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## **Ballet company to set up shop in Indianapolis**

Details of Indianapolis City Ballet to be announced next week; Sept. 12 gala set

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Almost four years after the collapse of Ballet Internationale, a new organization is seeking to reintroduce professional ballet in Indianapolis.

Indianapolis City Ballet is backed by major local arts supporters, headed by Robert Hesse and Jane Fortune.

Many of the details concerning the new venture are not being released before the company's news conference at 3 p.m. Wednesday at the Omni Severin Hotel, 40 W. Jackson Place, said spokeswoman Tess Green.

But The Indianapolis Star has learned that Australian-born dancer and director John Meehan is serving as the ballet's artistic chairman.

Meehan joined the Australian Ballet in 1970, and was named soloist in 1972 and principal two years later. He also danced for three seasons with American Ballet Theatre, whose junior company he served as artistic director from 1997 to 2006.

Meehan left the Hong Kong Ballet, where he had been artistic director since 2006, last summer.

While he is in Indianapolis, Meehan's first job is to assemble a one-night-only reunion of international ballet stars to mark the debut of Indianapolis City Ballet. The gala evening will be Sept. 12 at the Murat Theatre.

After that, "a chamber-sized company" of 12 dancers will be formed and the ballet's inaugural season will be announced, Green said.

She said former members of Ballet Internationale are not expected to be among the City Ballet dancers and that company members will not teach.

"Professional dancers in a company make a living by dancing primarily," Green said in an e-mail. "This is what distinguishes a professional company from those who teach and also dance for a performance."

News about the new ballet company was met with open arms by David Hochoy, longtime artistic director of Dance Kaleidoscope.

"When Ballet Internationale went under, it was a huge tragedy," he said. "I'm happy to see that someone is trying to form a ballet company here. I hope it succeeds on many different levels. I think it's admirable something is being attempted."

Hesse, Indianapolis City Ballet's volunteer chairman, has been executive director of the Joffrey Ballet and vice president for UNICEF in the U.S.

Fortune, who serves as the company's vice chair, is on the board of governors of the Indianapolis Museum of Art and is an advisory board member of the Herron School of Art and Design.