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MEDIA CONTACT:

Elizabeth Sosa Bailey, Houston Ballet
ebailey@houstonballet.org
C: 832-236-3849

Angela Lee, Houston Ballet
alee@houstonballet.org
C: 832-244-2391



HOUSTON BALLET OPENS STANTON WELCH'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON Presenting John Neumeier's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tutu

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HOUSTON, TX – [August 16, 2023] – Houston Ballet opens its 2023 – 2024 season full of celebration and creative storytelling with the much-anticipated return of choreographer legend John Neumeier's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, September 8 – 17.

“For me, ballets are never repeated - only recreated,” says John Neumeier. “The amazing thing about Shakespeare’s works is that these characters exist behind the words. Even if you have seen this production, dance is a living art which can only live in the present tense. A ballet is a live, living art, that must be performed as if it has never been before, making each performance new.”

The first Mixed Repertory program of the season, Tutu, will run September 21 – October 1. This triple bill showcases Stanton Welch’s breathtaking *Tu Tu*, the Houston Ballet premiere of George Balanchine’s iconic *Stars and Stripes*, and the world premiere of Annabelle Lopez Ochoa’s *Delmira*. Inspired by 20th-century Uruguayan poet Delmira Agustini, a pioneer of the modernist era, this new work features a commissioned score by Colombian composer Juan Pablo Acosta, costumes designed by Mark Eric, and set design by Christopher Ash.

Stanton Welch AM continues to bring world-renowned repertoire to Houston audiences as he enters his 20th season with the Company as Artistic Director. Joining Welch in the role of Artistic Director this season is Julie Kent where presenting performances of the highest caliber and introducing the world’s most impressive emerging choreographers continues to be a priority.

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. 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

Delmira (World Premiere) | Choreographer: Annabelle Lopez Ochoa | Music: Juan Pablo Acosta
September 21 – October 1, 2023

Welch's *Tu Tu* is full of agility and speed, with tongue-in-cheek choreography that showcases the Company's 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 *Stars and Stripes*. In all-American costumes with exuberant patriotic touches, this classic Balanchine work is set to five rousing marches from John Phillip Sousa. The program is capped with *Delmira*, a world premiere by Colombian-Belgian choreographer Annabelle Lopez Ochoa.

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 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 Sir Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, 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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