

□ AUSTRALIAN BALLET SPONSORSHIP

THE Australian Ballet will be helped through a "critical period" by a \$400,000 sponsorship by Benson and Hedges for 1984.

The sponsorship was announced by the Australian Ballet chairman, Sir Robert Southey, and chairman of Benson and Hedges, Mr Barry Smith. The same company sponsored the Australian Ballet last year.

"This generous sponsorship comes at a time when the company is under heavy financial pressure," Sir Robert said. "The environment for a performing arts organisation is one of rising costs, falling subsidies and the need to cut costs in activities already planned.

"The Ballet faces a deficit in the coming year, and we are immensely grateful for the further support of The Benson and Hedges Company in this critical period."

Exciting program

The Benson and Hedges sponsorship of The Australian Ballet's 21st anniversary last year made possible the free outdoor performances of Swan Lake in Sydney and Melbourne, and the hugely successful simulcast on ABC-TV and FM Radio, of the gala performance of the same production from the Adelaide Festival Theatre — performances which were seen and enjoyed by millions of Australians.

"Australia's national classical ballet company is a treasure that deserves the support of all Australians," Sir Robert said. "It is an inspiration to hundreds of thousands of young dancers around the country, and a joy to ballet-lovers of all ages."

The Ballet's artistic director, Maina Gielgud, has prepared a varied and exciting program for 1984, including her own production of the full-length *Sleeping Beauty* and six one-act ballets, five of which are new to Australian audiences.

WENTWORTH COURIER

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