

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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HOUSTON BALLET'S BEN STEVENSON ACADEMY PRESENTS ITS 2009 SPRING SHOWCASE

**World Premiere by HBII Dancer Garrett Smith, 20
His Fourth Work for Houston Ballet**

Houston, Texas – On Friday, April 24 and Saturday, April 25 at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, April 25 at 1:30 p.m., Houston Ballet II, the pre-professional training program of Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy, will present its 2009 Spring Showcase in the Cullen Theater at Wortham Theater Center in downtown Houston. Tickets start at \$17 and may be purchased by calling 713 227 ARTS (713 227 2787) or online at www.houstonballet.org. All proceeds raised by the performances will benefit Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy.

Houston Ballet II is composed of artists from the uppermost level of Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy, who are preparing for careers as professional dancers. Many of the artists of Houston Ballet II have trained for over ten years, making great sacrifices to achieve their dreams. Performing on the Cullen Theater stage allows the students to demonstrate to their peers and the public how they have developed as artists during their training years at the academy just as they're getting ready to enter the professional world. The Spring Showcase is a unique opportunity for Houston Ballet II to perform for their home audience after a busy schedule of touring.

This year alone, HBII dancers have performed in Budapest, Japan, Stevens-Point, Wisconsin, Monroe, Louisiana and at the Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland. Shelly Power, associate director of Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy explains the value of this opportunity for the academy to "do a full program, so it's a full evening of dance to show their range and versatility, from classical to contemporary repertoire." HBII Ballet Master Claudio Muñoz and Ms. Power carefully select each piece to fully showcase the abilities of every dancer.

The 2009 Spring Performance will include Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch's **A Time to Dance**, set to the music of Antonin Dvorak, as well as Mr. Welch's classical showpiece **Studies**, set to music by Carl Czerny and featuring 185 students from the academy. **Studies** has become an academy tradition; Mr. Welch created it especially for the 2005 Academy Spring Performance, and it has been performed every year since. Also on the program is Marius Petipa's **Paquita**, a classic, along with an excerpt from Ben Stevenson's **Five Poems** and **Flames of Paris**. Another highlight of the evening will be HBII dancer Garrett Smith's premiere of his latest piece for the academy, **Of Opposing Nature**.

**HBII Dancer Garrett Smith, 20, to Premiere *Of Opposing Nature*,
His Fourth Work for Houston Ballet II**

Adding to the excitement, HBII dancer and choreographer Garrett Smith, 20, will be premiering **Of Opposing Nature**, a new work for eight dancers set to a compilation of music, including that of Beethoven, Vivaldi and Derek Zhao, who Smith first collaborated with through the American Festival for the Arts (AFA) summer program. Mr. Smith is a student at Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy but has already choreographed three previous works, making this his fourth piece for Houston Ballet II. Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch recognized Garrett's talent during a choreographic workshop at the Academy's 2007 Summer Intensive Program and encouraged him to develop it. For the workshop, Mr. Smith created a twenty minute contemporary piece entitled **Subtle Release** that was performed by HBII.

"It's an amazing opportunity. Ever since the summer of 2007, choreography has been my newfound passion. I never considered myself a choreographer until I came here. It's just been so amazing to be able to not only create, but also to put your work out there," commented Mr. Smith. **Den III**, the piece Mr. Smith choreographed for 2008's Spring Showcase, recently had its international debut in Budapest.

Of his second experience choreographing for the Spring Showcase, Mr. Smith explained, "I feel more comfortable with myself as a choreographer and more experienced. I have been able to come up with movement on the dancers in rehearsals instead of doing it all in my head at home."

Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, he began his ballet training at The Utah Regional Ballet at the age of 13. During this time he danced in the 2002 Winter Olympics Opening Ceremonies and toured to Austria, Amsterdam and Paris in an annual production entitled *Tanzsommer*. Mr. Smith was a member of Odyssey Dance Theater II where he was able to dance with the Odyssey Dance Theater. Recently he was a Level 1 Jazz Dance winner for the National Foundation for the Advancement in the Arts. He was featured in the Off Broadway show *Breakthrough*, where he was presented with an award from Mikhail Baryshnikov. Mr. Smith later was named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts, the highest award a high school student can receive. He was able to meet the President at The White House and perform at The Kennedy Center. Mr. Smith has spent summers studying at The School of American Ballet, The Kirov, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Houston Ballet.

