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USA INTERNATIONAL BALLET COMPETITION OFFERS COMPETITORS AN EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER

Jackson, Miss., May 28, 2010 – Connor Walsh, now flourishing as a principal dancer at the Houston Ballet, was a favored competitor in the 2006 [USA International Ballet Competition](#) (USA IBC) but did not advance to Round II of the competition. Instead of heading back to Houston immediately, he remained in Jackson and soaked up the experience of the USA IBC until after the closing ceremonies.

Walsh, like many others, experienced an opportunity that dancers do not find at any other competition in the world. Competitors who are do not move past Round I of the USA IBC are allowed to stay throughout the end of the two-week event – free of charge. They continue in their classes, attend performances, and learn and grow from time spent with their peers.

“We intend to make the Jackson experience a most positive one for the young artist,” said Bruce Marks, USA IBC international jury chairman. “A winning experience is one wherein you grow, and in that sense everyone will take home a prize.”

The Edward Stierle Contemporary Showcase, created to feature USA IBC competitors in contemporary works prepared for Rounds II and III of the competition, is another unique opportunity for dancers who have not moved forward in the competition.

“This showcase was designed as a venue for dancers and choreographers to present their works to fellow competitors and to the USA IBC audience, adding to the positive experience of the competition no matter what the outcome,” said Sue Lobrano, USA IBC executive director.

This year’s program will be held Sunday, June 20 at 2 p.m. at the Belhaven Center for Performing Arts in Jackson, Miss. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased through the IBC box office.

The program is named in honor of [Edward Stierle](#), a talented dancer who competed in the third USA IBC in 1986. He left the competition with the junior gold medal and recognition by

Robert Joffrey, later joining the Joffrey Ballet. At 19, Stierle tested tested HIV-positive for the AIDS virus. Six days after his 23rd birthday, he passed away.

The 2010 Edward Stierle Contemporary Showcase benefits [Dancers Responding to AIDS](#) (DRA), a fundraising program of [Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS](#). DRA was founded in 1991 by former Paul Taylor dancers Denise Roberts Hurlin and Hernando Cortez. DRA encompasses a network of professional dance companies who raise money through audience appeals, annual events, and student fundraising competitions.

Since its inception in 1988, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS has raised more than \$175 million. All of the money raised (including funds raised through DRA) is distributed to almost 500 AIDS and family service organizations and to seven programs of The Actors' Fund of America. None of the money raised by DRA goes to medical research, but all funds are allotted to individuals in need and the organizations that serve them.

DRA has asked [Brooklyn Mack](#), Washington Ballet dancer and USA IBC 2006 silver medalist, to perform *Lacrymosa* at the 2010 Edward Stierle Showcase. A dance of mourning, *Lacrymosa* is the first of only two major ballets created by Stierle – one that he had dedicated to his late mentor Robert Joffrey in memory of his everlasting vision.

“Visitors are immersed in the beauty and life of dance for two exciting weeks, and we want the same for our competitors,” Lobrano said.

The USA IBC is a two-week, “olympic-style” competition where tomorrow’s stars vie for gold, silver and bronze medals; cash awards; company contracts; and scholarships. The event is designated as the official international ballet competition in the United States by a Joint Resolution of Congress. Presented under the auspices of the International Dance Committee, International Theatre Institute of UNESCO, the USA IBC is held every four years in Jackson, Miss., in the tradition of sister competitions in Varna, Bulgaria, and Moscow, Russia.

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