

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Arlene Shuler to step down as President and CEO of New York City Center following 2021 – 2022 Season

December 8, 2021/New York, NY—New York City Center today announced that **Arlene Shuler** will step down as President and CEO following the 2021 – 2022 Season after 19 years at the helm of Manhattan’s first performing arts center. Shuler will be honored for her extraordinary service and dedication to City Center’s founding mission to be a home for the performing arts and provide access for all New Yorkers at the Spring Gala on May 4—the opening night of Encores! *Into the Woods*. The Board of Directors has formed a search committee to find a successor.

Influential Festival of Dance

Arlene Shuler was named President and CEO of New York City Center in June 2003—returning to the historic institution where she had danced as a member of The Joffrey Ballet. At the time, City Center was largely known as a rental house, but Shuler’s impact on the growth of the institution would be immediately felt with the launch of the first Fall for Dance Festival the following year. Shuler conceived, helped to program, and raised the funds necessary to support the largest showcase of dance companies of all types in New York—and with all tickets just \$10, when it was first launched. With the dual goal of building a new audience for the future of dance and providing a crucial platform for many dance companies and artists who might not normally perform in a theater of City Center’s size, the Festival’s impact was immediate. In his closing night review of the inaugural festival, Jack Anderson wrote in *The New York Times*, “Fall for Dance has proved to be the brightest idea to light up the New York dance scene in a long time.”

Having just concluded its 18th season, the Festival remains a phenomenon, with regularly sold-out performances attracting new, younger, and more diverse audiences for dance night after night. Since its



founding, Fall for Dance has grown in scope to include an international array of choreographers and performers and expanded its mission to include commissioning new works from some of today's leading choreographers including Kyle Abraham, Dormeshia, Michelle Dorrance, Mark Morris, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Justin Peck, and Christopher Wheeldon.

Programming Expansion

The success of Fall for Dance led to the continued development of City Center's dance programming that over the years included appearances by international artists Akram Khan, Sylvie Guillem, and Natalia Osipova; Nederlands Dans Theater; Pacific Northwest Ballet; a three-year residency by Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company, until the company disbanded; and the 2010 engagement of Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* which would establish City Center as the New York home of Bourne's company New Adventures. In recognition of her significant contributions to dance, Shuler was awarded the 2009 Capezio Dance Award.

Shuler is also credited for the expansion of City Center's musical theater programming to seven major productions each season. The summer Encores! Off-Center series was created as a complement to the long-standing, Tony-honored Encores! series, with notable productions of Off-Broadway works including *Violet* starring Sutton Foster and Joshua Henry, which transferred to Broadway; *tick, tick...BOOM!* starring Lin Manuel-Miranda, Leslie Odom Jr., and Karen Olivo; and *Little Shop of Horrors* starring Ellen Greene and Jake Gyllenhaal. Additional musical theater presentations have included critically acclaimed productions of *Gypsy* starring Patti LuPone and Laura Benanti; and fall presentations of *Cotton Club Parade* featuring Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and *Sunday in the Park with George* starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Annaleigh Ashford, which all transferred to Broadway.

Even with the theater closed for live performances during the pandemic, Shuler brought artists back on stage to present a robust series of digital programs which reached a global audience in 28 countries and all 50 states. Programs included a digital Fall for Dance Festival with four commissioned works, a holiday concert with Audra McDonald, a repertory program by American Ballet Theatre, and a star-studded concert event led by Sutton Foster. The current 2021-2022 Season, which re-opened City Center after the pandemic with a full calendar of in-person performances, featured an evening of works by legendary choreographer Twyla Tharp and will include the launch of two new annual dance series: Artists at the Center, a program curated by and featuring NYCB Principal Dancer Tiler Peck, and the City Center Dance



Festival which this year showcases New York companies making their triumphant return to the City Center stage—Ballet Hispánico, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Martha Graham Dance Company, and Paul Taylor Dance Company.

