



Press Release

FOR RELEASE:
November 19, 2018

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
presents

Ballet Across America

Featuring

Dance Theatre of Harlem and Miami City Ballet

**Weeklong Festival Celebrates
Women's Creativity and Leadership in Ballet**

**Kennedy Center Commission Pam Tanowitz World Premiere
Unites Both Companies in One-Night-Only Performance**

**Dance Theatre of Harlem Co-Commission by
Claudia Schreier and Jessie Montgomery**

**May 28–June 2, 2019
In the Kennedy Center Opera House
With the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra**

(WASHINGTON)—Exploring the breadth and depth of artistry within American ballet, the Kennedy Center's *Ballet Across America* series returns May 28–June 2 for seven performances in the Opera House. This season's engagement features deeper looks at companies led by distinguished Artistic Directors Virginia Johnson and Lourdes Lopez with their respective companies, Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) and Miami City Ballet (MCB). Each company will present a full program while a one-night-only celebration on May 31 features a shared program that includes both companies in a world premiere Kennedy Center commission by renowned choreographer Pam Tanowitz.

“We are thrilled to provide a deeper look at these two companies,” stated Meg Booth, Director of Dance Programming. “*Ballet Across America* is a creative platform that allows us to be dynamic and responsive in curating, and as the nation’s cultural center, we have a responsibility to reflect the conversations happening within the art form nationally. For years, the industry has discussed the dearth of female artistic leadership in the country. Although the tide is slowly turning, there are a few notable companies who were early adopters. As two of the most recognizable female artistic directors in the field, both Lopez and Johnson are responsible for not only overseeing the legacies of their celebrated companies but to build upon those foundations. With each company imprinting its own unique signature on the future of ballet and dance, both women have used their positions to champion equity in the art form and create work reflective of their communities. We are elated to create an opportunity for these two companies to dance together in a world premiere by a female artist who has been quietly working for decades and is finally reaping the attention her work has long deserved, Pam Tanowitz.”

Virginia Johnson, a founding member and former principal dancer of the historic Dance Theatre of Harlem, leads DTH today in carrying forward its message of empowerment through the arts for all, and using the language of ballet and contemporary works to celebrate African American culture. Advocating for people of color in every role from choreographer to dancers, composers, and administrative leadership such examples include *Women Who Move Us*, a new initiative created to foster new work by women; leading 21 companies in *The Equity Project: Increasing the Presence of Blacks in Ballet* (of which *Ballet Across America* company Miami City Ballet is also a part); and the company’s *Dancing Through Barriers* arts in education program.

“Dance Theatre of Harlem’s participation in *Ballet Across America* this year is particularly meaningful to me. It is a sign of a dawning moment in ballet. This beautiful art form is based on a glorious tradition and yet it has not always embraced diverse voices,” stated Virginia Johnson. “As Artistic Director of an institution that has for 50 years been at the forefront of diversity in ballet, I am proud to continue that legacy with a personal mission to ensure that the inclusion of women’s perspectives and women’s choreographic voices, especially women of color, has the potential to define ballet as a 21st century art form. My hope is that these *Ballet Across America* programs will give audiences a glimpse at what is possible.”

Lourdes Lopez, a Cuban-American artist and administrator who danced for two legends of the art form--George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins--while at New York City Ballet, leads Miami City Ballet by maintaining the company's Balanchine legacy while embracing the city's rich cultural identity. Included in its season are commissioned works such as Miami-born artist Michele Oka Doner's reimagining of George Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* using the ocean floor as inspirations for its designs; Justin Peck's Miami-inspired work, *Heatscape*; and a new *Nutcracker*, including costumes created by Cuban renown designers Isabel and Ruben Toledo. Continuing the company's commitment to community engagement, Lopez also spearheaded MCB's Ballet Bus program, which provides underserved children with a 10-year comprehensive full-scholarship dance training.

