

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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HOUSTON BALLET'S
MASTERS OF MOVEMENT
PRESENTS THREE COMPANY PREMIERES

**Houston Ballet Joins Companies Across the World in Honoring Antony Tudor
on his 100th Birthday with the Company Premiere of *The Leaves are Fading***

Jiří Kylián's *Soldiers' Mass* Showcases Company Men

The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude

Marks Second Work by William Forsythe to Enter Company's Repertoire

Houston, TX - From March 12 – March 22, 2009, Houston Ballet is pleased to introduce three important works into its repertoire on its program **Masters of Movement**. **The Leaves are Fading** is a lyrical study in wistful dreaminess by famed English choreographer Antony Tudor. William Forsythe's **The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude** is a demanding neoclassical showpiece set to the music of Franz Schubert. Jiří Kylián's **Soldiers' Mass** is a poignant commentary on the destruction and devastation of war. Houston Ballet will give six performances of **Masters of Movement** in Brown Theater at Wortham Theater Center in downtown Houston. Tickets may be purchased by calling 713 227 2787 or by visiting www.houstonballet.org

This year marks the 100-year anniversary of Antony Tudor's birth. Houston Ballet will be joining ballet companies across the United States to pay homage to Antony Tudor by giving the company premiere of **The Leaves are Fading**. The Joffrey Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, and The Juilliard School are joining together to perform works by Tudor in his honor.

Anna Kisselgoff, a dance critic for *The New York Times* wrote about Antony Tudor's role in the world of dance, "Certainly, along with George Balanchine, Frederick Ashton, and Jerome Robbins, he [Tudor] belongs to a select club of giants in ballet choreography who have emerged in the last 50 years." (May 3, 1984).

With a cast of 15 dancers, Antony Tudor's abstract work **The Leaves are Fading** is set to a collection of chamber music by Antonin Dvořák arranged for string orchestra, and presents a series of passionate pas de deux, beginning and ending with a single young woman drifting on stage, and evokes the memories of young love. The work was choreographed on American Ballet Theatre and premiered on July 17, 1975. **The Leaves are Fading** is staged for Houston Ballet by Amanda McKerrow and John Gardner, who each danced several leading roles in this work under Mr. Tudor's tutelage at American Ballet Theatre.

British born Antony Tudor (1908-1987) was a dancer, choreographer, and teacher. He is best known for establishing the genre of psychological ballet. He was a master of understatement in his approach to choreography and storytelling, and feelings in his ballet are conveyed through subtle gestures, body language, and dramatic expression. Tudor preferred depicting the emotional lives of ordinary people in his ballets, as opposed to courtly characters and fairy-tale creatures, which set him apart from Ashton and Balanchine. He also was the resident choreographer for two historic companies: Ballet Rambert in the U.K. and American Ballet Theatre in the U.S. Houston Ballet has two other works by Antony Tudor in its repertory: **Dark Elegies**, which the company first performed in 1987, and **Jardin aux Lilacs (Lilac Garden)**, which entered the repertory in 1988.

Another premiere on the program is William Forsythe's **The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude**. Originally created for Frankfurt Ballet, it premiered on January 20, 1996 and is now in the repertories of companies across the world, including The Kirov Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre. A rapid and dynamic 12-minute ballet, it is a series of solo variations, pas de deux, pas de trois and ensemble sections for five dancers, two men and three women.

“**The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude** was, in this view, the season’s best ballet. It is a brilliant outburst of neo-classical style,” wrote Anna Kisselgoff, dance critic for *The New York Times*. (December 27, 1998).

William Forsythe alludes to ballet’s classical roots by setting the music to straight classical music, Franz Schubert’s *Allegro Vivace* from his *Symphony No. 9 in C Major*, dressing the dancers in dish-like tutus, and deriving the choreography from classroom steps. One of Forsythe’s more conventional ballets, the ballet is full of energy and vitality and tests the limits of the dancers.

William Forsythe was born in New York and danced briefly with The Joffrey Ballet before joining Stuttgart Ballet in 1973, where he created his first works as a choreographer. He assumed the directorship of Frankfurt Ballet in 1984 and led the company until 2004. Under his leadership, Frankfurt Ballet was transformed from a capable regional troupe into one of Europe’s foremost dance ensembles. Mr. Forsythe’s ballets have entered the repertoires of the world’s leading companies, including New York City Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet, The Royal Ballet of London, Netherlands Dance Theater, and Royal Swedish Ballet. In March 2003, he received the prestigious Dance Magazine Award for his contribution to the field of dance. After the closure of Frankfurt Ballet in 2004, Mr. Forsythe established a new, more independent ensemble, The Forsythe Company. The company was founded with the support of the German states of Saxony and Hesse, the cities of Dresden and Frankfurt am Main, and private sponsors. Mr. Forsythe’s most recent creations are developed and performed exclusively by the new company, which tours extensively across the world.

The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude is the second work by William Forsythe to enter Houston Ballet’s repertory after his signature piece, **In the middle, somewhat elevated**, entered the company’s repertory in 1999.

