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HOUSTON BALLET ANNOUNCES JULIE KENT AS CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Kent will join Houston Ballet and Artistic Director Stanton Welch AM in July 2023

HOUSTON, TEXAS [December 22, 2022] — Houston Ballet proudly announces Julie Kent as Co-Artistic Director, who will begin her new role in collaboration with Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch AM in July of 2023. Currently serving as the Artistic Director of The Washington Ballet since 2016, Kent has commissioned 26 world premieres by 17 different choreographers.

“The Houston Ballet board is thrilled to welcome Julie Kent to Houston Ballet,” said Kristy Bradshaw, Houston Ballet board president. “Our board has worked tirelessly to ensure our Company maintains a strong financial foundation, including working through the crisis of Hurricane Harvey and the global pandemic. It is this work that has put Houston Ballet in the position to make a bold strategic investment in our future with the addition of Ms. Kent. Julie Kent is an icon of ballet, and we are excited for her collaboration with our own icon of choreography, Stanton Welch. We are confident that this partnership will elevate Houston Ballet further and usher in a new era of growth for our Company.”

During her tenure, she has brought both classical and contemporary masterworks into the repertoire—including her and Associate Artistic Director Victor Barbee’s own critically acclaimed staging of *The Sleeping Beauty*, described by New York Times former chief dance critic Alastair Macaulay as “one of the world’s finer *Sleeping Beauties*.”

Julie Kent has showcased her dedication not only to the mastery of ballet, creativity and expression, but also to propelling ballet forward into the 21st century and redefining the image of the American Ballerina. Originally from Bethesda, Maryland, Kent is the longest-serving ballerina in American Ballet Theatre’s 83-year history. During her 30-year tenure with the American Ballet Theatre, she acquired a vast repertoire dancing over 100 ballets, including all of the major classical, dramatic and neo-classical roles in works by Marius Petipa, George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Sir Frederick Ashton, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, John Cranko, Jiří Kylián, Ronald Hynd, Ben Stevenson OBE and Christopher Wheeldon. Additionally, Kent has originated roles for many prominent choreographers and directors, including John Neumeier, Lar Lubovitch, Mark Morris, Twyla Tharp, Alexei Ratmansky, Natalie Weir, and Houston Ballet’s own Artistic Director, Stanton Welch AM. Kent and Welch previously worked together during Kent’s time as a dancer at American Ballet Theatre for *Clear* and *Carmina Burana*.

“I am thrilled to announce that Julie Kent will be joining Houston Ballet as co-artistic director. Not only is Julie Kent ballet royalty and immensely talented—both as a dancer, coach, stager and teacher— but there is no one I would rather have as a partner to bring Houston Ballet into this next chapter,” said Stanton Welch AM, Artistic Director. “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.”

Highlights from Kent's many notable achievements include: starring in Herbert Ross' "Dancers" in 1987 and Nicholas Hytner's "Center Stage" in 2000; the Canadian Erik Bruhn Prize in 1993 and the Russian Prix Benois de la Danse in 2000; receiving an Honorary Doctorate of Performing Arts from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in 2012; and earning a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from Dance Magazine, also in 2012.

"I have greatly admired Stanton and his brilliant work for more than 20 years, and I am deeply excited to partner with him in launching an exhilarating next chapter," said Kent. "I look forward to sharing many significant milestones in the years ahead and making many new and meaningful relationships throughout the city."

Kent is married to The Washington Ballet's Associate Artistic Director Victor Barbee and has two children. They will relocate to Houston in the summer of 2023, after concluding their tenures in Washington, D.C.

Find headshots and a full bio for Julie Kent at the press kit [here](#). For more information about Houston Ballet's 2022-2023 artistic staff, please visit houstonballet.org.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

With more than 50 years of rich history, Houston Ballet has evolved into a company of 61 dancers, with a budget of \$34.6 million and an endowment of \$88.9 million (as of June 2022), 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 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 169,000 individuals in the Houston area annually. Houston Ballet Academy trains more than 1,000 students every year, producing more than 60 percent of the elite athletes that comprise Houston Ballet's current Company.

For more information on Houston Ballet, visit houstonballet.org

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