



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

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photo Collection of Choreographer Mark Morris Makes Texas Premiere

The Exhibit Featuring the Work of Famed Photographers Now on Display in Downtown Houston

HOUSTON (Dec. 3, 2009) – Society for the Performing Arts (SPA), bringing the world's best to Houston, in association with the Mark Morris Dance Group and Brookfield Properties' Devon Energy Tower Two Allen Center, presents the Texas premiere of a collection of portraits of choreographer and opera director Mark Morris taken by world renowned photographers including Annie Leibovitz, Klaus Lucka, Mark Seliger, William Wegman and Max Vadukul. The photography exhibition is open to the public from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. daily, and will be on display through Wednesday, Jan. 13, in the lobby of Devon Energy Tower Two Allen Center, 1200 Smith St.

The 17 prints on display were taken between 1984 and 2008 and reflect 24 years in the life of one of America's most prolific dance makers. This exhibition was originally mounted at the Frieda & Roy Furman Gallery at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City as part of the Mark Morris Dance Group's 25th anniversary celebration. In 2008, the show traveled to Seattle and in 2009 was presented at the Museum of Performance & Design in San Francisco. It is now in Houston in advance of the Mark Morris Dance Group's performances at Wortham Center's Cullen Theater, January 15 and 16, 2010, presented by SPA.

For its SPA performances, the ensemble will perform *Excursions* with music by Samuel Barber; *Going Away Party* to the music of Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys; the powerful *Italian Concerto*, danced to the J.S. Bach score; and *Grand Duo*, considered "one of the masterpieces of the late 20th century (*The Guardian*), with music by Lou Harrison.

Mark Morris was born on August 29, 1956, in Seattle, where he studied as a young man with Verla Flowers and Perry Brunson. In the early years of his career, he performed with Lar Lubovitch, Hannah Kahn, Laura Dean, Eliot Feld and the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. He formed the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1980, and has since created more than 120 works for the company. From 1988-1991, he was Director of Dance at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, the national opera house of Belgium. Among the works created during his tenure were three evening-length dances: *The Hard Nut*; *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il*

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Moderato; and *Dido and Aeneas*. In 1990, he founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Mr. Morris is also much in demand as a ballet choreographer. He has created seven works on the San Francisco Ballet since 1994 and received commissions from American Ballet Theatre and the Boston Ballet, among others. His *Sandpaper Ballet* (1999) is currently in the repertory of Houston Ballet (to be performed May 27–June 6, 2010). Morris is noted for his musicality—he has been described by critics as “undeviating in his devotion to music” – and for his “ability to conjure so many contradictory styles and emotions.” He has worked extensively in opera, directing and choreographing productions for The Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, English National Opera and The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, among others.

The photo exhibit at Devon Energy Tower Two Allen Center may be viewed for free. Mark Morris Dance Group performance tickets range from \$20-\$55 and can be purchased online at www.spahouston.org, by phone at 713-227-4SPA or at the courtyard level ticket office at Jones Hall located at 615 Louisiana St. Hours of operation: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Monday – Friday, and 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Saturday. For groups of 15 or more, call 713-632-8113.

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.

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