

Dominic Walsh Dance Theater Mercury Baroque

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Reprise of the Smash Hit *Romeo & Juliet* Valentine's Day Weekend



HOUSTON—Dominic Walsh Dance Theater and Mercury Baroque will once again team up for the ultimate performing arts mash up—*Romeo & Juliet* on February 11 and 13, 2010 at 8:00 PM with a 2:00 PM matinee on February 14th at the Wortham Theater Center's Cullen Theater.

Forget the expensive roses and chocolates this Valentine's Day and instead, catch this triumphant union of Walsh's contemporary choreography with Baroque music, opera, and theater that brings Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers to life like never before.

One of the remarkable aspects of Shakespeare's works, and especially *Romeo and Juliet*, is that they are such compelling stories that deserve to be visited again and again through the eyes of many artists. "After extensively researching the text, I decided that for me, one art form was not enough to breathe new life into this poignant tale," says Walsh, Founder and Artistic Director of Dominic Walsh Dance Theater.

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The first step was to shed the well-known Prokofiev score of classical ballet versions and pair his contemporary choreography with a non-traditional Vivaldi score arranged by Antoine Plante, Founder and Artistic Director of Mercury Baroque. The score is comprised of nearly 30 Vivaldi compositions including violin, cello, and mandolin concertos, arias, and choral works and will be performed live by Mercury Baroque's musicians playing on period instruments and the Bach Choir of Houston.

“Researching and creating a new score for *Romeo & Juliet* was one of the most fascinating artistic experiences for me. And, it is always extremely interesting for us to do something new and unique with Baroque music,” states Plante.

Walsh then enlisted Rob Bundy, a freelance director and former Artistic Director of Stages Repertory Theatre in Houston, to serve as dramaturge and together, they created a fresh adaptation of Shakespeare's classic tale by developing the less prominent themes and delving deep into character relationships. Mercutio, Lady Capulet, and Tybalt are integral characters in this production and their observations reveal the complicated web of relationships that surround Romeo and Juliet, offering a unique perspective on their love story.

While dancers take the lead roles, Paris and Friar Laurence are portrayed by actors (including Jim Johnson reprising his role as Friar and newcomer Adam Van Wagoner as Paris), and Lord Capulet and the Nurse are portrayed by opera singers Gabriel Preisser and Ana Treviño-Godfrey – with all delivering Shakespeare's text at pivotal moments.

The cast is comprised of over 30 artists, musicians, singers, and dancers including DWDT company members Lauren Bettencourt, Marissa Leigh Gomer, Domenico Luciano, Felicia McBride, Rachel Meyer, Ty Parmenter, and Randolph Ward along with guest dancers Erika Johnson and John Henry Reid.

Adding to the wow factor of this production are the chic costumes designed by award-winning designer Fabio Toblini that suggest rather than define a period; award-winning designer Jorge Ballina's architectural frame and scrim set that morphs throughout the ballet; and lighting by Robert Eubanks that helps set the right mood for each scene.

Romeo & Juliet premiered in May 2006 to sold-out audiences and received rave reviews. “The time was right for our company and Mercury Baroque to once again join artistic and administrative forces to mount *Romeo & Juliet*. And just in time for Valentine’s Day weekend,” says Walsh.

Tickets for *Romeo & Juliet* are on sale for \$21.75, \$34.25, \$47, \$75 through **www.dwdt.org**, **www.mercurybaroque.org**, or by calling **832-251-0706**.

Photo credits: Dominic Walsh, Paola Georgudis, Ana Trevino-Godfrey, and Jim Johnson. Photos by Jim Caldwell.

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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. For more information, visit www.dwdt.org.

Mercury Baroque has been a dynamic member of the Houston arts community since 2000. Founded as a chamber ensemble, the group has grown into a Baroque orchestra performing a full subscription season of concerts in downtown Houston and touring both domestically and internationally. The organization continues to pursue its goal of building a strong tradition of Baroque music performance in Houston, starting with its educational outreach programs designed to train the city’s future musicians and create the audience of the future. Although Mercury is focused on bringing the best Baroque to Houston, the ensemble has toured to other countries as well, including two tours to Quito, Ecuador. In September, 2010, Mercury will revive its popular performance of Lully’s opera *Armide* in Paris. The 2010-2011 season will be Mercury’s important 10th Season.

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