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## EXPERIENCE THE SIGHTS, SOUNDS, & MAGIC OF THE HOLIDAYS WITH BALLET AUSTIN'S 61<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF *THE NUTCRACKER*

AUSTIN'S LONGEST-RUNNING LIVE PRODUCTION FEATURES 15  
PERFORMANCES DEC. 2-23

AUSTIN, Texas (October 1, 2023) – Celebrate the magic of the holiday season with Ballet Austin's **61st Annual Production of *The Nutcracker***. Featuring sparkling costumes, twinkling sets, and live accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's enchanting score by the **Austin Symphony Orchestra**, Austin's longest-running live performance remains a Central Texas holiday tradition perfect for the whole family. *The Nutcracker* includes 15 performances December 2-23 at the Long Center for the Performing Arts. Tickets for all performances are on sale now, with prices starting at just \$15. Following last year's record-breaking attendance, tickets for this year's performances are expected to go FAST.

### MAKING AUSTIN MAGICAL

From the twinkling lights, whirling snowflakes, and sparkling beauty of the exquisite sets and costumes comes the heart-warming story of young Clara and her nutcracker. