

One of America's top ballet companies, Houston Ballet, visits Melbourne for the first time this winter to perform Australian choreographer Stanton Welch's acclaimed *Romeo and Juliet*, 30 June–9 July 2016



Artists of Houston Ballet in *Romeo and Juliet*

Visiting Australia for the first time, leading US Company **Houston Ballet** presents its hit production of **Stanton Welch's *Romeo and Juliet*** as part of **The Australian Ballet's 2016 season**. Following its world premiere in 2015, this vibrant and sensual retelling of the famous love story makes its international debut with an exclusive season at **Arts Centre Melbourne** from **30 June–9 July 2016**.

Romeo and Juliet was created by the Melbourne-born Artistic Director of Houston Ballet, Stanton Welch AM, who is concurrently a Resident Choreographer of The Australian Ballet. Accompanied by **Sergei Prokofiev's** heartrending score, Welch's traditional production is faithful to the Shakespearean story, brimming with swordplay, bawdy humour, and tragic love. Internationally acclaimed designer **Roberta Guidi di Bagno** sets a romantic scene with lavish sets and costumes inspired by Renaissance Italy.

The Australian Ballet last performed a work created by Stanton Welch in 2014, when *La Bayadère* won wide acclaim in Sydney and Melbourne. He is the son of Australian ballet legends Garth Welch and Marilyn Jones. He became a dancer with The Australian Ballet in 1989 and has been one of the company's Resident Choreographers since 1995. In 2003 Welch assumed leadership of Houston Ballet. In 2015 he was named a Member of the Order of Australia for his contributions to the world of dance.

Houston Ballet will be touring to Melbourne with a company of **91 performers and crew**. Principals **Karina Gonzalez, Sara Webb** and **Melody Mennite** will dance the role of Juliet, and Principals **Connor Walsh, Ian Casady** and **Jared Matthews** will dance the role of Romeo. They will be accompanied by **Orchestra Victoria**.

Stanton Welch said, "I am very proud and excited to be able to bring my two homes together. Twenty-five years ago I started choreographing in Melbourne and now I get to return with one of my most recent works, *Romeo and Juliet*. I know Houston Ballet dancers are going to love Victoria's great stage and city, and I am sure Australian dance audiences will be thrilled to see this great company finally perform."

Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet, David McAllister said, "We are very proud that Stanton began his professional career with us and still remains one of our resident choreographers. For over a decade Stanton has been leading Houston Ballet as Artistic Director and has built a dynamic and hugely talented company that not only have a huge international repertoire, but have become the experts in dancing his ballets. We are delighted to be presenting Houston Ballet and look forward to giving them a very warm welcome here in Melbourne. It will be an exciting night in the theatre not to be missed," said McAllister.

The Australian Ballet has enjoyed a close relationship with Houston Ballet since Welch became the Artistic Director of the Texan company. Dancers have participated in an exchange program which most recently saw The Australian Ballet's Principal Artists Leanne Stojmenov and Daniel Gaudiello travel to Houston to perform in *The Nutcracker* in 2014. Meanwhile Houston Ballet's Karina González and Connor Walsh guest-starred in The Australian Ballet's Sydney season of *La Bayadère*.

Established in 1969, Houston Ballet is America's fifth largest classical ballet company, with an ensemble of 59 dancers. Houston Ballet has toured extensively across America, Canada and Europe. This season of *Romeo and Juliet* will be the company's first tour to Australia.

For all media enquiries, including interviews and images, please contact:

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NEWS FROM

The Australian Ballet



What the critics had to say:

“Rhythmic sword fights, crowd scenes that vibrate and ravishing partnering that captures the essence of the love story” – *Houston Chronicle*

“Stanton Welch has created another treasure to add to the Houston Ballet story repertoire” – *Houston Press*

“Welch's version adds a little fresh flavour while honouring the tradition. Bravo” – *Dance Australia*

CREDITS

ROMEO AND JULIET (2015)

Choreography Stanton Welch

Music Sergei Prokofiev

Costume and set design Roberta Guidi di Bagno

Lighting design Lisa J Pinkham

DATES

MELBOURNE

30 June – 9 July (12 performances)

Arts Centre Melbourne, State Theatre
with Orchestra Victoria

BOOKINGS

australianballet.com.au

or call 1300 369 741

Special Events:

McAllister in Conversation

Saturday 2 July, 5pm (45 Mins)

Arts Centre Melbourne, Amcor Lounge

To complement Houston Ballet's season of *Romeo and Juliet*, The Australian Ballet's Artistic Director David McAllister hosts an intimate conversation with ballet luminary Stanton Welch.

Tickets \$25 (includes glass of sparkling wine)

Post-Show Q&A

Monday 4 July, post-show (20 Mins)

Arts Centre Melbourne, State Theatre

Love the performance? Stay behind after the show for a special Q&A with Artistic Director David McAllister and Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch. The panel will also be joined by the Conductor and two leading dancers. Ask the experts about the dancers' preparation, the costumes and sets, the music, the choreography and more.

Free event

Behind the Scenes

Tuesday 5 July, 12:30pm (45 Mins)

Arts Centre Melbourne, State Theatre

Get an insider's look at and exclusive access to the world of elite ballet dancers. From your theatre seat see our dancers up close, taking class on stage. In just one hour you'll see what it really takes to prepare for a performance.

Tickets: \$39 Adults \$19 Children

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