



SOCIETY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
*Bringing the World's Best to Houston*

## Press Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **Unwind, Imagine and Escape with Society for the Performing Arts' 2009-10 Season**

Filled with Musical Theater, World Music and  
Contemporary Dance Icons

**Headliners to include:**

Stephen Sondheim with Frank Rich  
Gilberto Gil

Mark Morris Dance Group  
Marvin Hamlisch & Joel Grey  
Soweto Gospel Choir

Plus the return of *STOMP* and David Sedaris  
and much, much more!

**HOUSTON** (March 29, 2009) – As Houston's major arts presenter, Society for the Performing Arts (SPA) is pleased to announce its 2009-2010 season filled with music, dance and family entertainment from the world's best artists and companies. For the upcoming season, SPA will pay particular tribute to the living legends of the American musical theater, world music and contemporary dance, while presenting the eclectic programming for which it is renowned.

Headlining the 2009-2010 season will be Stephen Sondheim, the single most important composer/lyricist to work in American musical theater during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, appearing on the Jones Hall stage for an evening of conversation with *New York Times* columnist and former chief drama critic Frank Rich. In a similar vein, SPA will present an evening of the Broadway and film music of composer Marvin Hamlisch and actor Joel Grey, together in concert.

Two contemporary dance icons, Mark Morris and Richard Alston, will bring their remarkable companies in evenings of mixed repertory. Rising choreographic talents Trey McIntyre and Aszure Barton will present their companies as part of SPA's Dance Series. International music stars, the legendary Brazilian guitarist and vocalist Gilberto Gil and Fado singer Mariza, both

with Portuguese and African roots, head SPA's world music line-up, which also includes the acclaimed Soweto Gospel Choir. Other season highlights include a holiday performance with the fiddlers of BOWFIRE, Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, Interpreti Veneziani and the return of *STOMP*.

"We understand the need in our community at this time for experiences that offer an escape from the everyday, while providing moments of revelation and insight into the human psyche," said SPA Executive Director June Christensen. "The artists on our 2009-2010 season represent some of the world's greatest performers, including true icons of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. We hope to appeal to patrons' imaginations with programming that ranges from ground-breaking work—like that of dance maker Azure Barton—to lighthearted performances, such as *From Broadway to Hollywood: Marvin Hamlisch & Joel Grey in Concert*."

Making Houston debuts in the 2009-10 season are the Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition Gold Medalist, Great Britain's Richard Alston Dance Company, the contemporary ballet company Trey McIntyre Project, the traditional military Band of the Irish Guards, Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, the nine-member musical ensemble Interpreti Veneziani and dancer/choreographer Azure Barton. Favorite artists returning to Houston include Fado singer Mariza, America's own Mark Morris Dance Group, the international percussion sensation *STOMP*, author and humorist David Sedaris and the violinists of BOWFIRE.

SPA 2009-10 season subscriptions are on sale now. Renewing subscribers will be seated first; all other orders will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. For more information regarding performance dates, times and details, call 713-227-4SPA or visit [www.spahouston.org](http://www.spahouston.org).

### **About Society for the Performing Arts**

Founded in 1966, Society for the Performing Arts (SPA) is the largest independent non-profit presenting organization in the Southwest. Since its inception, SPA has sponsored more than 800 performances of the world's finest music, dance and theater events, in adherence to the belief that the arts are fundamental to the overall enrichment and quality of life within the community. In addition to presenting artists, SPA seeks to provide a variety of learning experiences for adults and children through master classes, lectures and special student performances, as well as build relationships between the performing arts and other interests within the greater Houston area and throughout the state of Texas.

