

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE ON
FEBRUARY 20, 2005

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**HOUSTON BALLET JAMS
TO THE MUSIC OF THE ROLLING STONES IN
*ROCK, ROLL, AND TUTUS***

**Stanton Welch Creates *Nosotros*,
A New Work to the Music of Rachmaninoff
To Showcase Company Artists**

Maina Gielgud Stages Company Premiere of the French Classic *Suite en Blanc*

Houston, Texas -- From February 24 – March 6, 2005, Houston Ballet will present **Rock, Roll, and Tutus**, a repertory program featuring a neo-classical ballet, rock music, and tutus, which will showcase the great stylistic range and depth of Houston Ballet's dancers. **Nosotros**, a world premiere by Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch, will be unveiled alongside the company premiere of Serge Lifar's elegant neo-classical work **Suite en Blanc**. Christopher Bruce's hard-charging, sexy **Rooster**, set to eight classic tracks by The Rolling Stones and hailed by *The Dallas Morning News* as "fast, furious and wild," rounds out the program. Houston Ballet will give six performances of **Rock, Roll, and Tutus** at Wortham Theater Center in downtown Houston, and tickets may be purchased by calling 713 227 2787 or online at www.houstonballet.org.

Houston Ballet's performances of **Rock, Roll, and Tutus** are generously underwritten by Duke Energy, Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P., The Brown Foundation, Inc., and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support for **Rock, Roll, and Tutus** comes in part from grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County.

Houston Ballet Shimmers Like a Galaxy of Stars In Stanton Welch's New Work *Nosotros*

Nosotros, a new work created by Mr. Welch to showcase the company, highlights the program. Set to Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, the abstract work features eleven couples in a glittering celebration of classical technique. Commented Mr. Welch, "It will be a large ensemble work showing off the present and future stars of Houston Ballet. Each of the leads comes forward for a pas de deux."

For inspiration, Mr. Welch looked to Houston Ballet's dancers; he choreographed **Nosotros** specifically for the members of the company. "My goal is to create a work that is a signature piece for our current dancers," he explained. "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 will wear glamorous gowns inspired by high fashion couture designers such as Dior, and their partners will match the romantic mood with flesh-toned, flowing costumes. The set design involves new state-of-the-art special effects that will surround the dancers with a magical, star-lit atmosphere.

Mr. Welch, one of the most sought after choreographers of his generation, has created ballets for such prestigious international companies as San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, The Australian Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet in the United Kingdom, and Royal Danish Ballet. **Nosotros** is one of three new works that Mr. Welch is currently working on for companies across the globe. In late 2004, he worked with The Australian Ballet on his new production of **The Sleeping Beauty**, set to open in September; and in early February, he created a new one-act work for San Francisco Ballet for ten dancers, set to music by Mozart. Mr. Welch has created five works for Houston Ballet, including **Indigo** (1999), **Bruiser** (2000), **Tales of Texas** (2004), **Blindness** (2004), and **Bolero** (2004).

Suite en Blanc:
French Classicism Comes to Houston by way of Australia

The neo-classical **Suite en Blanc** is one of the best-known works by Serge Lifar, the legendary Russian dancer, choreographer, and ballet director. Originally created for the Paris Opera Ballet, this “pure dance” piece is a technically demanding one-act ballet that was designed as a star vehicle for the Paris company. For the beautiful score, Lifar selected excerpts from Édouard Lalo’s *Namouna*, a two-act ballet choreographed by Lucien Petipa in 1882. **Suite en Blanc** premiered in Zürich on June 19, 1943, and has been revived several times at the Paris Opera and other major companies. Houston Ballet Artistic Associate Maina Gielgud, who danced virtually all the female roles in the ballet and was coached by Lifar himself on the famous “Cigarette” solo, will stage the work for the company.

“**Suite en Blanc** is abstract pure classical dance, one of four or five works like it in the world,” commented Mr. Welch. “**Theme and Variations, Symphony in C, and Etudes** are in the same category. It is based on French technique, with typical Lifaresque off-balance virtuosity, all done with humor behind it. It’s like a diamond of the classical repertoire.”

