

**UNDER EMBARGO:
PRESS RELEASE**

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HOUSTON BALLET PROUDLY ANNOUNCES ITS 2023-2024 SEASON

PHOTOS & VIDEOS: <https://bit.ly/3YctdK0>

HOUSTON, TEXAS [FEB. 8, 2023] — Houston Ballet proudly announces its 2023-2024 Season, celebrating Stanton Welch AM’s 20th anniversary as Artistic Director of the Company. The season highlights Welch’s dedication to growing Houston Ballet’s repertoire to include works from some of the most notable choreographers in dance history, as well as fostering up-and-coming creators. Audiences will enjoy six world premieres and three Houston Ballet premieres, in addition to the return of groundbreaking works from Welch’s 20-year tenure.

“We have a thrilling year ahead with six world premieres, three Houston premieres, and the return of three powerhouse full-lengths, all of which will showcase the Company’s virtuosity and strong technique,” says Artistic Director Stanton Welch. “I am proud of how Houston Ballet has grown to truly become an eden of creativity and I look forward to sharing the 23-24 season with our audiences this year.”

Bringing back an audience favorite, the revival of Welch’s fiery *Cinderella* shows off his signature ability to weave complex stories for modern audiences. Marking significant milestones in the Company’s history, Houston Ballet was the first North American company to perform the season’s other two story ballets: John

Neumeier's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a Shakespearean comedy full of romance, and Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Mayerling*, a dark tragedy packed with drama and intrigue.

Continuing to illustrate Houston Ballet's deep connection with dance legends, the season's mixed repertory programs include Houston Ballet premieres of Stanton Welch's *Bespoke*, Jiri Kylian's *Overgrown Path* and George Balanchine's *Stars and Stripes*, along with two world premieres from internationally renowned choreographers Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Dwight Rhoden, their first for the Company. Additionally, Houston Ballet presents a special 20th anniversary celebration for this season's Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance, featuring a world premiere one-act from Stanton Welch himself and a showcase of choreographic lineage with new works from three Company dancers.

Season ticket packages start at \$120 for all six main season performances and are on sale now through the Box Office at 713.227.2787 (ARTS) and online at houstonballet.org.

Houston Ballet's 2023-2024 season is generously sponsored by Bank of America, Houston Methodist, KPRC along with Baker Botts L.L.P., The Brown Foundation, Inc., Chevron, The Cullen Foundation, ConocoPhillips, H-E-B, Shell Oil, The Wortham Foundation, Inc. and The City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance.

The 2023-2024 season programming includes:

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Choreographer: John Neumeier | Music: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Gyorgy Ligeti
September 8 - 17, 2023

Based on Shakespeare's joyous romantic comedy, John Neumeier's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* follows the hijinks and hilarity that occur when a well-intentioned plan with a love potion goes awry. Following the thread of interwoven romances, the ballet travels from the Court of Athens to the Fairy Realm where mayhem ensues. By cleverly combining the music of Mendelssohn, Ligeti and traditional organ music, the score transports the audience into a fantasy world through choreography that demonstrates the narrative power of ballet. Created in 1977 on Hamburg Ballet, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of Neumeier's most famous works performed by companies around the globe. Houston Ballet was the first North American company to perform the distinguished work in 2014.

Tutu

Tu Tu | Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Maurice Ravel
Stars and Stripes (Houston Ballet Premiere) | Choreographer: George Balanchine | Music: John Philip Sousa,
arranged by Hershy Kay
Annabelle Lopez-Ochoa (World Premiere)
September 21 - October 1, 2023

The first triple bill of the season sets the stage with a playful look at classical ballet. Welch's *Tu Tu* is full of agility and speed, with tongue-in-cheek choreography that showcases superb classical technique. Set to Ravel's *Concerto for Piano in G major*, the dancers are outfitted in brilliantly colored costumes inspired by Gustav Klimt's gold-hued paintings. The Company adds a new Balanchine work to its repertoire with the Houston Ballet premiere of the iconic *Stars and Stripes*. In all-American costumes with exuberant patriotic touches, this classic Balanchine work is set to five rousing marches from composer John Phillip Sousa. The program is capped with a world premiere by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, a Colombian-Belgian choreographer who has created works for internationally renowned companies such as Dutch National Ballet, Scottish Ballet and

Les Grand Ballet Canadiens. Her first commission for Houston Ballet, this new work is inspired by the life of the famous 20th century Uruguayan poet Delmira Agustini, known as one of the first female poets of the modernist era.

Cinderella

Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Sergey Prokofiev
February 22 - March 3, 2024

Make no mistake, this is not your childhood Cinderella! More tomboy than princess, Stanton Welch's title character is a striking woman of substance, determination and spunk. Not waiting on a prince to rescue her, Cinderella is in control, fighting the will of her evil stepmother with wit and vigor. And when she finds true love she grabs it— and holds on with both hands. Set to Prokofiev's classic score with spectacular set and costume design by Kristian Frederickson, Welch's unique spin on the storied classic brings the work into modern times, with a twist to suit the 21st century.