**Event Listings for  
Society for the Performing Arts' 2009-10 Season**

**September 2009**

**Thirteenth Van Cliburn International  
Piano Competition Gold Medalist**

Sunday, Sept. 27 at 2 p.m.  
Wortham Center's Cullen Theater

*Music Series*

Be one of the first to witness the next piano sensation when the Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition Gold Medalist, makes his/her Houston debut. Held every four years in Fort Worth, the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, named for the American who won Moscow's First International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958, is widely regarded as the supreme piano competition in its potential for launching careers. Attracting talented candidates from all over the world such as former winners Alexander Kobrin and Olga Kern, the competition winner is awarded the Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Gold Medal, along with three years of international concert engagements coordinated by IMG Artists (U.K.) Limited, and a compact disc recording of his or her award-winning Cliburn Competition performances for the Harmonia Mundi Usa label. The winners of the Thirteenth Cliburn Competition will be announced on June 7, 2009.

**October 2009**

**Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company**

Friday, Oct. 2 at 8 p.m.  
Jones Hall

*International Series*

Embracing the beauty of its native country, the renowned folk dance ensemble named after its founder – innovative dancer, ballet master and choreographer Pavlo Virsky – is famous for its bright colors, unity of content and form, and the vivid embodiment of its stage concept. For more than 70 years, this Company has been bringing the wisdom, humor and optimism of its people to the stage through traditional dances that are charming, romantic, passionate and exciting.

**Richard Alston Dance Company**

Friday, Oct. 16 at 8 p.m.  
Wortham Center's Cullen Theater

*Dance Series*

Called "the finest choreographer the British modern-dance scene has ever known" by *The New York Times*, Richard Alston brings his company to Houston for the first time. Launched in 1994 to critical acclaim, Richard Alston Dance Company has grown into one of Britain's most avidly followed contemporary companies. As Britain's largest independent company, it offers a unique combination of the innovative and the entertaining. In building its repertoire, the Company focuses on Alston's new choreography but combines this with the re-creation of seminal past

works from Alston's 40-year career. Music plays a vital part in the Company's identity, and since its inception, Alston has used the work of a diverse range of composers including Brahms, Britten, Hoagy Carmichael, Monteverdi, Rameau, Shostakovich and Stravinsky.

***An Evening with Stephen Sondheim***

**An onstage conversation with host, Frank Rich**

Sunday, Oct. 25 at 7:30 p.m.

Jones Hall

*The Notables*

The most important artist to work in American musical theater over the past half-century, composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim is joined by *New York Times* columnist and former chief drama critic Frank Rich for a live, unscripted conversation offering a most personal and engaging view of Mr. Sondheim and his life in the theater—from *Gypsy* to *Sweeney Todd*.

**November 2009**

**Mariza**

Thursday, Nov. 12 at 8 p.m.

Jones Hall

*International Series*

Back by popular demand, Mariza brings her stunning vocal range and acoustic, seven-piece ensemble for one night only to Jones Hall. Having risen to even greater heights on the international music scene since SPA presented her in 2007, she represents the new face of Fado, the traditional music of Portugal. "Mariza has it all," says *The Times* of London, "charisma, a voice to die for and stunning looks."

**Trey McIntyre Project**

Friday, Nov. 13 at 8 p.m.

Worham Center's Cullen Theater

*Dance Series*

Led by Houston Ballet's former choreographic associate, this ground-breaking contemporary ballet company makes its Houston debut. Established by McIntyre in 2004, the Company allows him to continue his artistic and creative relationships with a select group of high-caliber dancers. What makes Trey McIntyre's choreography unique is "in the rhythm," says the *Los Angeles Times*. He makes "brainy choices about a dance's tempo, harmony and timbre. Audience members can see the music, hear the dancers and occasionally feel it under our own skin." In the summer of 2008, Trey McIntyre Project launched as a full-time company operating out of Boise, ID. In its first season, Trey McIntyre Project will have toured to more than 25 cities across the nation and the world.

**Leif Ove Andsnes**

***Pictures Reframed***

Sunday, Nov. 22 at 2 p.m.

