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## John Linden | Executive Director

John Linden began his dance training in 1976 in O'okiep, Namaqualand, under Alfred Hinkel at the Namakwalandse Dans Geselskap. His early career included a stint with the Dial Dance Company in Windhoek, Namibia, followed by freelance performances across Cape Town, Johannesburg, and the Wild Coast. He later returned to Jazzart Dance Theatre, where he became a founding member in 1986.

At Jazzart, Linden firmly established himself as a performer, teacher, and choreographer. In 1996, he took on the role of director for Jazzart's *Dance Joint* program, which offered open classes to the public, regardless of experience level. Between the late 1990s and 2010, Linden served as a resident choreographer and teacher at Jazzart, earning five FNB Vita Choreographic Awards during this time. He contributed significantly to Jazzart's acclaimed productions, including:

- *Bolero*
- *Water From an Ancient Well*
- *Junction*
- *Gatherings*
- *I Am Cinnamon*
- *Rain in a Dead Man's Footprints*
- *Cargo*

One of Linden's most iconic works, *Water from an Ancient Well* (2000), was set to music by Abdullah Ibrahim and premiered at the FNB Vita Dance Indaba. Frequently remounted by other practitioners, this piece resonates with over three generations of dancers, evoking nostalgia and admiration.

Throughout his 36-year career, Linden has collaborated with leading South African dance and theatre artists, including Sibonakaliso Ndaba, Dawn Langdown, Mark Fleischman, Alfred Hinkel, and Lara Foot.

In 2010, after establishing Jazzart Dance Theatre as South Africa's flagship contemporary dance company, Linden returned to O'okiep with his partner Alfred Hinkel. Together, they founded Garage Dance Ensemble, a professional organization dedicated to developing and employing the artistic, technical, and administrative talents of individuals from the region.

In 2019, Linden received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Western Cape Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture. In 2020, he directed the award-winning documentary *Die Dans van My Heenkoms: The Bolero Stories*.

Until 2025, Linden served as a dance educator, arts practitioner, and Artistic Director of the Garage Dance Ensemble. In that year, he formally appointed Byron Klassen as his successor in the role of Artistic Director and transitioned into the position of Executive Director, where he now oversees the organisation's operations and strategic direction. He has since stepped away from artistic creation to focus entirely on organisational leadership, development, and sustainability.

Despite no longer engaging in creative production, Linden continues to play a vital role in the realisation of the company's dance theatre works. In collaboration with the ensemble, he supports the development and presentation of new productions, helping to enrich and expand the cultural landscape of Namaqualand and to extend the company's impact beyond regional borders.