

HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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**HOUSTON BALLET LAUNCHES 37th SEASON
WITH A WORLD PREMIERE AND TWO COMPANY PREMIERES**

**Stanton Welch Creates a New Full-Company Classical Ballet
to the Music of Benjamin Britten**

**Houston Ballet Joins Companies Across the World in Honoring Glen Tetley
on his 80th Birthday with the Company Premiere of *Voluntaries***

Dutch Master Hans van Manen's *Grosse Fuge* Showcases Company Men

Houston, TX -- From September 7 – 17, 2006, Houston Ballet launches its thirty-seventh season with **Simple Elegance**, a program of premieres by three of the world's most influential choreographers: Stanton Welch, Glen Tetley and Hans van Manen. A new large scale classical work by Stanton Welch will be unveiled. Also on the program are the Houston premieres of **Voluntaries**, American master Glen Tetley's breathtaking tribute to John Cranko, and **Grosse Fuge** by Holland's best known dance maker Hans van Manen. Houston Ballet will give six performances of **Simple Elegance** in Brown Theater at Wortham Theater Center in downtown Houston. Tickets may be purchased by calling 713 227 2787 or by visiting www.houstonballet.org.

Simple Elegance will feature three beautifully minimal, contemporary interpretations of classical ballet that show the range and evolution of dance styles – from classical to contemporary. Commented Mr. Welch, "Both Tetley and Van Manen were extraordinary leaders in the dance world, choreographers who merged modern and classical technique, which at the time – in the late 1960s and early 1970s – was revolutionary."

Simple Elegance has been generously underwritten by Shell Oil Company Foundation, Altria Group, Inc., and The Brown Foundation, Inc.

Welch Collaborates Again with Holly Hynes

Mr. Welch's new work for Houston Ballet will be a full-company classical ballet set to "Soirées musicales" and "Matinées musicales" by English composer Benjamin Britten. Mr. Welch commented, "This music is something I've wanted to choreograph to for 15 to 20 years. I've danced to it in school; it's wonderful." Mr. Welch's ballet, which will emphasize the strong classical technique of Houston Ballet's artists, will feature numerous pas de deux and solos in a memorable showcase of classical dance. "It will be a true classical tutu ballet," said Mr. Welch.

Holly Hynes will design the costumes for Mr. Welch's new work. The dancers will appear in blue military-inspired costumes. Commented Mr. Welch, "Britten's music has a ceremonial feel, and so the look of Holly's designs came from several discussions we had."

Mr. Welch has collaborated with Ms. Hynes several times. She designed the costumes for five of his works: **Tu Tu** (2003) and **Falling** (2005) for San Francisco Ballet, **Don Quixote** (2003) and **Firebird** (2005) for BalletMet, and **Orange** (2001) for Dance Galaxy. An accomplished costume designer, Ms. Hynes has created more than 100 ballets, 45 of which are in New York City Ballet's repertory. Companies with her designs in their repertories include The Royal Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, and Pennsylvania Ballet. Additionally, Ms. Hynes has been entrusted by The George Balanchine Trust and the Jerome Robbins estate to teach the execution of costume designs for Mr. Balanchine's and Mr. Robbins's ballets to companies all over the world.

Mr. Welch, one of the most sought after choreographers of his generation, has created ballets for such prestigious international companies as San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, The Australian Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet in the United Kingdom, and Royal Danish Ballet. His new work for Houston Ballet will be his eighth piece for the company.

**Glen Tetley's *Voluntaries*, Performed in Houston for the First Time
and Across the Globe in a Milestone Year**

With the renowned American choreographer Glen Tetley celebrating his 80th birthday this year, Houston Ballet joins companies around the world in honoring his achievements with the company premiere of his signature work, **Voluntaries**. The Royal Ballet performed his breakthrough work, **Pierrot Lunaire**, October 17 – November 1, 2005, and will revive **Voluntaries** from October 5 -16, 2006. From January 27 – April 23, 2005, Stuttgart Ballet performed “Glen Tetley at 80,” a mixed repertory program featuring three of Tetley’s signature works: **Pierrot Lunaire**, **Voluntaries**, and **The Rite of Spring**. In November, the Norwegian National Ballet will perform his **Arena**. In October, the ballet company of the Saxonian State Opera in Dresden will dance **Voluntaries**. And from March 21 – 27, 2007, the National Ballet of Canada will revive **Voluntaries** in honor of Mr. Tetley’s 80th birthday.