**HBII Dancer Sebastian Concha awarded a prize
at the prestigious Prix de Lausanne Dance Competition**

Also performing in the Spring Showcase will be Houston Ballet II dancer Sebastian Concha was awarded a prize at the 37th Prix de Lausanne Dance Competition, the prestigious international contest held annually in Lausanne, Switzerland between January 27th and February 1st, 2009. Mr. Concha was the only student from an American ballet school to be awarded a prize.

“We are very proud of Sebastian and the way that he has grown and developed during his three years at Houston Ballet’s Ben Stevenson Academy,” commented Houston Ballet Managing Director C.C. Conner. “His winning a prize at a highly competitive international contest like the Prix de Lausanne is a source of pride not just for our school, but for Houston Ballet’s entire company. It also speaks to the high level of training provided by the academy and its dedicated teachers, coaches and staff.”

Houston Ballet’s Ben Stevenson Academy

Houston Ballet’s Ben Stevenson Academy is the official school of Houston Ballet and supplies 50% of the professional company’s dancers. Houston Ballet Principal Dancers Barbara Bears, Ian Casady, Mireille Hassenboehler, Melody Herrera, Sara Webb, and Connor Walsh were all once students of the prestigious Ben Stevenson Academy. As one of the most respected dance training institutions in America, graduates of the academy have gone on to dance with numerous

leading companies, including American Ballet Theatre, The Australian Ballet, Vienna State Opera Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, The Joffrey Ballet, Boston Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, San Francisco Ballet, Texas Ballet Theater, BalletMet, Memphis Ballet, State Street Ballet, Ballet Florida, Pacific Northwest Ballet and National Ballet of Canada.

Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy main school division takes students from introduction to ballet through a full course of ballet study. The rigorous program offers classes in technique, pointe work, pas de deux, character dance and music. Students as young as four take creative dance, and six year olds take pre-ballet, both of which lay the foundation for further study of classical ballet. Students follow a structured sequence of training phases designed to enhance their technical skills, stamina and discipline.

Stanton Welch assumed leadership of the company and the academy in July 2003. As artistic director, Mr. Welch is extremely involved in the academy and is committed to the development of its students. This season, academy students have had the opportunity to perform with the professional company in Stanton Welch's **Marie**, as well as Ben Stevenson's staging of **The Nutcracker**.

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**HOUSTON BALLET'S BEN STEVENSON ACADEMY
2009 SPRING SHOWCASE
FACT SHEET**

WHAT: **Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy Spring Showcase**

WHERE: Cullen Theater at Wortham Theater Center
501 Texas Avenue

WHEN: **7:00 PM** Friday, April 24 & Saturday, April 25, 2009
1:30 PM Saturday, April 25, 2009

TO PURCHASE

TICKETS: Call 713 227 ARTS (2787)
Or purchase online at www.HoustonBallet.org

WORKS TO

BE PERFORMED: OF OPPOSING NATURE

World Premiere

Music by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827),
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) and Derek Zhao

Choreography by Garrett Smith

Costume Design by Travis Halsey

A TIME TO DANCE

Music by Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)

Choreography by Stanton Welch

PAQUITA

Music by Leon Minkus (1826-1917)

Staged by Claudio Muñoz, after Marius Petipa

FIVE POEMS - Third Poem

Music by Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Choreography by Ben Stevenson, O.B.E. - *Coached by* Claudio Munoz

Costumes and Scenic Design by Jane Seymour

FLAMES OF PARIS

Music by Boris Asafiev

Staged by Claudio Munoz, after Vasily Vainonen

STUDIES

Music by Carl Czerny (1791-1857)

Arranged for two pianos by Robert Bridges

Choreography by Stanton Welch

Katherine Burkwall-Ciscon and Steven Tran, *Pianists*

All lighting by Robert Eubanks

GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY: EDS, an HP company and J.P. Morgan

FOR MORE

INFORMATION: Visit Houston Ballet on the World Wide Web at
www.houstonballet.org for more information or to purchase tickets.