor of knowing him, laughing with him, and dancing through life with him.

**1975**

Alun Jones and Helen Starr establish  
The Louisville Ballet School

**1976**

Louisville Ballet becomes a professional company  
under Richard & Christina Munro

**1978**

Alun becomes Artistic Director

**1982**

Premiere of Alun's Violin Concerto

**1987**

Premiere of Alun's Liebestraume, filmed by KET

**1988**

Premiere of Alun's A Midsummer Night's Dream

**1998**

Alun is given the prestigious Milner Award

**2002**

Alun retires as Artistic Director, receives the  
Louisville Forum's Fleur-de-Lis Award

**2017**

Alun reprises The Sleeping Beauty for the 65th  
Anniversary

**2019**

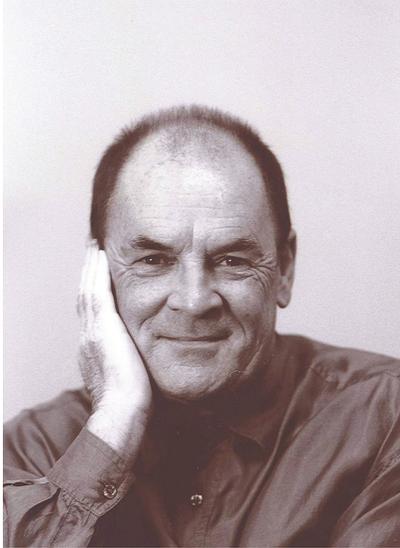
Alun reprises his last ballet with Louisville Ballet,  
Cinderella

“Watching Alun work in the studio was a masterclass in dance-theatre. His knowledge of stagecraft was supreme, he was unrelenting in his expectations, his sense of humor brought an edge to the room, and thankfully his vast creativity is embedded forever in the history of Louisville Ballet.”

Robert Curran

“The truth is that my experience with Alun Jones is so much more than a few stories. He was a friend, mentor and director. He was an instigator, provoker and all-around merrymaker. He always had a twinkle in his eye and a chuckle under his breath.”

Delilah Smyth



## ALUN JONES

1937–2019

Alun Jones was born and educated in Wales, receiving awards and diplomas from the London College of Music and a degree in Design from the University of Wales, Newport. He began his ballet studies with Myra Silcox in Newport and then at the Rambert School of Ballet in London with Dame Marie Rambert, Angela Ellis, and Eileen Ward. He danced with the Welsh National Opera, London's Festival Ballet, and Zurich Opera Ballet. In Zurich, under the direction of Nicolas Beriozoff, he partnered Melissa Hayden and Svetlana Beriosova in *Sleeping Beauty* and danced solo roles in *Swan Lake* and *Ondine*. He became a founding member of the New London Ballet and, as Technical Director and Stage Manager, toured Europe, Asia, and the United States with Dame Margot Fonteyn.

He joined Louisville Ballet in 1975 with his wife, the celebrated dancer and teacher Helen Starr, to help establish The Louisville Ballet School. He became Artistic Director of Louisville Ballet in 1978, catapulting the Company into local and global success. Under his leadership, Louisville Ballet presented 78 world premieres and 65 Louisville premieres, 11 of which were full-length ballets. Included in these premiers were ten ballets by George Balanchine, nine by Antony Tudor, and works by such notable choreographers as Sir Frederick

Ashton, Andree Howard, John Cranko, Kurt Jooss, Paul Taylor, Choo San Goh and many others. His own works included classics such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella*, *Peter Pan*, *The Merry Widow*, and *Lucy*, many of which have been performed in twenty four states, as well as in Bermuda, England, Portugal, Spain, India, South Africa, Hong Kong, and Japan.

In his first years leading the Company, he arranged for the renowned Mikhail Baryshnikov to perform with the Company twice, and increased season subscriptions exponentially. In addition to his work and accomplishments in Louisville, he remained a prominent figure in the arts regionally, evaluating companies for the N.E.A., Ohio Arts Council, Southern Arts Federation, and the Tennessee Arts Commission. He also served on the jury for the European Stage Dance Union contest in Croatia and was a member of the International Dance Council in Greece. In 1998, he received the Milner Award, Kentucky's highest award in the Arts, and in 2002 received the Louisville Forum's Fleur-de-Lis Award.