



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

## ***Press Release***

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Celebrate the History and Traditions of the Ukraine with Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company**

### **The 79-Member Company to Perform for One Night Only, Presented by Society for the Performing Arts**

HOUSTON (Sept. 3, 2009) – Society for the Performing Arts (SPA.), bringing the world's best to Houston, presents **Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company** for one night only on Friday, Oct. 2, at 8 p.m. in Jones Hall. Houston is just one stop on the Company's 65-city U.S. tour this fall! SPA dedicates this performance to Continental Airlines in honor of its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The Ukrainian culture and customs have evolved for thousands of years. Founded by ballet master Pavlo Virsky and led by Artistic Director and National Artist of Ukraine Myroslav Vantukh, Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company celebrates that lengthy history through vibrant choreography and colorful costumes in a stage performance portraying the rich traditions of its homeland. The performance will begin with a greeting dance complete with bread and salt on an embroidered towel, the symbol of the sincerity and kindness of the Ukrainian people, and will end with the "Hopak" featuring numerous solo performances with intricate choreographic formations.

"Houston has a large, passionate Ukrainian population that enjoys sharing its culture and traditions with others," said SPA Executive Director/CEO June Christensen. "The rich heritage of the Ukraine is truly fascinating, and something the entire family will enjoy learning more about through live performance."

The history of the ensemble goes back to 1937 when Virsky and Mykola Bolotov brought together a group of folk dancers. Virsky's first efforts at founding a folk dance company were rewarded in 1940, when his group was recognized as Ukraine's Song and Dance Company; today it carries his name. He was trained as a ballet dancer and performed as a soloist with a number of theaters in the old Soviet Union, where he also staged classical ballets such as Marius Pepita's *Swan Lake*, *Don Quixote* and *Raymonda*. However, he was fascinated by folk dancing, which he believed portrayed a people's culture and soul. As a choreographer, Virsky created a number of the dances still performed by the ensemble. It was under his guidance that the ensemble matured into a highly professional dance company of 79 members whose art has won the hearts of countless reviewers and the general public.

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Vantukh, Virsky's disciple and great expert in folk traditions and ethnography, has led the ensemble since 1980. His primary objective and continuing creative quest is the careful preservation and development of folk choreographic art. First class performances and expressiveness of the dancers, exquisite moves, the bright palette of costumes, the wealth of tunes and completeness of the choreographic plot are among characteristic features of the ensemble's repertoire.

Part of SPA's International Series, the performance of Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company is generously sponsored by Continental Airlines, The Brown Hand Center and H-E-B.

Prior to the performance, patrons are welcome to attend Arts Talk! by a member of the Company and translator Anthony Potoczniak at 7 p.m. on the balcony level of the Jones Hall lobby. At 7:30 p.m. patrons may enjoy the Performance Prelude at 7:30 p.m. by the Ukrainian School of Houston on the orchestra level of the Jones Hall lobby.

Tickets range from \$20-\$55 and can be purchased online at [www.spahouston.org](http://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.

### **Beyond the Stage**

An IW Marks Dance Master Class, taught by a member of Virsky Ukrainian National Dance Company, will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 1, at the Jewish Community Center, 5601 S. Braeswood. For more information or to register, call 713-729-3200 ext. 3223. The cost is \$3.50 in advance and \$5 at the door.

### **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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