

## **MEDIA ALERT: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Ellen Neiers, PR Manager  
[eneiers@houstonballet.org](mailto:eneiers@houstonballet.org) | (936) 230-9190

### **Houston Ballet Announces Promotion of Four Dancers to First Soloist**

**HOUSTON, TX — June 27, 2026 —** Houston Ballet is proud to announce the promotion of four company dancers to the esteemed rank of First Soloist. The promoted artists include [Eric Best](#), [Aoi Fujiwara](#), [Danbi Kim](#), and [Naazir Muhammad](#).

Each of these exceptional dancers has demonstrated outstanding artistry, dedication, and technical excellence on stage, contributing to Houston Ballet's continued reputation for excellence and innovation in dance. Their promotions reflect the strength and depth of talent within the Company.

"It is one of the greatest rewards as an Artistic Director to witness and celebrate the growth and development of artists within our Company," said Julie Kent, Artistic Director. "Stanton and I are pleased and proud to recognize the achievements of Eric, Aoi, Danbi, and Naazir with their promotion to First Soloist. The consistent quality of their work both onstage and in the studio has been a great inspiration to us all."

The promotions take effect immediately as Houston Ballet continues preparations for its highly anticipated 2025-26 season.

#### **About Houston Ballet**

Founded in 1968, Houston Ballet is the fourth-largest ballet company in the U.S., known for its artistic excellence, bold choreography, and exceptional training programs. Under the leadership of Artistic Directors Julie Kent and Stanton Welch AM, and Executive Director Jim Nelson, the Company operates with a \$41.2 million budget and a \$110.8 million endowment (as of July 2024). In April 2011, it opened the Margaret Alkek Williams Center for Dance, a \$46.6 million dollar state-of-the-art training facility. The Company regularly performs in the Wortham Theater Center in Houston, Texas, and tours internationally to cities such as London, Tokyo, Paris, and Dubai. Additionally, its Education and Community Engagement programs reach more than 85,000 people annually, while the Houston Ballet Academy trains over 1,000 students each year. For more information on Houston Ballet, visit [houstonballet.org/explore/history](https://houstonballet.org/explore/history).

For images or more information, please contact Ellen Neiers.

###