

Melody Mennite

A native of Santa Cruz, California, Melody Mennite trained at Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre under Robert Kelley and Diane Cypher and at Pacific Northwest Ballet. She also attended summer intensive programs with Suzanne Farrell. Mennite attended three consecutive summer intensive programs at Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy, starting at the age of 13. She then spent one year in Houston Ballet II on full scholarship and stipend, also winning a scholarship award from Regional Dance America/Pacific. She joined the company at the age of 17 and rose through the ranks quickly, achieving Principal dancer status in 2008. Melody retired from Houston Ballet after her 23rd season with the company. The 2024-2025 season is her first dancing with Vitacca Ballet in Houston.

With Houston Ballet, in Houston and on tours nationally and internationally Melody has originated many roles (designated by an asterisk) and performed all of the leading classical roles in the company's rep including Ben Stevenson's *Giselle*, *Coppelia*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, August Bournonville's *La Sylphide*, John Cranko's *Onegin*, and *Taming of the Shrew*, Sir Kenneth McMillan's *Manon*, Sir Fredrick Ashton's *La Fille Mal Gardee*, Stanton Welch's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Swan Lake*, *La Bayadere*, *Marie*, **Cinderella*, *The Nutcracker* (Sugar Plum Fairy and Clara*), *Sylvia* (Psyche*), *Madame Buutterfly* (Cio Cio San and Kate), Ronald Hynd's *The Merry Widow*, Trey McIntyre's *Peter Pan*, John Neumeier's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Her neoclassical and contemporary repertoire includes principal roles in ballets by Jiri Kylian, George Balanchine, Justin Peck, Jerome Robbins, William Forsythe, Christopher Bruce, Aszure Barton, Christopher Wheeldon, Trey McIntyre, Cathy Marston, Twyla Tharp, Nacho Duato, Paul Taylor, Jorma Elo, James Kudelka, Garret Smith, Mark Morris, Wayne McGregor, David Bintley, Edward Liang, and Stanton Welch. Mennite originated many roles with these choreographers.

In 2015, Mennite Co-Founded and Directed REACH - a choreographic project that curates evenings of world premieres by emerging choreographers and designates all proceeds for arts education programs in underserved schools. Following the success of REACH, Mennite and her colleagues were invited to collaboratively create a world premiere for a theatre in the round at the George R. Brown Convention Center, for Houston Ballet. As a choreographer, Mennite has created 16 commissioned works, including *Ana* for Ballet Arkansas, *Next of Kin* for Houston Ballet Academy, *Own* commissioned for Kingwood Dance Theatre which won a Regional Dance America award, *The 64 and 91* for Kansas City Ballet, *We all are* for Contingent Ballet in 2020, *Nostalgia de los montañas* for Houston Chamber Orchestra Festival, and *You and me and the waves* for Houston Ballet, among others. She was the choreographer, lead actor, and dancer in the award-winning film *Self Sabotage*, which was the short film category winner for the Festivus Film Festival in 2012.

Mennite is on the faculty of Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, and has taught master classes for Houston Ballet and Houston Ballet Academy, Ballet Arkansas, Vitacca Ballet, Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre, Huang Ballet School, Chunner Studio in New York, Perry Mansfield, and Kingwood Dance Theatre.