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HOUSTON BALLET ANNOUNCES ITS 2019/2020 SEASON

PHOTOS & VIDEOS: <https://bit.ly/2DzVmne>

HOUSTON, TEXAS [February 4, 2019] — Houston Ballet Artistic Director, Stanton Welch AM, announces the company's 2019/20 season, celebrating 50 years of creativity. The golden anniversary will be reflected in every performance during the season, showcasing Houston Ballet's signature style for the timeless, iconic and innovative.

"It's going to be an exciting year that's full of great history and adventurous new works," says Welch. "Part of the mission in creating the season's repertoire was to look back at what we have done. Our body of work is so rich, and we've drawn from it an extraordinary collection of ballets and choreographers. We are so excited to share this anniversary season with Houston."

Hand-picked by Welch, every ballet in the 2019/20 season was created on Houston Ballet dancers. The season commences with the production that launched ballet in Houston, *Giselle*. Mixed repertoires throughout the season each include returning stunners and a world premiere. The Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance will be a celebration of Houston Ballet through the ages and be a historic encapsulation in one evening. *Sleeping Beauty*, in all its spectacular wonder, will pay tribute to the era of Ben Stevenson OBE., Houston Ballet's former Artistic Director. Finally, the season will close with the most famous love story ever told, *Romeo and Juliet*.

For 50 years, Houston Ballet has taken the stage locally and afar, each season expanding its reach and repertoire. It grew from a company of 16 dancers to 60 dancers. As the fifth largest ballet company in the nation, it attracts global talent in the form of dancers, choreographers and staff.

"This season is a time to reflect on everything Houston Ballet has accomplished over the past five decades," says Houston Ballet Executive Director, Jim Nelson. "We are thrilled to celebrate this anniversary with all our loyal patrons and the Houston community. We hope everyone will join us as we continue this momentum into our next 50 years."

Season ticket packages will go on sale February 12 and will be available by calling the Box Office at 713.227.ARTS(2787) or by visiting houstonballet.org.

The 2019/20 season programming includes:

***Giselle* (2016)**

Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Adolphe Adam
September 6 – 15, 2019

When Marius Petipa's *Giselle* opened the Houston Ballet season in 1967, it marked a turning point; the city could and would support a company of international acclaim. While it remains a supreme example of 19th-century balletic Romanticism, Welch's *Giselle* was created entirely on Company dancers, many of whom will return to their original roles for this production. In this story of a peasant girl deceived by an aristocrat disguised as a commoner, the emotions of love, betrayal and redemption play out in stunning simplicity. With sets and costumes by acclaimed Italian designer Roberta Guidi di Bagno, Welch's *Giselle* is one of the most beautiful ever produced. [Houston Ballet's performances of *Giselle* generously underwritten by Lynn Wyatt and sponsored by Chevron and The Wortham Foundation, Inc.]

Mixed Rep II

Locally Grown – World Renowned

Passion (2013) | Choreographer: James Kudelka | Music: Ludwig van Beethoven

Murmuration (2013) | Choreographer: Edwaard Liang | Music: Ezio Bosso
World Premiere

To Be Announced (2019) | Choreographer: Zhang Disha | Music: TBA
September 19 – 29, 2019

Only a Company with the depth, breadth and the facilities of Houston Ballet could assemble a locally grown program by some of the world's most sought-after choreographers. Hailed by The New York Times as "easily ballet's most original choreographer," Canadian-born James Kudelka premiered *Passion* in Houston in 2013 to great critical acclaim. Born in Taiwan and raised in California, Edwaard Liang was inspired by flight patterns of starling birds and he employs his signature seamless and emotional movements in *Murmuration*. American-born Houston Ballet First Soloist Oliver Halkowich has danced classical and contemporary works by Balanchine, Kylián, Forsythe and many others. This is his first solo choreographic work for the Company. Also, on this spectacular program is a World Premiere by Zhang Disha. A winner of numerous international choreographic awards, she is recognized worldwide as a strong, daring and highly emotional modern choreographer. [Houston Ballet's performances of *Rep II* generously sponsored by: Chevron]

The Sleeping Beauty (1990)

Choreographer: Ben Stevenson OBE, after Marius Petipa | Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
February 27 – March 8, 2020

The 50th anniversary season would not be complete without a signature Ben Stevenson production. A lavish production that premiered in 1990, Stevenson's *The Sleeping Beauty* is recognized as one of the supreme achievements of classical ballet. His is an exquisite interpretation of the classic French fairytale by Charles Perrault; a beautiful princess is cursed by an evil fairy and doomed to sleep for a hundred years – only to be awakened by the kiss of the handsome prince who loves her. Stunning costumes and spectacular sets by Desmond Heeley help make the production as magical as the story it tells. [Houston Ballet's performances of *The Sleeping Beauty* generously sponsored by: The Rand Group and The Wortham Foundation, Inc.]