Mr. Welch’s mother, Marilyn Jones, O.B.E., one of Australia’s most gifted dancers from the 1960s and 1970s, brought the work to that country when she was the director of The Australian Ballet in the early 1980s. She invited Lifar to coach the Australian company, ensuring that the original choreography was passed down to the next generation of dancers. Under Ms. Gielgud’s directorship, the work became a trademark of The Australian Ballet.

Commented Mr. Welch, “I grew up with **Suite**, and feel that it’s important for young dancers to experience the work in order to enhance their love of classical ballet. It’s an extremely difficult ballet that shows off the entire company; only the best companies attempt it. Dancers need to do this work to prove their worth as dancers and artists.”

Houston Ballet Principal Mireille Hassenboehler will perform the “Cigarette” solo on opening night.

Christopher Bruce’s Sexy *Rooster* Struts into Town

Rooster, the smash hit by Houston Ballet Associate Choreographer Christopher Bruce, received its American premiere by Houston Ballet in 1995. Set to eight hits by The Rolling Stones, including “Sympathy for the Devil,” “Paint it Black,” and “Ruby Tuesday,” **Rooster** has become a signature piece for the company, and Houston Ballet has electrified audiences from Shanghai to South Carolina with this work.

On its surface, **Rooster** is a fast, furious, and wild evocation of the mating rituals of hip young Londoners during the “Swinging Sixties.” But critics delving deeper into the work have found other layers of meaning. At its wildly successful American premiere, Margaret Putnam, dance critic for *The Dallas Morning News*, wrote, “On a superficial level, the subject [of **Rooster**] is machismo and vanity, about the strut and swagger of young, cocksure males. But behind the bravado is despair, the sense that these youths are staring straight into a future of picket lines and cramped lives. **Rooster** even manages to transcend the music, no small feat.” (May 28, 1995)

Originally premiered by the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève on October 10, 1991, **Rooster** has been performed to overwhelming popular and critical acclaim worldwide. The London opening of the ballet at Sadler’s Wells Theater in November 1992 was a glittering international event. Prince Andrew was in attendance, as was Rolling Stones front man Mick Jagger. When asked what he thought of **Rooster** after the performance, Mr. Jagger responded, “I love it! It was great. I was looking at them and thinking ‘that’s a good move, I must nick that.’” He brought his children back to see a matinee performance of **Rooster**, and hired three of the **Rooster** dancers to appear in his next video.

The response of the public and the press to **Rooster** was equally enthusiastic. At a performance in Liverpool, *The London Times* reported that a group of teenagers greeted the piece with deafening cheers. Judith MacKrell of London's *The Independent* called **Rooster** "a sensation," writing that "sex, machismo, parody, and deep, deep nostalgia hung in the air." She also praised Mr. Bruce's "effortless reams of driving, exhilarating dance."

Houston Ballet last performed the work in 1998.

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HOUSTON BALLET
ROCK, ROLL, & TUTUS
FACT SHEET

WHAT: ROCK, ROLL, & TUTUS, featuring:

NOSOTROS (World Premiere)

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

ROOSTER

Music by The Rolling Stones

Choreography by Christopher Bruce

Costumes by Marian Bruce

Lighting by Tina MacHugh

SUITE EN BLANC (Houston Ballet Premiere)

Music by Edouard Lalo (excerpts from *Namouna*)

Choreography by Serge Lifar

Staged by Maina Gielgud

Lighting recreated by Christina R. Giannelli

Generously underwritten by:

Duke Energy

Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P.

The Brown Foundation, Inc.

The National Endowment for the Arts

Additional Support Provided by:

Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County.

**ABOUT THE
PROGRAM:**

From February 24 – March 6, 2005, Houston Ballet's exhilarating winter repertory program will open with **Nosotros**, a new work by Stanton Welch, a large-scale, classical pure dance piece created to highlight the company set to Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Set to the music of The Rolling Stones, Christopher Bruce's hard-driving, sexy **Rooster** is a wild evocation of London in the swinging 1960's. The company premiere of **Suite en Blanc**, an elegant full-company classical work, rounds out the program.

WHEN: At 7:30 pm on February 24, 26; March 4, 5, 2005
 At 2:00 pm on February 27 and March 6, 2005

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

TICKETS: Start at \$17. 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.

FOR MORE

INFORMATION:

Visit Houston Ballet online at www.houstonballet.org