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**VIRGINIA JOHNSON
ANNOUNCES DEPARTURE AS
DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

**ROBERT GARLAND DESIGNATED ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
BEGINNING WITH 2023-2024 SEASON**

(New York, NY – September 15, 2022) – Bringing to a close a four decade-long chapter of dance history, **Dance Theatre of Harlem** Artistic Director **Virginia Johnson** has announced her retirement from the visionary company, set for the close of the 2022-23 season on June 30, 2023. Her tenure with this powerful presence in the world of ballet includes twelve years in her current role as Artistic Director, preceded by a staggering 28 years as a company member, highlighted by her distinction as a founding member and as a Principal Dancer. As Ms. Johnson becomes Artistic Director Emerita, she will be succeeded as Artistic Director by current acclaimed DTH Resident Choreographer and School Director **Robert Garland**. Mr. Garland will continue in his current roles until he assumes the role of Artistic Director on July 1, 2023, at which time former DTH Principal Dancer **Tai Jimenez**, who following 12 years dancing with DTH became the first Black ballerina elevated to Principal at Boston Ballet in 2006, will become Director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem School.

Personally selected by legendary Dance Theatre of Harlem co-founder **Arthur Mitchell** as his successor and as the company's second-ever Artistic Director in 2009, **Virginia Johnson** was faced with a monumental task upon taking the reins. At the time of her appointment, though the DTH School and Ensemble were still in operation, the professional company had not performed since its disbandment for budgetary reasons in 2004. Under Ms. Johnson's steadfast guidance, **Dance Theatre of Harlem** saw its legacy as an inclusive cultural institution reinvigorated, emphasizing the organization's universal message of empowerment through the arts for all. She has also championed the artistic voices of female choreographers—particularly women of color—during her tenure, as well as leading the art form in diversity efforts through the co-creation of **The Equity Project**.

“To say it is in honor to have played a role in carrying forth the powerful vision laid out by Mr. Mitchell is a profound understatement,” Ms. Johnson said. “So much of who I am as an artist, a

leader, and a person is intertwined with the history and mission of this organization. As much as I have nurtured young dancers and educated audiences and communities through the rigor and beauty of ballet, I have received back tenfold in experiences I will carry with me forever. Together with a group of passionate and skillful individuals, over the past twelve years, we have achieved the impossible. I am eternally humbled to have led the charge in reestablishing this company's role as a leader in the world of dance.”

“Virginia has been absolutely instrumental in making artistic excellence synonymous with the name Dance Theatre of Harlem once again,” says Board Chairman **Ackneil Muldrow III**. “Her history with the company as a dancer, combined with her wealth of knowledge of the world of ballet at large, provided her the perfect proportion of expertise and insight to lead the organization from an uncertain professional future to restored worldwide acclaim. Along with the rest of the Board of Directors, staff, and artists, I have no doubt that Robert will continue the masterful trajectory set in motion by Virginia more than a decade ago.”

New Leadership

Much like Ms. Johnson's appointment to the role of Artistic Director, Resident Choreographer **Robert Garland** is the most natural and qualified successor for the position. He was selected by **Arthur Mitchell** as the company's first Resident Choreographer and has held numerous titles in his storied career with the organization.

Mr. Garland's work both with **Dance Theatre of Harlem** and prestigious companies across the U.S. and around the world, has received high praise from critics and audiences. He is currently creating a new work for San Francisco Ballet set to premiere in January 2023. Mr. Garland has more than earned the mantel of Arthur Mitchell's legacy. He is singularly qualified to carry Mr. Mitchell's vision into the organization's second half century.

“I look forward to the opportunities and challenges that this new venture within the organization will bring,” remarked Mr. Garland. “Through my work as a choreographer and school director, I have seen endless amounts of talent flourish both within and outside the walls of Dance Theatre of Harlem. Leading the charge to further shape the artistic future of this legendary organization gives me a renewed focus to bring our work to communities who need it most.”

Mr. Garland's promotion, and Ms. Jimenez's appointment is a testament to Dance Theatre of Harlem's commitment to its lineage and legacy, as well as to the organization's deliberate approach to succession planning that ensures a continuity of leadership and advancement of its strategic vision for a future that expands upon DTH's values of access, opportunity, and excellence.

Dance Theatre of Harlem kicks off its 2022-2023 tour—its final season under the artistic direction of Virginia Johnson—in Washington, D.C. October 7-8. The itinerary includes 18 engagements from coast to coast, including the company's annual homecoming season at New York City Center from April 19-23, 2023 and DTH's **2023 Vision Gala celebrating Virginia Johnson on April 20th at the Ziegfeld Ballroom**. The 2023-2024 season will mark Mr. Garland's first season of programming for the company in his newly announced position. Visit DanceTheatreofHarlem.org for more information.

