

# Dominic Walsh Dance Theater

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## *Season to Close with Exciting U.S. Premiere from Czech Choreographer*



HOUSTON—Dominic Walsh Dance Theater will close its sensational 2009-2010 season on **May 6, 7, and 8, 2010 at 7:30 PM at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Zilkha Hall** with a tantalizing mixed rep program that offers an escape to Europe without having to leave the city limits!

The highlight of this thoughtfully-crafted program will be the U.S. premiere of *Small Hour* by Czech choreographer Václav Kuneš.

“*Small Hour* is a geographically and artistically relevant work, and we are honored to share it with Houston audiences and to bring the choreography of Kuneš to the U.S. for the first time,” says Walsh.

After graduating from the Dance Conservatory in Prague, Kuneš began his dance career at Nederlands Dans Theatre II in 1993, and danced with Nederlands Dans Theatre I from 1998 until 2004. In 2004, he decided to continue as a freelance dancer and choreographer, while also staging works by the iconic Czech choreographer Jiří Kylián. Then in 2007, Kuneš started the Prague-based company 420PEOPLE with Nataša Novotná and Ondřej Kotrč. The artistic exchange between Walsh and Kuneš began when Kuneš was performing with The Kylián Foundation at Houston’s international Dance Salad Festival in 2005. The two artists continued to communicate, and Kuneš was instrumental in the addition of Kylián’s *Double You* to DWDT’s

repertoire. He traveled back to Houston in 2008 to set the solo on Dominic Walsh Dance Theater. At that time, Kuneš introduced his choreography to Walsh and he, in turn, invited him to set one of his works on DWDT.

Kuneš and Walsh decided that *Small Hour* would be an appropriate fit for the DWDT dancers and a powerful addition to the company's repertoire. *Small Hour* premiered in 2007 at the Korzo Theater in The Hague. It was Kuneš' opening creation for 420PEOPLE, and is his personal testimony about essential moments of one's life and about human fight with time. The work was awarded the Czech Republic's Theater Newspaper/Sazka Prize in 2008 for the best dance performance of the season and it was also selected for the prestigious *DansClick* tour for the 2008-2009 season. The duet is set to existing music by Robert and Ronald Lippok as well as Matthew Barley's version of a section from *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell.

This "European vacation" will continue with a revival of Mauro Bigonzetti's *Pression*. DWDT is privileged to have the work of Bigonzetti, "...the most interesting Italian choreographer of his generation" according to *Ballet 2000* magazine, as part of its repertoire. His innovative work has shed new light on contemporary ballet and further defined the genre, thus fostering a new generation of choreographers around the world. Commissioned in 1994 by *Di Nuovo Musica*, a contemporary music festival in Reggio Emilia, *Pression* is a work for four dancers that explores the contrasts between the sexes. It consists of two same-sex pas de deux – one male and then one female – that finally resolve into a mixed quartet in which the dancers form two mixed couples. It is an experimentation with various genres, blending classic with modern, to the accompaniment of Helmut Lachenmann's contemporary cello solo *Pression* (from which the work takes its name) and variations from *Death and the Maiden* by Franz Schubert. Since entering DWDT's repertoire, the company has performed *Pression* to rave reviews in Florida and New York.

DWDT will also reprise the White Swan duet from Matthew Bourne's Tony award-winning *Swan Lake* – the longest running ballet on Broadway. Walsh had the privilege of getting to know Bourne when their works were on the same program at the Sarasota Ballet in April 2008.

Bourne is widely hailed as the UK's most popular and successful choreographer/director. He is a five-time Olivier Award winner and the only British director to have won the Tony Award for both Best Choreographer and Best Director of a Musical. Bourne created *Swan Lake* in 1995 to the original Tchaikovsky score and transformed one of ballet's favorites into a stylish, witty, poignant, contemporary tale. Perhaps best-known for replacing the traditional female corps de ballet with a male ensemble, Bourne blends ballet, humor, spectacle, character comedy and mime to create a provocative *Swan Lake* for our times. Collecting over thirty international theater awards including three Tonys, *Swan Lake* is acclaimed as a landmark achievement on the international stage.



Dominic Walsh Dance Theater is the only company other than Bourne's own that has been permitted to perform this work. Since entering the repertoire, DWDT dancers have performed the work in Texas, Florida, and Italy. And for his portrayal of the Swan, DWDT Company Member Domenico Luciano was named one of 12 "Standout" dancers in 2009 by *Pointe Magazine*.

This romp through Europe will conclude with Walsh's smash hit *I Napoletani* created in 2007 and inspired by the vitality of Naples. This ballet opens with a tribute to Teatro San Carlo, one of the oldest theaters in Europe and the home of the first ballet school, set to Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. After this mysterious glimpse at the evolution of dance and theater, Walsh transports us to a kitchen in Naples with the remainder of the ballet set to Neapolitan popular music from the late 1800s.

"There is such a specific charm and humor to the people of Naples, and it is represented in their traditional folk music, like so many cultures. I feel an unmistakable vitality in the air when I am there, and I thought it would be fun to pay a small homage to this spirit of life that the Neapolitan people really appreciate," states Walsh.

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**Tickets for *Mixed Rep*** are available for \$24.25, \$38.25, and \$51.25 through [www.dwdt.org](http://www.dwdt.org) or by calling **713-315-2525**. A VIP Opening Night package, including priority seating and an exclusive post-show cocktail reception with the performers is available for \$81.25. Season subscriptions are also still available.



“Dominic has crafted a well designed program with something for everyone – intelligence, beauty, innovation, and humor. And audience members are sure to leave the theater smiling and craving pizza,” says DWDT Executive Director Leigh McBurnett.

**Photo credits (top to bottom):** Natasa Novotna and Václav Kunes in Kunes’ *Small Hour*. Domenico Luciano and Dominic Walsh in Bigonzetti’s *Pression* photo by Amitava Sarkar, Photography InSight. Domenico Luciano and Dominic Walsh in Bourne’s *Swan Lake* photo by Gabriella Nissen Photography. Lauren Bettencourt, Marissa Leigh Gomer, Domenico Luciano, Felicia McBride, Rachel Meyer, Ty Parmenter, and Randolph Ward in Walsh’s *I Napoletani* photo by Jaime Lagdameo.

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As a principal dancer with Houston Ballet for over a decade, Dominic Walsh received national and international praise for his interpretations of both classical and contemporary roles. Walsh burst onto the choreographic scene when he won the prestigious Choo-San Goh Award in 1998, and he is now hailed as a leading choreographer who is pushing the boundaries of ballet into new realms of theatricality. He won a second Choo-San Goh Award in 2007 and was one of only three choreographers to receive a 2008 Princess Grace Award.

Dominic Walsh Dance Theater, launched by Walsh in 2002, is also racking up accolades and honors. This contemporary ballet company has built a stellar reputation for taking the techniques and skills of classical ballet into more contemporary territory where sensuality and intimacy meet muscular fluidity. Today, the company’s roster includes dancers of the highest caliber and its repertoire features inventive works by Walsh and such iconic choreographers as Mauro Bigonzetti, Jiří Kylián, and Matthew Bourne. In addition to producing a vibrant Houston season of performances and educational programs that enliven the senses, this dynamic company tours the U.S. and Europe. By bringing together the greatest choreographers, consummate dancers, musicians, designers and visual artists, Dominic Walsh Dance Theater is revolutionizing how you see, hear and feel ballet.