Under Shuler’s leadership, City Center also expanded its arts education programs and added community engagement initiatives such as City Center on the Move, which brought artists directly to New Yorkers in their neighborhoods. These programs have grown to serve 11,000 New York City students, teachers, and families each year through in-school workshops and residencies, the Lynne and Richard Pasculano Student Matinees, professional development for educators, and apprenticeship programs committed to building pathways to careers in the arts for candidates underrepresented in the field.

Additional highlights of her remarkable tenure include:

- **Initiating the 2010 – 2011 renovation of the theater** to better serve its artists and audiences and celebrate and restore its distinctive neo-Moorish architecture; and **leading the \$75 million fundraising campaign** which financed the restoration.
- **Launching the landmark 75th Anniversary Season** (2018 – 2019) which paid tribute to the institution’s past and celebrated its singular role in the arts today. Programing highlights included Balanchine: The City Center Years—a festival of the world’s most prestigious ballet companies performing works by George Balanchine that were first created and performed by New York City Ballet at City Center, three visual art commissions, a community outreach program with tap dance superstar Ayodele Casel which toured all five boroughs, and two archival exhibitions.
- **Ensuring the institution’s financial stability** by growing the endowment to \$28 million from \$3 million in 2003.
- **Expanding the institution’s growth** by almost tripling the annual operating budget to \$27.6 million from \$10 million in 2003. City Center has also enjoyed operating surpluses during every year of Shuler’s tenure, even having weathered the 2008 financial crisis and the pandemic.

Arlene Shuler said, “City Center has been part of my life for almost as long as I can remember, first as a young dancer to a frequent audience member and then leading this historic institution for nearly two decades. It has truly been a privilege and the opportunity of my lifetime. To see how much has been accomplished is just so gratifying. None of this could have been achieved without the incredible support



of our Board of Directors, our loyal and generous donors and audiences, the extraordinary artists who have enriched all our lives, and our talented and dedicated staff and crew.”

Stacey Mindich, Board Co-Chair said, "Arlene has been the guiding force behind a true golden age for City Center where she has continued to elevate our programming to new heights season after season and provide a platform for diverse artists and creative voices. Under her leadership, City Center has become a renowned destination for artists and audiences alike."

Richard Witten, Board Co-Chair said, "Arlene's tenure has been transformative. Her passion, dedication, and love for the arts have made City Center a world-class performing arts center for all the people of the City of New York. Thanks to her tireless efforts, the organization is also in an exceptional financial position as it enters its next chapter."

Arlene Shuler began her long and distinguished career in arts administration in Washington, D.C., where she served as program administrator of the dance program at the National Endowment for the Arts. She returned to New York as executive director of Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, and then continued in the field of philanthropy in leadership positions with the Wallace Funds, General Atlantic Partners Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropic Service Company, and the Howard Gilman Foundation. For 11 years Shuler worked at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts as vice president for planning and development and then senior vice president of planning and external affairs. In June 2003 she was named president and CEO of New York City Center. She serves on the advisory board of the Trust for Mutual Understanding and is also a member of the New York State Bar Association. After dancing with The Joffrey Ballet, Shuler attended Columbia University, where she received her B.A. and J.D. degrees.

NEW YORK CITY CENTER has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943.

Manhattan's first performing arts center, City Center was founded by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with the mission of making the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. This commitment continues today through celebrated dance and musical theater series including the Fall for Dance Festival, the Tony-honored Encores! and Encores! Off-Center, and the newest series Artists at the Center and City Center Dance Festival. The distinctive neo-Moorish theater welcomes over 300,000 annual visitors to experience internationally acclaimed artists on the same stage where legends like George Balanchine, Leonard Bernstein, Barbara Cook, José Ferrer, Martha Graham, and Paul Robeson made their mark. Home to a roster of renowned national and international companies including Alvin Ailey



American Dance Theater, City Center's Principal Dance Company, and Manhattan Theatre Club, City Center's dynamic programming, art exhibitions, studio events, and master classes, are complemented by education and community engagement programs that bring the performing arts to over 11,000 New York City students, teachers, and families each year. NYCityCenter.org

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