"We are honored to partner with the Dance Theatre of Harlem for this week of performances celebrating women and the arts," said Miami City Ballet Artistic Director Lourdes Lopez. "There truly could not be a better time to celebrate the creativity and leadership of women--especially considering the diverse women leading our ballet company. We are delighted to share this artistry with lovers of dance in our nation's capital."

Shared Celebration Program (May 31)

A one-night-only celebration on Friday, May 31, will feature both companies in a shared program of works, including a world premiere Kennedy Center commission by choreographer Pam Tanowitz. Miami City Ballet will perform George Balanchine's *Walpurgisnacht Ballet*, which showcases choreography Balanchine originally created for Charles Gounod's opera *Faust*. Evoking the joyful revelry from the opera's final act, the work for 25 dancers depicts a traditional folk celebration on the eve of May Day and culminates with dancers whirling across the stage. Dance Theatre of Harlem performs a co-commission with the Virginia Arts Festival by emerging African American choreographer Claudia Schreier with commissioned music by African American violinist and composer Jessie Montgomery, and DTH trailblazing founder Geoffrey Holder's celebrated work, *Douglas*, with music performed live by members of the original percussion ensemble. Schreier's new work, created for 12 dancers and performed in three parts to live music, is set to a new score composed by Montgomery, which marks her first composition for a ballet. A celebrated choreographer and collaborator, Tanowitz is known for her post-modern approach of the classical dance vocabulary. "I am excited to work with these high-caliber artists from DTH and MCB," stated Pam Tanowitz. "My dances are deeply personal takes on

movement grounded in tradition. These companies each have their own rich traditions that we can build upon together. “

Dance Theatre of Harlem Program (May 28–30)

Opening on Tuesday, May 28, the first program features Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) in their 50th anniversary season with esteemed modern dance choreographer Dianne McIntyre’s *Change*; Geoffrey Holder’s seminal work, *Douglas*; George Balanchine’s sweeping ballet *Valse Fantaisie*; and the DTH co-commission with the Virginia Arts Festival rounds out the program with award-winning young choreographer Claudia Schreier and commissioned music by violinist and composer Jessie Montgomery. Schreier, who fuses neoclassical technique with a contemporary vocabulary, was recently named a Princess Grace Fellow and one of five women to be commissioned to create a work for American Ballet Theatre’s Studio Company (ABT) as part of its ABT Women’s Movement. Set to recorded spirituals and inspired by women—black, brown, and beige—McIntyre’s *Change* explores the impact of women who have helped create an openness in society in the face of obstacles. In *Douglas*, the late Geoffrey Holder drew on his Trinidadian heritage to create his vibrant 1974 masterpiece. Recently revived by the company after 14 years, the work depicts the ritual and pageantry of a marriage ceremony. The percussive score, created by Tania León and Holder, will be performed live by members of the original percussion ensemble. Performed by five women and one man, Balanchine’s *Valse Fantaisie* is set to Mikhail Glinka’s score of the same name and employs Balanchine’s signature musicality.

Miami City Ballet Program (June 1–2)

The second program, June 1–2, features Miami City Ballet in George Balanchine’s joyful *Walpurgisnacht Ballet*; Sir Kenneth MacMillan’s *Carousel* pas de deux from the Tony Award®-winning musical; Tony Award®-winning choreographer Justin Peck’s 2015 ballet *Heatscape*, which was inspired by Miami’s Wynwood Arts District; and Twyla Tharp and Jerome Robbins’s co-choreographed energetic work, *Brahms/Handel*. Featuring choreography from *Carousel*’s 1992 revival, this pas de deux is centered on the principal couple, Louise and Fairground Boy. MacMillan choreographed the dance vignettes after Agnes de Mille’s original 1945 choreography for a National Theatre revival in London that debuted a few weeks after his death. Created for Miami City Ballet, Peck’s high spirited *Heatscape* merges ballet and guerilla street art with a vibrant backdrop by visual artist and graphic designer Shepard Fairey and is set to Bohuslav Martinů’s Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1 in D major. Set to an orchestration of Brahms’s

Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, *Brahms/Handel* was a 1984 collaboration by modern masters Twyla Tharp and Jerome Robbins with costumes by Oscar de la Renta.

