**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Ellen Neiers, Houston Ballet

eneiers@houstonballet.org | C: (936) 230-9190



**HOUSTON BALLET ANNOUNCES SONJA KOSTICH AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
 *Kostich to Join Houston Ballet in August 2025, Collaborating with Co-Artistic Directors
 Julie Kent and Stanton Welch AM*

**View photos** [**here**](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/b3p7raibjoalm9s94xh8b/AIzHsNPCa4oBpciiTgYJNmU?rlkey=3tev2cfbkylhouhjkmhgfhdqd&st=9yezjhob&dl=0)**.**

**HOUSTON [May 5, 2025] —** Houston Ballet is pleased to announce the appointment of Sonja Kostich as the organization’s next Executive Director. Kostich will assume her role in August 2025 and will work closely with Co-Artistic Directors Julie Kent and Stanton Welch AM to lead the Company forward. She currently serves as President and Executive Director of Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York, a position she has held since 2022.

“On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are thrilled to welcome Sonja Kostich to Houston Ballet,” said Kristy Bradshaw, Houston Ballet board chair. “Our board has worked diligently to ensure the continued financial strength and operational excellence of our Company, building on the legacy of our retiring Executive Director, Jim Nelson. It is through this solid foundation – marked by fiscal stewardship, exceptional senior leadership, and a highly capable organizational structure that we have been able to attract such remarkable talent in Kostich. We are confident that her vision, creativity, and leadership will further elevate our Company on the global stage. We look forward to this exciting new chapter for Houston Ballet.”

Kostich brings over two decades of professional dance experience, combined with significant business expertise. She began her career as a dancer, having been hired by Mikhail Baryshnikov at age 17 to join American Ballet Theatre, following her training at The School of Classical Ballet, a prestigious program created by Baryshnikov. She also danced with the San Francisco Ballet, Zurich Ballet, White Oak Dance Project, and collaborated with renowned director Peter Sellars. Kostich later co-founded the contemporary dance company OtherShore, where she served as co-director for six years.

After retiring from the stage, Kostich pursued a career in business, earning a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from the Zicklin School of Business at CUNY Baruch College, where she graduated Salutatorian at age 42. She also completed a master's degree in arts administration. Kostich's professional experience includes roles at Goldman Sachs, Mark Morris Dance Group, and New York City Center. From 2018 to 2022, she was Chief Executive and Artistic Officer of Kaatsbaan Cultural Park, leading a successful rebranding and revitalization of the organization.

(more)

**SONJA KOSTICH NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - Page 2**

Since 2022, Kostich has served as President and Executive Director of Baryshnikov Arts Center, where she has achieved financial stability, expanded opportunities for artists, and increased both earned and contributed income to record-breaking levels while engaging new, diverse audiences.

**Julie Kent and Stanton Welch AM, Co-Artistic Directors of Houston Ballet, share their enthusiasm about Kostich’s appointment.**

Houston Ballet’s co-Artistic Directors, Julie Kent and Stanton Welch AM, have both previously worked with Kostich. Kent and Kostich overlapped during their dance careers at the American Ballet Theatre and Kostich was also an original cast member of Welch’s “Maninyas” (1996) choreographed for San Francisco Ballet.

“I am thrilled that Sonja will be joining Houston Ballet as Executive Director. She will be an excellent partner to bring Houston Ballet into our next chapter,” said Stanton Welch AM. “Along with her exceptional leadership capabilities, Sonja will also bring a level of unique dance expertise that will enhance our Company.”

Julie Kent added, “I very much look forward to what will be a highly collaborative experience that will only elevate what Houston Ballet can achieve, both artistically and as an organization. Sonja’s extraordinary talents and drive are a perfect match for our future goals.”

Kostich expressed her excitement about the opportunity: “Houston Ballet is an exemplary company with exceptional artists, dedicated employees, and a robust history of supporters and audience goers. I am deeply humbled and honored to build upon the Company's remarkable legacy and look forward to developing thoughtful and valuable long-term relationships within the community. Ballet as an art form has a phenomenal capacity to generate real inspiration and engagement in all ages. I am thrilled by this opportunity to work with Stanton and Julie, truly accomplished and respected artistic leaders, as we work together on a firm vision for the limitless potential for the future of Houston Ballet.”

**Transition Plan**
James Nelson, the retiring Executive Director, will assume the role of Executive Advisor, supporting Kostich during her transition into the role.

**ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET**

With over 50 years of rich history, Houston Ballet has evolved into a company with a budget of $37.6 million and an endowment of $97.5 million (as of June 2023), making it the country’s fourth-largest ballet company. Its $46.6 million state-of-the-art performance space, the Houston Ballet Margaret Alkek Williams Center for Dance opened in April 2011. In addition, Houston Ballet's reach is global, touring theaters in Dubai, London, Paris, Moscow, Spain, Montréal, Ottawa, Melbourne, New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Tokyo and more.

Australian choreographer Stanton Welch AM has served as Artistic Director of Houston Ballet since 2003. Welch has choreographed 43 new works for Houston Ballet during his tenure while ensuring the growth of the Company’s repertoire by presenting works from George Balanchine, William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, John Neumeier, and Jerome Robbins. Welch continues the legacy of Houston Ballet being a choreographic Eden by commissioning over 30 works from world-renowned choreographers including Aszure Barton, Trey McIntyre, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Justin Peck. Julie Kent joined Welch as Artistic Director in 2023, after serving as Artistic Director of The Washington Ballet from 2016 – 2023 and following a storied career as a Principal ballerina of American Ballet Theatre - the longest-tenured dancer in ABT’s 85-year history.

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 85,000 individuals in the Houston area annually. Houston Ballet Academy trains more than 1,000 students every year, producing more than 60 percent of the extraordinary artists that comprise Houston Ballet’s current Company. For more information on Houston Ballet, visit [houstonballet.org](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.houstonballet.org%2F&data=05%7C02%7CALee%40houstonballet.org%7C64e1cc87723949d1a10408dc32704e3b%7C96ffe6484e0e4d839e7a0b72af0ac187%7C0%7C0%7C638440705143801451%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=VlLWJ3L1c7HffofHZEmSzSNXbtA4wnnmnjGzrK9zMKE%3D&reserved=0)

###