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## **Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre to Inaugurate Byham Center for Dance**

*Artists, Supporters Gather to Cut Ribbon on Strip District Studio Expansion*

**PITTSBURGH, PA (Sept. 2016)** – On Friday, Sept. 23, at 2 p.m., Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre artists, supporters and, of course, costumed dancers will gather to cut the ribbon on the new Byham Center for Dance at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre Studios in the Strip District.

Featuring floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Liberty Avenue, the 14,000-square-foot, \$6.5 million annex adjoins PBT's original five-studio facility at 2900 Liberty Avenue, adding two spacious dance studios, an expanded Pilates and conditioning studio and new dressing rooms for community members and student dancers.

As headquarters to 30 full-time professional dancers and over 1,000 students – plus the company's costume shop, therapy and cross-training facilities – space was at a premium for the company and the school, which had seen a 75 percent enrollment rise in its Children's and Student divisions over 10 years.

Construction started in October 2015 and closed in early September. IKM Architects designed the building; Jendoco Construction Corporation is general contractor.

The ribbon cutting ceremony will feature remarks from special guests, including Mayor William Peduto, Carolyn and Bill Byham, in whose honor the building is named; UPMC's Brian Hagen, representing Dr. Freddie Fu, who invested in the building's Hilda and Dr. Freddie Fu Sports and Dance Conditioning Center; Dawn and Chris Fleischner, PBT School parents and Campaign co-chairs; and representatives from Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, which invested in student scholarships for the rising talents who will benefit from the new space. After the ceremony, guests will have the chance to tour the new building and view rehearsals in the new studios.

"This is a major turning point for Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, and we're looking forward to celebrating the people who made it possible," said Harris Ferris, PBT executive director. "It's a physical reminder of the growth that we're experiencing as a company and as a training institution. This expansion will give our student and professional dancers more space to spread their wings, and it will help us increase access to high-quality classes for dancers of all ages and interest levels."

Major contributors include Campaign Co-chairs Carolyn and Bill Byham, Campaign Co-chairs Dawn and Chris Fleischner, Hans and Leslie Fleischner and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which has invested a total of \$2.25 million through the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program toward the annex and other campus expansion projects since 2009. Leading corporate contributors to the campaign include Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield and PNC Bank, which invested in student scholarships, and Giant Eagle, which invested in innovation funding for artistic priorities.

Later this weekend, on Sunday, Sept. 25, from 12-4 p.m., PBT is inviting community members to explore the new space during its free Grand Opening Celebration. Guests will have the chance to get a behind-the-scenes look at rehearsals and performances, sample new community dance and fitness classes, have their photo taken with costumed dancers and tour the costume shop.

# ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TERRENCE S. ORR PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE

Starting this fall, PBT is growing its line of dance fitness and conditioning classes for community members. New offerings will include PBT Barre Fitness, dance cardio, Pilates mat and yoga, and will be built around core strength, coordination and alignment – essential building blocks for dance and an active lifestyle.

The new space also will help PBT School expand its Children's and Student divisions as well as its Pre-Professional division, an internationally recognized training program for students pursuing careers in dance.

"We hope guests will discover something new about dance and the many ways we can use movement to inspire and empower ourselves," said Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr. "For alignment, expression, exercise and coordination, ballet offers incredible benefits for the mind and body. We look forward to inviting in more dancers – whether they are just starting out, returning to it, or looking for a place to pursue it on a professional level."

The night prior – Saturday, Sept. 24, – PBT will inaugurate the space with a private reception for campaign contributors, featuring a private company performance and dedication of named spaces, including the Fleischner Family Studio, Catharine and John Ryan Studio, and Hilda and Freddie Fu Sports and Dance Conditioning Center. The building itself is named in honor of Carolyn and Bill Byham.

To date the company has raised \$16.3 million toward its total \$21.1 million campaign goal and \$8.7 million toward its total \$9.6 million building goal, which includes the reserve fund as well as capital to renovate dressing rooms and other spaces inside PBT's original building.

PBT continues to seek support for a \$2 million reserve fund for the building and other campaign priorities, including endowment and innovation funds to support repertory, live music, student scholarships and other artistic objectives that impact PBT audiences from season to season.

Those interested in contributing can visit [www.pbt.org/campaign](http://www.pbt.org/campaign) or call Lois A. Wholey, director of development, at [412-454-9133](tel:412-454-9133).

## **Campus Expansion Timeline**

The building is the capstone of PBT's seven-year campus expansion project:

- 2009: The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania awarded \$1.25 million toward PBT campus expansion.
- 2010: PBT acquired and renovated the former St. John's Rectory in Lawrenceville to create Byham House, its first company-owned student residence. Also that year, PBT installed sprung floors in all five dance studios.
- 2012: PBT unveiled an expanded reception area for school families and visitors. Later that year, PBT acquired its neighboring property to increase parking capacity and lay the footprint for the annex building.
- 2013: The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania awarded a \$1 million Economic Growth Initiative grant for the building project. PBT completed site improvements for the new building and opened an expanded parking lot to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety.
- Oct. 2015: PBT broke ground on the new annex building.
- Sept. 2016: Annex to open to the public.