Worham Center's Cullen Theater

*Music Series*

“The most accomplished pianist of the new generation” (*The New York Times*), international piano star Leif Ove Andsnes debuts with his latest collaboration centered around Mussorgsky’s epic piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition* with video installation by South African artist Robin Rhode. With more than 30 recordings, the 38-year-old Norwegian pianist has received his homeland’s most distinguished honor, Commander of the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav. In 2007, he received the prestigious Peer Gynt Prize, awarded by members of parliament to honor prominent Norwegians for their achievements in politics, sports and culture. Andsnes has also received the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Instrumentalist Award, the Gilmore Artist Award, four Gramophone Awards and seven Grammy nominations – including a nomination this year for his latest recording of Mozart piano concertos with the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra. Saluting his many achievements, *Vanity Fair* named Andsnes one of the “Best of the Best” in 2005.

December 2009

### **BOWFIRE**

#### ***Holiday Heart Strings***

Thursday, Dec. 3 at 7:30 p.m.

Jones Hall

#### ***Family Fun Series***

BOWFIRE is back for a theatrical holiday production featuring a Celtic Christmas, multicultural music-making, step dancing by world-class, award-winning performers, and such favorites as “Sleigh Ride” and “Silent Night.” Under the guidance of Creator and Artistic Director Lenny Solomon, Juno award winner (Canada’s Grammy) and three time recipient of *Jazz Report’s* Violinist of the Year award, as well as Broadway acclaimed Stage Director Stafford Arima, BOWFIRE features some of the top virtuoso violinists and fiddlers from North America for one heart stopping, electrifying performance.

### **January 2010**

#### **Mark Morris Dance Group**

Friday and Saturday, Jan. 15 & 16 at 8 p.m.

Worham Center’s Cullen Theater

#### ***Dance Series***

One of the world’s most successful and influential choreographers, Mark Morris continues to remain true to his conviction of performing dance with live music played by the best musicians, a feature of every performance. Musical collaborations over the years have included cellist Yo-Yo Ma in the Emmy Award-winning film *Falling Down Stairs* (1997); Indian composer Zakir Hussain, Mr. Ma and jazz pianist Ethan Iverson in *Kolam* (2002); The Bad Plus in *Violet Cavern* (2004); pianists Emanuel Ax and Yoko Nozaki for *Mozart Dances* (2006); and with the English National Opera in *Four Saints in Three Acts* (2000) and *King Arthur* (2006); among others. Film and television projects have included *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and two documentaries for the U.K.’s *South Bank Show*. *The Washington Post* hails Morris as “our Mozart of modern dance.”

### **February 2010**

***STOMP***

Friday, Feb. 12 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 13 at 5 & 9 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 14 at 3 & 7 p.m.

Jones Hall

*Family Fun Series*

The group of U.K. street performers that grew into the international percussion sensation known as *STOMP* is making its triumphant return to Houston for four performances on Valentine's Day weekend. The return of the percussive hit also brings some new surprises, with some sections of the show now updated and restructured and the addition of two new full-scale routines, utilizing props like tractor tire inner tubes and paint cans. The group's mix of comedy along with the rhythms found using ordinary everyday objects as musical instruments continues to make *STOMP* one of the most popular performances in the world.

**Band of the Irish Guards**

Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 7:30 p.m.

Jones Hall

*Family Fun Series*

Formed in 1900 on the express wish of HM Queen Victoria, the Irish Guards are part of the British Army tradition of bands providing musical support to troops on active service, engendering a unique esprit-de-corps. Making its U.S. tour debut in 2010, the Guards will bring their great musical traditions to Houston for one night only.

**March 2010**

**Gilberto Gil**

Friday, March 26 at 8 p.m.

Jones Hall

*The Notables*

Brazil's internationally acclaimed guitarist and vocalist and former Minister of Culture, Gilberto Gil brings his unique sound, incorporating an eclectic range of influences—from reggae, samba and forró to rock and African music—to Houston for one night only. Gil has developed one of the most relevant and renowned careers in world and pop music releasing more than 30 albums, six of them gold with four platinum singles, and five million records sold. A leader of the tropicalia movement in Brazil in 1967 and 1968, along with artists like Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa, his extensive and prolific catalogue of work has been covered and recorded by such artists as João Gilberto, Elis Regina, Gal Costa, Sérgio Mendes, Ernie Watts and Toots Thielmans.

