

PRESS CONTACT:Sara García, SGarcia@NYCityCenter.orgJoe Guttridge, JGuttridge@NYCityCenter.org**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

New York City Center announces \$5 million gift from Lisa and Richard Witten

City Center establishes permanent endowment for dance programming

**City Center's 2026 – 2027 Season begins Sep 22
with the Fall for Dance Festival**



Richard and Lisa Witten with Stanford Makishi; Photo by Benjamin Miller

SEP 17, 2026 (NEW YORK, NY) – NEW YORK CITY CENTER today announced a transformational \$5 million gift from outgoing Board Chair **Richard Witten** and his wife and fellow Board member **Lisa Witten**. The gift will establish a permanent endowment for dance presentations while also providing support for education and community engagement programming. In recognition of this extraordinary

gift, City Center will name its Artistic Director for Dance position, currently held by **Stanford Makishi**, the **Witten Family Artistic Director for Dance**.

“City Center is proud to be a premier home for dance and musical theater, dedicated to making the arts accessible to all New Yorkers,” said **Michael S. Rosenberg**, President & CEO. “Our continued success is due in large part to Lisa and Richard’s generosity and steadfast leadership. This remarkable gift reflects their unwavering support to strengthen our programming and grow the impact of our education and community engagement work across the City.”

“City Center has been an important home for dance since our founding in 1943,” said **Stanford Makishi**, Witten Family Artistic Director for Dance. “Lisa and Richard’s generous gift provides us with the resources to continue to present world-renowned dance companies, invite international artists to share their perspectives, and provide artists with essential, long-term support. I am honored to have their commitment to City Center’s mission and programming reflected in my title.”

“We have always believed that dance is central to what makes City Center such a special place, and we have tremendous admiration for Stanford and the vision, warmth, and artistry he brings to the institution,” said **Lisa and Richard Witten**. “It is deeply meaningful to us to support the future of dance at City Center and to help ensure that extraordinary artists and performances continue to inspire and engage audiences for generations to come.”

Lisa and Richard Witten are long-standing, passionate supporters of the arts. Lisa first became involved with City Center as a member of the Dance Council and later as a member of the Board of Directors since 2010. She has been a School Groups guide for New York City school children at the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 2009 and is also a member of the HICC Cancer Advisory Council and Chair of the Women's Health Care Council at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. Richard became Co-Chair, alongside Stacey Mindich, in 2013, joining his wife Lisa on the City Center Board of Directors. In 2022, he was named Chair, a position he held through the 2025 – 2026 Season. Richard also serves as Special Advisor to the President of Columbia University, a position he assumed after retiring as Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University. He is the Founder of Columbia Entrepreneurship; Co-Chair of the Columbia University Medical Center Board of Advisors; a member of the Boards of the American Museum of Natural History, the Harlem Children’s Zone (Emeritus), and the Columbia University Investment Management Corporation. He is also the Founder and Senior Managing Director of The Orienta Group and a retired General Partner of Goldman Sachs & Co. Together, Lisa and Richard helped



establish City Center's Artistic Innovation Fund in 2015, allowing City Center to take artistic risks and pursue unique presentations that engage new audiences. Their most recent support to expand the institution's education and community engagement initiatives has enabled City Center to reach more New Yorkers of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Stanford Makishi was appointed to his current position at City Center in 2021 after serving as vice president for programming since 2015. He began at the organization in 2011 as associate producer of its Fall for Dance Festival. Makishi danced with Trisha Brown from 1992 to 2006 and has taught and restaged her work internationally. He also served as artistic advisor for the Ringling International Arts Festival in Sarasota, executive director of the Baryshnikov Arts Center, director of programs at the Asian Cultural Council, and director of creative services at Carnegie Hall.

New York City Center's 2026 - 2027 Season opens with the Fall for Dance Festival (Sep 22 – Oct 3), followed by The Australian Ballet | *Oscar*® (Oct 8 – 11), and Annual Gala Presentation *In the Heights* (Oct 28 – Nov 15). For a full calendar, visit [NYCityCenter.org](https://nycitycenter.org).

Tickets from \$45 (fees included) can be purchased online at [NYCityCenter.org](https://nycitycenter.org), by calling 212.581.1212, or in person at the City Center Box Office. For audience members 40 years of age and under, **Access Club** offers a limited number of \$28 tickets (fees included) to City Center productions. For more information and to enroll, visit [NYCityCenter.org/Access](https://nycitycenter.org/Access). New York City Center is located at 131 W 55th St between Sixth and Seventh avenues.

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NEW YORK CITY CENTER (Michael S. Rosenberg, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city for more than 80 years. The distinctive Neo-Moorish building was founded by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia in 1943 as Manhattan's first performing arts center with the mission of making the best in theater, dance, and music affordable and accessible to all audiences. This commitment continues today through celebrated dance and musical theater series like the Fall for Dance Festival, Artists at the Center, the Tony-honored Encores! series, and the annual season by Principal Dance Company Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. City Center's affordable ticket programs like Access Club, Community Ticket Initiative, and Lynn & Richard Pasculano Student Matinees, welcome audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to experience internationally acclaimed artists including Kyle Abraham, Ayodele Casel, Manhattan Theatre Club, Hugo Marchand, Nederlands Dans Theater, and Twyla Tharp, on the same stage where legends made their mark. Dedicated to a culture built on the values of curiosity,



collaboration, accessibility, and inclusivity, City Center's dynamic programming, art exhibitions, and studio events are complemented by a full slate of education and community engagement programs that bring the performing arts to thousands of New York City students, teachers, and families every year.

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