



# HoustonBallet

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## HOUSTON BALLET PRESENTS SIR KENNETH MACMILLAN'S MAYERLING A HOUSTON BALLET PREMIERE

"I have watched ballet all my life. But it was not until I saw **Mayerling** that I realized all that ballet could be." – The Telegraph

"**Mayerling** remains one of the monumental achievements of 20th-century dance-theatre..." – The Guardian

**HOUSTON, TEXAS** – Due to Hurricane Harvey, Houston Ballet is unable to perform the opening two productions at the company's home venue. However, Houston Ballet is pleased to report that select performances of fall programming have been rescheduled at THE HOBBY CENTER – SAROFIM HALL. **For a limited time from September 22-24 at The Hobby Center**, Houston Ballet presents Sir Kenneth MacMillan's **Mayerling**, and will be the first North-American company to perform this compelling production. Originally premiering on February 14, 1978 at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden by the Royal Ballet, **Mayerling** also had a triumphant American premiere in Los Angeles that same year and was the subject of a London Weekend Television film, winning the 1978 music category of the prestigious Prix Italia – the first ballet to do so.

A captivating three-act narrative ballet, the production is based on the historic 1889 incident involving the murder-suicide of the sole heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Crown Prince Rudolf, and his 17-year-old mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera. Set to John Lanchbery's powerful arrangement of Franz Liszt compositions, Sir Kenneth's last full-length ballet boldly requires dancers to fully embody intense characters through dramatic acting and dancing. Houston Ballet will feature Costume and Scenic Designs by Pablo Núñez, Scenario by Gillian Freeman and Lighting Designs by Lisa J. Pinkham.

Hailed by *The New York Times* as "one of the century's great choreographers" (September 12, 1993), Sir Kenneth MacMillan was born in Dunfermline, Scotland in 1929 and received his dance training at the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, later the Royal Ballet, a new company formed by Dame Ninette de Valois. In 1953, Sir Kenneth's first ballet, **Somnambulism**, was the hit of the evening, and from then on, he pursued a celebrated choreographic career. From 1954 to 1965, he created over ten works for the Sadler's Wells company, including **The Burrow** (1958), **Romeo and Juliet** (1965) and **Song of the Earth** (1965). In 1966, Sir Kenneth received an invitation to direct Berlin Ballet at Deutsche Oper in West Berlin. He took over the company and staged his own productions of **The Sleeping Beauty**, **Swan Lake** and **Anastasia**. Emerging as the natural successor to The Royal Ballet Director, Sir Frederick Ashton, Sir Kenneth assumed the directorship at the beginning of the 1970-1971 Season. He continued to choreograph and, in 1974, created **Manon** and **Elite Syncopations**, as well as **Requiem** (1976) and **My Brother, My Sisters** (1978) for Stuttgart Ballet. Other works include **La Fin du Jour** (1979), **Gloria** (1980), **Isadora** (1981), **Wild Boys** for American Ballet Theatre (1981), **Quartet** (1982), **Orpheus** (1982) and **Valley of the Shadows** (1982) for The Royal Ballet. Sir Kenneth received his knighthood in 1983.

Sir Kenneth served as Houston Ballet's Artistic Associate from 1989 until his death in 1992. This year, Houston Ballet is pleased to premiere the historic and lavish production of **Mayerling**, a story of disastrous obsession and unrequited love, and will honor the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sir Kenneth's death.

Additional works by Sir Kenneth MacMillan in Houston Ballet's repertoire include **Song of the Earth**, **Gloria**, **Elite Syncopations**, **Solitaire** and **Manon**.

Houston Ballet's performances of **Mayerling** sponsored by: The Wortham Foundation

**HOUSTON BALLETT  
MAYERLING  
FACT SHEET**

All performances listed here are in THE HOBBY CENTER – SAROFIM HALL

**WHAT:** **MAYERLING**  
Houston Ballet Premiere

BALLET IN THREE ACTS

Music by Franz Liszt (1811-1886)  
Arranged and orchestrated by John Lanchbery OBE  
Choreography by Sir Kenneth MacMillan  
Costume and Scenic Design by Pablo Núñez  
Scenario by Gillian Freeman  
Lighting Design by Lisa J. Pinkham  
Staged by Karl Burnett and Grant Coyle

Coaching by Leanne Benjamin and Bruce Sansom

**PRODUCTION**

**SPONSORED BY:** The Wortham Foundation

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:**

The 2017/18 Season brings the Houston Ballet premiere of Sir Kenneth MacMillan's **Mayerling**. This 3-act narrative ballet is based on the historic 1889 incident involving the murder-suicide of the sole heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Crown Prince Rudolf, and his 17-year-old mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera. Set to John Lanchbery's powerful arrangement of Franz Liszt compositions, Sir Kenneth's last full-length ballet boldly requires dancers to fully embody intense characters through dramatic acting and dancing. Houston Ballet is pleased to be the first North-American company to perform this historic and lavish production about disastrous obsession and unrequited love.

**WHEN:**

**Mayerling – rescheduled at THE HOBBY CENTER – SAROFIM HALL**

- Friday, Sept. 22 at 7:30 PM
- Saturday, Sept. 23 at 1:30 PM
- Saturday, Sept. 23 at 7:30 PM
- Sunday, Sept. 24 at 2:00 PM

**WHERE:**

800 Bagby St, Houston, TX 77002

**TICKETS:**

Starting at \$25.  
Call 713-227-2787 or visit [houstonballet.org](http://houstonballet.org).

**FOR MORE**

**INFORMATION:** Visit Houston Ballet at [houstonballet.org](http://houstonballet.org).

**About Houston Ballet**

Houston Ballet has evolved into a company of 59 dancers with a budget of \$33 million (making it the United States' fourth largest ballet company by number of dancers.) With a state-of-the-art performance space built especially for the company, which is 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 many new 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 over a decade.

Houston Ballet has toured extensively both nationally and internationally. Over the past fifteen years, the company has appeared in London at Sadler's Wells, at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, Russia, in six cities in Spain, in Montréal and Ottawa, at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in New York at City Center and The Joyce Theater, at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in Paris, at The Arts Center Melbourne State Theatre in Melbourne, Australia, in Los Angeles at The Music Center's Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and in cities large and small across the United States. Houston Ballet has emerged as a leader in the expensive, labor-intensive task of nurturing the creation and development of new full-length narrative ballets.

Writing in *Dancing Times* in June 2012, dance critic Margaret Willis praised Houston Ballet and highlighted the fact that "During his own tenure, (Stanton) Welch has upped the standard and Houston Ballet now shows off a group of 55 dancers in splendid shape. With fast and tidy footwork, they are technically skillful and have strong, broad jumps and expansive, fluid movements. The dancers' musicality shines through their work, dancing as one with elegance and refinement – and they are a handsome bunch too!...if ballet were an Olympic sport, see Houston Ballet well on the way to achieving gold."

Houston Ballet Orchestra was established in the late 1970s and consists of 61 professional musicians who play for Houston Ballet's performances at Wortham Theater Center under Music Director Ermanno Florio.

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

For more information on Houston Ballet visit [houstonballet.org](http://houstonballet.org).

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