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**RICHMOND BALLET AND THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS  
PARTNER FOR THE 2018/19 MINDS IN MOTION PROGRAM**

**Richmond, VA** – Richmond Ballet is pleased to announce that the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) is serving as the 2018/19 community partner for the Ballet’s acclaimed community engagement program *Minds In Motion* (MIM). This partnership is focused on the museum’s permanent African Art collection with supplemental support from their special exhibit, *Congo Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa* which remains on view through Feb. 24, 2019. VMFA was the MIM program’s very first community partner back in 1996, when the inaugural MIM students celebrated *A Dancing “Tour” of The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*.

Through *Minds In Motion*, Richmond Ballet creates a bridge for elementary school students to gain a greater understanding of themselves through dance, classroom curriculum, community partnerships, and professional performances. As part of the MIM/VMFA partnership, fourth graders from 14 elementary schools in the Richmond Metro area and 6 in Charlottesville will learn the importance and art of oral traditions through folktales originating from the continent of Africa. Students will gain an understanding of how the wisdom and lessons from the past transcend time and can resonate in our own lives today. The geography of the African continent, with its vast differences in climate, terrain, and cultures, will also be featured throughout the students’ lessons.

“We really want to drive home the point that stories bring people together and that we all have our own stories to share,” explains MIM Director Jordan Glunt. “And for many of the African cultures, the stories that are passed down by the elders and master storytellers, or Griots, are to help teach moral lessons, to explain why things are the way they are in nature and life, and to pass down their culture from generation to generation. By highlighting key pieces from the VMFA collection, including the Linguist Staff, Chi Wara Headdress, Serpent Mask, Kente Cloth, and The King’s Robe, students will see and learn about tangible pieces that will help fuel their understanding and inspiration.”

“The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and Richmond Ballet share a vision of inspiring youth across the state through interactive experiences in the arts,” said VMFA Director Alex Nyerges. “It is our great honor to partner with Richmond Ballet once again on such a noteworthy initiative, and we are especially pleased that this year’s program will highlight our world-class exhibition, *Congo Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa*, which includes more than 130 rare Congolese masks.”

On Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, the MIM Ambassadors, an audition-based group consisting of former MIM students, performed their story of *Anansi the Spider* from the Ashanti culture at VMFA. Thanks to the generosity of VMFA, current MIM students will have the opportunity to visit the permanent African Art collection as well as the *Congo*

*Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa* exhibit in person. The VMFA and *MIM* partnership will culminate at the students' final performances in May 2019 at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Performing Arts Center in Charlottesville and Dominion Energy Center in Richmond, where the 1500+ student performers will share their new knowledge of dance, the African culture, and how stories from the past can and should still influence us today.

### **About *Minds In Motion***

Richmond Ballet's acclaimed *Minds In Motion (MIM)*, comprised of year-long programs, two-week residencies, and summer camps, reaches over 2,000 students locally in Richmond, Chesterfield, and Independent Schools, statewide in Charlottesville and Portsmouth, and internationally in Israel each year. Professional teaching artists and musicians bring their love and experience of dance to each *MIM* student while embodying one the Ballet's core beliefs that dance has a special and unique power to uplift our lives and to reinforce community bonds. The young dancers jump, twist, shake, and stomp as they come together from all walks of life to share a transformative, meaningful arts experience that is the only program of its kind in the Commonwealth. Through the audition-based Ambassador program, former *MIM* students receive scholarships to continue their dance training at School of Richmond Ballet and perform as representatives of the *MIM* program at community events. The 18/19 *MIM* schools include Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School, Bellevue Elementary, Bon Air Elementary, Burnley-Moran Elementary, Clark Elementary, Greenbrier Elementary, Hopkins Elementary, Jackson-Via Elementary, JB Fisher Elementary, John B Cary Elementary, Johnson Elementary, Linwood Holton Elementary, Mary Munford Elementary, Sabot at Stony Point, St. Benedict Catholic School, St. Michael's Episcopal School, The Steward School, Venable Elementary, Westover Hills Elementary, and William Fox Elementary.

To learn more about *Minds In Motion*, call 804.344.0906 x223 or visit [richmondballet.com/mim](http://richmondballet.com/mim).

### **About The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 40,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris, and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting, and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan, and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).

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