Jiří Kylián’s requiem dance **Soldiers’ Mass**, a Houston Ballet premiere, closes the mixed repertory program **Masters of Movement** with a moving tribute to the young soldiers of all wars who died. Bohuslav Martinů composed his *Soldiers’ Mass* in memory of a battalion of young

Czech recruits who were killed the day after they arrived at the front during World War I. Premiered by Netherlands Dance Theatre on June 13, 1980, **Soldiers' Mass** is an ensemble piece for twelve men dancing in unison in regimental patterns, with individuals occasionally breaking away in frenzied solos.

A powerful antiwar statement, **Soldiers' Mass** is also a stunning theater piece. At one point, the dancers suddenly stop, face the audience, and defiantly sing along with the offstage male chorus. Kylián himself designed the striking décor—khaki army fatigues and a purple backdrop slashed with scarlet—to suggest every soldier and all wars.

“The beauty of Mr. Kylián’s achievement lies in his use of a faceless mass to define the individual,” wrote Anna Kisselgoff, dance critic for *The New York Times*, “The effect is profound, stemming perfectly from Kylián’s forte of choreography for groups as well as a mass. The uniforms are generalized. The men dance against a curved horizon line. There is no specific time or place. The images are not realistic. They are real.” (July 19, 1981).

In an interview with Jennifer Dunning of *The New York Times*, Jiří Kylián said he attempted to recreate the music’s emotions, and not specific images of suffering and death on the battlefield. “It could happen in any country, any war, any barrack,” he said. “That idiotic device that is always at work. One is drafted. One fights for the fatherland. One’s uniform is red. Over there the uniforms are blue. They are worn by bad people that one must kill.” (July 10, 1981).

A native of Prague, Mr. Kylián began his training at the Prague Conservatory and London’s Royal Ballet School. In 1968, he joined Stuttgart Ballet where he worked alongside the legendary English choreographer John Cranko. Mr. Kylián choreographed his first ballet in 1970 for Stuttgart Ballet. After being invited by Netherlands Dance Theater in 1973 to be a guest choreographer, Mr. Kylián joined the company and served as artistic director from 1978 to 1999. During that time he created over sixty productions for the company, including such works as: **Sinfonietta** (1978) **Forgotten Land** (1981), **Bella Figura** (1995) and **Last Touch** (2003). **Soldiers' Mass** is the sixth work by Mr. Kylián to enter Houston Ballet’s repertory after **Petite Mort** and **Svadebka**, which entered the repertory in 2007, **Forgotten Land** in 2005, **Sinfonietta**

in 1995 and **Symphony in D** in 1983. Houston Ballet's performances of **Masters of Movement** in Houston are generously underwritten by National Endowment for the Arts.

HOUSTON BALLET
MASTERS OF MOVEMENT
FACT SHEET

WHAT: MASTERS OF MOVEMENT
(Winter Mixed Repertory Program)

THE LEAVES ARE FADING (1975)

Houston Ballet Premiere

Music by Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

"Cypresses" for string quartet, together with other chamber music for strings

Choreography by Antony Tudor

Staged by Amanda McKerrow and John Gardner

Scenic Design by Ming Cho Lee

Costume Design by Patricia Zipprodt

Lighting Design Recreated by Christina Giannelli

This season's performance of *The Leaves are Fading*, © 1977 Antony Tudor, presented by arrangement with the Estate of Antony Tudor and The Antony Tudor Ballet Trust, proudly salutes the artistry, vision, enduring relevance of Antony Tudor's work and commemorates the Centennial of his birth, 1908 - 2008.

THE VERTIGINOUS THRILL OF EXACTITUDE (2004)

Houston Ballet Premiere

Music by Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Symphony No. 9 in C

Choreography and Lighting Design by William Forsythe

Costume Design by Stephen Galloway

SOLDIERS' MASS (1980)

Houston Ballet Premiere

Music by Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959)

Choreography, Costume and Lighting Design by Jiří Kylián

Staged by Roslyn Anderson

Scenic Design by Kees Tjebbes

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**ABOUT THE
PROGRAM:**

Houston Ballet pays tribute to the 100th anniversary of the birth of the great English choreographer Antony Tudor with the company premiere of his 1975 masterwork, **The Leaves are Fading**, a lyrical paean to first love and love recollected. Czech master Jiří Kylián's **Soldiers' Mass** is a deeply moving lament for the destruction and devastation of war that will showcase the strength of Houston Ballet's male dancers. William Forsythe's **The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude** is an exhilarating classical showpiece, featuring stylish, sexy costumes and set to the music of Franz Schubert.

WHEN: At 7:30 pm on March 12, 14, 20, 21, 2009
At 2:00 pm on March 15, 22, 2009

WHERE: Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center
501 Texas Avenue in downtown Houston

TICKETS: Start at \$17 - \$125. For tickets call (713) 227 2787 or 1 800 828 ARTS.
Tickets are also available at www.houstonballet.org and the Houston Ballet Box Office at Wortham Theater Center.

FOR MORE

INFORMATION: Visit Houston Ballet on the World Wide Web at
www.houstonballet.org

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