

HOUSTON BALLET FOUNDATION
Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees
MINUTES
Monday, May 18, 2020 at 4:30pm

Call to order:

The Houston Ballet Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees was held via Zoom web-conference in Houston, Texas on Monday, May 18th, 2020. The meeting convened at 4:30pm.

Quorum: achieved (per by-law requirements)

Trustees Present:

Dr. Julia D. Andrieni, Mr. Cecil H. Arnim III, Mrs. F. T. Barr, Brenda W. Bazan, Mrs. Diane Bazelides, Ms. Ann Bean, Mrs. Susan Binney, Mrs. Leslie Blanton, Mrs. Kristy J. Bradshaw, Ms. Lindsey Brown, Mrs. Wendy Wilkins Burks, Mr. Richard L. Burleson, Mr. Tripp Carter, Mrs. Albert Y. Chao, Mrs. Molly Crownover, Mrs. Leslie Culhane, Mrs. Lilly Cullen, Ms. Gay Currie, Ms. Sasha Davis, Mrs. Donald L. Erskine, Hon Charles C. Foster, Mrs. Kate Fowler, Mrs. Jo Furr, Mr. Mitchell B. George, Mrs. Mignon Gill, Mrs. Donald M. Graubart, Mr. Jeremy Griggs, Dr. Joshua Harris, Mr. Herschel Hamner, Mrs. Theodore J. Haywood, Gillian Hobson, Ms. Michelle Iversen Jeffery, Mr. Jesse H. Jones II, Mr. James M. Jordan, Mrs. Russell C. Joseph, Ms. Melissa Juneau, Elizabeth Mata Kroger, Mrs. Elizabeth Leykum, Chad Libertus, Mr. Mark Loveland, Mrs. Kelley S. Lubanko, Mr. Jerry Martin, Mrs. Jean E. May, Mr. Daniel M. McClure, Mrs. Kris McGee, Mr. Shane Miller, Ms. Nancy Powell Moore, Mr. James M. Nicklos, Mr. Joshua B. Nix, Mrs. Cabrina Owsley, Mr. James J. Parr, Mrs. Sheel Patel, Mrs. Amy Pincu, Mrs. Elisa S. Pye, Laura M. Robertson, Ms. Elizabeth Schwarze, Mrs. Alicia Smith, Mrs. Heidi Smith, Mrs. Leigh M. Smith, Dr. Liliana Soltero, Ms. S. Shawn Stephens, Mrs. Allison Thacker, Ms. Ann Trammell, Stephanie Tsuru, Mrs. Phoebe Tudor, Mrs. Christine Underwood, Ms. Hallie Vanderhider, Crystal C. Wright, M.D., Mrs. Elizabeth R. Zdeblick and Mrs. Rini Ziegler.

Guests Present:

Christina Carroll and Spencer Park, Orchestra Representatives; Bridget Kuhns, Houston Ballet Dancer

Staff Present:

MJ Bavaret, Melissa Bowman, Patsy Chapman, Ermanno Florio, Lucy Graham, Kelli Gilson, Lindsey Hurst, Rachel Koenig, Angela Lane, Angela Lee, James Nelson, Andrew Nielsen, Jennifer Sommers, Stanton Welch, Alexandra Yates and Cheryl Zane.

Ms. S. Shawn Stephens welcomed everyone and called to order the Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees. Ms. Stephens then invited Board Chairman, Mrs. Allison Thacker, to introduce the New Trustees for the Class 2020-2023.

Following this, Mrs. Thacker called for a motion to approve the new slate of Executive Committee Officers and Members-at-Large for the 2020-2021 season. With a quorum present, the motion was passed. Mrs. Thacker then recognized and thanked Mr. Jim Nicklos, Mrs. Carroll Robertson Ray, Becca Cason Thrash and Mrs. Wendy Wilkins Burks for their service on the Executive Committee. Mrs. Thacker concluded her time by offering remarks on her experience serving as Board Chairman for the past two seasons and prior to that, as Board President for two seasons.

Ms. Stephens thanked Mrs. Thacker and then called for a motion to approve the February 10th, 2020 Full Board Meeting minutes. With a quorum present, the minutes were approved.

Ms. Stephens then invited Mrs. Patsy Chapman, CEO of the Nutcracker Market, to give an update on the 2020 Virtual Spring Market. Mrs. Chapman showcased the success of the inaugural Virtual Spring Market, held from March 25th-April 30th, which had more than 25,000 shoppers and 126 participating merchants. Following her report, Mrs. Chapman invited FY20 Guild President and HBF Trustee, Mrs. Wendy Wilkins Burks, to provide an overview of the Guild's 2019-2020 season.

Ms. Stephens thanked Mrs. Chapman and Mrs. Burks for their respective reports and proceeded to give the Special Events report. Ms. Stephens highlighted the success of the 50th Anniversary Ballet Ball and congratulated Chairmen Beth and Nick Zdeblick and Honorary Chairmen Phoebe and Bobby Tudor for raising nearly \$1.8 million. Ms. Stephens continued by noting that though the 2020 'Raising the Barre' event was postponed, it raised over \$100,000, and Ms. Stephens thanked event Co-Chairs Mignon and Steve Gill and Samira Salman for their dedicated leadership. Ms. Stephens concluded the special events report by inviting Trustees to save-the-date for the 2020 Jubilee of Dance Onstage Dinner (December 4, 2020) and the 2021 Ballet Ball (February 20, 2021).

Following the special events report, Ms. Stephens invited Mr. James Nelson to give the Executive Director's report.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Nelson began his report by providing an overview of the state of the organization during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted Houston Ballet's transition to a digital and virtual platform through the "Houston Ballet at Home" initiative. He then commented on some notable press surrounding this initiative. Mr. Nelson then gave a detailed account of the financial state of the organization and a projection of finances for the 2020-2021 season, along with measures that the organization has taken and will take to cut costs and ensure the company's long-term continued success and financial health.

Mr. Nelson continued his report by providing some updates on the progress of the mitigation work currently underway at the Center for Dance.

Mr. Nelson proceeded with an “In Memoriam” moment for three Trustees: Mr. E. Daniel Leightman, Mr. Harry H. Cullen, Sr. and Mr. John Blaisdell.

Mr. Nelson then recognized and thanked Ms. Cheryl Zane, Chief Financial Officer, for her 30+ years of service to Houston Ballet and concluded his report by thanking Board Chairman, Mrs. Allison Thacker, and Board President, Ms. S. Shawn Stephens, for their Board leadership and service.

Ms. Stephens thanked Mr. Nelson for his report and invited Mr. Stanton Welch AM to provide the Artistic Director’s report.

Artistic Director’s Report

Mr. Welch began his report by providing an in-depth look into the “Houston Ballet at Home” programs which include: *Brunch with Houston Ballet*, *Tea with Houston Ballet*, *The Director’s Chair*, *The Dancer’s perspective*, *En Pointe*, and all the creative blogs and videos the Artistic department has been spearheading during the COVID-19 quarantine. Mr. Welch then demonstrated how Company classes and rehearsals have transitioned online by showing videos of the Company rehearsing a new online ballet choreographed by Stanton Welch AM.

Mr. Welch then noted that some Company dancers have returned to the Center for Dance for some studio time, and that strict, effective measures are in place to ensure their continued safety and health.

Mr. Welch then proceeded with some Company updates. He announced the promotion of Mackenzie Richter to Soloist; he noted that Ian Casady will be retiring as Principal dancer and will move to a new role on Artistic staff; and he announced the promotion of two HBII Academy students, Matthew West and Magnoly Batista, who are joining the Company in the 2020-2021 season as Apprentices.

Mr. Welch then invited Ms. Jennifer Sommers, Director of Education, to provide some Academy/ECE updates.

Ms. Sommers began her report by showcasing a timeline of when and how the Academy moved from in-person instruction to virtual instruction via Google Classroom and then Zoom. Ms. Sommers then showcased how a new device, currently being developed, will improve the Zoom online experience by syncing the teacher’s voice and the pianist’s music, which will help the students clearly hear both the teacher and the pianist simultaneously. Ms. Sommers then noted the various Spring 2020 Academy/ECE events that were ultimately canceled. Ms. Sommers then demonstrated an example of

virtual learning by showing a video of four Company dancers teaching Academy classes. Ms. Sommers then shared some dates for summer 2020 classes and concluded her report by noting the various virtual ECE programs that have occurred and some currently underway with existing partners.

Ms. Stephens thanked Ms. Sommers for her report and then provided some remarks on her experience serving as President for the past two seasons.

Adjournment: With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:42pm.