



For Information Contact:

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For Immediate Release

The Earth and Artists Responding to Violence:
Dance and Music Celebrate FotoFest's Dual Themed 2006 Biennial

ADMISSION: \$20 General; \$12 Students and Seniors
Friday March 24, 2006 at 8:00 p.m.

Houston, Texas (February 14, 2006) - The Michele Brangwen Dance Ensemble, in association with FotoFest, presents an evening of contemporary dance and music that celebrates the Festival's 2006 Biennial themes: The Earth \diamond Artists Responding to Violence. The performance is Friday, March 24 at 8:00 p.m. at Zilkha Hall, Hobby Center.

The evening features a performance of **Black Rain**, a work by choreographer **Michele Brangwen** and composer **Thomas Helton**, that explores the dark poetry of rain by looking back to the fallout at two Ground Zeros -- Hiroshima after the bomb, and the destruction of Lower Manhattan after the 9/11 attacks -- with a cautionary look into the future under radioactive world leadership.

The **Michele Brangwen Dance Ensemble** always performs to live original music and their musicians not only share the stage with the dancers; they are an integral part of the choreography. For this performance they are joined by the avant-garde jazz ensemble the **Rosta Jazz Avengers**: **John Edward Ross**, guitar; **Seth Paynter**, saxophone; **Richard Cholakian**, percussion; and **Thomas Helton**, string bass. **Black Rain** pairs the grace, fluidity and drama of modern dance with a powerful score comprised of sections of intense and spontaneous improvisation and sections of lovely soaring melodic lines.

"Visually stunning....Brangwen and Helton blended their visions artfully, and they delivered a piece that was rich with dynamic changes and fascinating imagery."

Linda Phenix, HOUSTONDANCE.COM

"Finally, a choreographer gives heart, soul, and depth, to a global issue,"

Nancy Wozny, DANCEHUNTER.COM

"The beginning of the dance is a hallucination, which is a symptom of radiation sickness, or it is a dream," says Brangwen. "We never use program notes for this work so it could be anything the viewer decides it is. The dancers' bodies form shapes from some sort of mysterious iconography. The central section represents for me a white rain, a harmony which we long for, a peaceful co-existence."

A champion of interdisciplinary collaboration in both her work and the Ensemble's programming she reflects: "I think that in the breaking of the disciplinary boundaries, the key essence becomes

evident, and that is that performance is about communication. Although we may work endlessly to perfect our respective crafts, it isn't so much about how we dance or how they make music, it really is more about how we tell you something together."

The program also features the acclaimed **Joe LoCascio/Woody Witt Quartet** performing new jazz compositions, including LoCascio's **Soul Song for a Paralyzed Civilization**, a haunting duet for piano and saxophone. Apria Records recording artist **Woody Witt** on saxophone, and Hart Music recording artists **Joe LoCascio** on piano, are joined by a rhythm section comprised of Houston's finest jazz musicians. From introspective ballads to the up-tempo bursts of jubilation, the quartet's style melds the beloved straight-ahead jazz of the 50's with sounds that are contemporary and happening. They will perform compositions by both Witt and LoCascio, and showcase the talents of all four musicians on different selections.

"(LoCascio's) technical facility, harmonic sophistication and fluid melodic lines"

-- Paul Mac Arthur, *Downbeat Magazine*

Woody Witt continues the tradition of great 'Texas Tenors' with a big fat sound, fresh ideas and a decidedly modern and original approach to improvisation and composition. A perfect combination of building on the past and searching for the future."

-- Randy Brecker, Grammy award winning trumpeter/composer

The performance will also include **Voices in My Head**, with music by **Arthur Gottschalk** and video by **Yunuen Perez Vert**. This mesmerizing work for solo percussionist, video and electro-acoustic sound environment immerses the audience in the lush sounds and images of the rain forest. As photographs of the familiar – trees, plants, animals, a man in the wild – morph into the abstract, the viewer is drawn not only deep into nature but also the recesses of the mind. It will be performed by **James Metcalfe**.

KUHF Radio Announcer **Elaine Kennedy** will introduce the program and moderate a Meet the Artists Q & A Panel following the performance.

The performance is at Zilkha Hall, the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 801 Bagby. Tickets are \$20 General Admission, \$12 Students and Seniors, and can be purchased at the door or in advance at 713 315-2525 or www.thehobbycenter.org For additional program information call 713 533-9515 or visit www.brangwendance.org