



“Sandra Organ...is one to watch...Organ has assembled able dancers and has ideas both intellectual and choreographic.”

- Anne Holmes, Houston Chronicle, September 1997

“With a landmark program and performance, Sandra Organ Dance Company raised the barre for Houston’s dance scene. Bravo!”

- Molly Glentzer, Houston Chronicle, October 2000

“[Organ] Solis’ choreography seamlessly linked fluid passages of movement with shapes and gestures that while abstract, evoked a language of meaning all their own...[Organ] Solis is a dancer who turns as if sustained by a current of air, effortlessly revolving in space.”

- Michele Brangwen, Dance Writing, April 2007

### **Sandra Organ Dance Company** *Celebrating a Decade of Dance*

In 1997, Sandra Organ ended her 15-year career with Houston Ballet to found the Sandra Organ Dance Company and realize a dream. Her mission was to promote contemporary dance, educate the public, and attract a diverse audience. Now celebrating its 10th Anniversary, Sandra Organ Dance Company (SODC) choreographs and performs works that tell the stories of past and present. SODC themes have explored the complexity of race relations in American history, the tragedy and redemption of organ donation, the contributions of African Americans, and the lives of historical figures. SODC has added movement to Duke Ellington, Dmitri Shostakovich, Bobby McFerrin, U2, Maya Angelou, Pablo Neruda, and many others. Blending the vocabulary of dance with music and the spoken word is a hallmark, as is the incorporation of community voices, ideas, and experiences.

Two significant season events for the company are presentations of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and performances for Black History Month. *Amahl* incorporates sign language into the dance performance to tell an uplifting and unique Christmas tale, which has quickly become a Houston holiday tradition. Black History Month performances are integral to SODC’s season and its mission, and most recently the company presented a retrospective, in conjunction with its 10th Anniversary that included works based on the contributions of George Washington Carver, Sojourner Truth’s tribute to the black regiments of the Civil War, the poetry of Lucille Clinton and Maya Angelou, the music of Louis Armstrong, and a work in progress based on Frederick Douglass.

SODC has drawn on over 80 professional dancers and 10 choreographers to create over 80 new ballets. The company has presented over 110 dance concerts to more than 35,000 people of which over 7,500 are children from ages 10 to 19. SODC has collaborated with over 25 arts, education, and service organizations, including The Living Bank and the Fifth Ward Enrichment Program, to develop and deliver performances to the broad and diverse community. With Writers in the Schools, Houston PREP, and After School Initiatives, SODC has hosted choreographic workshops to empower youth to explore their homework topics through expressive movements. Community collaboration is vital to SODC’s success, and all SODC performances include an audience participation component, a “Talk Back” of dialogue between the company and the audience, and a survey.

SODC receives funding from numerous sources, including Houston Arts Alliance, Texas Commission for the Arts, Houston Endowment, the Scurlock Foundation, the Mithoff Family Foundation, and the Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, corporations, and individuals.

Sandra Organ, now Organ Solis, is a former soloist with the Houston Ballet and was its first African-American female ballerina. Her international career with the Houston Ballet encompassed a diverse range of classical and contemporary roles in works from choreographers Ben Stevenson, Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, and Sir Kenneth MacMillan to Christopher Bruce, James Kudelka, and Paul Taylor. She is on the faculty of Houston Ballet Academy, Houston High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, and the St. John’s School, and she is the founder and artistic director of SODC.