

# Dominic Walsh Dance Theater

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*New National Theatre, Tokyo to again present Walsh's Work*



HOUSTON—On Sunday, May 9th, the day after Dominic Walsh Dance Theater closed its Mixed Rep program at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts in Houston, Dominic Walsh and DWDT Company Member Domenico Luciano hopped a plane to Japan to begin work with New National Theatre, Tokyo (NNT).

NNT is Japan's principal, national theater for the performing arts including opera, ballet, contemporary dance, and theater. NNT Ballet will be performing Walsh's *Wolfgang for Webb* on May 28 and 29, 2010 as part of its "DANCE to the Future" program featuring contemporary works from young choreographers from Japan and abroad.

Walsh has a long history with NNT Ballet. In 2003, he was a guest artist in the dual roles of "des Grieux" and "Lescaut" in the company's production of Kenneth MacMillian's *Manon*. Ryoko Sasaki for *Asahi Newspaper* wrote of Walsh's performance: "...No doubt, an appearance of the fresh new star to the Japanese ballet fans." After dancing with NNT to great acclaim, Walsh was invited to participate in the company's Emerald Project. This project was established to create an

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original repertory for New National Theatre through commissions by contemporary choreographers from Japan and throughout the world, and Walsh was the first American choreographer invited to participate.

The resulting work was Walsh's full-length *Orfeo ed Euridice* that earned rave reviews in 2007. Audiences were moved by Walsh's innovative approach and freshness, and he gave the dancers of NNT Ballet the opportunity to challenge themselves with performances of a thoroughly contemporary work. After the premiere of *Orfeo ed Euridice*, critic Akiko Tachiki said: "The choreography in which techniques of classic ballet and contemporary dance fuse was full of deformations and twists, and sparkled with unique originality."

Now, NNT Ballet will present Walsh's *Wolfgang for Webb*. *Wolfgang* was created in 2008 on the Sarasota Ballet of Florida and is the first work in Walsh's beloved Mozart trilogy. *Wolfgang* is set to piano sonatas, operatic works, and symphonies and features twelve dancers. For the Japan premiere, DWDT Company Member Domenico Luciano will dance the male lead with NNT Ballet Soloist Hana Sakai as the lead female. Although Luciano has danced as a guest artist with companies around the world, this will be his first time dancing with NNT. "I am very excited and honored to be invited to dance with such a prestigious company," says Luciano.

And Sakai is no stranger to Walsh and his work. Walsh danced with her in 2003 in *Manon* and created the role of Euridice in his *Orfeo ed Euridice* for her. Then in 2008, Dominic Walsh Dance Theater brought Sakai to Houston for her American debut. "It is incredibly fulfilling to have Domenico here dancing with Hana. They are two of the most extraordinary and truly magical artists I know, and they are really exploring some untapped layers in the characters and movement interpretations," states Walsh.



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For *Wolfgang*, Walsh collaborated with Houston visual artist Libbie Masterson on the set design. Upon seeing an exhibition of Masterson's photographs of Antarctica several years ago, Walsh was immediately inspired by her aesthetic. "These images were so powerful for me and create feelings and ideas of open space, a clean coldness, solitude, loneliness, and something endangered like all of us," says Walsh. For *Wolfgang*, Masterson drew upon these photographs and created sculptures that are dramatically lit from within. They are reminiscent of icebergs and suggest an essence of time and space in a sea of solitude. Masterson is also in Tokyo refining her set design for the Tokyo theater as well as adding some projections. In addition to dancing, Luciano also designed the costumes that suggest elements from the Baroque period and then evolve into a more danceable while still representational look – high collars, long sleeves, and stylized make-up and hair for the women.

From Japan, Walsh reports: "It is wonderful to be back in Tokyo. The dancers are so willing and work and prepare so well. I love having the opportunity to continue to develop my vocabulary and philosophy with them. The entire administrative and artistic staff is a joy to work with as is the production team that can do just about anything you ask."

For more on this weekend's performances and New National Theatre, Tokyo, visit <http://www.nntt.jac.go.jp/english/dance/>

**Photo credits (top to bottom):** Sarasota Ballet of Florida in Walsh's *Wolfgang for Webb* photo by Frank Atura. Domenico Luciano in Walsh's *Amadeus for Anita* photo by Gabriella Nissen Photography. Hana Sakai and Dominic Walsh in Walsh's *Orfeo ed Euridice* photo by Amitava Sarkar, Photography InSight.

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**Dominic Walsh** began dancing in Elgin, Illinois with Lisa Boehm. He joined Houston Ballet in 1989 and danced there until 2004. He was promoted to Principal Dancer by 1996. During his years at the ballet, he danced around the globe, receiving praise from national and international critics. He has danced all the classics such as *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, *Don Quixote*, *Romeo & Juliet*, and *Manon* and appeared with major stars, including Nina Ananiashvili and Alessandra Ferri. He also has danced the contemporary repertoire and has had many ballets created for him. Some of the most influential choreographers include Jiří Kylián, Christopher Bruce, Nacho Duato, Natalie Weir, William Forsythe, Kenneth MacMillan, George Balanchine and Ben Stevenson. In 1998, he created *Flames of Eros*, when Mr. Stevenson invited him to choreograph on Houston Ballet. This work won the Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography. He created three more works for

Houston Ballet and Houston Ballet Academy and continues to set and create works for other companies most recently including, Ballet Florida, ABT Studio Company, Asami Maki Ballet Tokyo, New National Theatre, Tokyo, and Sarasota Ballet of Florida. In 2002, he formed Dominic Walsh Dance Theater, a Houston-based contemporary ballet company. In May 2006, Mr. Walsh created *Romeo & Juliet*, his first full-length, multi-sensory production that received praise from *Dance Magazine*. In 2007, he premiered a new full-length ballet, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, for New National Theatre, Tokyo and a full-length *Sleeping Beauty*. Most recently, he premiered *Titus Andronicus*. Since founding his company, Mr. Walsh continues to grow as a dancer and had the opportunity to perform the American premiere of Mauro Bigonzetti's *Pression*. Most recently, he danced Jiří Kylián's only solo for a man, *Double You*, and the White Swan pas de deux from Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*. Walsh received his second Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography for *Amadeus* in 2007 and in 2008, he won a Princess Grace Award for Choreography for *Mozart*. Mr. Walsh was also recently named Resident Choreographer for Sarasota Ballet of Florida.

**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.

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