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HOUSTON BALLET HOSTS FIRST ALL-FEMALE CHOREOGRAPHIC WORKSHOP, ELLE ÉMERGE

PHOTOS & VIDEO: <https://bit.ly/2B995k4>

HOUSTON, TEXAS [November 15, 2018] — Houston Ballet set out to provide a space for women to explore choreography and tell their stories through its inaugural all-female choreographic workshop, *elle émerge*. Women from Houston Ballet, Houston Ballet Academy, Cincinnati Ballet and Kansas City Ballet answered the call to premiere complete pieces and movements from upcoming works for around 100 ballet supporters at Houston Ballet on November 10.

“Stepping out to create a piece is a scary thing. It’s such a personal process and I feel that the presence of the female voice is more important than ever. I’m so fortunate for the safe and supportive environment we were given to explore in. I’m extremely proud of the brave ladies who stood alongside me at *elle émerge* and created beautiful works,” says Houston Ballet Principal Dancer Jessica Collado.

Houston Ballet Demi Soloist Natalie Varnum was one of the first-time choreographers participating in the workshop. Her first piece was well received and a testament to how these types of opportunities open doors to new possibilities.

“I never considered choreography as something I would want to try, but there was just something about *elle émerge*. I knew I would be mad at myself if I missed out on this opportunity. It’s so powerful to showcase your work alongside other strong women who just happen to be your close friends,” says Varnum.

For established choreographers, *elle émerge* was just as impactful. Houston Ballet Principal Dancer Melody Mennite is no stranger to choreography, as she has seven completed pieces. Houston Ballet Company dancers performed the third movement from Mennite’s *Oh there you are*, which fully debuts at the *Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance* on November 30.

“I don’t take this opportunity to contribute my artistic voice for granted. In the arena of choreography that has historically been pretty male dominant, making a space to specifically hear women’s voices in this way is vital. I have been inspired by and impressed with all of my sister choreographers who bravely made works for *elle émerge*, and I hope we can do it again very soon,” says Mennite.

Houston Ballet thanks Victoria Morgan of Cincinnati Ballet and Devon Carney of Kansas City Ballet for their time, resources and support of this empowering event, Houston Ballet choreographers Jessica Collado, Tyler Donatelli, Karina González, Bridget Khuns, Jacquelyn Long, Madison Russo and Natalie Varnum, Houston Ballet Academy choreographers Jacqueline Bertault, Rachel Koerner and Sophie Powell, Cincinnati Ballet choreographers Jennifer Archibald and Melissa Gelfin, and Kansas City Ballet choreographers Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Andrea Schermoly.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

Houston Ballet has evolved into a company of 60 dancers with a budget of \$33 million, making it the country’s fifth largest ballet company. With a state-of-the-art performance space built especially for the company—also the largest professional dance facility in America—Houston Ballet’s \$46.6 million Center for Dance opened in April 2011, with an endowment of just over \$74.1 million (as of July 2017).

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 makers such as Christopher Bruce, Alexander Ekman, William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Trey McIntyre, Julia Adam, Edwaard Liang, and George Balanchine. Executive Director James Nelson serves as the administrative leader of the company, a position he assumed in February 2012 after serving as the company's General Manager for more than a decade.

Houston Ballet has toured extensively both nationally and internationally. Over the past fifteen years, the company has appeared in renowned theaters in London, Paris, Moscow, Spain, Montréal, Ottawa, Melbourne, New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and in cities large and small across the United States.

Houston Ballet's Education and Community Engagement Program reaches more than 60,000 individuals in the Houston area annually. Houston Ballet Academy teaches more than one thousand students every year, and approximately 50 percent of the current company was trained by the Academy.

For more information on Houston Ballet, visit www.houstonballet.org.

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