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**Houston Ballet Principal Soo Youn Cho Announces Retirement**

**PHOTOS & VIDEOS:** [[LINK HERE](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/otqr0xgtzd1ovzf0pp9cv/AOMm37_ZDdRSBa4QpAhzUhg?rlkey=vyle8197wij691wipfb7cmw4i&st=rqa3a97x&dl=0)]

**HOUSTON, TX — June 20, 2025—** Houston Ballet announces the retirement of Principal Dancer Soo Youn Cho, whose 13-year tenure with the Company has been marked by grace, strength, and artistic depth. After more than a decade of unforgettable performances and deeply moving portrayals, Cho is stepping away from the stage with profound gratitude and reflection.

Cho, who joined Houston Ballet in 2012 and was promoted to Principal in 2018, has captivated audiences with her elegance, emotional authenticity, and technical brilliance. Her performances have included iconic roles such as Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Kitri in *Don Quixote*, Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*, the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, and Suzuki in *Madame Butterfly*, among many others. Each role reflected her wide artistic range and commitment to storytelling through dance.

"This decision was not made lightly, but with a great deal of reflection and acceptance over the past year," said Cho. “Since I first began ballet at the age of four, it has been the greatest love of my life. Even through pain and injury, I felt joy and purpose in every moment. I gave my best to every step along the way, and I now leave the stage with a peaceful heart and deep gratitude.”

Cho’s retirement follows a period of recovery from spinal surgery prompted by chronic back issues that intensified during and after her pregnancy. Despite her dedicated efforts to heal and return to the stage, she made the difficult decision to retire when it became clear that dancing at her previous level would no longer be possible.

In addition to her many memorable roles, Cho holds a special place in the hearts of colleagues and audiences for the passion and sincerity she brought to every performance. Her portrayal of Suzuki in *Madame Butterfly* is especially close to her heart, not only for its emotional depth but for the lifelong friendship it sparked with fellow Principal Yuriko Kajiya.

As she steps into this next chapter, Cho remains grateful for the journey she’s shared with Houston Ballet. “Becoming part of this Company and working alongside such extraordinary people has been one of the greatest blessings and privileges of my life. I close this chapter with a full heart and immense appreciation for the art, the audiences, and the people who made it all so meaningful.”

**ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET**

With over 50 years of rich history, Houston Ballet has evolved into a company with a budget of $37.6 million and an endowment of $97.5 million (as of June 2023), 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 theaters in Dubai, London, Paris, Moscow, Spain, Montréal, Ottawa, Melbourne, New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Tokyo and more.

Australian choreographer Stanton Welch AM has served as Artistic Director of Houston Ballet since 2003. Welch has choreographed 43 new works for Houston Ballet during his tenure while ensuring the growth of the Company’s repertoire by presenting works from George Balanchine, William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, John Neumeier, and Jerome Robbins. Welch continues the legacy of Houston Ballet being a choreographic Eden by commissioning over 30 works from world-renowned choreographers including Aszure Barton, Trey McIntyre, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Justin Peck. Julie Kent joined Welch as Artistic Director in 2023, after serving as Artistic Director of The Washington Ballet from 2016 – 2023 and following a storied career as a Principal ballerina of American Ballet Theatre - the longest-tenured dancer in ABT’s 85-year history. 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 85,000 individuals in the Houston area annually. Houston Ballet Academy trains more than 1,000 students every year, producing more than 60 percent of the extraordinary artists that comprise Houston Ballet’s current Company. For more information on Houston Ballet, visit [houstonballet.org](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.houstonballet.org%2F&data=05%7C02%7CALee%40houstonballet.org%7C64e1cc87723949d1a10408dc32704e3b%7C96ffe6484e0e4d839e7a0b72af0ac187%7C0%7C0%7C638440705143801451%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=VlLWJ3L1c7HffofHZEmSzSNXbtA4wnnmnjGzrK9zMKE%3D&reserved=0) ###