

## Veronica Tennant, C.C. Website Bio

Veronica Tennant, Prima Ballerina with The National Ballet of Canada for 25 years, won hearts and accolades on the national and international ballet stage. Since 1989, she has been recognized as a gifted filmmaker, producer/director, speaker/narrator and writer, with her works garnering several awards, including the International Emmy Award. In 2004, Veronica Tennant was awarded the prestigious Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement, and was announced by the Canada Council, as the recipient of the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts. As the first dancer to be appointed to the Order of Canada as Officer in 1975, Veronica Tennant was promoted in 2003, for the breadth of her contribution to the arts in Canada, to the rank of Companion, which is the country's highest honour.

During Veronica Tennant's illustrious career, she won a devoted following as a dancer of extraordinary versatility and dramatic power. Entering the company at 18, as it's youngest Principal Dancer she was cast by Celia Franca as Juliet in John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet*. She earned accolades in every major classical role as well as having several ballets choreographed for her, dancing on stages across North America, Europe and Japan, with the greatest male dancers of our time, including Erik Bruhn, Rudolf Nureyev, Anthony Dowell and Mikhail Baryshnikov. She gave her farewell performance in 1989: *A Passion for Dance: Celebrating the Tennant Magic*.

Overlapping from the National Ballet in 1989, Tennant was the host, creative consultant/writer of *Sunday Arts Entertainment* for three seasons on CBC Television. Her first venture as television producer was with the critically lauded: *Salute to Dancers for Life* telecast on CBC, and *Danser Pour La Vie* for Radio-Canada 1995, in which she also appeared as bilingual host. She produced and authored *Margie Gillis; Wild Hearts in Strange Times*, with celebrated guests including, Jessye Norman. The show won the 1996 Chryslers Peoples Choice Award and its subject, Margie Gillis, received a Gemini Award for Best Performance. Tennant's next special, *Karen Kain Dancing In The Moment*, aired on CBC Television, winning the prestigious 1999 International Emmy Award for Performing Arts. She accepted the Emmy in New York, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary to the night – of her farewell performance with the National Ballet. Earlier in her dance career, she had danced the title roles of *Cinderella*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*, (with Rudolf Nureyev), which also won Emmy Awards for the CBC.

The subject of several performance documentaries, the *Life & Times of Veronica Tennant – Renaissance Woman* was telecast in 2001, the year she was named to Canada's Walk of Fame and was one of the inaugural recipients of the Paul D. Fleck Fellowship from The Banff Centre for the Arts. She was Executive Producer/Producer of the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Gala 2000; and her company, Veronica Tennant Productions co-produced with Rhombus Media, James Kudelka's *The Four Seasons* with a Gemini Award going to Rex Harrington for Best Performance. For Bravo!FACT Tennant has choreographed, directed and produced a number of award-winning short films including, sequences from *Shadow Pleasures*, which was first shown on CBC's Opening Night in an hour-long version. Written and narrated by author, Michael Ondaatje, *Shadow Pleasures* received an unprecedented sweep at the 2005 Yorkton Film Festival with 7 Golden Sheaf Awards, including Best of the Festival, Best Performing Arts, and Best Director Award for Tennant. *The Cinnamon Peeler*, (a short from *Shadow Pleasures* choreographed by Tennant), enjoyed a theatrical release in Canada before Robert Altman's *The Company*, and was included on the Jury Select list at the 2005 Dance on Camera Festival at Lincoln Center and shown on the Bravo!FACT Big Screen Project in New York in 2011. In 2006, *Celia Franca: Tour de Force*, made for CTV/Bravo! with Sound Venture Productions, was named the "best dance-film" by the Toronto Star. Broadcasts in 2008/9 included, *Finding Body & Soul*, CBC which won a Silver World Medal at the New York Television/Film Festival. and *Vida y Danza, Cuba!*, CTV/Bravo! – screened at the Luminato Festival, garnering Tennant Gemini Nominations for Best Director and Best Performing Arts Program and invited to screen at the Havana Film Festival as well as showing on Cuban National Television.

On the concert stage, Veronica Tennant has performed extensively as narrator and creator with Canada's orchestras including; The Toronto Symphony, The National Arts Centre Orchestra, The Vancouver Symphony and she's been a frequent guest at Festival of the Sound, Opera Atelier and Toronto Consort. Her theatrical collaborations include; performing in The Shaw Festival's 1992 season in the leading role of Ivy Smith/Miss Turnstiles in *On the Town*, and a 22 city national tour in the title role of *The Piano Man's Daughter and Others*, with Timothy Findley, directed by Paul Thompson. As associate director and choreographer; she has worked at the Tarragon Theatre, Canadian Stage, and the Stratford Festival. In 2007 Veronica Tennant was movement

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director/choreographer, for the successful theatrical adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, a collaboration between the Royal Shakespearean Company and the National Arts Centre, performed in Stratford-Upon-Avon in the UK and at the NAC in Ottawa, Canada.

Veronica Tennant has published two children's books with McClelland and Stewart, *On Stage, Please* and *The Nutcracker*, as well as writing articles for *Saturday Night Magazine*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star* and *Dance International*. She was the bilingual co-host of the 2009 NAC 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the 1999 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards, and for the Canada Day Celebrations from Parliament Hill in 1995 and 2002. Dr. Tennant has been awarded honorary doctorates from: Brock University, York University, Simon Fraser and the University of Toronto, and most recently Doctor of Letters from McGill. Twice invited by the University of California, Irvine in both the Departments of Dance and Film/Media, she was the Chancellor's Distinguished Fellow for the 2005/06 season. She has been honoured with the Toronto Arts Award, the Arts and Letters Award from The Canadian Club of New York City, and the Danny Kaye Award from UNICEF. A tireless advocate for the Arts, Veronica Tennant has served on the boards of a large number of arts organizations including the Ontario Arts Council, the first dancer elected to The National Ballet Board, the Glenn Gould Foundation, the Dancer Transition Resource Centre, the inaugural board of The Governor General's Performing Arts Awards, two terms on the Board of Trustees of the National Arts Centre, and currently, REEL Canada.

Chosen by The Banff Centre as their 2004 Outstanding Alumnae Nominee in Alberta's Provincial Awards for Excellence, Veronica Tennant was named Canada's cultural ambassador for the 2005 Hans Christian Andersen celebrations in Denmark. She was Chair of The Arts and Culture Committee of the Toronto 2008 Olympic Bid, and has served as Adjunct Professor, Fine Arts at York University. She has produced & directed innumerable charity benefits, including *Dreams Come True* for the launching of The Artists' Health Centre at the Toronto Western Hospital 2002, directing *Vive La Danse* honoring the Dancer Transition Resource Centre in 2007 and 2011, and *An Artists' Affair* to benefit Tafelmusik and The Artists' Health Centre in 2010/2011/12. In summer 2009, Tennant was guest-artist alumna of The Banff Centre's midsummer weekend, with screenings of *Shadow Pleasures*, *¿Vida y Danza*, *Cuba*, and in 2010 she was invited to Havana by Cuban National Television to record a series of interviews to accompany the broadcast of shows she has both danced in, and produced and directed. Veronica Tennant was the opening speaker in Toronto for the Unique Lives series in February, 2010. She was named Cultural Ambassador for the City of Hamilton in 2011, and bestowed with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal by His Excellency the Governor General, David Johnston in 2012.