

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Jacalyn Lawton
Public Relations Manager
JLawton@houstonballet.org
Press@houstonballet.org



HOUSTON BALLET PRINCIPAL IAN CASADY RETIRES AFTER 22 YEARS AND BECOMES BALLET MASTER

HOUSTON, TEXAS [Oct. 1, 2020] — Houston Ballet announces Principal Dancer Ian Casady's retirement and his new position as Ballet Master for its professional company. Casady concludes a rich 22-year career as a performer and assumes his new role in Houston Ballet's reimagined 2020-2021 season, generously supported by Houston Methodist Hospital.

"I am looking forward to passing on the knowledge that I have accumulated over the years to my fellow dancers and the next generation," says Casady. "I want to help protect and nurture the art form as best I can. And I look forward to enjoying it all from the audience as well."

Casady took his final bows on the Wortham Theater Center stage during Ben Stevenson's *The Sleeping Beauty* on March 8, 2020, mere weeks before an official announcement would have been made about his planned retirement. Houston Ballet intended for his final performance to be the iconic leading male role from *Romeo & Juliet*, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced an early close of the 2019-2020 season.

"It's disappointing, but a lot of people retiring during the pandemic are in the same boat," says Casady. "This is life right now, and, more than anything, I am thankful for my health and the health of my family and friends, and I feel for those who are being more impacted than myself. Some of my closest people have reminded me, too, that one 'final' show is not in itself some symbol for an entire career. The career was the career. Every day in the studio and every show on stage, and all the years of training that led up to it. Any one of our shows could be the last, and that is why it is important to give it all, every chance you get. I am just grateful to have had so many years, and so many shows, and to have worked with so many wonderful people."

Casady led an inspiring career as a professional dancer. He began ballet training at 9 years old at Dance Theater Seven in his hometown, Fairfax, California. He studied at Houston Ballet Academy before joining the professional Company in 1998 as a member of the Corps de Ballet. Casady rose through the ranks, becoming a Soloist in 2002 and a Principal in 2007. In his 22-year career, he danced many timeless roles and had original roles created on him by esteemed choreographers Christopher Bruce, Ben Stevenson OBE and Stanton Welch AM.

"Thank you so much for supporting me and going along with me on this decades long journey," says Casady to his fans. "I can only hope that you have received from it a fraction of the joy that I have."

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

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.

###