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**Casa Romantica Executive Director Berenika D. Palys to step down after 6 years;
Leaves a legacy of strong leadership and a vibrant cultural institution
*Board of Directors choose replacement from within organization***

San Clemente, CA – Casa Romantica Board Chairman Ruth DeNault Announced today that Berenika Palys will step down from her position as Executive Director starting November 11, 2019.

Amy Behrens, Casa Romantica's Director of Marketing and Public Relations, will be promoted to Executive Director. A seamless transition and ambitious continuation of all Casa Romantica's programs and initiatives will be ensured. Palys will remain connected to Casa Romantica in an advisory role.

"We thank Berenika Palys for six and a half years of extraordinary service and for leading Casa Romantica to incredible success in so many areas," said DeNault. "The prominence and exciting reputation which the Casa currently enjoys is due in large part to her visionary and powerful leadership, along with the dedicated work of the Casa staff. We all wish her well in her future endeavors and we are happy that she will remain in an advisory role."

Amy Behrens has successfully advanced the mission of Casa Romantica in her role for nearly four years. "She enjoys the complete confidence and support of everyone in this organization," said DeNault. "The Board enthusiastically welcomes her as Casa Romantica's new Executive Director and looks forward to more achievements for our organization in the future."

"I am very happy, together with the Board, to welcome Amy Behrens as the next Executive Director of Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens," added Palys. "We share a vision of excellence for the future of our institution."

"Casa Romantica is a unique, valuable cultural destination, something that I have been dedicated to sharing with the public these past four years. I am honored to lead our organization following the example that Berenika has set," said Behrens. "She realized the transformation of Casa Romantica into a premier Southern California cultural center, and I have great respect for her vision and her leadership."

"As we focus on furthering our mission to ensure that our organization grows, thrives, and reaches more of the Southern California community," Behrens added, "supporting the Casa Captivating programming has never been more important."

Berenika Palys stated: "It is hard to believe that it has really been six years since I came to San Clemente! They have been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Being awarded Outstanding Arts Organization for all of Orange County by ArtsOC was a highlight. With the support of our amazing board, staff and volunteers



the Casa has boldly forged a way forward for cultural organizations throughout Orange County. My gratitude is profound. I especially express my deepest thanks and admiration to my team, board and volunteers. Leaving them and indeed my Casa family is not easy, but my solace is in remaining in an advisory capacity. I have been fortunate to work with such talented, committed and loving people. The Casa is in a robust and healthy state both programmatically and financially and is positioned to continue to be a premiere Southern California Cultural Center!"

About Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens maintains a robust series of year-round programs in arts, music, history, horticulture, and literature for all ages. Under the leadership of Executive Director Berenika D. Palys, Casa Romantica has commissioned several critically-acclaimed works, including *Casa Coastal: Murals of Levi Ponce* (2019; visual art), *Casa Theater: The Odd-Essy* (2019; theater), *Casa Kinetic: Culture Shock LA Hip Hop* (2019; dance); *Casa Coastal: The Art of Baja California* (2018; visual art), *Casa Theater: A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2018; theater), *Casa Kinetic: Celebrating Tap Dance Legends* (2018; dance), *Casa Coastal: Rebecca Louise Law* (2017; visual art), *Casa Kinetic: Contemporary Dance Collective* (2017; contemporary dance), *The Beauty of the Butterfly* (2017; visual art), *Casa Kinetic: Carrie Lee Riggins* (2016; contemporary dance), *Casa Drama: Slings & Arrows* (2015; theater), and *Open Casa: The Photographs of Douglas Kirkland* (2015; visual art). The 2019-20 *Casa Captivating* season includes a new music program (Casa Vibes), visual and performing arts commissions, and an expanded Casa Kids education program.

"Casa Romantica strives to be the epicenter for innovative artistic experiences in our southern California community," says Casa Romantica Executive Director Berenika D. Palys.

Casa Romantica also hosts a variety of free arts education programs for children year-round. The institution's annual Casa Romantica Music Festival and Academy has received critical praise for its comprehensive two-week music studies program in cello, piano, viola, and violin. Casa Romantica also offers a Summer Dance Workshop, a Spring Break Arts Week, various art, literature, and horticulture events to grades K-12, and welcomes over 6,000 children from the Capistrano Unified School District each year for STEAM-based field trips that examine the history of San Clemente and the coastal environment.

Mission Statement: Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and is the historic home of the founder of the City of San Clemente. Casa Romantica provides programs for all ages in arts, music, history, and horticulture and is a premier Southern California cultural center.

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens is located at 415 Avenida Granada, San Clemente, CA 92672. Hours: Tuesday—Thursday 11 am—4 pm; Friday—Sunday 10am—2pm; closed Mondays and holidays. General admission is \$5; Casa Members and children under age 13 visit for FREE. For more information, call (949) 498-2139 or visit CasaRomantica.org

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