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**Media Contact:** Motley Crew Media for the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts  
Nicole Shiro | 512.740.6665 | [nicole.shiro@motleycrewmedia.com](mailto:nicole.shiro@motleycrewmedia.com)  
Amy S. Layton | 512.695.0799 | [amy.layton@motleycrewmedia.com](mailto:amy.layton@motleycrewmedia.com)

## **THE HOBBY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS EXPANDS EXXONMOBIL DISCOVERY SERIES FOR 2024-25 SEASON**

*An Estimated 20K Houston Area Fifth-Grade Students to Experience Performances  
by Local Artists and Arts Organizations*

**Houston, TX – The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts** continues to expand its *ExxonMobil Discovery Series* to serve an estimated 20,000 students in the 2024-25 season, doubling the number of performances previously offered.

The *ExxonMobil Discovery Series* welcomes Greater Houston fifth-grade students to experience live theatre, music, dance, and more by Houston-based artists and arts organizations. Offered free of charge—including bus transportation—to all participants, the Hobby Center works with schools to coordinate all logistics and cover costs, reducing barriers to arts access. After serving 118 schools during the inaugural 2023-24 season, primarily from Houston, Alief, and Spring ISDs, the program’s expansion will now also serve Aldine, Pasadena, and Dickinson ISDs with other partnerships in the works.

"As Houston’s Performing Arts Center our role is to open students’ minds through the arts and help them *discover* their own creativity, self-expression and belonging," said Deborah Lugo, Hobby Center Vice President of Programming and Education. "Houston has an incredible array of artists who through their craft are experts in educating students via the plethora of disciplines and educational approaches the arts provide. For the 2024-25 school year, we are honored to have selected nine organizations to partner with us in this work, including new collaborations with DACAMERA, FLY Dance, Houston Contemporary Dance Company, Open Dance Project and artist ShaWanna Renee Rivon, as we continue to expand the series. We are excited to make the ExxonMobil Discovery Series a staple of what fifth-grade students participate in every year, ensuring every student has a chance to participate in this lived arts experience before they reach middle school."

Focused on serving fifth graders during a key developmental stage of life, performances not only expose students to the arts, but also provide an educational opportunity beyond the classroom. Pre- and post-performance learning materials align with Texas teaching objectives allowing teachers to create connections and integrate arts experiences into their classroom activities.

"The Hobby Center’s partnership with renowned artisans has provided a unique opportunity to our students to learn about local history and, in turn, about how they themselves can impact the future," said Susan Chacko, Assistant Principal at Miller Intermediate (Alief ISD). "At a performance this past

season, one student asked a performer, 'Did you do all this for us?' Yes, the Hobby Center did! I highly recommend this great experience for all students! Walk away touched, walk away changed!"

Early exposure to the arts develops students' creativity, communication, relationship-building, and leadership skills. It nurtures the capacity for critical thinking that is vital to success in a range of fields including science, engineering, technology, healthcare, and law. Beyond this key educational impact, childhood participation cultivates a lifelong appreciation for the arts in today's students and tomorrow's artists and audiences.

The *ExxonMobil Discovery Series* leverages the Hobby Center assets to amplify impact for students and educators, as well as other arts organizations, engaging a broader audience and highlighting diverse performers across all disciplines of the performing arts while providing infrastructure for education and outreach.

"The *ExxonMobil Discovery Series* provides a unique opportunity for us to intimately engage with students and teachers from all over the city," said Harrison Guy, Founder and Artistic Director Urban Souls Dance. "As an organization dedicated to telling local Black history, we know these experiences reach far beyond the stage. In 2023, we saw a spark ignite as students learned of the greatness that is Black Houston."

"The Hobby Center's *ExxonMobil Discovery Series* not only serves thousands of children who otherwise may not have access to live performing arts, but also builds a community of arts partners who create a more accessible and stronger blueprint for arts education in Houston," said Kinga Ferguson, Executive Director of Ars Lyrica Houston. "We look forward to continuing our ten-year collaboration during the 2024-25 season."

### **The ExxonMobil Discovery Series 2024-25 Season:**

Week 1: Theater

***Pick Me Last* starring The Ensemble Theatre | Sept 23-25**

Week 2: Hip-Hop Dance

***SYMPHONIC FLY* starring Fly Dance Company | Oct 8-10**

Week 3: Music

***Diabelli 200* starring Musiqa & University of Houston IUCRC BRAIN Center | Oct 22-24**

Week 4: Dance

***Exploration of Sensation* starring Houston Contemporary Dance Company | Nov 5-7**

Week 5: Music

***The Science of Sound* starring DACAMERA | Nov 12-14**

Week 6: Music - history of voice and percussion

***Origines Program* starring Jesus Pacheco & Cecy Duarte from Ars Lyrica | Jan 14-16**

Week 7: Dance Theatre

***The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* starring Open Dance Project | Jan 28-30**

Week 8: Theater

***ShaWanna Emancipation!* | Feb 11-13**

Week 9: Dance Theater

***Colored Carnegie* starring **Urban Dance Company** | Feb 25-27**

**The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts** serves as a connector, convenor and incubator for all Houston audiences, artmakers and arts organizations. Opened in 2002, 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 ExxonMobil Discovery Series that welcomes thousands of students to performances every season. Please visit [TheHobbyCenter.org](http://TheHobbyCenter.org). Follow the Hobby Center on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

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