

Dominic Walsh Dance Theater

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Lauren Anderson returns to the stage in Walsh's *The Dying Swan*



HOUSTON—Contemporary ballet company Dominic Walsh Dance Theater kicks off its 2011-2012 season on **October 13, 14 and 15, 2011 at 7:30 PM at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Zilkha Hall** located at 800 Bagby Street in Houston, Texas. 2011-2012 marks Dominic Walsh Dance Theater's tenth anniversary season and to celebrate this milestone, the company has an exciting line-up of prized works by Walsh, brilliant pieces from the iconic choreographers in its repertoire, star dancers from around the world, and some of Houston's most beloved ballerinas.

“As I have had the great opportunity to travel the world as a dancer and choreographer, I noticed our city did not have a company dedicated to current, international, world-class contemporary ballet, and Houston deserved that. I cannot believe that we are now celebrating our tenth season as Dominic Walsh Dance Theater, and I am grateful to Houston for supporting us along the way,” states DWDT Founder and Artistic Director Dominic Walsh.

This star-studded season opens with the October mixed bill that follows Walsh's rise to becoming a leading choreographer. The program includes a revival of **Walsh's *Katharsis*** that premiered as part of the company's inaugural performance in 2003. In *Katharsis*, Walsh paints a portrait of an artist who is alone in his studio and confronted by his own creation. This piece, set to an original score by Terrence Karn, presents a metaphor of art manipulating its creator. “This work holds something special for me,

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as I look back to the time when I ventured out to start my company. It was a moment when I really acknowledged the sensation of a craft driving its creator. Overall, the work is about being shaped or manipulated by what we shape and manipulate, and how we become the receivers of the very things we claim to create. This inevitable circle structure has been intimidating, scary, and humorous, and sometimes all of these things at the same time,” says Walsh.

The October program also features the **Houston premiere of *The Whistling*** that Walsh created for Ballet Austin’s 2010 New American Talent Choreographic Competition. Walsh wanted to create a work around popular Cuban music of the 1940s and 1950s that calls on the spirit and joy of the people and their traditions, while avoiding the obvious social dancing usually associated with the sounds. *The Whistling* revisits a time of a golden era through a dream like state and received the most audience votes and tied for the highest jurors’ prize as part of the competition. “I was very pleased with this work with its nice balance of humor, fun, and romance all wrapped up in an ethereal quality that I think makes it a recognizable, signature Walsh work,” says Walsh.

For the season opener, **Walsh also presents an inventive world premiere work** dedicated to long-time DWDT Board Member and supporter Robert L. Moore. “Bob Moore has served on our Board of Directors since the inception of the company in 2002. He and his wife Karen have been devoted supporters of my work both with Houston Ballet and DWDT and over the years, they have seemed to develop a great love for the craft and steadfast belief in my vision. To show my gratitude and appreciation, I am dedicating this world premiere to them.” For years, Walsh has been drawn to the musical design created for the film about Farinelli who was a great castrato singer (1705-1782). In order to make Farinelli’s singing voice as accurate as possible, the film team had to combine the voices of countertenor Derek Lee Ragin and soprano Ewa Malas-Godlewska. This resulted in a sound and tone that is both majestic and haunting. “This new work dives deep into the spirit of the composition creating a visual vocabulary of movement that reflects the virtuosic execution of the sound design,” states Walsh.

Rounding out this program are the **U.S. premieres of “Ho messo via” from *Certe Notti* and a duet from *Come Un Respiro* by Italian choreographer Mauro Bigonzetti**. Bigonzetti was the first iconic choreographer to allow DWDT to perform his work, so it is very fitting that the company’s tenth anniversary season will showcase some of his newer creations. Walsh had the great fortune to meet Bigonzetti in 2005, when we had the opportunity to observe rehearsal with Aterballetto in Reggio

Emilia, Italy where Bigonzetti was the Artistic Director and chief choreographer at the time. He was in the process of creating a work called WAM. “I was mesmerized by his use of pleasure in the movement, and the dancers seemed to access wonderful fantasy as they experienced it. The aesthetic of the movement combined strong classical technique with a primal quality that was also very sophisticated. At times, in the duet work, I was almost reminded of a moment you might see in a Jiří Kylián work yet it was still his own and had a fierceness and aggression about it,” says Walsh.

