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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Hobby Center Announces Established Houston Arts Leader Mark Folkes as President & CEO

Folkes will provide strategic leadership and drive deeper community engagement as the Hobby Center builds on its first 20 years of success

HOUSTON—July 27, 2022—The Hobby Center Foundation is proud to announce the appointment of Mark Folkes as President & CEO of the Hobby Center effective August 22, 2022. Folkes joins the nonprofit organization as it celebrates its 20th anniversary, bringing with him a strong, personal commitment to enhancing Houston’s arts landscape and ensuring the Hobby Center remains a premier state-of-the-art venue for the performing arts in Houston.

Folkes is a community-focused arts leader with a deep, proven history of civic engagement in Houston. During his time as Managing Director of Stages, Folkes successfully led the company through a \$35.8 million capital campaign to build a transformative new three-theater campus, The Gordy, that opened in January 2020. During his tenure, the operating budget and subscriber audience nearly tripled, in addition to dramatic growth of contributed revenues that led to new investments across the organization. Prior to this, Folkes served as Senior Director, Development, for the Houston Symphony helping to raise over \$16 million annually in support of operations, sustainability, and endowment. In his most recent position as Chief Advancement Officer for Greater Houston Community Foundation, Folkes led the Advancement and Donor Relations team while continuing to increase the philanthropic impact of the Foundation through work with donors and clients.

“Arts and culture are at the center of our civic identity. Houston has so much to be proud of for fostering a dynamic and diverse arts ecosystem, and the Hobby Center is, in many ways, at the center of this progress,” said Folkes. “The Hobby Center is well positioned to become an even stronger community partner to Houston artists and audiences, and I am excited to lead the team to help deepen our impact in presenting engaging performing arts experiences for all Houstonians.”

The Hobby Center Foundation Board of Directors conducted a comprehensive search for the Hobby Center’s new President & CEO beginning January 2022, with an executive search process guided by Bruce Thibodeau, president of Arts Consulting Group.

“We are delighted to welcome Mark Folkes to the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. With a passion for the performing arts, an impressive business acumen, and strong ties to the Houston community, Mark stood out as the right candidate for the position. There is no doubt he will be an outstanding leader for the Hobby Center for many years to come,” said Rob Doty, Chairman of Board of the Hobby Center Foundation. “I would like to personally thank our search committee – Steve Ash, Kimberly Cutchall, Matt Henneman, and Lauren Reid – for the many hours they contributed to considering numerous candidates from across the country. Their contribution to this process has been immeasurable.”

“There is an amazing group of Houstonians driving forward the work of the Hobby Center, one that I am proud to join,” added Folkes. “I look forward to partnering with the Board and team to continue to build the Hobby Center as a thriving hub for the performing arts in Houston.”

Folkes has worked for a variety of other arts organizations including Canada’s National Arts Centre, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, and Houston Grand Opera. He is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) and holds Master of Business Administration and Master of Arts, Arts Administration degrees from the University of Cincinnati. Originally from Canada, Folkes completed his undergraduate studies in theatre at the University of Waterloo and the Canadian College of Performing Arts.

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The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts is operated by the Hobby Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Its mission is to expand Houston’s reputation as a world-class cultural center by providing a premier performing arts facility, fostering accessibility to the performing arts and promoting arts education, with an emphasis on musical theatre. The complex houses two performance chambers, an on-site restaurant, Diana American Grill, and an on-premise parking garage.