Bespoke

Bespoke (Houston Ballet Premiere) | Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Johann Sebastian Bach
Overgrown Path (Houston Ballet Premiere) | Choreographer: Jiří Kylián | Music: Leoš Janáček
Filigree and Shadow | Choreographer: Tim Harbour | Music: 48nord (Ulrich Müller and Siegfried Rössert)
March 7 – 17, 2024

Bespoke brings a fresh mixed repertory program with three ballets never-before-seen on the Wortham Theater stage. Continuing the long-standing commitment to bringing Jiří Kylián's work to Houston, the program adds another of his works to the Company repertoire with the premiere of Kylián's *Overgrown Path*. Set to the deeply moving score from composer Leoš Janáček, the work was created in 1980 for Nederlands Dance Theater in dedication to the legendary choreographer, Antony Tudor. Making its Houston Ballet debut, Stanton Welch's *Bespoke* was created on San Francisco Ballet in 2018. Set to a series of Johann Sebastian Bach's violin concertos, the ballet explores dancers' love for their artform and the fleeting cycle of being a performer, with motifs of time present throughout the piece. Joining the two Houston premieres is Australian choreographer Tim Harbour's rhythmic, fast-paced *Filigree and Shadow*, taking the stage at the Company's home theater for the first time after its debut during the Hometown Tour following Hurricane Harvey in 2018.

Mayerling

Choreographer: Sir Kenneth MacMillan | Music: Franz Liszt arranged and orchestrated by John Lanchbery
OBE
May 23 - June 2, 2024

The psychological thriller of Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Mayerling* comes to the Wortham Theater stage for the first time after its Houston Ballet debut in 2018 as part of the Hometown Tour. An epic triumph in classical story-telling, this titillating three-act ballet tells the dark tale of Crown Prince Rudolf, the sole heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 1880s. The work weaves a masterful story of scandal and political intrigue through an unhappy marriage, sensuous dalliances and morbid obsessions – all leading to the tragic murder-suicide of the Prince and his young mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera. Accompanied by glamorous costumes and exquisite scenery, Houston Ballet dancers' acting and dancing strengths are on full display in this theatrical production.

Four Seasons

Elapse | Choreographer: Disha Zhang | Music: Zeng Xiaogang

The Four Seasons | Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Antonio Vivaldi

Tschaikovsky Pas de Deux | Choreographer: George Balanchine | Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Dwight Rhoden (World Premiere)

June 6 - 16, 2024

The season comes to a close with Four Seasons, featuring works from four choreographers, each with their own distinct style. After a critically-acclaimed debut in 2019, Disha Zhang's *Elapse* returns to the stage for an encore not to be missed. Exploring the idea of aging and the passage of time, her first piece choreographed for an American company is set to a captivating original score by Zeng Xiaogang. George Balanchine's *Tschaikovsky Pas de Deux* is described by New York City Ballet as "an eight-minute display of ballet bravura and technique." Welch's *The Four Seasons* dramatizes the stages of a woman's life from the vigor of youth in spring to the introspection of old age in winter. Set to Antonio Vivaldi's beloved score of the same name, the large ensemble work returns for the first time since its premiere in 2007. Rounding out the program is a world premiere by Dwight Rhoden, Founding Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer of Complexions Contemporary Ballet—his first for Houston Ballet. Rhoden has created works on notable companies such as New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and The Washington Ballet.

The add-on performances for 2023-2024 season programming include:

The Nutcracker

Choreographer: Stanton Welch AM | Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

November 24 – December 27, 2023

Houston's holiday tradition continues with the magic and wonder of Stanton Welch's *The Nutcracker*. Following the annual Stahlbaum Christmas party, journey through the glittering Land of Snow to the bright and joyful Kingdom of Sweets with Clara, Drosselmeyer and the Prince as he reunites with the Sugar Plum Fairy amongst the clouds, where the real magic happens. One of the most splendid ever staged, Welch's *The Nutcracker* features hundreds of characters, elaborate sets and stunning details that will captivate audiences and leave you finding something new with every performance.

Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance: A Celebration of Stanton Welch

December 1, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

Always one of the most fun performances of the season, this year's Margaret Alkek Williams Jubilee of Dance will celebrate the 20th anniversary of Stanton Welch as Houston Ballet's esteemed Artistic Director. The evening will begin with a selection of highlights of Welch's work created in Houston over the past 20 seasons. Continuing to spotlight the Company's strength as an eden for choreographic growth, the evening will also include three new ballets by Soloist Jacquelyn Long, Demi-Soloist Jack Wolff and Corps de Ballet dancer Jindallae Bernard. To close the night, audiences will enjoy a world premiere one-act ballet from Welch himself, set to one of the most popular concertos ever written, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto, No. 1. Reserve your seats early for this evening full of the stars of Houston Ballet.

Academy Spring Showcase

April 26-27, 2024

The Academy Spring Showcase is your chance to see the stars of tomorrow, today! The students of Houston Ballet Academy represent the future of ballet, with over 60% of the Company coming through the Academy. The Showcase gives students the stage to shine – whether its performing works from the Company repertoire or ballets created specifically for them. This is a can't miss performance to see the talented young dancers at their best.

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

With more than 50 years of rich history, Houston Ballet has evolved into a company of 61 dancers, with a budget of \$34.6 million and an endowment of \$88.9 million (as of June 2022), making it the country's fourth-largest ballet company. Its \$46.6 million state-of-the-art performance space, the Houston Ballet Margaret Alkek Williams Center for Dance, opened in April 2011. In addition, 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 169,000 individuals in the Houston area annually. Houston Ballet Academy trains more than 1,000 students every year, producing more than 60 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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