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Contact:

Alyce Jenkins
Maryland Youth Ballet
926 Ellsworth Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-608-2232
info@marylandyouthballet.org

MARYLAND YOUTH BALLET ANNOUNCES NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Olivier Munoz will succeed Michelle Lees as Maryland Youth Ballet's Artistic Director in 2019

Silver Spring, MD (October 3, 2017) Renowned classical ballet school, Maryland Youth Ballet (MYB), is pleased to announce Olivier Munoz as its new Artistic Director. Mr. Munoz will succeed Michelle Lees in 2019. He had previously been a senior faculty member at MYB from 2000 to 2006. After an exhaustive nationwide search, Mr. Munoz was the unanimous choice by the Board of Directors to carry on the institution's mission to provide the highest caliber of training and performance opportunities to prepare young dancers for a career in the performing arts as well as to provide classes to dancers of all ages and levels in the community.

"Michelle Lees has made an immeasurable contribution to the growth and success of MYB. Under Oliver Munoz's leadership, we anticipate that MYB will continue to train and inspire the future stars of classical ballet. His extraordinary career both as a dancer and as an instructor in classical ballet will usher in another exciting chapter in the history of MYB," says MYB Board President, Nancie Marzulla.

Mr. Munoz is starting his 14th season as principal teacher at Orlando Ballet School where he created a successful men's program as well as the academy all-day program for talented students. He is a certified professor of dance from the French Ministry of Culture and has also received an American Ballet Theatre (ABT) Affiliate Teacher Award where he is certified in all levels of the ABT curriculum. He has served on panels for the U.S. Department of Education's National Foundation for the Advancements in the Arts and on various grant selection committees. Since 2001, he has been a sought-after coach for Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) and has been awarded Outstanding Teacher numerous times. Mr. Munoz has coached gold medal dancers in international competitions and many of his former students are performing in professional companies all over the world

Mr. Munoz began his studies at the National Conservatory of Dance in Lyon, France and then attended Rosella Hightower's International Dance Center in Cannes. He is a 1981 Laureate of the Prix de Lausanne. As a principal dancer with the English National Ballet, the Cleveland San

Jose Ballet, the Northern Ballet Theater, and a principal guest artist for Teatro alla Scala, the Tokyo Ballet, The Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow, Ballet Philippines, and Ballet Nuevo Mundo in Caracas, Venezuela, among others, he performed all the leading roles in the classical repertoire. Mr. Munoz was involved in several movies including *Blue Suede Shoes* for PBS (1998), the *Drew Carey Show* (1997), *Love in 4 Acts* for PBS (1995), and has choreographed for Cleveland San Jose Ballet, Orlando Ballet School, and several Geoffrey Beene fashion shows.

Michelle Lees, will be stepping down in 2019 and will be moving out of the metropolitan region to be closer to her family. Ms. Lees has been at MYB for 41 years, *“Little did I know when I stopped performing and began teaching at MYB in 1976 that I would still be teaching AND be Principal and Artistic Director of the school four decades later. How time flies! When I began, there was one studio; we now have five. There were a couple of hundred students; now we have more than 1600. There were six teachers; now we have twenty-seven. What hasn’t changed is the quality of instruction. From the beginning in Tensia Fonseca’s basement to the state of the art studios in Silver Spring, MYB has consistently taught and produced professional dancers, business entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, lawyers, architects, and more. I am very proud of what we have accomplished and I have every confidence that Olivier Munoz is the perfect person to lead MYB.”*

To ensure a seamless transition, the MYB Board of Directors have developed an 18-month strategic plan that will slowly integrate Mr. Munoz into the organization as Artistic Director with frequent visits and an official start date in September 2018 when he and Ms. Lees will co-direct the school until her retirement in December 2018.

“This is one of the finest classical ballet institutions around. The Board wanted to ensure that the transition was handled with great care and respect for the students, the staff, and for the mission that Michelle has brought to life the past 40 years to build the outstanding school that MYB is and continues to be,” says Barbara Mullenex, Vice President of MYB’s Board of Directors.

About Maryland Youth Ballet

Since 1971, the mission of MYB has been to provide the highest caliber of training and performance opportunities to prepare young dancers for a career in the performing arts as well as to provide classes to dancers of all ages and levels in the community. The MYB children’s program puts deliberate emphasis on pre-professional achievement with each level carefully crafted to provide the most comprehensive training and coaching in order to produce the high quality dancer that MYB is known for. The MYB adult program, spanning levels from basic beginner through advanced, enjoys the same faculty as the children’s program, offering our adults the finest teachers of ballet, stretch, and classical core conditioning in the region.

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