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Milwaukee Ballet celebrates construction milestone with 'beam signing' ceremony

Baumgartners' \$10 million gift provides foundational support for Ballet's new facility

Milwaukee – September 13, 2018 – Milwaukee Ballet marked a major milestone towards completion of its new home -- the *Baumgartner Center for Dance* -- when guests gathered today to sign the beam that will form the structural heart of the building.

Milwaukee Ballet broke ground on what will become its new home in Milwaukee's Third Ward in early June. Donna and Donald Baumgartner helped make the new facility possible with a transformational gift of \$10 million.

Donna Baumgartner explained that their gift completes the circle on a decades-long commitment to Milwaukee Ballet.

"Donald's first ever contribution to the arts was in the 1970s – and it was a \$3,000 gift to Milwaukee Ballet," said Donna Baumgartner. "It gives us immense pleasure to make this milestone gift more than 40 years later."

The final steel beam installed on the structure, located at 132 N. Jackson Street, has been signed during the past week by Milwaukee Ballet Board Members, donors, dancers, staff, guests, and construction workers. The two-story, 52,000 square foot facility is scheduled to open in fall 2019.

Guests gathered for the beam-signing opportunity before Milwaukee Ballet's Annual Meeting where they learned about a record-setting year from Milwaukee Ballet Chair & President and Capital Campaign Chair Justin Mortara.

"Milwaukee Ballet continues to excel on the stage and in the community," Mortara said. "Our strong earned and contributed revenue results this season and ongoing artistic excellence – including six world premieres – underscore our incredible momentum as we work on our new home and our 50th Anniversary year."

Artistic Director Michael Pink said the Company continues to find innovative ways to present new work to new audiences while maintaining fiscal sustainability.

"We are on the eve of 50 years of delivering exceptional ballet artistry to Milwaukee and beyond. There are numerous areas for growth and inspiration ahead in our artistic offerings, in the community and especially in the important training ground of our School and Academy," said Pink.

The new facility is a significant component of Milwaukee Ballet's capital campaign, now at nearly \$23 million of its \$26 million goal. The capital campaign focuses on each aspect of the Company's mission: artistry, education, and community engagement, while providing an operating reserve fund to support the expenses of running a larger facility.

The ***Baumgartner Center for Dance*** will house the administrative functions of the current headquarters, located at 504 W. National Ave., as well as Company rehearsals and the operations of Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy. The new facility will feature seven studios instead of the current four at the National Ave location as well as improved access for our Tour de Force students with mobility challenges. For the School & Academy, the new space will help reduce class waiting lists and enable the creation of new classes and program offerings.

Today's ceremony caps a very successful 2017-18 season for Milwaukee Ballet Company. Highlights include:

- Record-setting ticket revenue of over \$2.5M including the world premiere *Beauty and the Beast*
- Over 25% growth of Community Engagement, reaching nearly 40,000 people, through various outreach initiatives including the hugely successful Ballet Beat summer program
- Largest Summer Intensive program in more than 20 years with 181 students from 22 states and 4 countries.

The announcement of the Baumgartner's gift by Milwaukee Ballet coincides with the release of Donald Baumgartner's biography *With the Wind at His Back: The Charmed and Charitable Life of Donald Baumgartner*, authored by Kurt Chandler. The book looks back at Baumgartner's family roots and the growth of his philanthropic interests, culminating in the transfer of the ownership of his Milwaukee manufacturing company to his employees in 2016.

About Milwaukee Ballet

Milwaukee Ballet was founded in 1970. Led by Artistic Director Michael Pink, Milwaukee Ballet's mission is to create a rich and diverse community through its inspiring dance performance, education and outreach. Milwaukee Ballet hosts an international company of dancers, and is one of the few companies in the nation to maintain its own orchestra. Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy is the only professional dance school in the Midwest accredited by the National Association of Schools of Dance. Milwaukee Ballet's award-winning Community Engagement department serves more than 38,000 people in Southeastern Wisconsin each year through original, interactive programs. Milwaukee Ballet celebrates its 50th Anniversary in the 2019-20 season.

About the Baumgartner Center for Dance

*The **Baumgartner Center for Dance** is designed by a team from HGA Architects and Engineers, led by Design Principal James Shield, FAIA, John Chapman, Principal-in-Charge, and Andrew Lasca, Project Manager. The due diligence, entitlement and construction process is managed by Catalyst Construction and The DeMichele Company, respectively led by Adam Arndt and Michael DeMichele.*

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