

# HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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**HOUSTON BALLET'S BEN STEVENSON ACADEMY PRESENTS ITS  
2008 SPRING SHOWCASE**

**University of Houston's  
Moore's School of Music Symphony Orchestra  
to Accompany Performance for the First Time at Wortham Theater Center**

**Dane Johnny Eliassen Stages Company Premiere of  
*August Bournonville's Konservatoriet***

**HBII Dancer Garrett Smith, 17, to Premiere *Den III*,  
His Third Work for Houston Ballet**

**Houston, Texas** – On Friday, April 18 at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, April 19 at 2:30 p.m., Houston Ballet II, the pre-professional training program of Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy, will present its 2008 Spring Showcase in the Cullen Theater at Wortham Theater Center in downtown Houston. Tickets start at \$17 and may be purchased by calling 713 227 ARTS (713 227 2787) or online at [www.houstonballet.org](http://www.houstonballet.org). All proceeds raised by the performances will benefit Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy.

Houston Ballet II is composed of artists from the uppermost level of Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy, who are preparing for careers as professional dancers. Many of the artists of Houston Ballet II have trained for over ten years, making great sacrifices to achieve their dreams. Performing on the Cullen Theater stage allows the students to demonstrate to their peers and the public how they have developed as artists during their training years at the academy just as they're getting ready to enter the professional world.

This year alone, HBII dancers have performed in New York City and at Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland, but the spring showcase has a different goal, according to Shelly Power, associate

director of Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy. When the dancers performed at Houston's Jewish Community Center's Dance Month in January 2008, she says that "JCC is specific in its guidelines, and we perform only one piece." With the showcase, the Academy has the opportunity to "do a full program, so it's a full evening of dance to show their range and versatility, from classical to contemporary repertoire." HBII Ballet Master Claudio Muñoz and Ms. Power carefully select each piece to fully showcase the abilities of every dancer.

The 2008 Spring Performance will include Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch's **Liebeslieder Waltzes**, set to the music of Johannes Brahms, featuring three couples and created in honor of the twentieth anniversary of Da Camera; and Mr. Welch's classical showpiece **Studies**, set to music by Carl Czerny and featuring 185 students from the Academy. Also on the program are the company premieres of August Bournonville's 1849 work **Konservatoriet**, staged by the celebrated Danish ballet master Johnny Eliassen, and Cuban choreographer Jorge Garcia's **Majisimo**, set to music by Jules Massenet, and the world premiere of **Den III**, a new piece by HBII dancer Garrett Smith. Rounding out the evening is the Black Swan Pas de Deux from Marius Petipa's **Swan Lake**.

Premiered by the Royal Danish Ballet on May 6, 1849, **Konservatoriet** featured a dancing class of the Paris Conservatory set against a background of complicated Romantic intrigue. Set to music by Holger Pauli, the ballet shows a typical Bournonville class in which the great Danish choreographer pays tribute to the illustrious teacher Auguste Vestris,

### **Collaboration with University of Houston Moore's School of Music Symphony Orchestra is first in Showcase History**

"This year's performance is particularly exciting and challenging because for the first time ever, HBII will perform to a live orchestra," says Ms. Power. Franz Krager, the University of Houston's **Professor of Conducting and Director of Orchestras**, will conduct the student orchestra of the University of Houston's Moore's School of Music in a historic collaboration with the Academy. Audiences will have the unique opportunity to witness two groups on the cusp of entering the professional world, the stars of tomorrow.

Performing to live music brings its own challenges. Human fallibility comes into play as well as understanding how the music will carry in the performance hall.

Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy has had an excellent relationship with Moore's School of over the last decade. In the past, the Academy dancers would perform at the University of Houston when the orchestra presented its own end of year showcase. The next step was only natural. "We've been trying to do this for years and the timing was right," says Ms. Power. All but one piece of the showcase will feature live music from the Moore's School of Music Orchestra.

**HBII Dancer Garrett Smith, 18, to Premiere *Den III*,  
His Third Work for Houston Ballet II**

Adding to the excitement, HBII dancer and choreographer Garrett Smith, 18, will be premiering **Den III**, a new work for four dancers set to the music of the Flemish Renaissance composer Tielman Susato with costumes by Travis Halsey. Mr. Smith is a student at Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy, but has already choreographed two previous works, making this his third piece for Houston Ballet II. Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch recognized Garrett's talent during a choreographic workshop at the Academy's 2007 Summer Intensive Program and encouraged him to develop it. For the workshop, Mr. Smith created a twenty minute contemporary piece entitled **Subtle Release** which was performed by HBII

"It's an amazing opportunity. Ever since the summer of 2007, choreography has been my newfound passion. I never considered myself a choreographer until I came here. It's just been so amazing to be able to not only create, but also to put your work out there," commented Mr. Smith.

He says he finds a lot of inspiration from his favorite choreographers, Jiří Kylián and Mats Ek. "Every time I see their choreography I get so inspired to try something new! There are so many ideas running through my head. I think its so rewarding to see the results after so much hard work and it's amazing to then hear the reactions from people who see my work."

He has no plans to slow down and has already been asked to choreograph a new piece in the summer of 2008 in collaboration with a composer from the AFA summer program. Mr. Smith's ever-expanding resume will get a boost this summer when he performs in The People's Republic of China and in Thailand.

Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, he began his ballet training at The Utah Regional Ballet at the age of 13. During this time he danced in the 2002 Winter Olympics Opening Ceremonies and toured to Austria, Amsterdam and Paris in an annual production entitled *Tanzsommer*. Mr. Smith was a member of Odyssey Dance Theater II where he was able to dance with the Odyssey Dance Theater. Recently he was a Level 1 Jazz Dance winner for the National Foundation for the Advancement in the Arts. He was featured in the Off Broadway show *Breakthrough*, where he was presented with an award from Mikhail Baryshnikov. Mr. Smith later was named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts, the highest award a high school student can receive. He was able to meet the President at The White House and perform at The Kennedy Center. Mr. Smith has spent summers studying at The School of American Ballet, The Kirov, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Houston Ballet.

### **185 Dancers Shine in Welch's *Studies***

Every student in Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy main school division will perform in **Studies**, a stellar showcase displaying the artistry and talent of Academy students from all levels of the academy. The piece highlights the Academy's ability to take students from preparatory ballet and develop them into skilled professional dancers.

Set to a selection of piano etudes by Carl Czerny, Mr. Welch's intricate piece will bring together 185 Academy students, including levels one through eight and the pre-professional students in Houston Ballet II. According to Mr. Welch, "The piece is designed to give the audience an idea about the different levels of technique acquired as each age group progresses through their training." For several of the younger artists this will be their first time on stage.

"The short vignettes of Czerny's etudes are wonderful for showcasing the entire Academy, and the simple charismatic tunes are not overwhelming for an eight year old," comments Ms Power, Associate Director of the academy. "Every year students look forward to learning what they

watched the year before. This gives them a sense of accomplishment as they graduate to new levels.” Mr. Welch created **Studies** especially for the 2005 Academy Spring Performance and it has been performed every year since.

### **Houston Ballet’s Ben Stevenson Academy**

Houston Ballet’s Ben Stevenson Academy is the official school of Houston Ballet and supplies 50% of the professional company’s dancers. Houston Ballet Principal Dancers Barbara Bears, Ian Casady, Mireille Hassenboehler, Melody Herrera, Sara Webb, and Connor Walsh were all once students of the prestigious Ben Stevenson Academy. As one of the most respected dance training institutions in America, graduates of the academy have gone on to dance with numerous leading companies, including American Ballet Theatre, The Australian Ballet, Vienna State Opera Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, The Joffrey Ballet, Boston Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, San Francisco Ballet, Texas Ballet Theater, BalletMet, Memphis Ballet, State Street Ballet, Ballet Florida, Pacific Northwest Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada.

Houston Ballet’s Ben Stevenson Academy main school division takes students from introduction to ballet through a full course of ballet study. The rigorous program offers classes in technique, pointe work, pas de deux, character dance and music. Students as young as four take creative dance, and six year olds take pre-ballet, both of which lay the foundation for further study of classical ballet. Students follow a structured sequence of training phases designed to enhance their technical skills, stamina and discipline.

Stanton Welch assumed leadership of the company and the academy in July 2003. As artistic director, Mr. Welch is extremely involved in the Academy and is committed to the development of its students. This season, Academy students have had the opportunity to perform with the professional company in Stanton Welch’s **Cinderella** and **The Core**, as well as Ben Stevenson’s staging of **The Nutcracker**.

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**HOUSTON BALLET'S BEN STEVENSON ACADEMY  
2008 SPRING SHOWCASE  
FACT SHEET**

**WHAT:** **Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy Spring Showcase**

**WHERE:** Cullen Theater at Wortham Theater Center  
501 Texas Avenue

**WHEN:** **7:00 PM** Friday, April 18, 2008  
**2:30 PM** Saturday, April 19, 2008

**TO PURCHASE  
TICKETS:**

Call 713 227 ARTS (2787)  
Or purchase online at [www.HoustonBallet.org](http://www.HoustonBallet.org)

**WORKS TO**

**BE PERFORMED:** **LIEBESLIEDER WALTZES, OP 52**

**Music:** Johannes Brahms

**Choreography:** Stanton Welch

**SWAN LAKE**

"Black Swan" Pas de Deux

**Music:** Peter I. Tchaikovsky

**Choreography:** Marius Petipa

**Staging:** Claudio Muñoz

**DEN III**

**World Premiere**

**Music:** Tielman Susato

**Choreography:** Garrett Smith

**Costumes:** Travis Halsey

**KONSERVATORIET**

**(The Conservatory)**

**Music:** Holger Simon Paulli

**Choreography:** August Bournonville

**Staging:** Johnny Eliassen

**Coached:** Claudio Muñoz

**MAJISIMO**

**Music:** Jules Massenet

**Choreography:** Jorge Garcia

**Staging:** Lazaro Carreño

**STUDIES**

**Music:** Carl Czerny (1791-1857)

**Choreography:** Stanton Welch  
**Arranged for Chamber Orchestra:** Robert Bridges

All lighting by Christina R. Giannelli

**FOR MORE**

**INFORMATION:** Visit Houston Ballet on the World Wide Web at  
[www.houstonballet.org](http://www.houstonballet.org) for more information or to purchase tickets.