An emotional outpouring of grief and simultaneous celebration of life, **Voluntaries** was Mr. Tetley’s tribute to the acclaimed South African choreographer John Cranko, who created the dramatic masterwork **Onegin** in 1965. Mr. Tetley had already been asked to create a work for Stuttgart Ballet when Mr. Cranko died unexpectedly in 1973, and so Mr. Tetley conceived of a piece specifically “in memoriam” for Mr. Cranko and his bereaved company in Stuttgart.

A large pure dance piece featuring seventeen dancers in an exhilarating display of sensuous and virtuosic movement, **Voluntaries** is considered a 20th century classic. Set to French composer Francis Poulenc’s *Concerto in G minor for Organ, Strings, and Timpani*, the choreography is closely connected to the music. As Mr. Tetley said, “**Voluntaries** – by musical definition – are free-ranging organ improvisations, often played before, during and after religious service. The Latin root of the word can also connote flight or desire, and the ballet is conceived as a linked series of voluntaries.” With its shifting moods and colors – the dancers and sets sparkle in white and multi-colored spots – **Voluntaries** explores spiritual themes about life, death and the perseverance and importance of art in times of despair.

Glen Tetley is a pioneering choreographer who became a key figure in the movement to fuse classical and contemporary techniques. Of his stylistic evolution as a choreographer, *The Oxford*

Concise Dictionary of Dance observed, “As his work progressed into the 1970s, his style moved from the cool modernity of **Pierrot Lunaire** to a more balletic lyricism and he became a key figure in the crossover between classical ballet and modern dance.” Commented Mr. Tetley, “Throughout my career, I was a dancer who didn’t believe in barriers. I began my training as a classical dancer, then began immediately to train in contemporary technique.

“Historically, I was one of the first dancers to be a principal with American Ballet Theatre and at the same time a soloist with the Martha Graham Dance Company. When I became a choreographer, it was natural that I should work for a fusion of classical dance and contemporary techniques. I’ve pursued this fusion throughout my career.”

Born in Cleveland, Ohio on February 3, 1926 Mr. Tetley is one of the twentieth century’s most renowned and respected choreographers. He has created more than 65 ballets for the world’s major dance companies. His impressive list of commissions include works for American Ballet Theatre, Ballet Rambert, The Royal Ballet, Houston Ballet, The Australian Ballet, English National Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Norwegian National Ballet, and the National Ballet of Canada, among others. He has also been the artistic director of two of Europe’s most influential companies: Stuttgart Ballet (from 1974-1976) and Netherlands Dance Theater (serving as co-director with Hans van Manen from 1969-1971).

Voluntaries was premiered by Stuttgart Ballet on December 22, 1973 at the Wurtembergische Staatstheater. It has since entered the repertoires of the world’s leading companies, including American Ballet Theatre, The Royal Ballet, the National Ballet of Canada, Dutch National Ballet, The Australian Ballet, and Pacific Northwest Ballet. Houston Ballet has four works by Tetley in its repertoire: **Rite of Spring** (1973), **Daphnis and Chloe** (1975), **Praeludium** (1978), and **Lux in Tenebris**, which was created especially for Houston Ballet in 1999 to the music of the Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina.

Hans van Manen: A Pioneering Radical at Netherlands Dance Theater

Another premiere on the program is Hans van Manen's **Grosse Fuge**, originally created for Netherlands Dance Theater on April 8, 1971. An abstract, contemporary work for eight dancers, **Grosse Fuge** examines love and relationships, a common theme in van Manen's choreography. It is set to Ludwig van Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge, Op. 133* and *Cavatina Op. 130*, one of the composer's last works for string quartet.

