

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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HOUSTON BALLET ANNOUNCES SPRING TOURING SCHEDULE

Tour to Spain Includes Appearances in Six Cities in April 2009

Company performs *Marie*, Full-Length Ballet Inspired by the Life of Marie Antoinette, in New Orleans, in March 2009

Houston, TX – Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch announced touring plans for the company today, including performances of **Marie** in New Orleans, and a tour to six cities in Spain with a mixed repertory program. Houston Ballet's tour to Spain has been generously underwritten by Riviana Foods, and both tours are supported by The Fayeze Sarofim & Co. Touring Fund of the Houston Ballet Endowment.

The company begins its touring with appearances in New Orleans with **Marie**, a new full-length ballet inspired by the life of Marie Antoinette, choreographed by Stanton Welch and set to the music of Dmitri Shostakovich, on March 27-28, 2009. Houston Ballet will appear as part of New Orleans Ballet Association's season, with performances being accompanied by the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. **Marie** will be the first dance concert presented by the New Orleans Ballet Association in the newly renovated Mahalia Jackson Theater of the Performing Arts, and marks the 30th anniversary of Houston Ballet's first performances in New Orleans. Tickets may be purchased by calling (504) 522-0996, Ext. 2, or on New Orleans Ballet Association's web site at <http://www.nobadance.com>.

"Houston Ballet has had a thirty-year love affair with New Orleans," commented Mr. Welch. "We first appeared in the Crescent City in 1979, and we made our last appearance there in the fall of 2006, in those dark days when the city was struggling to recover from Hurricane Katrina. We are so excited to bring our new production of **Marie** to New Orleans first, immediately after its premiere in Houston, to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the relationship between Houston Ballet and New Orleans. Two of our company's veteran ballerinas, principal Mireille Hassenboehler and former soloist Tyann Clement, hail from New Orleans, so we have much to thank Louisiana for."

From April 21 – April 30, 2009, Houston Ballet will tour to six cities in Spain with a mixed repertory program. This will be Houston Ballet's first tour to Europe in seven years. The company last performed in Europe in Moscow at the Bolshoi Theatre in November 2002 and London at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 2001. The performances in April mark Houston Ballet's second appearance in Spain. The company debuted in Spain on its first European tour in 1982.

Houston Ballet will perform **Mediaeval Bæbes**, **Solo**, **Hush**, and **Nosotros** on April 21 at the Teatro – Sala de Conciertos in Vigo and the same mixed repertory on April 22 at the Teatro Rosalía Castro in A Coruña. On April 24 the company will perform **Nosotros**, **Hush**, and **Divergence** at the Palacio de Festivales de Cantabria in Santander and the same mixed repertory on April 25 at the Baluarte, Palacio de Congresos y Auditorio de Navarra in Pamplona and on April 28 at the Auditorio y Centro de Congresos Victor Villegas in Murcia. Houston Ballet will perform **Mediaeval Bæbes**, **Solo**, **Hush** and **Nosotros** on **April 30** at the Teatro Campoamor in Oviedo.

Houston Ballet presented the world premiere of Stanton Welch's **Mediaeval Bæbes**, choreographed to showcase the company's women and inspired by the music of the popular English group by the same name on September 18, 2008. The company also first performed Hans van Manen's **Solo** in September 2008. Believing that the complexity of Johann Sebastian Bach's Violin Suite makes it impossible for just one person to dance, the great Dutch choreographer 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.

Choreographed by Christopher Bruce for Houston Ballet in March 2006, **Hush** features six dancers and is performed to selected tracks from the album *Hush* by Bobby McFerrin and Yo-Yo Ma. Mr. Bruce was drawn to a quote by Yo-Yo Ma from the record's liner notes: "*Hush* is a musical celebration of life – from youth to old age. While in so many ways this album speaks to children, it is equally true that perhaps its central goal, to use Bobby's phrase, is to 'release the child in the adult.'"

"My cast has evolved into a kind of family group reflecting, in a light-hearted way, various archetypical characters and situations," commented Mr. Bruce. The characters in the ballet include a mother, a father, and four children.

Stanton Welch created **Nosotros** for Houston Ballet and it premiered on February 24, 2005 at the Wortham Theater Center in Houston, Texas. 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 is a signature piece for 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.”

Created in 1994, Stanton Welch’s abstract and vibrant **Divergence** has become a trademark work for The Australian Ballet, where Mr. Welch has served as resident choreographer since 1995. Set to Georges Bizet’s “L’Arlésienne, Suites No. 1 & 2” and featuring twenty dancers clad in Vanessa Leyonhjelm’s provocative industrial strength costumes, **Divergence** is classical dance with a punch. The work, which had its Houston premiere in 2004, was a critical and audience favorite. Molly Glentzer, dance critic for the *Houston Chronicle*, exclaimed, “Wow. Am I just giddy with love at first sight, or is **Divergence** the coolest thing Houston Ballet has ever done? If this is 21st century ballet, bring it on.” (February 28, 2004)

Houston Ballet is America's fourth largest ballet company. It was founded in 1969, and has been hailed by *The New York Times* as "one of the nation's best ballet companies." Under the leadership of artistic director Stanton Welch, the company features 54 dancers and has a \$20 million annual budget. Over the last decade, Houston Ballet has toured to London, New York, Moscow, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Montreal and The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. With its extensive international touring, Houston Ballet has emerged as one of the city's most effective international ambassadors.

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HOUSTON BALLET
2009 SPRING TOURING SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>VENUE/CITY</u>	<u>PROGRAM</u>
<u>2009</u>		
March 27-28, 2009	New Orleans Ballet Association Mahalia Jackson Theater of the Performing Arts New Orleans, Louisiana Tel. (504) 322-0996, Ext. 2 http://www.nobadance.com	Marie
April 21, 2009	Teatro - Sala de Conceirtos Vigo, Spain	Mediaeval Bæbes Solo Hush Nosotros
April 22, 2009	Teatro – Rosalía Castro A Coruña, Spain	Mediaeval Bæbes Solo Hush Nosotros
April 24, 2009	Palacio de Festivales de Cantabria Santander, Spain http://www.palaciofestivales.com	Nosotros Hush Divergence
April 25, 2009	Baluarto Palacio de Congresos y Auditorio de Navarra Pamplona, Spain http://www.baluarto.com	Nosotros Hush Divergence
April 28, 2009	Auditorio y Centro de Congresos Victor Villegas Murcia, Spain http://www.auditoriomurcia.org	Nosotros Hush Divergence
April 30, 2009	Teatro Campoamor Oviedo, Spain	Mediaeval Bæbes Solo Hush Nosotros

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MARIE(2009)

Inspired by the Life of Marie Antoinette

Music by Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975), arranged by Ermanno Florio

Choreography by Stanton Welch

Scenic and Costume Design by Kandis Cook

Lighting Design by Lisa J. Pinkham

MEDIÆVAL BÆBES (2008)

Music by Mediæval Bæbes

Choreography and Costume Design by Stanton Welch

Scenic Design by Thomas Boyd

Lighting Design by Lisa Pinkham

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

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

DIVERGENCE (2004)

Music by Georges Bizet (1838-1875), L' Arlésienne, Suites No. 1 & 2

Choreography by Stanton Welch

Costumes by Vanessa Leyonhjelm

Lighting by Francis Croese

HUSH (2006)

Choreography by Christopher Bruce

Music by Yo-Yo Ma and Bobby McFerrin (*Hush*)

Scenic and costume designs by Marian Bruce

Lighting by Christina R. Giannelli