Mr. Chancellor, it gives me special pleasure to present Grant Strate, Professor Emeritus, School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University. He is one of the most important figures in the evolution of dance in this country. Indeed, none other than Veronica Tennant has said of him: “Grant Strate has been instrumental in putting Canadian dance on the map. More than that — he defined, detailed, and expanded that map.”

Initially, Professor Strate studied law, earning his LL.B. at the University of Alberta. In 1951, he was invited to become a charter member of the National Ballet of Canada where he remained for 20 years as soloist and resident choreographer. In a career that has spanned almost five decades, Grant Strate has distinguished himself as a dancer, choreographer, administrator, and pioneering educator who has mentored many of Canada’s finest young dancers.

He has choreographed more than 50 works, creating ballets for such renowned companies as the Royal Swedish Ballet, the Studio Ballet of Antwerp, and the Laban Centre in London. His talent and vision encompass teaching and administration. He was the founding Chair of the Dance Department at York University and the founding Chair and board member of Dance in Canada Association. During the years 1979 to 1991 he was Director of four National Choreographic Seminars, milestones of collaboration by Canadian choreographers, dancers, composers, and musicians.

In 1980, to our great good fortune, Grant Strate became Director of what was then called the Centre for the Arts, now the School for the Contemporary Arts. His vision and leadership greatly enriched not only the dance community but also the broad spectrum of the fine and performing arts. Here, at SFU, he was the catalyst that sparked the creation of a unique, interdisciplinary program in dance, music, film, theatre, and the visual arts. And though he retired in 1994, he continues to teach, create, and inspire.

He has been widely recognized for his lasting contributions to dance and culture. An Officer of the Order of Canada, he received the Jean A. Chalmers Award for Creativity in Dance in 1993 and the Governor General’s Performing Arts Award in 1996.

Mr. Chancellor, Grant Strate has used his talent as a dancer and choreographer to create beauty, his skill as an administrator to promote dance education, and his talent as a teacher to guide hundreds of students. In return he has earned the admiration, respect, and gratitude of all those who value culture. I am proud to present Grant Strate for the degree Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.