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HOUSTON BALLET ANNOUNCES ITS 2020-2021 SEASON

HOUSTON, TEXAS [January 26, 2019] — Houston Ballet Artistic Director, Stanton Welch AM, announces the company's lively 2020-2021 season. Houston Ballet, continuing to paint the town gold this season, will embrace the next chapter and decade in vivid color this fall.

"I'm excited to launch our next 50 years with critically acclaimed works by Forsythe, Peck and Balanchine, plus a new creation by our own Principal Dancer Melody Mennite," says Welch. "Alongside these premieres comes the return of audience favorites *Aladdin*, *Mayerling* and *La Bayadère*. As we forge into our future with the masters and today's wunderkind, Houston Ballet always aims to lead the way in innovation and creativity."

The spectacular season ahead does just that. The headline three story ballets include Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Mayerling*, David Bintley's *Aladdin* and Welch's *La Bayadère*. Houston Ballet made history by bringing *Mayerling* to North America in 2017, but only for a few performances as the city had just been hit by Hurricane Harvey. The company is ready to bring this thriller to the Wortham Theater Center stage for the full run it deserves. The season's mixed repertoires include Houston Ballet premieres from acclaimed choreographers William Forsythe and Justin Peck as well as audience favorites from Christopher Bruce, Wayne McGregor and Welch. Welch continues to foster Principal Dancer Melody Mennite's talent for choreography, signing her on for another commission following her first solo gig with the company in 2018. *The Nutcracker*, Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance and the Academy Spring Showcase return as part of the cherished season add-on offerings.

"Following a spectacular 50th anniversary season celebrating the rich collection of ballets created on Houston Ballet, we're excited to continue that tradition with three works new to our Houston audiences," says Houston Ballet Executive Director Jim Nelson.

With 61 professional dancers, a full-time staff of 103, an exceptional training school and the finest dance facility in the country, Houston Ballet is well poised to continue its brilliant trajectory. A trajectory that includes presenting full-length ballets that showcase company strengths as well as one-act ballets that showcase its diversity. The colorful 2020-2021 season is no exception.

Season ticket packages start at \$114 and are on sale now through the Box Office at 713.227.ARTS(2787) and online at houstonballet.org.

The 2020-2021 season programming includes:

**Mixed Rep I
Love Letters**

Rubies (1967) | Choreographer: George Balanchine | Music: Igor Stravinsky

Blake Works I (2016) | Choreographer: William Forsythe | Music: James Blake

Young Person's Guide to Orchestra (2014) | Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Benjamin Britten

September 11 – 20, 2020

From three choreographers come three ballets composed as love letters to ballet and the orchestra. *Rubies* by George Balanchine was created as an ode to vintage Americana and the dynamic energy and rhythm of American ballet choreography. Set to seven songs by the young English musician James Blake, William Forsythe created the joyous *Blake Works I* as a love letter to the history and evolution of ballet. Stanton Welch's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* is set to Benjamin Britten's iconic work of the same title, a score created by Britten as way to educate youth on the art of the orchestra. Created on Houston Ballet in 2014, this huge, collaborative piece features the entire company and the talented musicians of the Houston Ballet Orchestra in a colorful love letter to music. [Houston Ballet's performances of Rep I generously sponsored by: ConocoPhillips]

***Mayerling* (1978)**

Choreographer: Sir Kenneth MacMillan | Music: Franz Liszt
September 24 – October 4, 2020

For the first time on the Wortham Theater Center stage, Houston Ballet is pleased to present Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Mayerling*. An epic triumph in classical storytelling, this mesmerizing three-act ballet recounts the tale of Crown Prince Rudolph, sole heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It follows him through an unhappy marriage, flirtations and dalliances, all leading to his tragic demise alongside his 17-year-old mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera. Backed by exquisite costumes and scenery, the acting and dancing strengths of Houston Ballet dancers are on full display in this theatrical and physically demanding production. [Houston Ballet's performances of *Mayerling* generously sponsored by: The Wortham Foundation, Inc.]

***La Bayadère* (2010)**

Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Ludwig Minkus
February 25 – March 7, 2021

Created on Houston Ballet in 2010, Stanton Welch's *La Bayadère* has entered the repertoires of the Joffrey Ballet and the Australian Ballet to critical acclaim. A colorful version of the Russian classic, *La Bayadère* is the lively story of Nikiya the temple dancer, her lover Solor and the vengeance that keeps them apart – at least in this life. With lavish scenery and costumes by renowned designer Peter Farmer, *La Bayadère* features mesmerizing classical performances highlighted by the famous Kingdom of Shades scene, staged for the ethereal corps de ballet. [Houston Ballet's performances of *La Bayadère* generously sponsored by: Chevron and The Wortham Foundation, Inc.]