About Dance Theatre of Harlem

Virginia Johnson is a founding member of Dance Theatre of Harlem and was one of its principal ballerinas over a career that spanned nearly 30 years. After retiring in 1997, Ms. Johnson went on to found Pointe Magazine and was editor-in-chief for 10 years. A native of Washington, D.C., Ms. Johnson began her training with Therrell Smith. She studied with Mary Day at the Washington School of Ballet and graduated from the Academy of the Washington School of Ballet and went on to be a University Scholar in the School of the Arts at New York University before joining Dance Theatre of Harlem. Ms. Johnson is universally recognized as one of the great ballerinas of her generation and is perhaps best known for her performances in the ballets *Giselle*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Fall River Legend*. She has received such honors as a Young Achiever Award from the National Council of Women, Outstanding Young Woman of America, and the Dance Magazine Award.

Robert Garland, a native of Philadelphia, began his dance training at The Philadelphia School of Dance Arts and the Pennsylvania Ballet. During this time, he also performed with The Philadelphia Dance Company (Philadanco), at the age of 15 years old. Upon graduation from The Juilliard School, he danced for two seasons with Ballet Hispanico, before joining the Dance Theatre of Harlem Company, where he achieved the rank of principal dancer. After creating a work for the DTH School Ensemble, Arthur Mitchell invited Robert Garland to create a work for The Dance Theatre of Harlem Company and appointed him the organization's first Resident Choreographer. Over the years, Mr. Garland has choreographed audience favorites, *Return, New Bach*, and the most recent ballet – *Higher Ground* set to music by Stevie Wonder. He also serves as Director of the DTH School. In addition to choreographing several ballets for DTH, Mr. Garland has also created works for New York City Ballet, Britain's Royal Ballet, Oakland Ballet and many others. His commercial work has included music videos, commercials and short films, including the children's television show "Sesame Street," a Nike commercial featuring New York Yankee Derek Jeter, the NAACP Image Awards, a short film for designer Donna Karan, and the "Charmin Cha-Cha" for Proctor and Gamble. Most recently, Mr. Garland was commissioned to create an original work for the opening of the Lower Manhattan park, Little Island, featuring Misty Copeland and Black ballet dancers from Dance Theatre of Harlem, American Ballet Theatre, and New York City Ballet. Mr. Garland holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from the Juilliard School in New York City.

Tai Jimenez performed as a Principal dancer with Dance Theatre of Harlem where her repertoire included the title roles in *Giselle* and *Firebird* as well as many classical, neo-classical, and contemporary ballets. She also was a principal dancer with Boston Ballet. Jimenez made her Broadway debut as Ivy Smith (Miss Turnstiles) in the revival of *On the Town*, directed by George C. Wolfe. She originated the roles of Fran in Maria Irene Fornes's *Letters from Cuba* and Ysabel in Debbie Allen's *Soul Possessed*. She was a featured dancer at the Academy Awards, the Kennedy Center Honors, and in pop superstar Prince's concert video "Rave Un2 the Year 2000." She also performed as a guest artist with New York City Ballet, Lar Lubovitch, Complexions, Francesca Harper Project, Virginia Ballet Theater, Maryland Ballet Theater, and Lula Washington Dance Theatre. Ms. Jimenez has taught ballet at many institutions including Harvard University, University of Wyoming, the Dance Theatre of Harlem School, Boston Ballet School,

Phillips Academy Andover, Boston Arts Academy, and was an Assistant Professor at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. In addition, she is also a certified yoga instructor. Ms. Jimenez has published articles in Dance Magazine and Pointe Magazine and continues to write. She has graced the cover of Dance Magazine and was profiled in Dance Teacher Magazine.

Dance Theatre of Harlem is a leading dance institution of unparalleled global acclaim, encompassing a world class company, a professional studio school, a leading arts education program - Dancing Through Barriers®, and community engagement activities. Each component of Dance Theatre of Harlem carries a solid commitment towards enriching the lives of young people and adults around the world through the arts. Founded in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook, Dance Theatre of Harlem was considered “one of ballet’s most exciting undertakings” (*The New York Times*, 1971). Shortly after the assassination of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mitchell was inspired to start a school that would offer children — especially those in Harlem, the community in which he was born — the opportunity to learn about dance and the allied arts. Now in its fifth decade, Dance Theatre of Harlem has grown into a multi-cultural dance institution with an extraordinary legacy of providing opportunities for creative expression and artistic excellence that continues to set standards in the performing arts.

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