

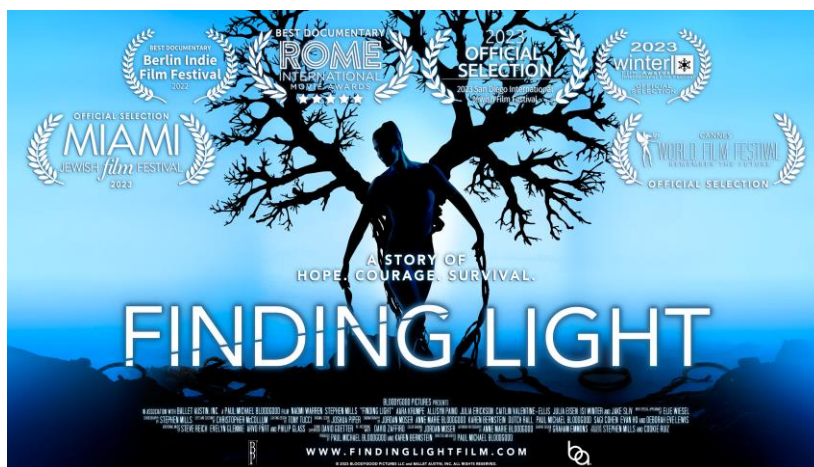
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***FINDING LIGHT* NAMED “BEST DOCUMENTARY” IN BERLIN AND ROME FILM FESTIVALS ALSO NAMED OFFICIAL SELECTION OF NOTABLE FESTIVALS AROUND U.S.**



[Click to view the official trailer](#)

AUSTIN, Texas (February 1, 2023) – Ballet Austin is pleased to announce that [*FINDING LIGHT*](#), a documentary feature detailing the story behind choreographer Stephen Mills’ *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project (Light)*, received the “Best Documentary” award from both the Berlin Indie Film Festival and the Rome International Movie Awards. The film is also an official selection of notable festivals across the United States and the world, including a world premiere at the prestigious Miami Jewish Film Festival and a screening at the Cannes World Film Festival.

Illuminated through the story of Holocaust survivor Naomi Warren, *FINDING LIGHT* takes the audience on a journey focused on Naomi’s life within three death camps while making relevant connections to current human rights issues through the lens of dance.

WHAT IS LIGHT / THE HOLOCAUST & HUMANITY PROJECT?

The production premiered on April 1, 2005 as a part of Ballet Austin’s 2004/05 season. Since then, Mills has licensed the production to Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre in 2009, Colorado Ballet in 2013, and Nashville Ballet in 2018. Ballet Austin toured the ballet nationally in Miami and West Palm Beach and internationally in three cities in Israel (Akko, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem). *Light*

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returns to Austin March 31-April 2 at the Long Center for the Performing Arts as a part of Ballet Austin's current season.

Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin's Sarah & Ernest Butler Family Fund Artistic Director, developed and choreographed *Light*; it has been an ongoing project of his for the past 17 years. Mills toured seven concentration camps in Europe in preparation for the creation of *Light*. He also spoke extensively with Holocaust survivor Naomi Warren, whose story serves as the inspiration for *Light*. The final result is a full-length contemporary ballet and Holocaust education partnership that promotes the protection of human rights against bigotry and hate through arts, education, and public dialogue.

Mills said of the piece: "*Light* challenges communities to work collaboratively to consider the 'difficult knowledge' presented by the Holocaust. Citizens are asked to hold themselves and each other accountable for any act of disregard for human rights and to learn by studying the ethical, historical and representation issues of the Holocaust through public lectures, a production by Ballet Austin, screenings of *FINDING LIGHT*, as well as other public conversations. In closing, citizens are encouraged to consider how the study of the Holocaust might foster dialogue regarding contemporary issues of genocide, bigotry, and hate."

