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HOUSTON BALLET ANNOUNCES ITS NEW BOARD PRESIDENT, LEIGH SMITH

Arts Leader Assumes Role During Global Crisis

HOUSTON, TEXAS [Sept. 8, 2020] — Houston Ballet proudly announces its new Board of Trustees President, Leigh M. Smith. Smith succeeds S. Shawn Stephens, who will continue to shepherd the nonprofit as the Chairman of the Board.

“I am deeply honored to be a part of this internationally renowned company and part of a wonderfully engaged Board,” says Leigh Smith, former attorney and Houston philanthropist. “I am grateful to each Board President who has served over the 50 plus years of Houston Ballet.”

Smith has been a friend of Houston Ballet since 2012, supporting the nonprofit as an Ambassador and offering her leadership as an Executive Committee member. Her tenure includes chairing many successful events and initiatives from the 2017 Nutcracker Market Saks Fashion Show and Luncheon to the record-breaking 2019 Ballet Ball, in addition to her many years of service on the Special Events Committee of the Board and the Ballet Ball Committee. Prior to stepping into her role this season as Houston Ballet’s Board President, Smith served as the Vice President of Development and Vice President of Trustee Development. She has frequently traveled alongside the company to see them perform on the world’s most important stages such as those at Dubai Opera House, Jacob’s Pillow and New York City Center.

“We are lucky to have one of America’s best ballet companies as our own; Houston Ballet is a key part of Houston’s proud reputation as a cultural capital,” says Smith. “It has been a privilege to see Houston Ballet perform on some of the world’s most important stages, and to see firsthand how audiences in other cities delight in the talent and artistry of our company.”

The arts leader’s involvement in the Houston community spans across many organizations, which is needed more than ever during the global crisis. In addition to serving as Chair of Houston Arts Alliance, Smith is immersed in Art League Houston, Asia Society, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, The Menil Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Star of Hope and Trees of Hope. She was previously honored as an ABC13 Woman of Distinction by the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation and Houston Chronicle’s Best Dressed in support of March of Dimes.

“Clearly this is a challenging time for all performing arts organizations, but Houston Ballet is quite skilled at turning adversity into creative inspiration,” says Smith. “I know that our dancers and artistic team will continue to bring the finest dance performances, education, and community engagement programs to our city over the next year, even in a socially distanced world and with all attendant challenges. This is what we do and who we are.”

Individuals can ensure Houston Ballet’s return to the stage and the continuation of its many community programs by committing to donating at give.houstonballet.org/donate.

Smith shares her philanthropic spirit with her family. The former attorney met her husband, Reggie Smith, at law school at University of Georgia. He is a Partner at King & Spalding. The couple have three children, Ross and his wife Caroline, Sarah and Sam, who are all thriving as they finish their higher education and grow their careers.

Smith looks forward to her presidency during Houston Ballet’s reimagined 2020-2021 season, generously supported by Houston Methodist Hospital, and the rest of her term.

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.

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