Pulitzer-Prize winning author and musician Edmund Morris recently observed that Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* is "deliberately harsh music that is cruel to play and cruel to listen to. It's like Beethoven wanted to push the body always beyond its own limits." Beethoven's aggressive music is reflected to some degree in van Manen's choreography, which features vigorous male partnering, and strong group and ensemble work. The costumes, designed by van Manen, are notable for the long, divided, Martha Graham-like skirts worn by the male dancers.

Commented Mr. Welch, "Van Manen choreographs well on men, and his work really looks good on macho dancers. **Grosse Fuge** is a great ballet for strong guys. You have to be dynamic, accented, musical and quick, and we certainly have that with our men."

Writing in *The International Dictionary of Ballet*, Katie King characterizes van Manen's focus as a choreographer as follows:

Van Manen has stated that he is not interested in relating ballet and literature – he does not wish to use the narrative form, portray dramatic characters, or recite anecdotes in movement. However, that is not to say that his ballets are without ideas or themes. There is always a keen concern with the individual dancer and his or her partnership with fellow individuals. Even within a group of dancers, identifiable personalities emerge and van Manen builds upon the passions and frictions which result from these distinctions. His primary occupation is with the relationship between the sexes, and the duet form has proven to be the hub of these investigations....

Van Manen's ballets were viewed as remarkably radical during his first decade with the innovative Netherlands Dance Theater. While his more recent choreography can not be credited with the same qualities of invention, his concern with male and female, his clarity of concept and execution, and his ultimate focus on both the dancer and the dance

enable the best of his work to remain both contemporary and timeless and to provide new and personal challenges to later generations of dancers.

Mr. van Manen began to work with the Netherlands Dance Theater in 1960, first as a dancer, next as a choreographer, then as the artistic director (from 1961 to 1971). For the following two years he worked as a freelance choreographer, then joined Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam in 1973. Outside of the Netherlands, he has staged his ballets for many international companies. In September 1988 Mr. van Manen rejoined Netherlands Dance Theater as a resident choreographer. In the course of his career, he has created more than 100 works, 58 of which have been for Netherlands Dance Theater. Mr. van Manen has also been awarded numerous prizes. In 1991 he received the Sonia Gaskell Prize for his entire body of work. In 1992—his 35th year as a choreographer— he was knighted by the Queen of the Netherlands in the Order of Orange Nassau.

Houston Ballet has one other work by Mr. van Manen in its repertory, **Adagio Hammerklavier**, which entered the company's repertory in 1978.

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HOUSTON BALLET
SIMPLE ELEGANCE
FACT SHEET

WHAT: SIMPLE ELEGANCE, featuring:

GROSSE FUGUE (1971)

Houston Ballet Premiere

Music by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Grosse Fuge, Op. 133; Cavatina, Op. 130

Choreography and costume design by Hans van Manen

Staged by Mea Venema

Scenic Design by Jean-Paul Vroom

Lighting design by Jan Hofstra

VOLUNTARIES (1973)

Houston Ballet Premiere

Music by Francis Poulenc (1899 – 1963)

Concerto in G minor for Organ, Strings, and Timpani

Choreography by Glen Tetley

Assistant to Mr. Tetley is Bronwen Curry

Scenic and Costume Designs by Rouben Ter-Arutunian

Lighting by John B. Read

WORLD PREMIERE BY STANTON WELCH

Houston Ballet Premiere

Music by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

“Soirées musicales” and “Matinées musicales”

Choreography by Stanton Welch

Costume Designs by Holly Hynes

Scenic Design by Thomas Boyd

Lighting Design by Christina R. Giannelli

Generously Underwritten by:

Shell Oil Company Foundation

Altria Group, Inc.

The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts

The Brown Foundation, Inc.

**ABOUT THE
PROGRAM:**

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WHEN: At 7:30 pm on September 7, 9, 15, and 16, 2006
At 2:00 pm on September 10 and 17, 2006

WHERE: Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center
501 Texas Avenue in downtown Houston

TICKETS: Start at \$17. Call (713) 227 ARTS or 1 800 828 ARTS
Also available at Houston Ballet Box Office at Wortham Theater Center
downtown at Texas at Smith Street, or purchase tickets online at
www.houstonballet.org.

FOR MORE

INFORMATION: Visit Houston Ballet online at www.houstonballet.org