

## CASE STUDY



Principal Karina González in Jiří Kylián's Stepping Stones.  
Photo by Amitava Sarkar (2017).

# Harlequin Floors Assists With Recovery in Aftermath of Disaster

## Summary

Houston Ballet's Center for Dance, located in Houston's downtown Theater District, is the largest professional dance facility in the United States. The six-story, 115,000 square-foot building is home to the professional company, the training academy and features nine dance studios and a black box theater known as the Dance Lab. The nearby Wortham Theater Center is Houston Ballet's home theater and the company's primary performance venue.

In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey dropped unprecedented amounts of rainfall on the city of Houston. Over 40 inches of rain drenched the region causing substantial flooding in the Theater District area. The Center for Dance sustained significant water damage destroying the floors in both the Dance Lab and the "Little Brown" Studio. The Houston Ballet team soon discovered that their home theater, the Wortham Theater Center, also suffered damage. Over 15 feet of water in the basement rose all the way to the ceiling, leaving water on the stage level. The country's fifth largest professional ballet company was left without rehearsal spaces and a performance venue for the upcoming season.

## Challenge

With the beginning of the 2017-2018 season just around the corner Houston Ballet was facing not just one but two crises post disaster. It was imperative to repair the dance studios and obtain a sprung floor for their new performance home as soon as possible.

### *Center for Dance Rehearsal Studios*

The company was determined to get operations in the Center for Dance up and running quickly not only for themselves but also for nightly events for the community. In the flooded studios, the original Harlequin vinyl and sprung floors were damaged beyond repair. When crews began ripping up the floors there was a considerable amount of water underneath causing another issue as humidity and moisture in the space could delay installation.

### *Performance Theater*

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts was decided upon as the temporary performance venue. The production team realized that the stage did not have a sprung floor, however, which is unacceptable for professional ballet companies. Having already lost performances at the Wortham Theater Center cancelling additional performances was not an option. The Company would need to act quickly and make a decision on a sprung dance floor for The Hobby Center.

American Harlequin Corporation  
800-642-6440  
contact@harlequinfloors.com





## Solution

Andrew Nielsen, Director of Production for Houston Ballet, turned to the experts at Harlequin Floors for assistance. Harlequin had supplied the professional dance floors for the Center for Dance and he was confident they would deliver a solution for both spaces within the required timeframe.

### *Center for Dance Rehearsal Studios*

The team at Harlequin was eager to help with the recovery efforts and took immediate action to begin restoring the studios. Led by Harlequin Contracts Director, Larry Sullivan, installation crews were working on the studio floors within weeks after the storm hit. Larry worked closely with Andrew and his team to ensure that moisture and humidity levels in the rooms were acceptable prior to beginning installation of the new Harlequin WoodSpring® sprung floors and Harlequin Studio™ marley floors.

### *Performance Theater*

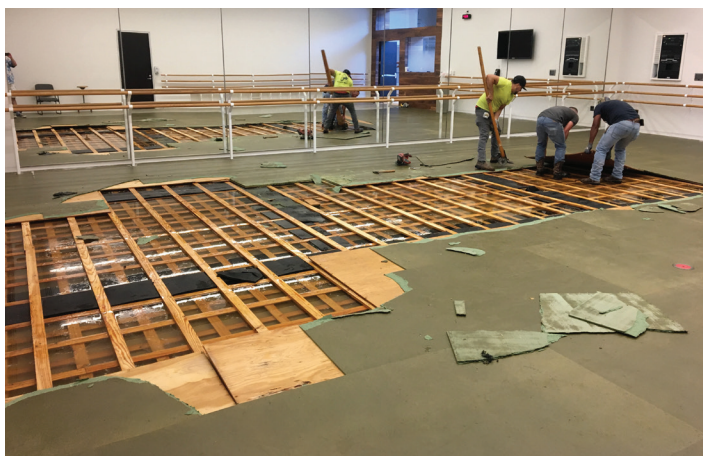
With upcoming performances at The Hobby Center and other theaters in the Houston area Nielsen wanted a sprung floor that was ideal for touring and, in case of another hurricane, one that could be removed if needed. Harlequin recommended Harlequin Liberty LatchLoc™ sprung floor panels as the best option for a touring floor. There were concerns, however, about the weight limits of the panels and whether they would sustain the weight of the heavy scenery. With Harlequin's extensive experience with this issue they would also provide specially customized panels to Houston Ballet. Eight carts of Harlequin Liberty LatchLoc panels were shipped within the week for The Hobby Center debut, while the customized panels were delivered just in time for *The Nutcracker*.

**“For more than 20 years, we’ve turned to Harlequin Floors, and what they were able to do for us after Harvey was incredible.”**

– Andrew Nielsen  
Director of Production, Houston Ballet



HoustonBallet



© Harlequin Floors 08/2019.

## Project Snapshot

<b>Client:</b>	Houston Ballet
<b>Architect:</b>	Gensler (Center for Dance)
<b>Location:</b>	Houston, TX
<b>Products:</b>	Harlequin Liberty LatchLoc™ touring panels, Harlequin LatchLoc™ customized panels, Harlequin WoodSpring®, Harlequin Studio™, Storage Carts, Installation.
<b>Scope:</b>	Replace dance floors in rehearsal studios that sustained substantial water damage following Hurricane Harvey and provide a portable sprung floor option for touring use.

## Timeline

**August 25** – Category 4 Hurricane Harvey hits Houston, Texas

**August 30** – Water remained in the studios after the marley and sprung floors were ripped out

**August 31** – Andrew Nielsen, Director of Production, contacts Harlequin Floors for assistance

**September 8** – All damaged flooring removed and cement begins drying prior to installing new dance floors

**September 15** – Harlequin Liberty LatchLoc™ touring panels shipped to Houston

**September 22** – Houston Ballet takes the stage at The Hobby Center on a Harlequin sprung floor

**September 22** – Harlequin crews begin installing new sprung floors in Center of Dance studios

**September 29** – Rehearsals resume in “Little Brown” and Dance Lab studios

**November 27** – Specially customized Harlequin Liberty LatchLoc™ panels shipped to Houston for *The Nutcracker* performances

**December 12** – Houston Ballet opens *The Nutcracker* at the Smart Financial Center in Sugar Land, TX on a Harlequin sprung floor

## Result

Just weeks after the devastation of Hurricane Harvey Houston Ballet was back rehearsing in their studios, once again outfitted with Harlequin professional dance floors. In mid-September, when the Company began performing at The Hobby Center, the stage was equipped with a sprung dance floor and everyone – dancers, production and Harlequin – was thrilled.

Despite a natural disaster and devastating damage to their facilities, Houston Ballet persevered through the 2017-2018 season and remains Houston strong.