

# HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 14, 2008**

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## **MELODY HERRERA PROMOTED TO PRINCIPAL**

**Houston, Texas** – Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch promoted Melody Herrera to the rank of principal dancer onstage at the end of the company's evening performance of **Cinderella** on March 8, 2008 at Wortham Theater Center.

"I was inspired to create one of the leading roles in my recent ballet **The Core** for Melody because I had seen the stellar work she had done in comic parts in Jerome Robbins's **The Concert** and Christopher Bruce's **Hush**," said Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch. "I also choreographed the role of spring for her in **The Four Seasons**. In that ballet, she was partnered by Connor Walsh; they both exuded an exuberant youthfulness and lyricism, which was exactly the right essence for that movement of the score."

In her review of **Cinderella**, Molly Glentzer, *Houston Chronicle* Lifestyle Editor and Arts Critic observed, "Lyricality can't be taught...it comes from the soul. Melody Herrera had this down perfectly and brought such exceptional delicacy to her dancing, the whole production had a powerfully tender appeal." (*Houston Chronicle* {**Chron.com**} March 9, 2008).

A native of Santa Cruz, California, Herrera trained at Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre under Robert Kelley and Diane McLarty and at Pacific Northwest Ballet. She also attended summer intensive programs with Suzanne Farrell. At the age of 13, Herrera began her training with Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy and attended three consecutive summer intensive programs with the academy. In the 2000-2001 season, she spent one

year in Houston Ballet II on full scholarship and stipend. Herrera also won a scholarship award from Regional Dance America in 2000. She was invited to tour with Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre through Tansonmer, Austria. Prior to joining Houston Ballet, she performed numerous leading roles with Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre: the Sugar Plum Fairy and Snow Queen in **The Nutcracker**; Kitri in **Don Quixote** and Odette in **Swan Lake**.

"I feel very blessed and honored to have been promoted to principal dancer. My heart is in what I do; I can't enjoy it any other way. So I feel very strongly and deeply thankful to be given the opportunity to continue doing what I love. My parents were in the audience the night that I was promoted. They have always been supportive and have sacrificed so much and worked so hard so that I could dance. So it was very special and emotional for me that they were there for that key moment in my career. I'm still overwhelmed and I'm still pinching myself!" said Herrera.

Herrera has performed a number of featured roles with Houston Ballet including: Olga in John Cranko's **Onegin**, Sugar Plum Fairy in **The Nutcracker**, Neapolitan Princess in Stanton Welch's **Swan Lake**, the Spring Fairy in Ben Stevenson's **Cinderella**, Swanilda and Dawn in **Coppelia**, Valencienne in **The Merry Widow**, Cio-Cio San and Kate in **Madame Butterfly**, and Cinderella in Stanton Welch's **Cinderella**.

Herrera has also been featured in contemporary roles in **Petit Mort**, the white pas de deux in Jiri Kylian's **Forgotten Land**; Stanton Welch's **Velocity**, **Indigo**, **Wildlife** and **Brigade**; Christopher Bruce's **Ghost Dances** and **Rooster**; Harald Lander's **Etudes**; Paul Taylor's **Company B**; William Forsythe's **In The Middle, somewhat elevated**; George Balanchine's **The Four Temperaments** and **Serenade**; and Mark Morris's **Sandpaper Ballet**.

Ms. Herrera is married to Houston Ballet principal dancer Randy Herrera. They have one son, Isaac Joshua.

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