***From Broadway to Hollywood:***

***Marvin Hamlisch & Joel Grey in Concert***

Saturday, March 27 at 8 p.m.

Jones Hall

*Music Series*

Two legendary Broadway stars — composer Marvin Hamlisch (*A Chorus Line*) and actor Joel Grey (*Cabaret*) — will appear together for a one-of-a-kind concert experience. As a composer, Hamlisch has won every major award: three Oscars, four Grammys, four Emmys, one Tony, three Golden Globes, and a Pulitzer Prize for *A Chorus Line*. Grey has been entertaining

audiences for more than 40 years on stage and screen, hitting the mainstream as the Master of Ceremonies in *Cabaret*, and as the Wizard of Oz in the Broadway smash, *Wicked*.

## **April 2010**

### **Soweto Gospel Choir**

Friday, April 9 at 8 p.m.

Jones Hall

#### *International Series*

The Grammy-Award winning South African musical phenomenon Soweto Gospel Choir has proven to be a musical force capable of transcending cultural boundaries and connecting with diverse audiences through the power of its music. Expect earthy rhythms, rich harmonies, a capella numbers, as well as accompaniment by an exciting four piece band and percussion section when the 26-member choir comes to Houston. Add to this, energetic dancing and vibrant, colorful costumes. This young, dynamic choir performs traditional and contemporary music in six of South Africa's 11 official languages. Created in late 2002 when South African Executive Producer Beverly Bryer and notable Musical Director David Mulovhedzi held auditions in Soweto to form an all-star "super-choir," the acclaimed group has achieved an almost unbelievable array of accomplishments: two Grammy Awards, two #1 *Billboard* World Music Chart albums, collaborations with Peter Gabriel, Bono, Robert Plant, Diana Ross, Josh Groban and Celine Dion, and support from such prominent and revered figures as Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (an official patron of the Choir).

### **Interpreti Veneziani**

Sunday, April 11 at 7:30 p.m.

Jones Hall

#### *Music Series*

Interpreti Veneziani made its debut in 1987, immediately gaining a reputation for the youthful exuberance and all-Italian brio characterizing its performances. Sitting in a semi-circle, the members play music ranging from Baroque to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a spirited party conversation. For the last 20 years, the nine-member ensemble has performed its own season consisting of more than 200 concerts at Venice's San Vidal Church. The talent of this group, their expertise as soloists and ensemble musicians, and the high level of their performances has earned Interpreti Veneziani an enthusiastic welcome from audiences and critics alike. *The Royal Gazette* called their performance "a dream evening of exquisite music and musicianship."

### **Aszure Barton & Artists**

Friday, April 23 at 8 p.m.

Wortham Center's Cullen Theater

#### *Dance Series*

The brilliant Canadian choreographer Aszure Barton has burst on the scene with "works that are quirky, deep, cheeky, and poignant," says *The Globe and Mail*. Mikhail Baryshnikov calls her dances "extraordinary" and "uncompromising." She has choreographed for American Ballet Theatre, Sydney Dance, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, films, and the Broadway stage. Now her striking choreography, which draws on a wide range of movement sources from classical ballet and contemporary dance to movements that surface during the creative process, can be seen with

her own company of consummate performers for the first time in Houston. Her dances often dramatize inner thoughts and impulses, using idiosyncratic movements to paint a psychological portrait. The work looks at how our natural peculiarity, gestures and ways of moving can conjure up humor, cacophony and pathos, revealing a rich, dynamic landscape of the human psyche. Barton's creative process is rooted in a celebration of music and movement, and a love for collaboration with dancers, filmmakers, designers, photographers and musicians.

**David Sedaris**

Wednesday, April 28 at 8 p.m.

Jones Hall

*Back by Popular Demand*

David Sedaris, an SPA favorite, returns to Houston to dish out his trademark satire in hilarious doses, reading from new and unpublished works. Sedaris slices through cultural euphemisms and political correctness with social critiques that have made him one of America's preeminent humor writers. Bestselling author, playwright, and often heard on *This American Life* on Public Radio International, "David Sedaris just may be the funniest man alive," says *Time Out New York*.

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