***FINDING LIGHT* | INSPIRATION**

The feature documentary shares a behind-the-scenes look at the creation process of the poignant production. The film's director and producer, Lone Star Emmy®-winning filmmaker Paul Michael Bloodgood, is a former dancer with Ballet Austin and member of the original cast of the dance production. Having been an integral part of the creation and touring of the work, Bloodgood brings a unique first-person perspective to this documentary. "As a filmmaker, the story of the creation of *Light* was instantly something I wanted to share through the lens of film – but the right timing didn't reveal itself until 2019. The catastrophic loss endured during the Holocaust can't possibly be distilled down to a single book or film, but I truly believe in the worldwide effort to continue spreading awareness and keeping community dialogue open concerning social justice and human rights," Paul Michael Bloodgood says of the project.

***FINDING LIGHT* AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

FINDING LIGHT will be screened at a variety of upcoming film festivals and is the recipient of two notable film festival awards, including:

Official Selections:

- Berlin Indie Film Festival | "Best Documentary" Award
- Rome International Movie Awards | "Best Documentary" Award
- Miami Jewish Film Festival

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- San Diego International Jewish Film Festival
- Winter Film Awards International Film Festival (New York)
- Cannes World Film Festival
- Madrid International Movie Awards | “Best Documentary Feature” & “Best Producer” Awards
- Kalakari Film Festival (India)
- Liber Films International Festival (Greece)

TICKETS ON SALE

Tickets for Ballet Austin’s upcoming live production of *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project* are on sale now. Visit balletaustin.org to reserve seats online, or contact Ballet Austin’s Box Office at **512.476.2163**, weekdays from noon to 6 p.m. CT for personalized assistance.

ABOUT STEPHEN MILLS

Sarah & Ernest Butler Family Fund Artistic Director

Known for his innovative and collaborative choreographic projects, Stephen Mills has dance works in the repertoires of companies across the United States and around the world. From his inaugural season as Artistic Director in 2000, Mills attracted attention from around the United States with his world-premiere production of *Hamlet*, hailed by Dance Magazine as “...sleek and sophisticated.” The Washington Post recognized Ballet Austin as “one of the nation’s best-kept ballet secrets” in 2004 after Ballet Austin performed Mills’ world premiere of *The Taming of the Shrew*, commissioned by and performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The Company was first invited to perform at the Kennedy Center in January of 2002 with the Mills production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and at The Joyce Theater in New York City in 2004. In 2005 after two years of extensive research, Mills led a community-wide human rights collaboration that culminated in the world premiere work *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project*. In 2006, *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project* was awarded the Audrey & Raymond Maislin Humanitarian Award by the Anti-Defamation League. In September of 2013, the work made its international debut with a tour in three cities across Israel.

In 1998, Mills was the choreographer chosen to represent the United States through his work, *Ashes*, at Les Rencontres Chorégraphiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis in Paris. Most recently, Mills was awarded the Steinberg Award, the top honor at Le Festival des Arts de Saint-Sauveur International Choreographic Competition for *One / the body’s grace*. Mills has created more than 40 works for companies in the United States and abroad. His ballets are in the repertoires of such companies as Hong Kong Ballet, Ballet Augsburg, American Ballet Theatre Studio Company, Atlanta Ballet, Milwaukee Ballet, Washington Ballet, Cuballet in Havana, Cuba, BalletMet Columbus, Dayton Ballet, Sarasota Ballet, Ballet Pacifica, Dallas Black Dance Theater, Louisville Ballet, Nashville Ballet, Colorado Ballet, Texas Ballet Theater, The

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Sacramento Ballet, and Dance Kaleidoscope. He has worked in collaboration with such luminaries as the eight-time Grammy Award-winning band, Asleep at the Wheel, Shawn Colvin, and internationally renowned flamenco artist José Greco II.

As a dancer Mills performed with a wide variety of companies such as the world-renowned Harkness Ballet and The American Dance Machine under the direction of Lee Theodore. He also performed with the Cincinnati Ballet and The Indianapolis Ballet Theatre before becoming a part of Ballet Austin. Mills has danced principal roles in the Balanchine repertoire, as well as works by Choo-San Goh, John Butler, Ohad Naharin, Vicente Nebrada, Domy Reiter-Soffer, and Mark Dendy.

