

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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HOUSTON BALLET GIVES THREE **FREE** PERFORMANCES OF *CLASSICALLY CONTEMPORARY* AT MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE MAY 8-10

Houston, TX – Fresh from the company’s tour to Spain at the end of April, Houston Ballet returns to Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park to present three **FREE** performances of **Classically Contemporary** May 8 - 10, 2009 at 8:00 p.m. **Classically Contemporary** features four different interpretations of classical ballet that show the range and evolution of dance styles, including George Balanchine’s classical duet **Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux**, Hans van Manen’s contemporary *tour-de-force* ballet **Solo**, Stanton Welch’s **Mediaeval Bæbes** showcasing the company’s women, and Mr. Welch’s popular **Nosotros**, a romantic display of talent in a magical, starlit setting.

While all performances at Miller Outdoor Theatre are **FREE** of charge, Houston Ballet’s performances of **Classically Contemporary** require tickets to the seated area. Tickets are available on the day of the performance from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Miller Theatre Box Office. Any tickets remaining are distributed one hour before curtain. There is a limit of four tickets per person. Please call 281.FREE.FUN (281-373-3386) for further ticket information or visit www.milleroutdoortheatre.com

Originally created in 1960 for New York City Ballet, George Balanchine’s **Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux** premiered at the City Center for Music and Dance in New York. An eight-minute display of ballet bravura and technique, the work features music that Peter Tchaikovsky belatedly created for Act III of **Swan Lake**.

Hans van Manen's **Solo** was first performed by Netherlands Dance Theater in The Hague on January 16, 1997. Believing that the complexity of Johann Sebastian Bach's Violin Suite makes it impossible for just one person to dance, van Manen divides this masterful solo among three men in a *tour de force* work that challenges the men's daring agility and grace. This explosive display of virtuosity and wit launches the men into an exhilarating whirlwind of movement and musicality in a short, but powerful seven-minute ballet. With a classical score and a contemporary dance style, the dancers connect briefly, and then continue to dance sequential solos with virtuosity. "**Solo** epitomizes dance at its essence," writes Allan Ulrich, dance critic for *The San Francisco Chronicle*." (February 5, 1999).

Stanton Welch choreographed **Mediæval Bæbes** specifically to showcase the women of Houston Ballet, and this large-scale work premiered on September 26, 2008. His inspiration was the music of the popular English group of the same name. Mediæval Bæbes offers a sound that is unique by pulling lyrics from medieval texts and setting them to original scores using medieval and classical instruments. The music evokes an earlier time, but is accessible to a modern audience. The medieval themes of nature, the life cycle, love and longing are as relevant in 2009 as they were in 1409. In the last ten years, Mediæval Bæbes have placed three studio albums on the top of the U.K. classical charts and performed before audiences in the U.K., United States, Canada, and Europe.

Reviewing Houston Ballet's performance of **Mediæval Bæbes** for the *Houston Press* on October 2, 2008, Marene Gustin observed, "Artistic Director Stanton Welch's world premiere of **Mediæval Bæbes**, a celestial celebration of life and Mother Nature — is just what the audience needed. The dance used the music of the UK group Mediæval Bæbes . . . gave the women in the company full rein for flirty, earthy movements . . . Welch designed the costumes of fitted blue bodices with flowing, slit-to-there skirts that the women worked furiously, looking like ancient goddesses at play in the universe."

Stanton Welch created **Nosotros** for Houston Ballet and it premiered on February 24, 2005 at Wortham Theater Center in Houston, Texas. **Nosotros** has emerged as a signature work for Houston Ballet, with the company performing it in New York City at City Center in September

2005; in Ottawa, Canada in May 2006; and in several cities across Spain in April 2009. Set to Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, **Nosotros** (the Spanish word for "us") is an abstract work featuring eleven couples in a glittering celebration of classical technique. "It's a large ensemble piece showing off the present and future stars of Houston Ballet. Each of the leads comes forward for a pas de deux," said Mr. Welch. "In making the ballet, my goal was to create a work that showcases our current dancers. I know what scares them, what challenges them, and what looks good, so I've incorporated that into the choreography. I want to capture their essence in dance."

The scenic and costume designs for **Nosotros** emphasize a work that presents a galaxy of stars to the audience. The women wear glamorous gowns inspired by high fashion couture designers such as Dior, and their partners match their romantic mood with flesh-toned costumes. The set design surrounds the dancers with a magical, star-lit atmosphere.

A critical and audience favorite, **Nosotros** won acclaim at its premiere. *Houston Chronicle* dance critic Molly Glentzer enthused, "Houston Ballet rocks with Rachmaninoff. Welch exploits his leading dancers' best qualities in **Nosotros** . . . demanding extreme virtuosity and jaw-droppingly athletic partnering." (February 26, 2005).

These performances of **Classically Contemporary** at Miller Outdoor Theatre are sponsored by the City of Houston through the Miller Theatre Advisory Board.

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**HOUSTON BALLET'S FREE PERFORMANCES AT
MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE
CLASSICALLY CONTEMPORARY
FACT SHEET**

WHAT: TCHAIKOVSKY PAS DE DEUX (1960)
Choreographed by George Balanchine
Music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
Staged by Victoria Simon
Costumes after Karinska
Lighting by Christina R. Giannelli

SOLO (1997)
Music by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Sigiswald Kuijken's amplified recording of Bach's Suite for Violin in D Minor
Choreography by Hans van Manen
Staged by Mea Venema
Costume Design by Keso Dekker
Lighting Design by Jan Hofstra

MEDIAEVAL BÆBES
Music by Mediæval Bæbes
Choreography and Costume Design by Stanton Welch
Scenic Design by Thomas Boyd
Lighting Design by Lisa Pinkham

NOSOTROS (2005)
Music by Rachmaninoff (1873 – 1943),
Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43
Choreography by Stanton Welch
Designs by Stanton Welch, realized by Pat Padilla and Tom Boyd

Sponsored by:
The City of Houston
Miller Theatre Advisory Board

**ABOUT THE
PROGRAM:**

On May 8, 9, and 10, 2009 at 8:00 p.m. Houston Ballet will present three **FREE** performances of **Classically Contemporary** at Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park. **Classically Contemporary** will feature a wide range of balletic works, including George Balanchine's **Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux** and **Solo**, a contemporary *tour-de-force* for three male dancers by Dutch choreographer Hans van Manen. The evening also features two recent pieces by Stanton Welch: **Mediæval Bæbes**, a showcase for the company's women, and **Nosotros**, a romantic display of talent in a magical, star lit setting.

WHEN: At 8:00 pm on May 8, 9, 10, 2009

WHERE: MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE in Hermann Park, Houston, TX

TICKETS: **FREE!** Call Miller Theatre Box Office at 281.FREE.FUN (281-373-3386)

**HOW TO GET
FREE TICKETS:**

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FOR MORE

INFORMATION: Visit Houston Ballet at www.houstonballet.org
or Miller Outdoor Theatre at www.milleroutdoorthatre.com

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