Mixed Rep IV

Forged in Houston

ONE/end/ONE (2011) | Choreographer: Jorma Elo | Music: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Hush (2006) | Choreographer: Christopher Bruce | Music: Bobby McFerrin and Yo-Yo Ma
World Premiere

To Be Announced (2020) | Choreographer: Trey McIntyre | Music: TBA
March 12 – 22, 2020

Continuing its tradition of supporting the world's most respected choreographers, Houston Ballet is pleased to present an uplifting program featuring two of the most successful ballets ever created on the Company and a World Premiere by a choreographer who grew up in Houston. Jorma Elo's *ONE|end|ONE* reflects the dance maker's quirky and unexpected movements to create an atmosphere of playfulness. Christopher Bruce's *Hush* is a comic and moving celebration of life set to the music of Yo-Yo Ma and Bobby McFerrin. Award-winning choreographer Trey McIntyre trained at Houston Ballet Academy and danced for Houston Ballet before becoming the company's first choreographic associate. Over the years he has made more than 100 ballets, many created on Houston Ballet dancers.

Mixed Rep V

From Houston to the World

The Letter V (2015) | Choreographer: Mark Morris | Music: Joseph Haydn

Angular Momentum (2012) | Choreographer: Aszure Barton | Music: Tobin Del Cuore
World Premiere

To Be Announced (2020) | Choreographer: Arthur Pita | Music: TBA
May 21 – 31, 2020

Recognized worldwide as a famously musical choreographer, Mark Morris created *The Letter V* on Houston Ballet in 2015 to audience and critical acclaim. Of the work, Dance Europe wrote, "You left the theatre feeling a better person than when you went in, and that doesn't happen too often." Aszure Barton's *Angular Momentum* has notable Houston heritage. Not

only was the choreographer influenced by the city's architecture including the etchings on the windows at the Center for Dance, the third movement of Mason Bates's score was written about Houston and the moon landing. Arthur Pita has created works for San Francisco Ballet and for The Royal Ballet of London, but this program marks the first time the acclaimed choreographer has worked in Houston. [Houston Ballet's performances of *Rep V* generously sponsored by: Riviana Foods, Inc.]

***Romeo and Juliet* (2015)**

Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Sergey Prokofiev
June 4 – June 14, 2020

Welch's *Romeo and Juliet* made its world premiere at Houston Ballet in 2015 and has since traveled as far as Australia. The exquisite production is a brilliantly imagined interpretation of the world's most famous love story. Set to Prokofiev's breathtaking score, Welch's ballet weaves the poignant tale of the star-crossed pair exquisitely. With lavish sets and costumes by acclaimed Italian designer Roberta Guidi di Bagno, the production pays tribute to Italian Renaissance. The theme is classic and the choreography fresh. [Houston Ballet's performances of *Romeo and Juliet* generously underwritten by Melza and Ted Barr and sponsored by ConocoPhillips]

The add-on performances for the 2019/20 season programming include:

***The Nutcracker* (2016)**

Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Nov. 29 – Dec. 29, 2019

This is the fourth season Houstonians and visitors will be treated Welch's opulent production of *The Nutcracker*. Welch's over the top scenery blends seamlessly with the beloved characters and Tchaikovsky's splendid score in this classic tale. Gather your family and friends to join Clara in holiday revelry as she journeys from her home on Christmas Eve, through a magical Christmas tree and into the whimsical Kingdom of Sweets, accompanied by her Nutcracker Prince. Join Houston Ballet for this grand holiday tradition to cap off 2019. [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, H-E-B, Macy's, Shell Oil, Tenenbaum Jewelers and United Airlines]

Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance

December 6, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

The Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance is always a joyous and fleeting acknowledgement of the creativity that is Houston Ballet. This 50th Anniversary Jubilee of Dance promises to be even more spectacular than ever. With spoken narrative and exquisite dance, the evening will present a glimpse into the history of the Company, as told by some of its most beloved artists. There will be tributes to Houston Ballet legends and showcase works for current and future stars. Reserve your seats early, for the Jubilee of Dance is an evening not to be missed. [Special thanks to Margaret Alkek Williams for endowing this annual gala performance]

Academy Spring Showcase

April 24-25, 2020

Featuring the gifted young dancers of the renowned Houston Ballet Academy, the annual Academy Spring Showcase offers a glimpse into the bright future of the professional company. Hundreds of dancers grace the stage in a display of remarkable artistry, performing beloved classical styles to innovative contemporary movements while showcasing the high level of training and technique instilled by the Academy. Join in on these exceptional performances in this inspiring showcase to envision the future of Houston Ballet.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

Houston Ballet has evolved into a company of 60 dancers with a budget of \$33 million, making it the country's fifth largest ballet company. With a state-of-the-art performance space built especially for the company—also the largest professional dance facility in America—Houston Ballet's \$46.6 million Center for Dance opened in April 2011, with an endowment of just over \$74.1 million (as of July 2017).

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 makers such as Christopher Bruce, Alexander Ekman, William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Trey McIntyre, Julia Adam, Edwaard Liang, and George Balanchine. Executive

Director James Nelson serves as the administrative leader of the company, a position he assumed in February 2012 after serving as the company's General Manager for more than a decade.

Houston Ballet has toured extensively both nationally and internationally. Over the past fifteen years, the company has appeared in renowned theaters in London, Paris, Moscow, Spain, Montréal, Ottawa, Melbourne, New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and in cities large and small across the United States.

Houston Ballet's Education and Community Engagement Program reaches more than 60,000 individuals in the Houston area annually. Houston Ballet Academy teaches more than one thousand students every year, and approximately 50 percent of the current company was trained by the Academy.

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

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