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KAATSBAAN | CULTURAL PARK FOR DANCE

ANNOUNCES

STELLA ABRERA

NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2020

Signaling a Complete Generational Change in Leadership for the 30-Year Old Organization

(November 18, 2019 – Tivoli, NY) Kevin McKenzie, Co-founder and Chair of the Board of Trustees, and Sonja Kostich, Executive Director, of Kaatsbaan | cultural park for dance announced today that Stella Abrera will join the organization as its new Artistic Director, effective January 1, 2020. Joining Ms. Kostich at the prominent 30-year-old Hudson Valley dance organization, Ms. Abrera’s appointment will expand the portfolio of Kaatsbaan as the second step in its strategic plan. With distinct histories in dance, Ms. Abrera and Ms. Kostich will unite their efforts to champion the development of varied programs and cultural offerings. Partnering and reporting to an influential board of trustees, the Artistic and Executive Directors will spearhead major initiatives to contribute to both the national and international dance communities, as well as the Hudson Valley arts landscape, cultivating relationships with a variety of external stakeholders and community partners.

Ms. Kostich, who assumed the role of Executive Director in December 2018, will continue overseeing the organization’s management, operations, and long-term strategy to realize Kaatsbaan’s redevelopment and drive the organization to its next level of growth and service to the community.

Ms. Abrera’s role will actively be associated with connecting artists to Kaatsbaan and its unique resources, and to support their creative growth and the development of their projects. This will include teaching and coaching dancers via her role as Artistic Director of Kaatsbaan’s ballet intensives and Pro-Studio program. Ms. Abrera has decades of experience in the dance community both as a respected Principal Dancer with American Ballet Theatre and as an influential spokesperson for a diverse and global community of artists.
Ms. Kostich says, “Stella is an extraordinary figure in the cultural world and an inspiring advocate for Kaatsbaan, both as a female Filipino-American leader and as an artist, and I’m elated to welcome her as my new partner at Kaatsbaan. As Kaatsbaan continues to grow and fulfill its mission to be the cultural park for dance and a cultural destination in the Hudson Valley – the home for dance and related arts – Stella will play a crucial part in the success and prosperity of those efforts.”

“Dancing at American Ballet Theatre for 24 years has been a realization of a dream, and now I’m inspired to impact the art form from the other side of the proscenium, as Kaatsbaan’s Artistic Director. I’m honored by this appointment, and I’m excited to partner with Executive Director Sonja Kostich, that rare individual who has reached the peak of achievement as both an artist and businessperson. Together, we’ll endeavor to connect a broader community to this beautiful cultural sanctuary, and to help Kaatsbaan realize its potential as a major artistic presence in the Northeast, and beyond,” says Ms. Abrera.

“The Board of Trustees is thrilled to welcome Stella Abrera to our Kaatsbaan family as our new Artistic Director of Kaatsbaan,” shared Board Chair, Kevin McKenzie. “Stella brings the professional experience and enthusiasm perfectly suited to this role as our organization moves forward in our five-year strategic plan, and will make an ideal counterpart to our Executive Director, Sonja Kostich. In short, we have a dynamic new leadership team combining Ms. Abrera’s vast artistic experience paired with Ms. Kostich’s diverse background in both dance and business/finance.

As of January 2020, Gregory Cary, co-founder of Kaatsbaan will step down from his position as Artistic Director to assist this next generation of leaders in the realization of Kaatsbaan’s 5-year plan, moving away from daily operations and into the role of Senior Advisor of Capital Projects.

Martine van Hamel, co-founder of Kaatsbaan will take on the role of Principal Ballet Teacher for Kaatsbaan’s ballet and special weekend intensives.

Bentley Roton, co-founder of Kaatsbaan retired from daily operations in 2019.

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Stella Abrera is from South Pasadena, California. In 1996, after winning the gold medal in London's Adeline Genee Awards, she joined American Ballet Theatre’s corps de ballet. She was promoted to Soloist in 2001 and to Principal in 2015. She has guested with companies such as The Australian Ballet, The Washington Ballet, The Royal New Zealand Ballet, and Ballet Philippines; toured internationally with Stiefel and Stars and Angel Corella and Friends; performed at the Kennedy Center Honors 2018 (honoring Carmen De Lavallade), TED Conference (California), The Vail Dance Festival, Ballet Sun Valley, Youth America Grand Prix Stars of Today Meet the Stars of Tomorrow, and several other galas and festivals. She is a proud Capezio ambassador.

Abrera’s charity work includes founding Steps Forward for the Philippines, an organization that partnered with Operation USA to rebuild and supply a school in the wake of 2013’s Super Typhoon Haiyan. She cofounded Artists for Aveni, which benefits the Aveni Foundation’s mission to cure cancer. She also curated and danced in a series of galas in Manila in 2018 and 2019 benefitting the economically disadvantaged yet gifted Filipino children of CENTEX (Center of Excellence) elementary schools in the Philippines, which resulted in the building of the Stella Abrera Dance and Music Hall in Batangas. She is also a frequent performer in galas for Dancers Responding to Aids and Dance Against Cancer.

Abrera teaches master classes throughout the US and abroad, and serves as Guest Ballet Mistress for American Ballet Theatre Studio Company. She studied at Long Island University, and at Harvard University through its “Crossover into Business” program.

Ms. Abrera's awards and nominations include:
Benois de la Danse Nomination for The Sleeping Beauty | 2017
New York State Assembly recognition for service to the community | 2017
Woman of the Year recognition from the Philippine Consulate General in New York | 2016
California State Senate recognition for contributions to the performing arts | 2015
Gold Medal, R.A.D.’s Adeline Genee Awards | 1995
Kaatsbaan | cultural park for dance aims to support a diverse range of dance artists and their most ambitious projects, providing a vital environment for residency and retreat. Since 1990, Kaatsbaan has developed into a robust residency, performance, and education facility, with three state-of-the-art studios, a dancers’ inn, a gatehouse offering kitchen facilities and additional accommodations, and a 160-seat black box theater with a performance floor the size of the Metropolitan Opera House stage. These facilities sit on a beautiful 153-acre Hudson River-adjacent property. Each year, Kaatsbaan presents up to 100 cultural events, programs, and performances and serves over 200 dance artists with subsidized creative and technical residencies of 1-5 weeks.

More information can be found at [www.kaatsbaan.org](http://www.kaatsbaan.org).

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