

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE
OCTOBER 24, 2004

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HOUSTON BALLET'S CULLEN SERIES RETURNS WITH THREE WORLD PREMIERES

Program Takes on an International Tone with
An Emphasis on Experimentation

Rising Young Choreographic Stars Adrian Burnett and Matjash Mrozewski
Create Their First Works for Houston Ballet

Stanton Welch Choreographs *Blindness*,
A New Ballet Exploring Relationships

Houston, TX -- From October 28 – 31, 2004, Houston Ballet's Cullen Series returns after a three-year hiatus with a new focus: to present emerging international choreographers who are building names for themselves in the world of ballet. The program features **Blindness**, a new work by Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch, and world premieres from acclaimed young choreographers Adrian Burnett and Matjash Mrozewski. Also included on the program is a revival of Houston Ballet Choreographic Associate Trey McIntyre's quirky, critically acclaimed **Touched**. The company will give five performances of The Cullen Series at the Wortham Theater Center in downtown Houston.

The inauguration of The Cullen Series in 1992 marked a milestone in the development of Houston Ballet. Funded with a generous grant from The Cullen Foundation, the mandate of the series was to provide contemporary choreographers with the freedom and opportunity to explore a diverse range of choreographic styles. The series was put on hiatus beginning in 2002 due to budgetary constraints.

During this 35th anniversary season, the first season that Mr. Welch has fully programmed, the return of The Cullen Series is one of his top priorities: “It’s important that a company have the ability to facilitate new choreographers,” explained Mr. Welch. “It’s our duty as a company, and my duty as a choreographer, to give them these opportunities to experiment. Choreographers are hard to find. You have to search for them – they don’t just appear.” As a young choreographer, Mr. Welch was given opportunities to create new works and stand out as an artist, so he wants to give back to the dance community by providing a nurturing environment for emerging dance makers.

In commenting on his new focus for The Cullen Series, Mr. Welch said, “This series offers an opportunity for experimentation. If dance is a war, and the war is about pushing the envelope of art, then this is the front line. Art forms are never static.” With his piece, Mr. Welch said that he plans to “explore my own boundaries of where contemporary and classical ballet meet.”

Mr. Welch explained that all the pieces were chosen for another reason as well. “These ballets may look better in an intimate setting,” he commented. “It’s more like a play in a small house – you see more detail. **Touched** was designed specifically for a small venue.”

Houston Ballet’s Cullen Series has been generously underwritten by Grant Prideco, The Cullen Foundation and The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts.

Blindness: An Exploration of Relationships

An abstract contemporary piece, **Blindness** is set to music by Bach and will feature nine dancers.

Of his new work for The Cullen Series, Mr. Welch commented, “Love is blind. In relationships, people sometimes overlook their partner’s faults. It’s natural to blind ourselves to the other person’s biggest issue.” The closer we get to somebody, the less

critical we become, making it difficult to examine our lover's character and personality in an objective way. **Blindness** is an exploration of this concept.

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, and Royal Danish Ballet. Since taking the helm of Houston Ballet in July 2003, Mr. Welch has energized the company, leading the *Dallas Morning News* to observe, "Welch leads Houston Ballet with unequalled perfection." (*Dallas Morning News*, September 6, 2003) He has created three other works specifically for Houston Ballet, including **Indigo** (1999), **Bruiser** (2000), and **Tales of Texas** (2004).

A Rising Choreographic Star from Down Under

New Zealand-born Adrian Burnett joins The Cullen Series this year to create his first work for Houston Ballet. The abstract ballet will be set to Elena Kats-Chernin's *Piano Concerto No. 2*.

David McAllister, artistic director of The Australian Ballet, who has worked extensively with Mr. Burnett commented, "Adrian Burnett has just embarked on his career as a choreographer full time this year and joins an illustrious line of resident choreographers of The Australian Ballet, including Stanton Welch and Stephen Baynes.

"Adrian's work is athletic and physically dynamic. He uses the ballet vocabulary to explore contemporary movement concepts and works in a very collaborative style with the dancers, looking to highlight their unique qualities. He has a wonderful movement aesthetic which celebrates the 21st century ballet dancer and also has a keen eye for design, as well as challenging himself with bold musical choices. I'm sure his work will have a keen impact on The Australian Ballet and beyond in the coming years."

A former senior artist with The Australian Ballet, Adrian Burnett was appointed resident choreographer with that company in September 2003. Mr. Burnett graduated from The Australian Ballet School in 1987, joined the professional company in 1988, and rose to the rank of senior artist in 2002. Mr. Burnett created **Pitch ‘n’ Sway** (1995), his first choreographic piece, as part of the ‘New Moves’ Choreographic Workshop presented in Melbourne, Australia. In 1999, he received the Lissa Black Memorial Scholarship and assistance from the Australia Council Emerging Artists Scheme, enabling him to study choreography in the U.S. and Europe. He has created works for New York City Ballet, The Australian Ballet, West Australian Ballet and Royal New Zealand Ballet. His work for The Australian Ballet includes **Subtle Sequence of Revelation** (2002) and co-direction, with artistic director David McAllister, of The Australian Ballet’s “Beyond 40” gala. His latest work for that company, **Aesthetic Arrest** (2004), is set to John Adams’s *Fearful Symmetries*.

