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HOUSTON BALLET CELEBRATES THE RETIREMENT OF CLAUDIO MUÑOZ

The end of an era, but the legacy lives on: Muñoz to remain with the company in a new role, continuing to shape the next generation of dancers.

PHOTOS & VIDEOS [HERE](#)

HOUSTON, TEXAS — AUGUST 31, 2026 — Houston Ballet announced the retirement of Claudio Muñoz, Ballet Master for Houston Ballet II, after 27 years of shaping the technique and style of dancers who have gone on to companies around the world. Muñoz will remain connected to Houston Ballet in a new capacity as Guest Principal Instructor, continuing the mentorship that has defined his career.

"It's the end of an era, but the legacy lives on," said Houston Ballet Academy Director Jennifer Sommers. "Claudio's influence is written into the technique of dancers on stages across the world: from New York to California and beyond. He has given Houston Ballet more than two decades of artistry, discipline and heart, truly bringing out the best in every student, and we are thrilled that his story with this organization continues."

Before coming to Houston, Muñoz had a celebrated career as a principal dancer, teacher, and Ballet Master at the Ballet de Santiago in Chile. As a dancer, Muñoz filled principal roles in Peru, Uruguay, Argentina and New York, performing works by a roster of celebrated choreographers including W. Dollar, John Cranko, A. Rodriguez, George Balanchine, V. Nebrada, Ben Stevenson, L. de Layres, Ivan Nagy and Ronald Hynd — partnering the esteemed Russian ballerina Natalia Makarova in Hynd's *Rosalinda*.

Claudio was a highly sought after coach across the Americas and around the globe when the late Ben Stevenson, former Houston Ballet Artistic Director, invited him to join the staff of Houston Ballet Academy in January 1999. Current Houston Ballet Artistic Director, Stanton Welch AM, created Houston Ballet II (HBII) and made Claudio the first and only Ballet Master. "Claudio has been an essential part of both the heart and excellence of Houston Ballet for many years. The dancers he has developed and guided have gone on to occupy every rank within our company and to build remarkable careers around the world. Directors from other companies consistently remark on the extraordinary qualities of Houston Ballet students; from their technique and partnering to their acting, artistry, and deep respect for our art form. Claudio's imprint on Houston Ballet is profound, and his legacy will continue to be felt for generations to come," said Welch.

In more than two decades at Houston Ballet, Muñoz has taught and mentored dancers who now carry his wisdom onto stages and into studios around the world. Additionally, Muñoz played an integral role in the development of several Houston Ballet Academy dancers who medaled at the prestigious ballet competition, Prix de Lausanne.

"Looking back, the past is treasured, and the future holds the taste of hope," said Muñoz.

In his new role as Guest Principal Instructor, Muñoz will continue to mentor the next generation of dancers and represent Houston Ballet at international ballet competitions and events. Houston Ballet plans to celebrate Muñoz's legacy in the coming months with archival photography, video and

additional storytelling honoring his contributions to the company and to dance worldwide.

For more information about Claudio Muñoz and his legacy at Houston Ballet, please contact press@houstonballet.org.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

Founded in 1969, Houston Ballet is one of the nation's leading ballet companies — an artistic force and an important business leader and partner in the Houston region — inspiring audiences through artistic excellence, bold choreography, and a commitment to the future of dance. Under the artistic leadership of Artistic Directors Julie Kent and Stanton Welch AM and the chief administrative leadership of Executive Director Sonja Kostich, the Company is home to the Margaret Alkek Williams Center for Dance, the largest professional dance facility in the country. Houston Ballet operates with a \$47 million annual budget (FY27) and a \$139 million endowment (as of June 2026), presents a diverse repertory of classical and contemporary works, and tours internationally with a global reach spanning 116 countries.

Houston Ballet Academy serves as a leading pipeline for emerging dance talent, training more than 1,000 students annually—most on scholarship. Through complementary Education and Community Engagement programs, the Company reaches more than 85,000 people annually, expanding access to dance across the Houston region.

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