

Press release: For Immediate Release, 1/2/2007

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ALONZO KING: ACCLAIM FROM ABROAD

Alonzo King, commissioned by the Royal Swedish Ballet to bring one of his ballets into the company's repertoire this fall, received critical acclaim from the Scandinavian press. The Royal Swedish Ballet's premiere of "Handel" on November 1, 2006—the day before Alonzo's King's own company, Lines Ballet, opened its Fall Home Season in San Francisco—was hailed as “both powerful and beautiful” by the Stockholm *Aftonbladet* newspaper. This is the first time that Alonzo King's work has been performed in Scandinavia, although Lines Ballet appears regularly in other European venues.

"The dancing starts in silence, followed by a long chord. The dancing is softly beautiful, often purely sensual to short quotations of music by Handel. Colors and movements in lovely harmony offer a purely meditative experience," wrote the critic for the daily *Uppsala Nya Tidning*. Another Stockholm paper, the *Dagens Nyheter*, noted the "fundamental play of lines," which conjured resonant images, as the piece “creates a sacred fateful room... emotionally charged and mysterious. Who are they and from where do they come? At one moment they seem like tamed predators only to be trees playing and wrestling with the autumn winds colossal strength at the next. Gracefully winding movements are turned inside out and get into sidetracks and surprising turns.”

“Handel” was created by Alonzo King for LINES Ballet, and had its premiere at the Company's Fall 2005 Home Season in San Francisco. Exploring Handel's depth in this piece, Alonzo King works with an entire and complex music of bodies, taking up the dramatic elegance of Baroque expression. Handel found that he could integrate the new homophonic style—with its clarity of melody, rising against the harmonic base—and the tradition of blended polyphony; the boldness of melody is never lost. This balance of thematic richness and simplicity that distinguishes Handel as a composer comes through in the clean, graceful lines of Alonzo King's choreography, which is deeply resonant with the nobility of the music. The ballet creates a sense of majesty without opulence, and of dignity that needs no declaration. In 1741, Handel said of his latest composition, “Whether I was in my body or out of my body as I wrote it, I know not. God knows.”

The Royal Swedish Ballet, founded in Stockholm in 1773, is the fourth-oldest ballet company in the world—after Paris, Copenhagen, and St. Petersburg—and renowned for the dramatic capability and astonishing versatility of its 75 dancers. The Swedish premiere of “Handel” was given at the Royal Opera House, a stately and beautiful theater. The score, with music by George Friderich Handel, was played live by the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra, with interludes created by Leslie Stuck, a noted Bay Area

electronic-music composer whose work has been commissioned by the Toyko Ballet, Frankfurt Ballet, and New York City Ballet.

LETTER FROM STOCKHOLM

LESLIE STUCK WRITES ON THE CHALLENGES OF CREATING A LIVE SCORE

Performing "Handel" with a live orchestra was a major challenge. Alonzo had assembled a number of CD cuts from various Händel works and performance groups, and choreographed them in great detail. As you may know, music of this period can be played in many different ways, so it is not enough to have the original score.

For this reason, creating a score for "Handel" was quite complex, requiring detailed transcription of those CD cuts Alonzo had chosen-- their instrumentation, ornamentation, tempi, phrasing, "feel"-- all this had to be quantified and recreated. Furthermore, we could not find a score for the organ solo, so that had to be transcribed. Actually, we don't even know whether it was composed by Händel at all! Finally, my electronic parts had to be transposed to the European tuning of A=442Hz. My coworkers were wonderfully talented--my copyist Meg Schedel, the Swedish Opera Librarian Gudny Bartoletti, and of course the conductor David Björkman.

After months of detailed work, it was with a mixture of excitement and apprehension that I flew to Stockholm for the premiere. This quickly turned into exhaustion since my flight was delayed by 30 hours, and my luggage was lost. I was unable to attend any rehearsals, and went to the performance full of curiosity. The Royal Opera house is a replica of the Paris Opera Salle Garnier, which has so many memories for me. Entering and taking my seat was almost surreal.

The experience was magical. David Björkman's loving attention to detail made the music jump to life, with perfect phrasing and flourishes to support the dance. The staging, costumes, and dancers all looked great. It was a profoundly European experience, and Alonzo's choreography emerged triumphantly as the star of the evening.

When the performance ended, the audience went wild, applauding and shouting enthusiastically for a full three minutes. At the party afterwards, I congratulated David Björkman, gave him a few corrections, then caught my 5am flight back to San Francisco.

--Leslie Stuck

LINES BALLET'S GIFT TO AIDS BENEFIT

"Dance From the Heart," a benefit for Dancers Responding to AIDS, invited a select number of the nation's outstanding dance companies to perform at the one-night-only, high-profile fundraising event on Dec. 11th in Manhattan. Alonzo King's LINES Ballet performed a *pas de deux* from the ballet "Migration," receiving thunderous applause in the intimate Cedar Lake Theater in Chelsea. Although nearly all of the

companies performing at the event were based in New York, DRA directors extended a special invitation to the LINES Ballet dancers—the only West Coast company asked to participate this year—and, during the evening’s proceedings, gave a speech onstage thanking dancers Brett Conway and Meredith Webster for flying across the country to participate in the benefit. Ballet Austin, the other company from outside New York, performed earlier in the evening; among the other well-known companies performing were Lar Lubovitch Dance Company (featuring Rasta Thomas), Pilobulus, STREB, two principal dancers from American Ballet Theater, Armitage Gone! Dance, several cast members of “The Color Purple,” and a premiere by Stephen Petronio.

DRA Founding Director Denise Roberts Hurlin and DRA Producer Jamie Bishton were featured on last Sunday’s *New York Times* Style page of society benefits and charity events, celebrating the evening’s success at the post-performance reception. The event, hosted by Tony Award-winning choreographer Jerry Mitchell, raised \$40,000 for AIDS organizations and dancer health programs across the country. Grants given by Dancers Responding to AIDS, which is a program of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, support 16 health and educational organizations in San Francisco. "Our commitment to fighting AIDS through dance has created a major force in the dance community," said Jamie Bishton, DRA Producer. "Not only does DRA provide critical assistance to those in need, but it has also inspired a new kind of family spirit in the dance world."

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