Matjash Mrozewski: Inspired by Bodies in Space and the Birth of a Star

The acclaimed young Canadian choreographer Matjash Mrozewski’s first work for Houston Ballet is based on the study of heavenly bodies: “My inspiration comes from the universe and bodies in a huge, empty and dark space,” explained Mr. Mrozewski. “I’m interested in representing events and phenomena, like the birth of a star, on a human level, as well as exploring the contradictory notions of chaos and calm, violence and serenity that come to my mind when I think of the universe. My aesthetic departure point will be guided by reading I’ve done in astrophysics and astronomy, and I’ll be relying on the bodies on stage, as well as lighting to convey my impressions.”

Mr. Mrozewski, who is looking forward to being part of The Cullen Series, commented, “As a young choreographer, working with a prestigious and talented company like Houston Ballet is a major stepping stone in my career. I’m so excited to work with Stanton and his amazing team of artists.”

The ballet will be set to three different pieces of music: the first movement of Brahms's *Piano Quartet in C minor*; *Industry*, a piece for amplified solo cello by Michael Gordon; and a work by Owen Belton.

Recently singled out as one of *Dance Magazine's* "25 to Watch" in January 2004, Matjash Mrozewski is a Toronto-based choreographer who graduated from Canada's National Ballet School in 1993. He has danced with numerous ballet companies, including The National Ballet of Canada and Les Ballets de Monte Carlo, and has appeared in works by William Forsythe, Twyla Tharp, Lar Lubovitch, Frederick Ashton, and Paul Taylor. Since leaving the National Ballet in 2001, Mr. Mrozewski has taken part in the New York City Ballet Choreographic Institute and created works for numerous international ballet companies. His works include **Lost and Found** (2002) for Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, the prize-winning **Another Space** (2002) for Milwaukee Ballet, **Flames and Ashes** (2002) for the Copenhagen International Ballet, **Monument** (2003) for the National Ballet of Canada, and **A World of Art** (2004) for The Royal Ballet. He will create a new work for Germany's Stuttgart Ballet in April 2005.

Touched:

A Playful Use of Light and Dark Set to the Music of Jazz Legend Dave Brubeck

A revival of Trey McIntyre's **Touched**, which premiered in the 1994 Cullen Series, rounds out the program. With its playful use of light and dark and its wildly eccentric, colorful costumes, the work reflects Mr. McIntyre's singular sensibility: exuberant, experimental, and suffused with an irrepressibly idiosyncratic sense of humor. At its premiere, Ann Holmes, dance critic for the *Houston Chronicle* said, "It's a dance piece with originality, a welcome experiment in black and white, close and far, coupled with youthful energy...**Touched** comes across as a vital number that works well." (April 4, 1994)

Set to the cool tunes of jazz great Dave Brubeck, **Touched** is performed in four parts. Two sections of the work are danced entirely in the dark, with the artists using flashlights to illuminate parts of their bodies. In the work, Mr. McIntyre leaves the world of tutus,

toe shoes, and the classical idiom far behind, requiring the dancers to dig deep into his grounded, barefoot, intensely athletic dance vocabulary. Although the tone is whimsical, Mr. McIntyre examines several serious ideas in the piece: the struggle to be vulnerable, to reveal oneself completely in a romantic relationship, and the challenge of achieving a sense of connection and emotional intimacy with another person.

Recently named one of the 25 most eligible bachelors in *People*, Houston Ballet Choreographic Associate Trey McIntyre is an award-winning choreographer who has created seven works for Houston Ballet, including **Second Before the Ground** (1996), **Bound** (2000), **The Shadow** (2003) and the full-length **Peter Pan** (2002). In 1987, Mr. McIntyre came to Houston Ballet Academy, and two years later was named choreographic apprentice, a position created especially for him. He joined the company as a member of the corps de ballet in 1990 and created his first work for the company, **Skeleton Clock** (1990), at the age of 20. Houston Ballet, which has nurtured and developed Mr. McIntyre's career, named him choreographic associate in 1995. Other companies he has created works for are: New York City Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, Moscow Ballet Theater, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Washington Ballet, Ballet Florida, Ballet Memphis, and Miami City Ballet. Mr. McIntyre has choreographed four works for Oregon Ballet Theatre, where he served as resident choreographer for the 1998-1999 season, and he is now resident choreographer for Ballet Memphis. In October, Mr. McIntyre will unveil his first commission for American Ballet Theatre as part of their City Center season in New York. He is also creating a new work for the Washington Ballet.

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HOUSTON BALLET
CULLEN SERIES
FACT SHEET

WHAT: CULLEN SERIES, featuring:

BLINDNESS (World Premiere)
Music by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Choreography by Stanton Welch
Lighting Design by Christina R. Giannelli

WORLD PREMIERE BY ADRIAN BURNETT
Music by Elena Kats-Chernin, *Piano Concerto No. 2*
Choreography by Adrian Burnett
Lighting Design by Christina R. Giannelli

WORLD PREMIERE BY MATJASH MROZEWSKI
Music by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), *Piano Quartet in C minor, Op. 60*, First Movement; Michael Gordon, *Industry*, for amplified solo cello; and Owen Belton, *The Great Attractor*
Choreography by Matjash Mrozewski
Lighting Design by Christina R. Giannelli

TOUCHED
Music by Dave Brubeck
Choreography and Costumes by Trey McIntyre
Lighting by Christina R. Giannelli

Generously underwritten by:
Grant Prideco
The Cullen Foundation
The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts

**ABOUT THE
PROGRAM:**

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WHEN: At 8:00 pm on October 28, 29, 30, 2004
At 2:30 pm on October 30, 31, 2004

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

TICKETS: Start at \$22.50. 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.

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