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HoustonBallet

## Houston Ballet Hosts Youth America Grand Prix 2026 Season Finals

*World's Largest Student Ballet Scholarship Competition, May 10-18, 2026*

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**HOUSTON, TX – February 3, 2026** – In a major cultural and arts education milestone for the City, [Houston Ballet](#) will host the 2026 [Youth America Grand Prix \(YAGP\)](#) Season Finals in Houston for the first time, bringing the world's largest student ballet scholarship competition—and more than 2,000 of the most talented young dancers from around the world—to Houston.

Held May 10 through 18 at the Wortham Theater Center, the week-long event reinforces Houston and Houston Ballet as an international hub for ballet, arts education, and emerging talent. Dancers competing in the Finals are hand-selected from more than 15,000 students worldwide, making their arrival in Houston a significant moment not only for the ballet community, but for the City's cultural landscape as a whole.

Throughout the week, Houston will welcome dancers, families, educators, and artistic leaders from around the world for an immersive program that includes:

- High-level master classes taught by internationally recognized directors and educators
- Competitive performances judged by a world-renowned panel, with scholarships and professional opportunities awarded to leading ballet schools and companies
- A closing Gala performance showcasing today's most celebrated ballet stars alongside the next generation of artists

As host organization, Houston Ballet plays a central role in welcoming and supporting this global community, reinforcing the city's reputation as a destination for world-class arts education and training. Houston Ballet Artistic Directors Julie Kent and Stanton Welch AM shared, "We are honored to host the Youth America Grand Prix 2026 Finals and to support the next generation of young dancers. As a leading cultural and educational institution in Houston, we are proud to welcome the international ballet community to our city and to partner with YAGP in presenting a week of extraordinary performances, training, and opportunity. This is a meaningful moment for Houston and for the future of ballet."

YAGP will present its signature Stars of Today, Stars of Tomorrow Gala at the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center in New York on April 16 and the International Dance School Festival on April 18, including Houston Ballet II – the junior company – marking the company's return for the first time since 2019. Additionally, there will be another Gala performance in Houston on May 17, celebrating the conclusion of the YAGP 2026 Season.

YAGP Founder and Artistic Director **Larissa Saveliev** shares, "YAGP is thrilled to present its 2026 Season Finals in Houston for the very first time in our 27-year history, thanks to our

longtime friends and partners at Houston Ballet. As the world’s largest dance gathering, the YAGP Finals represent our organizations’ shared commitment to fostering the next generation of dance artists through access to world-class scholarship and performance opportunities. We look forward to an inspiring week in Houston at the preeminent Wortham Theater Center, with master classes hosted by Houston Ballet at their state-of-the-art facilities at the Margaret Alkek Williams Center for Dance.”

The 2026 Season Finals showcase the city as the culminating destination for the world’s largest student ballet scholarship competition. In addition, YAGP Houston auditions will be held in March, offering local and regional dancers the opportunity to compete close to home for a chance to advance to the Finals and reinforcing Houston’s role as a leader in ballet training and arts education.

**Youth America Grand Prix** is the largest global network of dance. YAGP fulfills its mission of dance education through scholarship auditions, master classes, alumni services, and performances. Over the past 26 years, \$5 million has been awarded in scholarships to the world’s leading dance schools, with up to \$500,000 now awarded annually. Since YAGP’s founding in 1999, over 300,000 young dancers – ages 9 to 19 – of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds have participated in YAGP’s international workshops, audition classes, and dance awareness events. Today, more than 15,000 young dancers audition annually. 500 YAGP alumni are now dancing with 100 professional companies around the world, including American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Boston Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, Houston Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, The Royal Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet, Mariinsky Ballet and many others. Over 100 of these alumni are soloists and principal dancers. Larissa Saveliev founded YAGP after training and touring with the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow, before moving to the United States in the early 90’s. For further information, please visit <https://yagp.org/>

### **About Houston Ballet**

Founded in 1969, Houston Ballet is one of the nation’s leading ballet companies, 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 ballet facility in the country. Houston Ballet operates with a \$44 million annual budget (FY26) and a \$130 million endowment (as of October 2025), 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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