



Media Contact:
Abby Linney, abby@elmorepr.com
713-524-0661

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Hobby Center appoints Deborah Lugo as first Vice President of Programming and Education

HOUSTON— March 28, 2023 — The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts today announced Deborah Lugo as Vice President of Programming and Education. In this position, Lugo will serve as the artistic lead for the Hobby Center driving creative vision and strategy execution for programming, education, and community engagement initiatives. With 17 years of experience in performing arts and education, Lugo brings a deep level of expertise to this new, mission-driven position as the Hobby Center moves into its third decade of operation.

As Vice President of Programming and Education, Lugo is responsible for developing innovative, dynamic, and diverse arts and education experiences for Houstonians. In keeping with the Hobby Center’s mission to expand Houston’s reputation as a world-class cultural center, Lugo will drive the organization’s collaborative efforts with Houston’s artists and arts organizations through a lens of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility, supporting the overall growth and sustainability of the arts ecosystem in our region.

“We see tremendous opportunity to evolve our programming, education, and community engagement initiatives,” said Mark Folkes, President and CEO of the Hobby Center. “Deborah’s passion, strategic creativity and deep connection to the Houston community will bring the Hobby Center’s programs to a new level of impact.”

Lugo is an established arts and education leader recognized for building exemplary institutions with a collaborative and inclusive approach. In her role as the first Executive Director of Mercury Chamber Orchestra, Lugo led the organization as it grew from a young Baroque ensemble to a renowned chamber orchestra. As the founding Executive Director of Arts Connect Houston, Lugo built a community of more than 90 partner organizations from diverse sectors, aligned in the mission of expanding equitable access to the arts for students across Houston. Originally from Puerto Rico, Lugo holds a Master in Public Policy from Princeton University with a focus in arts nonprofit and philanthropy, and a Bachelor in Violin Performance from Florida International University.

“I am profoundly committed to applying, weaving, and leveraging the transformative power of the performing arts through meaningful experiences and active participation to build a more connected community,” said Lugo. “I am honored to join the Hobby Center and excited to broaden its impact as a beacon of the arts for all Houstonians, while highlighting and advancing artists and the overall arts ecosystem in our city.”

Since opening in 2002, the Hobby Center has been a driver of performing arts activity in the Houston region connecting Houston audiences to the highest quality live arts experiences and welcoming over 400,000 audience members through its doors annually. The Hobby Center is a national leader in accessibility programming as the first major performing arts center in the country to introduce sensory-friendly performances of touring Broadway with Disney’s *The Lion King* in 2012. The Discovery Series has been a cornerstone educational program of the Hobby Center, introducing thousands of Houston area students to free arts programming each season through performances in Zilkha Hall by local and national arts organizations.

As the organization embarks on its third decade of operations, a strategic planning process has been launched with the goal of identifying how the Hobby Center can be a catalyst for the continued improvement of the arts ecosystem in Houston. Lugo, as Vice President of Programming and Education, will be a key leader in the development and implementation of this plan.

###

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts opened in 2002 to expand Houston’s reputation as a world-class cultural center by providing a premier performing arts venue, fostering accessibility to the performing arts and promoting arts education, with an emphasis on musical theatre. The campus houses two theaters including the 2,650-seat Sarofim Hall and the 500-seat Zilkha Hall. Delivering a best-in-class patron experience, the Hobby Center welcomes over 400,000 audience members annually to engage with high-quality arts programming including the Memorial Hermann Broadway at the Hobby Center series. The Hobby Center is also home to a full season of musical theatre produced by Principal Resident Company Theatre Under the Stars, as well as a variety of diverse performances from both Houston-based and touring artists and companies. Education and accessibility initiatives are central to the Hobby Center’s impact in Houston through programs like the Discovery Series that welcomes thousands of students to performances every season.