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HOUSTON BALLET CELEBRATES RESILIENCY WITH VIRTUAL ONSTAGE DINNER AND JUBILEE OF DANCE

HOUSTON, TEXAS [Dec. 8, 2020] — Houston Ballet celebrated its generous supporters and the resiliency and talent of its world-class company with two virtual events on Friday, December 4. The evening began with the virtual Onstage Dinner, followed by a gifted invitation for all Houston Ballet donors and subscribers to partake in the annual Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance.

“This gala evening is always special for Houston Ballet as it showcases the incredible versatility and dancers of our entire company,” says Stanton Welch, Houston Ballet Artistic Director.

The Onstage Dinner, historically taking place post-performance, pivoted to a virtual event after the recent determination to cancel the rest of Houston Ballet’s in-theater performances for the 2020-2021 season. Raising more than \$75,000 in support of Houston Ballet’s crisis relief efforts, the dinner honored Gary and Marian Beauchamp for their generous giving that spans the breath of the entire organization.

“We are pleased to honor dear friends of Houston Ballet, Gary and Marian Beauchamp,” says Jim Nelson, Houston Ballet Executive Director. “Gary and Marian’s support of Houston Ballet spans far and wide. Gary has served on the Board of Trustees for nearly 20 seasons, and together their dedication to the company exceeds three decades.”

The nearly 90 Onstage Dinner supporters enjoyed 30 minutes of exclusive Onstage Dinner programming, a three-course dinner and wine offerings delivered by Jackson and Company and holiday gift boxes. The charming Ian Casady, former Houston Ballet Principal and now Ballet Master, hosted the event via Zoom from his home with an adorable guest appearance from his daughter. Additional messages came from Nelson, former Houston Ballet Principal Lauren Anderson and Board President Leigh Smith, with a holiday pre-show from Soloist Harper Watters and First Soloist Oliver Halkowich and holiday traditions with Soloist Jacquelyn Long and Demi Soloist Natalie Varnum. The gift box was filled with holiday dinnerware including Houston Ballet etched wine glasses and a gold nutcracker wine stopper for top underwriters.

With a built-in intermission for guests to re-fresh their beverages or enjoy dessert, the evening continued onto the Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance. Programming was filled with moving stories about the Company’s experience during the pandemic and the feeling when they returned to the studios a few months ago, in addition to an abundance of dance. Viewers caught sections of some of Welch’s greatest works from *Marie* to *Sylvia* as well as his new digital projections *Dancing with Myself* and *Restoration*.

“This year’s program shows the full depth of our company’s talent as we perform excerpts of cherished ballets, all of which were specifically made on our company,” says Welch. “We are also proud to present a short film about how Houston Ballet continues to turn challenges presented by pandemic into creative inspiration, told through the perspective of our dedicated company members.”

This display of world-class dance would not be possible without the program’s namesake. The annual one-night-only Jubilee of Dance is generously endowed by Margaret Alkek Williams.

“On behalf of the dancers, myself and all of us at Houston Ballet, we want to say a big thank you,” says Welch. “It is the generosity of people like Margaret Alkek Williams that keeps the arts alive in Houston. We are delighted to count her as a cherished friend and are honored to have her tremendous support, especially at this critical time. We thank her for her generous leadership and passion for Houston Ballet.”

Houston Ballet remains grateful for its community’s support. The revenue losses attributed to the impact of the pandemic present the greatest financial challenge Houston Ballet has ever faced. Currently, contributions to the nonprofit are being matched dollar for dollar by The Jerry C. Dearing Family Foundation. Supporters can contribute to the nonprofit reaching its goal by donating to the campaign at give.houstonballet.org/donate.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLETT

With more than 50 years of rich history, Houston Ballet has evolved into a 61-dancer Company with a budget of \$33.9 million and an endowment of \$79.2 million (as of June 2019), making it the country’s fifth largest ballet company. Its Center for Dance is a \$46.6 million state-of-the-art performance space that opened in April 2011 and remains the largest professional dance facility in America. Houston Ballet’s reach is global, touring in renowned theaters in Dubai, London, Paris, Moscow, Spain, Montréal, Ottawa, Melbourne, New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and more.

Houston Ballet attracts prestigious leaders in dance. Australian choreographer Stanton Welch AM has served as Artistic Director of Houston Ballet since 2003, raising the level of the Company’s classical technique and commissioning works from dance legends such as Julia Adam, George Balanchine, Aszure Barton, Christopher Bruce, Alexander Ekman, William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Edwaard Liang, Trey McIntyre and Justin Peck. Executive Director James Nelson serves as the administrative leader of the organization, a position he assumed in February 2012 after serving as the Company’s General Manager for more than a decade.

Beyond its stage presence, Houston Ballet maintains a strong foothold in continuing to foster a love for dance in future generations. Its Education and Community Engagement program reaches more than 70,000 individuals in the Houston area annually. Houston Ballet Academy trains more than 1,000 students every year, producing more than 50 percent of the elite athletes that comprise Houston Ballet’s current Company.

For more information on Houston Ballet, visit houstonballet.org.

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