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HoustonBallet
50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

HOUSTON BALLET ANNOUNCES ITS GOLDEN 2019-2020 SEASON ROSTER AND NINE NEW DANCERS

HOUSTON, TEXAS [August 7, 2019] – Houston Ballet proudly announces its 61-dancer Company for the 2019-2020 season. The golden anniversary roster features 52 returning dancers and nine new additions: Demi Soloist Mayo Arii, Corps de Ballet dancers Gretel Batista, Juntaro Coste and Elivelton Tomazi, and Apprentices Henrique Barbosa, Jaci Doty, Danielle Esposito, Rafaela Henrique and Song Teng.

Mayo Arii joins Houston Ballet as a Demi Soloist from Hamburg Ballet. Born in Kochi, Japan, Arii began her classical training in Hiroshima, Japan at 6 years old. She started her professional career at Hamburg Ballet as an Apprentice in 2007, joined the Corps de Ballet in 2008 and was promoted to Soloist in 2015. She performed the roles of Moyna in *Giselle*, Louise in *The Nutcracker*, Kitri in *Don Quixote*, Step Sister in *Cinderella*, Manon in *Lady of the Camellias*, Lady in Mauve in *Dances at a Gathering* and Lydia Iwanowna in *Anna Karenina*. Arii also participated in galas for UNICEF, CENTEX and Academy One's Tuloy Foundation, benefiting local ballet students.

Gretel Batista joins Houston Ballet's Corps de Ballet from Dance Alive National Ballet. Born in La Habana, Cuba, she began classical training at the National Ballet School of Cuba at 3 years old. Batista was a Soloist at Dance Alive National in 2013, and then she danced as an Artist at Orlando Ballet in 2015. She returned to Dance Alive National Ballet and was promoted to a Principal Dancer in 2016. She performed the roles of Queen Tatianna in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Nikiya in *Giselle*, Gamzatti in *La Bayadère*, Aurora in Marius Petipa's *Sleeping Beauty* and Swanilda in *Coppélia*. She also appeared as an International Guest Artist at the ADC International Ballet Competition Gala and International Ballet Festival of Miami. Her awards include YAGP New York Finals (2012) and Gold Medal at the American Dance Competition (2013).

Juntaro Coste joins Houston Ballet's Corps de Ballet from the Finnish National Ballet. Born in Stuttgart, Germany, he began classical training at the Conservatoire National de Region of Angers at 8 years old. Coste started his career as an Apprentice with Stuttgart Ballet in 2010, joined the Finnish National Ballet's Corps de Ballet in 2011 and then became a member of the junior ballet at Zurich Ballet in 2013. He returned to the Finnish National Ballet in 2014 as a member of the Corps de Ballet. He performed the roles of Gustave in *Lady of the Camellia* and Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Elivelton Tomazi joins Houston Ballet's Corps de Ballet from The Joffrey Ballet. Born in Santa Catarina, Brazil, Tomazi began classical training at the Bolshoi Theatre School in Brazil at 9 years old. He danced with The Paulista Company of Dance in São Paulo, Brazil in 2009, before apprenticing for The Joffrey Ballet in 2012. In 2013, Tomazi joined The Joffrey Ballet as a Company Artist. He has performed roles such as of Four Performers in Stanton Welch's *La Bayadère*, Son in George Balanchine's *Prodigal Son*, Snow Prince and Cavalier in Robert Joffrey's *The Nutcracker*, Mercutio in Krzysztof Pastor's *Romeo & Juliet*, Jester in Frederick Ashton's *Cinderella* and Peasant Pas in Lola de Ávila's *Giselle*.

Henrique Barbosa joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from Houston Ballet Academy. Born in Maracanaú CE, Brazil, Barbosa began classical training at the Centro de Ballet Clássico Mônica Luiza at 10 years old. He danced with Houston Ballet II, Houston Ballet's second Company, from 2017-2019. He has participated in International ballet festival "Temps lie" 2018 and the Prix de Lausanne workshop in 2019.

Jaci Doty joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from Houston Ballet Academy. Born in Shenandoah, Iowa, Doty began training in Nebraska City at 6 years old. When she was 14 years old, she joined Houston Ballet Academy as a Professional Division 1 Student. She earned a place with Houston Ballet II in 2017, which prepared her for joining Houston Ballet this season.

Danielle Esposito joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from the School of American Ballet. Born in San Diego, California, Esposito began classical training when she was 9 years old, receiving her training from Ballet Arte Academy of Classical Ballet (2010-2016), Evolution Dance Center (2010-2016) and the School of American Ballet (2016-2019).

Rafaela Henrique joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from Houston Ballet Academy. Born in Jundiai SP, Brazil, Henrique began classical training at Danzaria Estúdio de Dança at 9 years old. She continued her training with Houston Ballet Academy, where she danced with Houston Ballet II from 2018-2019.

Song Teng joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from Houston Ballet Academy. Born in Hunan China, Teng began classical training at the Shenzhen Arts School in China at 11 years old. He continued his training with Houston Ballet Academy, where he danced with Houston Ballet II from 2017-2019

Back for another season are: Principals Ian Casady, Chun Wai Chan, Soo Youn Cho, Jessica Collado, Karina González, Nozomi Iijima, Yuriko Kajiya, Melody Mennite, Connor Walsh and Charles-Louis Yoshiyama, First Soloists Christopher Coomer, Mónica Gómez, Oliver Halkowich and Alison Miller, Soloists Tyler Donatelli, Christopher Gray, Bridget Kuhns, Jacquelyn Long, Aaron Sharratt, Alyssa Springer, Hayden Stark and Harper Watters, Demi Soloists Aoi Fujiwara, Ryo Kato, Estheysis Menendez, Mackenzie Richter, Luzemberg Santana and Natalie Varnum, and Corps de Ballet members Austen Acevedo, Gloria Benaglia, Chandler Dalton, Caleb Durbin, Yumiko Fukuda, Syvert Garcia, Joshua Guillemot-Rodgerson, Kellen Hornbuckle, Kirsten Hunsberger, Gabrielle Johnson, Danbi Kim, Fernando Martin-Gullans, Adrian Masvidal, Kathryn McDonald, Riley McMurray, Naazir Muhammad, Saul Newport, Caroline Perry, McKhayla Pettingill, Samuel Rodriguez, Madison Russo, Andrew Vecseri, Jack Wolff and Chae Eun Yang.

To learn more about Houston Ballet's 2019-2020 Company, please visit houstonballet.org/explore/artists/.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

Celebrating 50 years of creativity, Houston Ballet has evolved from a Company of 16 dancers to one of 61 dancers 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 60,000 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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