Soon after this meeting, Bigonzetti offered the company a ballet and this is when DWDT took *Pression* into the repertoire in May 2007. “I was ecstatic to say the least. New York City Ballet is the only other company performing his work, so there was uniqueness in the U.S. which was appealing to me too,” says Walsh. And DWDT is certainly thrilled to share more Bigonzetti with Houston. DWDT company member Domenico Luciano and newcomer Stefania Figliossi danced these two duets at the closing gala of the prestigious First International Ballet Competition in Beijing, China this past summer and are honored to perform them for Houston audiences. And although two very different works, the qualities that Walsh finds so intriguing about Bigonzetti’s choreography are evident in both.



But, let’s not forget Houston’s own superstars. Throughout the season, DWDT will also have surprise, cameo appearances from Houston’s most celebrated ballerinas. For the October program, the company is honored that **Lauren Anderson will perform Walsh’s unforgettable *The Dying Swan***. Anderson danced with Houston Ballet from 1983 to 2006, performing leading roles in all the great classical ballets, appearing across the world to critical acclaim, and in the process, becoming one of Houston Ballet’s most beloved stars. She trained exclusively at Houston Ballet’s Ben Stevenson Academy from

the age of seven. She joined Houston Ballet in 1983 and in 1990 became the first African-American to be promoted to principal dancer at Houston Ballet – and one of the few African-American ballerinas at the head of a major ballet company anywhere in the world. “The very first Principal role I danced was with Lauren in 1990. Since that time, we have created a fantastic rapport in ballets like *Don Quixote*,

Coppelia, *The Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Dracula*, and of course, *Cleopatra* which was created for us. There is no doubt that Lauren has the ‘it’ factor! There is magic and light that supports her as she walks on to the stage, and I know she will give a sincere and heartfelt interpretation of my *Dying Swan*,” says Walsh.

Tickets for Dominic Walsh Dance Theater’s 2011-2012 season programs are available through www.dwdt.org or by calling **713-315-2525**.

“Houston is full of great cultural gems, and that says something wonderful about the people who live here. We hope Houstonians will celebrate with us this season and be proud of the achievements that we have accomplished together,” says DWDT Executive Director Leigh McBurnett.

***Photo credit** (top to bottom): Dominic Walsh’s *Katharsis* photo by Michael Connally. Dominic Walsh’s *The Whistling* photo by Tony Spielberg courtesy of Ballet Austin. Lauren Anderson in *Sleeping Beauty* photo by Drew Donovan.

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 received a 2008 Princess Grace Award. Walsh was recently named a winner of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago's 2010 National Choreographic Competition, and he was the Audience Choice and Judge’s Award winner in Ballet Austin’s 2010 New American Talent Choreographic Competition.

Dominic Walsh Dance Theater, launched by Walsh in 2002, is also racking up accolades and honors from around the world, most recently being named “Best Dance Company” by the *Houston Press*. This contemporary ballet company has built an international reputation for taking the techniques and skills of classical ballet into groundbreaking territory. The company’s roster includes dancers of the highest caliber and its repertoire features inventive works by Walsh and such superstar choreographers as Mauro Bigonzetti, Jiří Kylián, Matthew Bourne, and Mats Ek. In addition to producing a Houston season of performances and educational programs that enliven the senses, this dynamic company tours the U.S. and Europe. With a unique mix of technical virtuosity, innovation, and collaboration, Dominic Walsh Dance Theater is one of this country’s leading contemporary ballet companies.

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