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HOUSTON BALLET PRESENTS *MAYERLING* AND *FOUR SEASONS*
Story by Legend Sir Kenneth MacMillan and a World Premiere by Dwight Rhoden

PHOTOS & VIDEOS: [\[Click HERE\]](#)

HOUSTON, TX – [May 1, 2024] – Houston Ballet concludes Artistic Director Stanton Welch AM’s emerald season with two phenomenal productions that demonstrate the world-renowned caliber of choreographers from legend to the emerging choreographers of our time. The only North American ballet company to have the scandalous Habsburg royal family story ballet in its repertoire, Sir Kenneth MacMillan’s *Mayerling* follows emotionally unstable and death-obsessed Austro-Hungarian Prince Rudolf through his decline and multiple lovers. Set to John Lanchbery OBE’s powerful arrangement of music by Hungarian composer Franz Liszt, the psychological thriller is gripping from beginning to end.

Following *Mayerling* is the last mixed repertory production of the season, *Four Seasons*, a quaternary of one-acts all influenced in some way by a sense of time. George Balanchine’s *Tschaikovsky Pas de Deux* is perhaps the most subtle, with a gradual building to peak and then gently subsiding to its close. Disha Zhang’s emotional experience of aging in *Elapse* set to Zeng Xiaogang’s earthy composition evokes sounds of water and wind and exudes a sense of loss with the passing of time and loved ones.

Dwight Rhoden creates his first work on Houston Ballet with a world premiere set to an original score by internationally acclaimed percussionist David Rozenblatt that goes everywhere from classical violin to bombastic percussion. Christine Darch, who has designed for Houston Ballet previously is the costume designer, with Michael Korsch designing the lighting. The large-scale one-act is for 16 dancers who tackle the idea of “The Lightning Round” as it correlates to the grind of everyday life.

“The ballet looks at our lives in the concentrated span of time where the desire to accomplish as much as we can - and our rush to do so - becomes the impetus,” explains Rhoden. “It unpacks those emotional highs and lows individually along the way — and our relationships with one another on our quest to experience all that life has to offer.”

On the precipice of the 300th anniversary since Antonio Vivaldi’s instantly recognizable and universally treasured *The Four Seasons* was published in Amsterdam, Stanton Welch’s ballet *The Four Seasons* returns for the first time since its 2007 debut. The four movements signify a woman growing through her own changes of sprung youth and wintry demise.

Mayerling

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

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 that leads to the tragic murder-

suicide of the Prince and his young mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera. With glamorous costumes and exquisite scenery, Houston Ballet dancers' acting and dancing strengths are on full display in this theatrical production.

7:30 PM on May 23, 25, 31, and June 1, 2024

2:00 PM on May 26 and June 2, 2024

Four Seasons

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

Eclipse | Choreographer: Disha Zhang | Music: Zeng Xiaogang

The Lightning Round (World Premiere) | Choreographer: Dwight Rhoden | Music: David Rozenblatt

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

June 6 - 16, 2024

After a critically acclaimed debut in 2019, Disha Zhang's *Eclipse* is her first piece choreographed for an American company, 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." Stanton 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. Rounding out the program is *The Lightning Round*, a world premiere by Dwight Rhoden. Founding Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer of Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Rhoden has created works on New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and The Washington Ballet.

7:30 PM on June 6,8,14,15, 2024

2:00 PM on June 9,16, 2024

ABOUT HOUSTON BALLET

With over 50 years of rich history, Houston Ballet has evolved into a company 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 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. Welch has choreographed 43 new works for Houston Ballet during his tenure while ensuring the growth of the Company's repertoire by presenting works from George Balanchine, William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, John Neumeier, and Jerome Robbins. Welch continues the legacy of Houston Ballet being a choreographic Eden by commissioning over 30 works from world-renowned choreographers including Aszure Barton, Trey McIntyre, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Justin Peck. Julie Kent joined Welch as Artistic Director in 2023, after serving as Artistic Director of The Washington Ballet from 2016 – 2023 and following a storied career as a Principal ballerina of American Ballet Theatre - the longest-tenured dancer in ABT's 85-year history. 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 extraordinary artists that comprise Houston Ballet's current Company. For more information on Houston Ballet, visit houstonballet.org

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