In addition to his work as a choreographer, Mills is a master teacher committed to developing dancers. He has been invited as guest faculty at many pre-professional academies including Jacob's Pillow, Goucher College, Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing Arts in Dallas, The Virginia School of the Arts, The New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, Stephens College and Point Park University in Pittsburgh. Mills is a member of the national dance service organization Dance / USA and has served both in leadership roles and on the Board of Trustees for the organization.

ABOUT PAUL MICHAEL BLOODGOOD ***FINDING LIGHT* Director and Producer**

Lone Star Emmy®-winning filmmaker Paul Michael Bloodgood enjoyed a career spanning 20 years as a professional ballet dancer with Ballet Austin and Ballet Pacifica, performing in a myriad of principal roles in works such as *Hamlet*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *La Sylphide*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Firebird*, *Coppélia*, *Agon*, *Allegro Brillante*, an original cast member of *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project*, as well as originating "Beast" in Stephen Mills' *Belle Redux / A Tale of Beauty & The Beast*.

Paul Michael has a Bachelor of Arts in Dance and the Humanities from St. Edward's University and is a union stunt performer with recent work in Martin Scorsese's next film *Killers of the Flower Moon* starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro, Robert Rodriguez's upcoming *Hypnotic* starring Ben Affleck, multiple episode appearances on seasons 5-8 of *Fear the Walking Dead*, and season 2 of *Leverage: Redemption*. Paul Michael has appeared in major feature films including Michael Bay's *Transformers*, Forest Whitaker's *First Daughter* starring Katie Holmes and Michael Keaton, Richard Linklater's *Bernie* starring Jack Black, and alongside Mena Suvari and Jason Biggs in the Wheatus music video for the film *Loser*.

Executive produced by Academy Award®-winner, James Moll (*Foo Fighters: Back and Forth*), Paul Michael's feature film *Trenches of Rock* premiered at the Atlanta Film Festival, garnering the attention of festivals worldwide, receiving 14 accolades including multiple "Best Feature Documentary" and "Best Director" awards (available on iTunes / Amazon / Google Play /

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DirecTV). Paul Michael collaborated with choreographer Stephen Mills on the Lone Star Emmy®-winning dance film, *Preludes/Beginnings* which premiered on Austin PBS. A member of SAG-AFTRA since 2003 and a 4-time Austin Critics Table Award recipient, Paul Michael credits his extensive background in film, music, and dance for his approach to creative storytelling.

ABOUT BALLET AUSTIN

As distinctive and dynamic as the city it calls home, Ballet Austin welcomes audiences near and far to participate in its “classically innovative” vision for the creation of original artworks, classical ballet instruction, and life-long health and wellness through dance and fitness. With a rich history spanning six decades, acclaimed productions, a commitment to creating access to programs, and a large, classical ballet academy, the organization is poised for an even greater future. From their home at the Butler Dance Education Center in downtown Austin, Ballet Austin and Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin’s Sarah & Ernest Butler Family Fund artistic director, actively engage the community, dancers, and audiences alike. The *New York Times* proclaims Ballet Austin “a company with big ambitions” originating work that is “absorbing.” For additional information on Ballet Austin and to purchase tickets and classes, visit balletaustin.org.

ABOUT OUR SPONSORS

***FINDING LIGHT* Executive Producers**

Stephen Mills, Cookie Ruiz

***Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project* Production Sponsors**

The Fifth Age of Man Foundation, Drs. Joann Hunter Johnson & Kenneth Johnson, Dr. Beverly Dale, EY

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Arrange interviews, access high-resolution images and videos by contacting **Paul Michael**

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Bloodgood via e-mail at findinglightfilm@gmail.com. Did you know Ballet Austin is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization? [Learn more.](#)

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