



For Immediate Release

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**Major Community Initiative Brings American Ballet Theatre Back to Detroit
in Performances of "Romeo and Juliet"**

*ABT Stars Misty Copeland, Isabella Boylston, Herman Cornejo, David Hallberg
and Daniil Simkin Set to Perform*

Feb. 8-11 at the Detroit Opera House

Jan. 9, 2018, Detroit – Michigan Opera Theatre and University Musical Society will present American Ballet Theatre's "[Romeo and Juliet](#)" for five performances Feb. 8-11 at the Detroit Opera House. The world-renowned dance company, led by Artistic Director Kevin McKenzie, includes leading performers Misty Copeland, Isabella Boylston, David Hallberg and Daniil Simkin, among a rotating cast in the lead roles of Romeo, Juliet and Mercutio.

The Shakespeare tragedy of star-crossed lovers comes to life in this rich and sensual interpretation by Kenneth MacMillan, performed to the recognizable score by Sergei Prokofiev.

"As a ballet, the music and movement of 'Romeo and Juliet' further underscore the lyric beauty and passion of the work in a way that can speak emotionally louder than words," said MOT Principal Conductor Stephen Lord. "We look forward to presenting this signature ABT production to Metro Detroit audiences."

Copeland, who made headlines in 2015 as the company's first African-American female principal dancer, will perform Juliet on the Feb. 8 and 11 performances. Other Juliets include Boylston, Hee Seo and Stella Abrera. Cornejo, Hallberg, James Whiteside and Cory Stearns will share the role of Romeo. Simkin, Jeffrey Cirio, Arron Scott and Gabe Stone Shayer will alternate the role of Mercutio.

"As the first dance company to perform on our Detroit Opera House stage in 1996, American Ballet Theatre has a longstanding and special relationship with Southeast Michigan," said MOT

CEO and President Wayne S. Brown. "We are proud of our strong rapport with this prestigious ballet company and are delighted to have them return to our historic theater."

Beyond the performances, MOT and UMS, with support from the Lear Corporation and the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan, have partnered with ABT to increase exposure to the arts in the region. The partnership brought ABT dancers to area schools, universities and ballet studios to speak, perform and teach master classes in November, and a return visit to the region will occur again this week for education and community clinics Jan. 8-9.

MOT and UMS are working with community partners to provide access to area youth who might not otherwise be able to attend. Through a special relationship with the Greater Wayne County Chapter of Links Incorporated, many young dancers will be attending these performances. MOT and UMS are also making complimentary tickets for the Saturday matinee performance available to students and families affiliated with pre-selected community organizations that serve underprivileged area children.

"As UMS and Michigan Opera Theatre seek to expand the impact of dance in Southeast Michigan, we are delighted to partner to bring the American Ballet Theatre back to the region," said UMS President Matthew VanBesien. "We are so proud that we have been able to make up to 1,000 low-cost and free tickets available to underserved communities in our region to attend the Saturday matinee. By working together, UMS and Michigan Opera Theatre are able to do things that neither of us could ever do alone -- including providing support for new audiences to experience one of the very best dance companies in the world."

The upcoming production of "Romeo and Juliet" is part of a multi-year partnership between MOT and UMS to bring the renowned ballet company to Southeast Michigan. The first production, "The Sleeping Beauty," resulted in five sold-out performances in 2016.

In addition to attending a performance, members of the public are invited to audition to take part in the production as a supernumerary. Supernumeraries, or extras, stand on stage in costume with the dancers to fill out the scenes. Roles are simple with no dancing or experience required. ABT is looking for 63 dancers: ladies 14 and up, men 15 and up and boys between 9-12 years old. Auditions will take place Monday, Feb. 5 at 5 p.m., with rehearsal immediately to follow from 7-9 p.m. Rehearsals will take place the following Tuesday and Wednesday from 5 - 9 p.m. and Thursday from 11:15 a.m. - 5 p.m. Those interested can find more details and register to audition online at <http://www.michiganopera.org/working-with-us/dance-auditions/>.

Patrons are also invited to attend the Opening Night Gala on Feb. 8. In addition to a ticket to the performance, the gala includes cocktails at 5 p.m. and a seated dinner at 5:45 p.m. at the Detroit Athletic Club. It also includes an afterglow at the Detroit Opera House immediately following the performance. Tickets begin at \$2500 per couple. For more information, contact Assia Likomanov at alikomanov@motopera.org or (313) 237-3268.

All performances take place at the Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. A complimentary dance talk is offered to all ticketed patrons one hour before each performance.

Principal casting slated for each of the performances includes:

Thursday, Feb. 8 at 7:30 PM

Misty Copeland, *Juliet* ([bio](#))

Herman Cornejo, *Romeo* ([bio](#))

Jeffrey Cirio, *Mercutio* ([bio](#))

Friday., Feb. 9 at 7:30 PM

Hee Seo, *Juliet* ([bio](#))

Cory Stearns, *Romeo* ([bio](#))

Daniil Simkin, *Mercutio* ([bio](#))

Saturday, Feb. 10 at 2 PM

Stella Abrera, *Juliet* ([bio](#))

James Whiteside, *Romeo* ([bio](#))

Arron Scott, *Mercutio* ([bio](#))

Saturday, Feb. 10 at 7:30 PM

Isabella Boylston, *Juliet* ([bio](#))

David Hallberg, *Romeo* ([bio](#))

Gabe Stone Shayer, *Mercutio* ([bio](#))

Sunday, Feb. 11 at 2:30 PM

Misty Copeland, *Juliet* ([bio](#))

Herman Cornejo, *Romeo* ([bio](#))

Jeffrey Cirio, *Mercutio* ([bio](#))

The 2017-18 dance season is made possible by the Lear Corporation.

Purchase Tickets: Tickets for the ballet are \$39-\$139.

www.MichiganOpera.org

(313) 237-7464

Detroit Opera House (1526 Broadway, Detroit)

www.ums.org

(734) 764-2538

Michigan League Ticket Office (911 N University Ave, Ann Arbor)

For more information visit: <http://www.michiganopera.org/dance/romeo-juliet/> or ums.org/abt.

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About Michigan Opera Theatre

Michigan Opera Theatre (Wayne S. Brown, President and CEO; Stephen Lord, Principal Conductor, Dr. David DiChiera, Founder and Artistic Director Emeritus), one of the nation's most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, is committed to presenting opera and dance of the highest artistic caliber. Founded in 1971, the company's mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. Visit the website at www.michiganopera.org.

About UMS

A recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Michigan, presenting over 70 music, theater, and dance performances by professional touring artists each season, along with over 100 free educational activities. UMS is committed to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness. Since 1990, the organization has co-commissioned and supported the production of nearly 80 new or reimagined works. Matthew VanBesien became president of UMS in July 2017.

About American Ballet Theatre

Recognized by an act of the United States Congress as America's National Ballet Company®, American Ballet Theatre is one of the great dance companies in the world. Few ballet

companies equal ABT for its combination of size, scope and outreach. Since its founding in 1940, ABT annually tours the United States, performing for more than 400,000 people and is the only major cultural institution to do so. It has made more than 30 international tours to 50 countries and has been sponsored by the State Department of the United States on many of these engagements.