

2024 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 111

BY REPRESENTATIVE DAVIS

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend Molly Buchmann and Sharon Mathews on the occasion of their retirement as artistic directors of Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre.

WHEREAS, Molly Buchmann and Sharon Mathews have led the nonprofit Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre (BRBT) since 1976 when founder Elissa Fuchs awarded the shared honor and responsibility during a curtain call on the LSU Union Theatre stage; and

WHEREAS, Molly and Sharon have since created numerous notable works, trained thousands of dancers, brought world-renowned guest artists to Louisiana, and earned incredible honors including the Governor's Award for Outstanding Large Arts Organization in 2004, the Mayor-President's Award for Excellence in the Arts in 1999, and the John W. Barton, Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award in 2007; and

WHEREAS, Buchmann and Mathews created the nationally-acclaimed holiday classic *The Nutcracker – A Tale from the Bayou*; the innovative production retells the classic story through the eyes of a young girl from the Louisiana bayou; and

WHEREAS, Buchmann and Mathews created a partnership with the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra to offer live music from the original Tchaikovsky score for this annual production, which features a stunning bayou scene, an elaborate Louisiana mansion, a snowy oak alley, a castle based on the Louisiana Old State Capitol, and world-renowned guest dancers performing with BRBT's company and hundreds of Louisiana children; the unique Louisiana spin on the popular ballet celebrated its thirtieth anniversary of performances in December 2023 while entertaining nearly six thousand patrons in the Baton Rouge River Center Theatre; and

WHEREAS, under the direction of Buchmann and Mathews, the Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre has commissioned works by Martha Graham, including *Panorama*, which used thirty dancers from across the Baton Rouge area performing with the Martha Graham Dance Ensemble; and

WHEREAS, community outreach has been a major focus of the Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre during the tenure of Buchmann and Mathews; outreach programs include Youth Ballet, a summer tour program that offers free performances at libraries, community centers, hospitals, and nursing homes; school-day matinees; Clara's Closet Nutcracker Scholarships; Ballet Experience, which provides free performance tickets to children and other nonprofits; and Ballet for Every Body, which cultivates new dance enthusiasts with its message of inclusivity; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Buchmann is the co-owner of The Dancers' Workshop and former head of dance for the Louisiana State University Department of Theatre, where she developed the current dance minor program; she has choreographed more than sixty musicals for professional, community, and university theatres as well as ballet and modern works for the Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre; she holds a master's degree in dance and is an American Ballet Theatre certified teacher; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Mathews is also co-owner of The Dancers' Workshop; from 1976 until 2014, she served as director of dance for Baton Rouge Magnet High School, and she holds a bachelor of science in education and a master of science in dance from Louisiana State University; she has been recognized as the Outstanding Dance Educator by the Louisiana Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and she is a member of numerous civic boards and committees; and

WHEREAS, Molly Buchmann and Sharon Mathews are both worthy of the highest recognition for their incredible careers.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Molly Buchmann and Sharon Mathews on the occasion of their retirement after forty-eight years as artistic directors of Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre and does hereby extend sincerest wishes that they both prosper in all of their endeavors as they begin a new journey in retirement.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE