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MEDIA CONTACT:

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



THEATER DISTRICT HOUSTON BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPOINTS JIM NELSON TO CHAIRMAN

HOUSTON, TEXAS [Dec. 21, 2020] — Theater District Houston Board of Directors appoints Jim Nelson as its new Chairman. Nelson, Executive Director of Houston Ballet, will serve as the Chairman until September 2022.

“I am honored to represent Houston’s expansive Theater District,” says Nelson. “The talent we have in our city is immense, and we have all showed the world our resiliency and creativity during this turbulent year.”

Nelson succeeds Perryn Leech, who served in the role since 2014. Leech will depart Houston in March 2021 to assume the General Director seat at Canadian Opera Company, per his November announcement.

“The Theater District is stronger due to Perryn’s leadership,” says Nelson. “He will be greatly missed, and we wish him the best on his next chapter.”

Nelson has spent nearly his entire career in the arts. Beginning as a professional dancer, he performed for 11 years with Cincinnati Ballet, Houston Ballet and Ballet de Santiago. After retiring from the stage, Nelson was named general manager of Houston Ballet in August 2000. In 2005, he was selected for and attended the Stanford University Graduate School of Business Executive Program for Non-Profit Leaders. Since assuming the role of Houston Ballet’s Executive Director in 2012, Nelson has led the nonprofit through a period of transformational growth and acclaim. His tenure has included the pursuit of building large-scale, full-length ballets and expanding Houston Ballet’s international exposure. Under Nelson’s leadership, Houston Ballet has developed a partnership with Houston Methodist that provides both health and wellness services to its dancers and staff. This relationship has proven invaluable, as Houston Ballet and its Academy rely on the continued guidance of Houston Methodist during the ongoing pandemic. Houston Ballet’s COVID-19 Crisis Relief Fund campaign has reached \$4.87 million of the \$5 million goal.

The Theater District is the premier cultural and entertainment center in Houston, comprising seven world-renowned performing arts organizations in four venues—Jones Hall, Wortham Theater Center, Alley Theater and Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. The organization’s mission is to advocate for, partner with and promote the downtown cultural district by raising the profile and resources to celebrate the arts and the Board is comprised of representatives of the seven performing arts organizations as well as individuals and businesses within the geographic area defined as Houston’s Theater District.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

In 50 years, 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 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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