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HOUSTON BALLET PRESENTS STANTON WELCH'S *CINDERELLA* AND *BESPOKE* Stanton Welch's 20th Anniversary Season Continues

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HOUSTON, TX – [February 6, 2024] – Houston Ballet's celebratory season continues with the much-anticipated return of artistic director Stanton Welch's *Cinderella* (**February 22 - March 3**), an unconventional interpretation that incorporates various versions of the age-old classic fairytale. Originally staged for The Australian Ballet in 1997, Welch's rendition of *Cinderella* offers a multi-layered, sometimes dark, yet true-to-herself story of a woman coming into her own.

"It's the kind of character where you can be a role model," says ballet master Amy Fote, who performed the role for Houston Ballet's premiere in 2008. "She is brave, not a victim. It's happy ever after but not in the way you might think."

Following *Cinderella* is *Bespoke* (**March 7 - 17**), a mixed repertory production comprised of three never-before-seen performances on the Wortham Theater stage, including two Houston Ballet premieres; Stanton Welch's *Bespoke* and Jiří Kylián's *Overgrown Path*, as well as Tim Harbour's return of *Filigree and Shadow*. After its first Houston presentation at the Resilience Theater in the George R. Brown Convention Center post-Hurricane Harvey, Harbour's physically demanding *Filigree and Shadow* showcases the strength of the Company's male dancers. Bursting with dense choreography, the ballet is inspired by the weather phenomena of a cyclone. Welch's titular ballet *Bespoke*, created on San Francisco Ballet in 2018, is set to the timeless violin concertos of Johann Sebastian Bach. The ballet delves into the ephemeral nature of being a performer with the theme of time woven throughout the piece. Exemplifying Houston Ballet's commitment to presenting works by dance legends, Kylián's *Overgrown Path* is set to the emotionally charged score by composer Leoš Janáček and carries historical significance promising audiences a deeply moving experience.

"Kylián's breadth spans so many concepts," artistic director Julie Kent says of the choreographer. "He is a true game changer in dance. There's never been anyone quite like him before and people will be inspired by him for time to come."

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 Frederikson, Welch's unique spin on the storied classic brings the work into modern times, with a twist to suit the 21st century.

At 7:30 PM on February 22, 24 and March 1 & 2, 2024

At 1:30 PM on February 24 and March 2, 2024

At 2:00 PM on February 25 and March 3, 2024

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 *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.

At 7:30 PM on March 7,9,15,16, 2024

At 2:00 PM on March 10,17, 2024

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

With over 50 years of rich history, Houston Ballet has evolved into a company of 58 dancers, with a budget of \$37.6 million and an endowment of \$97.5 million (as of June 2023), 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, Tokyo and more.

Australian choreographer Stanton Welch AM has served as Artistic Director of Houston Ballet since 2003, raising the level of the Company's classical technique from dance legends such as Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, Jiří Kylián, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, John Neumeier, and Jerome Robbins. Continuing the legacy of being a choreographic eden, Houston Ballet has also commissioned new works by Aszure Barton, Trey McIntyre, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Justin Peck. Julie Kent joins Welch as Artistic Director in 2023, after serving as Artistic Director of The Washington Ballet from 2016 – 2023, where she commissioned over 26 world premieres from a diverse range of choreographers as well as several full-length classical ballets. Kent retired as a Principal dancer in 2015 as the longest-tenured dancer in American Ballet Theatre's 84-year history and is deeply committed to positively impacting artists, audiences, and communities through the transformative power of dance. 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 85,000 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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