

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

English National Ballet Announces Winners of Emerging Dancer 2017

English National Ballet is pleased to announce the joint winners of the 2017 **Emerging Dancer Award** are Rina Kanehara and Aitor Arrieta.

Having performed together in the *Esmeralda* pas de deux, Kanehara also danced Raimondo Rebeck's *Blind Dreams* set to music by Philip Glass while Arrieta performed *Self*, a new piece by Aleix Mañe. They were announced live on stage at Sadler's Wells last night (Thursday 25 May 2017) by Artistic Director of English National Ballet Tamara Rojo, and live streamed to audiences across the world, achieving over 47,000 views.

Of winning the 2017 Emerging Dancer Award, Rina Kanehara said: *"I'm so pleased to win this award. Performing with Aitor has been amazing, we are great friends and have had lots of fun working on this together. I'm thrilled to be sharing this award with him.*

Aitor Arrieta added: *"I am so honoured to have won this award. This was the first time I have danced Esmeralda and I really enjoyed performing it with my friend Rina to the audience at Sadler's Wells and viewers online.*

The evening also saw **Sarah Kundi** named as the recipient of the **Corps de Ballet Award**, acknowledging her exceptional work on and off-stage over the last year, while **Georgia Bould** was awarded the **People's Choice Award**, as voted for by members of the public.

Now in its eighth year, Emerging Dancer allows English National Ballet to recognise the excellence of its artists. Tamara Rojo CBE, Artistic Director of English National Ballet was joined on the judging panel by Laura Connor, Dmitri Gruzdyev, Marguerite Porter MBE, Alfreda Thorogood, and Graham Watts OBE.

Tamara Rojo CBE, Artistic Director of English National Ballet said: *"Emerging Dancer is one of my favourite evenings in the season. I am so pleased that we have this opportunity to celebrate the young dancers of English National Ballet. Having this platform allows us to continue our commitment to nurture the stars of the future, and develop them artistically.*

"I am incredibly proud and absolutely thrilled with all the performances, the standard this year was so high that making a decision was very difficult. Rina and Aitor are two very charismatic and extremely gifted dancers who both have great careers ahead of them."

The other finalists this year were Isabelle Brouwers, Madison Keesler, Guilherme Menezes and Emilio Pavan.

Previous winners of the Emerging Dancer Award include **Yonah Acosta** (2012), who is now a Principal of English National Ballet, **Shiori Kase** (2011), and **Junor Souza** (2014), who have since been promoted to First Soloist, **Alison Mcwhinney** (2014) who went on to be promoted to Soloist, **Jinhao Zhang** (2015) who was promoted to First Artist, and last year's winner **Cesar Corrales** who has since been promoted to First Soloist. Cesar has gone on to perform several principal roles including Ali in *Le Corsaire* for which he was presented the award for Outstanding Male Performance at the 2017 Critics Circle National Dance Awards.

The Emerging Dancer competition is generously supported by Sue and Graeme Sloan.

The Corps de Ballet award is generously supported by Roger Handley.

Ends

For further information, interview requests and images please contact Press Officer Alice Gibson on alice.gibson@ballet.org.uk or 020 7590 2932

For further information about English National Ballet and to book tickets visit www.ballet.org.uk. Please note performance details are subject to change.