Mixed Rep IV

Rock, Roll & Tutus

Heatscape (2015) | Choreographer: Justin Peck | Music: Bohuslav Martinů
Rooster (1991) | Choreographer: Christopher Bruce | Music: Rolling Stones
Divergence (1994) | Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Georges Bizet
March 11 – 21, 2021

Contemporary ballet is looking better than ever in these three works. Created on Miami City Ballet, *Heatscape* beautifully merges ballet and guerilla street art in a stunning collaboration between Tony Award-winning choreographer Justin Peck and celebrated visual artist Shepard Fairey, all set to the music of Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů. Christopher Bruce's *Rooster* is still rocking audiences around the world. It's a fast-paced romp of machismo and nostalgia set to eight classic tracks by the Rolling Stones. And with Stanton Welch's *Divergence*, the popular, unexpected and explosive ballet that put him on the international map, Rock, Roll & Tutus is sure to be a showstopper. [Houston Ballet's performances of Rep IV generously sponsored by: Chevron]

Mixed Rep V

The Rite of Spring

Dyad 1929 (2009) | Choreographer: Wayne McGregor | Music: Steve Reich
World Premiere
To Be Announced (2021) | Choreographer: Melody Mennite | Music: TBA
The Rite of Spring (2013) | Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Igor Stravinsky
May 27 – June 6, 2021

It takes a world-class company to perform an evening of ballet this diverse. Abstract and fast as lightning, Wayne McGregor's *Dyad 1929* is dedicated to the memory of modern dance legend Merce Cunningham and features his trademark style of dynamic contrasts and intensely physical partnering. The evening will also include a world premiere by Melody Mennite, Houston Ballet Principal Dancer and noted choreographer to watch. Set to the audacious Stravinsky score, Stanton Welch's *The Rite of Spring* features art by indigenous Australian painter Rosella Namok and expands on the provocative movement of the original production with themes of sexuality and primitiveness.

***Aladdin* (2008)**

Choreographer: David Bintley | Music: Carl Davis
June 10 – June 20, 2021

Aladdin made its American premiere in 2014 to audience and critical acclaim. A run-in with the palace guards leads the young and reckless title character into a whirlwind of adventure and romance in this vibrant ballet based on the legendary tale of Aladdin and his magical lamp, *One Thousand and One Nights*. With unbelievable riches, love at first sight, treachery, a flying carpet and, of course, a mystical blue genie, Sir David Bintley's *Aladdin* is ideal entertainment for audiences of all ages. This spectacular production features scenery by renowned designer Dick Byrd and an original, whimsical score by Carl Davis. [Houston Ballet's performances of *Aladdin* generously sponsored by: Beauchamp Foundation and The Wortham Foundation, Inc.]

The add-on performances for the 2020-2021 season programming include:

***The Nutcracker* (2016)**

Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Nov. 27 – Dec. 27, 2020

There's so much to love about Houston Ballet's *The Nutcracker*. With grand sets, stunning costumes, the iconic score, swordfights, snowflakes, dancing animals and toys, *The Nutcracker* truly is the ultimate holiday experience for the whole family. Join Clara and Drosselmeyer as they travel together to the Kingdom of the Sweets, where the Sugar Plum Fairy is reunited with her prince and the magic happens. One of the most splendid ever staged, Stanton Welch's production features the entire company of dancers and many Houston Ballet Academy students playing hundreds of fun and whimsical roles. [Houston Ballet's performances of *The Nutcracker* are presented by Houston Methodist and generously sponsored in part by: Apache Corporation, Baker Botts LLP, Bank of America, ConocoPhillips, H-E-B, Macy's, Shell Oil, Tenenbaum Jewelers and United Airlines]

Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance

December 4, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

The Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance is a star-studded celebration featuring every lead dancer in a jubilant one-night-only performance of highlights from Houston Ballet's extensive repertory. Spotting this season's program is a world premiere work choreographed especially for the evening by company Principal Connor Walsh. Reserve your seats early, for the Jubilee of Dance is not to be missed. [Special thanks to Margaret Alkek Williams for endowing this annual gala performance]

Academy Spring Showcase

April 30 – May 1, 2021

The young dancers of the Houston Ballet Academy have performed on stages across the world. They've been honored at the Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland. See them in their home theater to experience the next generation of dancers for yourself. Whether dancing scenes from ballets in the Houston Ballet repertoire or ballets created especially for them, these talented young performers represent the bright future of ballet.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

Celebrating 50 years of creativity, Houston Ballet has evolved from a Company of 16 dancers to one of 61 dancers with a budget of \$33.9 million and an endowment of \$79.2 million (as of June 2019), making it the country's fifth largest ballet company. Its Center for Dance is a \$46.6 million state-of-the-art performance space that opened in April 2011 and remains the largest professional dance facility in America. Houston Ballet's reach is global, touring in renowned theaters in Dubai, London, Paris, Moscow, Spain, Montréal, Ottawa, Melbourne, New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and more.

Houston Ballet attracts prestigious leaders in dance. Australian choreographer Stanton Welch AM has served as Artistic Director of Houston Ballet since 2003, raising the level of the Company's classical technique and commissioning works from dance legends such as Julia Adam, George Balanchine, Aszure Barton, Christopher Bruce, Alexander Ekman, William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Edwaard Liang, Trey McIntyre and Justin Peck. Executive Director James Nelson serves as the administrative leader of the organization, a position he assumed in February 2012 after serving as the Company's General Manager for more than a decade.

Beyond its stage presence, Houston Ballet maintains a strong foothold in continuing to foster a love for dance in future generations. Its Education and Community Engagement program reaches more than 70,000 individuals in the Houston area annually. Houston Ballet Academy trains more than 1,000 students every year, producing more than 50 percent of the elite athletes that comprise Houston Ballet's current Company.

For more information on Houston Ballet, visit houstonballet.org.

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