ABOUT DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM

For 50 years, Dance Theatre of Harlem has provided access to ballet for all. Comprised of an international touring company, a training school, and a celebrated arts education and community engagement program, Dancing Through Barriers®, DTH demonstrates the power of art to transform lives. Compelled to make a positive impact following the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the legendary Arthur Mitchell started a school with his teacher, Karel Shook. Mitchell's idea was to offer children in the Harlem neighborhood where he grew up the opportunity to change their futures by challenging themselves against the rigors of a classical art form. In 1971, only two years after its founding, *The New York Times* called Dance Theatre of Harlem "one of ballet's most exciting undertakings." Now in its fifth decade, DTH has an extraordinary legacy based on thrilling performances and artistic excellence predicated on providing opportunity where none had existed before. Through performance, training and education, the impact of Dance Theatre of Harlem continues to be felt across the globe.

ABOUT MIAMI CITY BALLET

Miami City Ballet, now in its 33rd season, has been led by Artistic Director Lourdes Lopez since 2012. Lopez was recently named one of "The Most Influential People in Dance Today" by *Dance Magazine* and is on The Ford Foundation Board of Trustees. MCB was founded in 1985 by Miami philanthropist Toby Lerner Ansin and Founding Artistic Director Edward Villella. The Company has 52 dancers and a repertoire of more than 100 ballets. MCB performs for nearly 100,000 patrons annually during its South Florida home season in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Naples, and tours to top theaters domestically and internationally. Miami City Ballet School, the official school of Miami City Ballet, is one of the most respected ballet training academies in America. The School trains approximately 400 students, ages 3-18, in its year-round program, and 400 during its summer programs, granting more than \$500,000 in scholarships annually. More than 500 adults participate in a vibrant community division.

FUNDING CREDITS

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Ballet Across America is presented as part of The Irene Pollin Audience Development and Community Engagement Initiatives.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

**BALLET ACROSS AMERICA: Dance Theatre of Harlem and Miami City Ballet
with the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra**

DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM PROGRAM

Virginia Johnson, Artistic Director

Conducted by Tania Leon

Tuesday, May 28, 2019, at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 29, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 30, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

Valse Fantaisie (Glinka/ Balanchine)
Change (Spirituals “By and By” and “Don’t Let Nobody Turn You Round”/McIntyre)
New Claudia Schreier Commission (Montgomery /Schreier)* with live music
Douglas (León and Holder/Holder) with original percussive band

*Washington, D.C. Premiere

SHARED CELEBRATION PROGRAM

Friday, May 31, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
Conducted by Tania Leon and Gary Sheldon

Walpurgisnacht Ballet (Gounod/ Balanchine)
New Claudia Schreier Commission (Montgomery /Schreier)* with live music
Dance Theatre of Harlem and Miami City Ballet with New Pam Tanowitz Commission**
Douglas (León and Holder/Holder) with original percussive band

*Washington, D.C. Premiere

**World Premiere

MIAMI CITY BALLET PROGRAM

Lourdes Lopez, Artistic Director

Conducted by Gary Sheldon

Saturday, June 1, 2019, at 1:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, June 2, 2019 at 1:30 p.m.

Walpurgisnacht Ballet (Gounod/ Balanchine)
Carousel pas de deux (Rodgers/ MacMillan)
Heatscape (Martinů/Peck)
Brahms/Handel (Handel/ Tharp, Robbins)

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets start at \$29. Tickets can be purchased on the Kennedy Center website, at the Kennedy Center box office or by calling Instant Charge at (202) 467-4600. Patrons living outside the Washington metropolitan area may dial toll-free at (800) 444-1324. For all other ticket-related customer service inquiries, call the Advance Sales Box Office at (202) 416-8540.

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PRESS CONTACT

Brittany Laeger
(202) 416-8445
balaeger@kennedy-center.org