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Ballet Arizona Announces New Plans for Fall Programming

Digital Streaming Keeps Company on its Toes

PHOENIX - Due to ongoing concerns related to COVID-19, Ballet Arizona announced a departure from the company's previously planned 35th Anniversary fall season of main-stage performances. *Director's Choice*, *Giselle* and the beloved annual production of *The Nutcracker* have been removed from the performance calendar and a more digitally focused fall season is planned. The changes were recently announced by Artistic Director, Ib Andersen; Executive Director, Samantha Turner; and Board of Directors Chair, Miranda Lumer, after lengthy considerations that included feedback from the community, staff, and board.

"Each year, we enjoy sharing the joy and artistry of live ballet performances with more than 85,000 Arizonans. The pandemic has significantly challenged our ability to do that this year in our traditional performance venues," said Turner. "We know that so many in our community continue to be deeply affected by the pandemic in numerous ways. There couldn't be a more important time for the arts to be available to provide a respite from the challenging circumstances we are all experiencing. We are committed to finding solutions that allow us to be there for our community in ways that provide comfort and inspiration."

"During the early months of the pandemic crisis we experimented with new ways to provide access to ballet performances and streamed archival footage from our repertoire," Andersen said. "This fall we will expand on what we learned and venture into new territory with digital streaming experiences of new performances adapted to the challenges presented by COVID-19."

The company plans to digitally present some favorite contemporary works from choreographer and collaborator, Alejandro Cerrudo; and an August Bournonville classic that is new to Ballet Arizona. Andersen envisions creating new choreography that is adapted to social-distancing recommendations. He also plans to present an adapted version of *The Nutcracker* – a new way to make the beloved annual tradition part of this year's holiday plans.

The specific dates and digital programming offerings for fall performances are still being finalized, with the company scheduled to announce those details in early September.

"Connecting with our community is so vital, now more than ever," Lumer said. "Ballet Arizona is choosing to see our virtual offerings as a way to innovatively reach a broader audience and deliver world-class ballet in new, unique ways."

Ballet Arizona's fall offerings also include new ways for patrons to stay connected with the company. The company announced it will host its free, inaugural Ballet Arizona Book Club that will meet quarterly via ZOOM beginning in August. The first session, a discussion of School of Ballet Arizona alumnus

David Hallberg's memoir, has already garnered a large response and a second date has been added. Also on the community engagement front will be several educational programs that schools can take advantage of virtually throughout the school year.

"In the months ahead we will continue to evaluate our ability to return to Symphony Hall in the spring, and we are counting on our return to Desert Botanical Garden in May 2021 to present the much-anticipated world premiere of *The Four Seasons*," Turner said. "Until that time, we will work diligently to create programming for our season subscribers as well as avenues through which all Ballet Arizona fans can engage with the company and experience the magic and beauty of ballet."

The School of Ballet Arizona remains dedicated to dance education and will continue to hold open adult classes virtually and then in person when possible. School year classes for youth are currently in the planning stages with careful attention being paid to government health and safety guidelines that allow students to resume their training.

"While there's no doubt this will be a very different year for Ballet Arizona and our patrons, we remain dedicated to our mission to teach, create, and perform outstanding classical and contemporary ballet and to serve our communities through superior educational and outreach programs," Turner said. "The means through which we accomplish our mission this year might not look like seasons past, but we are committed to doing all we can to share Ballet Arizona with our community."

For continued updates on digital engagement opportunities and more information about Ballet Arizona's season, please visit www.balletaz.org.

Ballet Arizona

Ballet Arizona is dedicated to preserving and celebrating classical dance while creating new and innovative works. Under the artistic direction of internationally acclaimed choreographer Ib Andersen - a former Principal Dancer with The New York City Ballet and The Royal Danish Ballet - Ballet Arizona follows his lead to the future of dance in Arizona. The School of Ballet Arizona promotes access to the art form of ballet through dance education, with a focus on excellence in the form, directing each student to a life-long love of dance. Following this vision, Ballet Arizona connects to more than 35,000 children and families every year through its free and low cost outreach programs. For more information, visit balletaz.org.

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