

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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WORLD PREMIERE BY JULIA ADAM HIGHLIGHTS HOUSTON BALLET'S WINTER REPERTORY PROGRAM

**Program Features Company Premiere of Stanton Welch's
Sexy Signature Piece, *Divergence***

Houston, Texas – From February 26 through March 7, 2004, Houston Ballet will unveil the world premiere of **Ketubah**, the first work by the celebrated young choreographer Julia Adam to enter Houston Ballet's repertoire, alongside the Houston premiere of Stanton Welch's sexy and explosive ballet, **Divergence**. Rounding out the program is a revival of Ben Stevenson's **Four Last Songs**, set to Richard Strauss's four haunting songs of farewell. The company will give six performances of the program at Wortham Theater Center in downtown Houston.

Ms. Adam, a former principal dancer with the San Francisco Ballet, began her choreographic career in 1993. She has created numerous pieces for San Francisco Ballet including: **The Medium is the Message** (1993), **Once is Enough** (1994), and **Night** (2000). **Night** has become a signature work for the San Francisco troupe, and the company has performed it at London's Royal Opera House, at the Opera Garnier in Paris and at New York's City Center. Reviewing **Night** for *Dance Magazine*, Janice Ross wrote, "Adam's brilliance in **Night** resides in the way she can generate and sustain a very complicated stage picture, one that starts deep in the physical actions of each of her eleven dancers."

Julia Adam's newest work takes the audience to a traditional Jewish wedding, beginning with the title, **Ketubah**, a Hebrew term referring to the marriage contract signed by the bride and groom on their wedding day. Set to traditional Jewish music performed live by a local group, The Best Little

Klezmer Band in Texas, the ballet involves sixteen dancers: eight women on point and eight men. The piece begins with a lighthearted game of “musical chairs” that serves to introduce the bride and groom, and then flows through the elements of a Jewish wedding, including a ritual bath, the groom’s party, the unveiling of the bride, the ceremony under the chuppah – the wedding canopy, and finally ending with a celebration.

Of her inspiration for **Ketubah**, Ms. Adam said, “I began with the idea of this wedding. I’m pulling from Eastern European Jewish Ashkenazi ritual. Pulling from ritual and tradition makes good theater.” She looked to her own family and roots when creating the ballet, “I’m Jewish, so it’s coming from my background. I’m revisiting a part of my life. I married a non-Jew, but had a Jewish wedding: a rabbi, the chuppah, the whole thing.”

Houston Ballet’s winter repertory program is generously underwritten by Altria Group Inc. and Duke Energy. Additional support has been provided by The National Endowment for the Arts.

Houston Premiere of Stanton Welch’s DIVERGENCE

Created in 1994, the 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.

Reviewing a performance of **Divergence** by The Australian Ballet in September 1994, Alison Barclay observed in *The Herald Sun*, “Wow! Get a grip on your armrests because this is explosive theatre. **Divergence** is sexy, funny, and eclectic, handfuls of steps and styles, grabbed from everywhere and flung together with humor and imagination.” (September 5, 1994)

Mr. Welch comments, “For years I had heard that classical ballet was dying; staggering along like some prehistoric creature, tiredly dragging its old and limited repertoire around. I have never

believed this. I was raised on the beauty of classical ballet and have never seen its limitations – it was my breast milk.

“I wanted to take classical ballet, and diverge from it. The first image in the work is what one would consider very traditional classical ballet. From then on, I kept branching off into different paths. I wanted to show the women working as hard as the men. I wanted to show the inside of ballet, to make it look difficult and athletic. I wanted to show the pain and the strength and the difficulty behind what the dancers were doing, rather than hide it.”

FOUR LAST SONGS

Four Last Songs was premiered by Houston Ballet in 1980. Set to Richard Strauss’s poignant, haunting songs of farewell, the ballet traces a journey through the passages of life: from youthful exuberance and romance at the beginning of the work to somber farewells on the eve of death in the concluding movement. The final image of the ballet is an unforgettable *coup de theatre*: the billowing folds of silk hovering above the dancers throughout the ballet lower gently, enveloping the eight performers on the ground like a shroud. When Houston Ballet performed **Four Last Songs** at The Kennedy Center in October 1997, Anna Kisselgoff of *The New York Times* pronounced the work “exquisite.”

**HOUSTON BALLET
FALL REPERTORY PROGRAM
FACT SHEET**

WHAT: WINTER REPERTORY PROGRAM, featuring:

KETUBAH

(World Premiere)

Traditional Jewish folk music

Performed live by The Best Little Klezmer Band in Texas

Choreography by Julia Adam

Costumes by Christine Darch

Lighting by Christina Giannelli

DIVERGENCE

(Houston Ballet Premiere)

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

Choreography by Stanton Welch

Costumes by Vanessa Leyonhjelm

Lighting by Francis Croese

FOUR LAST SONGS

Music by Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

By arrangement with Boosey and Hawkes, Inc., publisher and copyright owner

Choreography by Ben Stevenson

Set and costume design by Matthew C. Jacobs

Lighting by Tony Tucci

Generously underwritten by:

Altria Group, Inc.

Duke Energy

Additional support provided by:

The National Endowment for the Arts

**ABOUT THE
PROGRAM:**

From February 26 through March 7, 2004, Houston Ballet will feature **Ketubah**, a work by choreographer Julia Adam, inspired by the rituals of a traditional Jewish wedding, alongside the Houston premiere of Stanton Welch's sexy signature work **Divergence**. Rounding out the program is a revival of Ben Stevenson's masterwork **Four Last Songs**.

WHEN: At 7:30 pm on February 26, 28; March 5, 6, 2004
At 2:00 pm on February 29; March 7, 2004

WHERE: Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center
Texas at Smith Streets in downtown Houston

TICKETS: \$11.50 -- \$115.50, Call (713) 227 ARTS or 1 800 828 ARTS
Also available at Houston Ballet Box Office at Wortham Theater Center downtown
at Texas at Smith Street, or purchase tickets online at www.houstonballet.org

DANCE TALKS:
At 6:45 pm on February 26, 28; March 5, 6, 2004
At 1:15 pm on February 29; March 7, 2004

FOR MORE

INFORMATION: Visit Houston Ballet on the World Wide Web at <http://www.houstonballet.org>