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HOUSTON BALLET PROUDLY ANNOUNCES ITS 2023 – 2024 SEASON ROSTER

HOUSTON, TEXAS [July 27, 2023] — Houston Ballet is thrilled to announce its 2023 – 2024 roster and the highly-anticipated return of its professional company to Houston Ballet's Margaret Alkek Williams Center for Dance. The Company welcomes the return of 49 dancers along with nine new additions: Nikita Baryshnikov, Adelaide Clauss, Rylan Doty, Taela Graff, Alejandro Molina Leon, Gian Carlo Perez, Rench Soriano, Masanori Takiguchi and Allison Whitley.

Gian Carlo Perez joins Houston Ballet as a First Soloist from The Washington Ballet. Perez began his ballet training in Havana, dancing with Ballet Nacional de Cuba. He has performed in Spain, Panama, France, and Italy. In Rome, his repertoire included *Celeste* by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and *Lumino* by Peter Quans. In 2014, Perez performed with Manuela Navarro in a ballet series in Panama and at the USA International Ballet Competition in Jackson, Mississippi, and participated in the Gala of the Stars of the 21st Century in France. In 2017, he was awarded a Princess Grace Fellowship in Dance.

Adelaide Clauss joins Houston Ballet as a Demi Soloist from The Washington Ballet. Originally from Buffalo, New York, Clauss began ballet training with The Neglia Conservatory of Ballet, continuing onto The Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at American Ballet Theatre. Clauss' repertoire includes Julie Kent and Victor Barbee's *The Sleeping Beauty, Giselle, and Swan Lake.* Pointe Magazine named Clauss one of their "2019 Stars of the Corps" and was included in Dance Magazine's 25 to Watch for 2023.

Rench Soriano joins Houston Ballet as a Demi Soloist from The Washington Ballet Studio Company after graduating from The New Zealand School of Dance in 2019. Soriano won the Youth Asian Grand Prix (AGP) International Ballet Competition in Hong Kong and a gold medal award for the Beijing International Ballet Competition.

Masanori Takiguchi joins Houston Ballet as a Demi Soloist from The Washington Ballet. Originally from Tokyo, Japan, Takiguchi began training at Studio Les Bijou. He had Summer Training on Full Scholarship to the American Ballet Theatre in New York, The Joffrey Ballet in Chicago, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School and Houston Ballet Academy. Takiguchi won first place in the National Society of Arts and Letters Classical Ballet Competition and third in the Japan Grand Prix in 2017. In 2018, he placed first in the Youth America Grand Prix Chicago Regional Semifinals, becoming a Finalist at the David H. Koch Theater in New York City. In 2019 he was awarded the Grand Prix in the Washington DC Grand Prix.

Taela Graff joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from The School of American Ballet. Originally a competitive Rhythmic Gymnast with a two-time US National Championship title, Graff has completed various top summer intensive programs including Bolshoi Ballet, Miami City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and Houston Ballet.

Allison Whitley joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from Houston Ballet Academy after two seasons in Houston Ballet II and one season in the professional division. Whitley trained at The Dallas Conservatory before attending Houston Ballet Academy's Summer Intensive Program.

Nikita Baryshnikov joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from Houston Ballet Academy after two seasons in Houston Ballet II. Baryshnikov trained with the International Ballet Academy, Bolshoi Academy and Tanz Akademie Zürich.

Rylan Doty joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from Houston Ballet Academy. Doty trained with Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet before joining Houston Ballet II.

Alejandro Molina Leon joins Houston Ballet as an Apprentice from The Washington Ballet. Born in Sant Boi de Llobregat, Barcelona (Spain), Molina trained with the Loida Grau Dance School.

New promotions for the 2023 – 2024 season include: Eric Best, Griffin Koehl, Augustin Lehner and Ryan Williams to the rank of Corps de Ballet.

The full company, listed by rank, for the 2023 – 2024 season includes: **Principals** Skylar Campbell, Soo Youn Cho, Jessica Collado, Karina González, Yuriko Kajiya, Melody Mennite, Chase O'Connell, Beckanne Sisk and Connor Walsh. **First Soloists** Tyler Donatelli, Mónica Gómez, Gian Carlo Perez and Harper Watters. **Soloists** Simone Acri, Aoi Fujiwara, Ryo Kato, Bridget Kuhns, Jacquelyn Long, Naazir Muhammad, Aaron Daniel Sharratt and Alyssa Springer. **Demi Soloists** Adelaide Clauss, Yumiko Fukuda, Syvert Lorenz Garcia, Kellen Hornbuckle, Estheysis Menendez, Rench Soriano, Masanori Takiguchi, Elivelton Tomazi, Natalie Varnum, Jack Wolff and Chae Eun Yang. **Corps de Ballet** Henrique Barbosa, Gretel Batista, Magnoly Batista, Jindallae Bernard, Eric Best, Neal Burks, Jaci Doty, Emma Forrester, Rafaela Henrique, Danbi Kim, Griffin Koehl, Augustin Lehner, Zoe Lucich, Riley McMurray, Saul Newport, Jaclyn Oakley, Samuel Rodriguez, Madison Russo, Song Teng, Matthew West and Ryan Williams. **Apprentices** Nikita Baryshnikov, Rylan Doty, Taela Graff, Alejandro Molina Leon and Allison Whitley.

Houston Ballet looks forward to the spectacular season ahead! To learn more about Houston Ballet's 2023 – 2024 Company dancers, visit **houstonballet.org.**

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 in renowned 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, raising the level of the Company's classical technique from dance legends such as Sir Frederick Aston, George Balanchine, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, John Neumeier, and Jerome Robbins. Continuing the legacy of being a choreographic eden, Houston Ballet has also commissioned new works by Aszure Barton, Trey McIntyre, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Justin Peck. Julie Kent joins Welch as Artistic Director in 2023, after serving as Artistic Director of The Washington Ballet from 2016 – 2023, where she commissioned over 26 world premieres from a diverse range of choreographers as well as several full-length classical ballets. Kent retired as a Principal dancer in 2015 as the longest-tenured dancer in American Ballet Theatre's 84-year history and is deeply committed to positively impacting artists, audiences, and communities through the transformative power of dance. 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 elite athletes that comprise Houston Ballet's current Company.

For more information on Houston Ballet, visit houstonballet.org

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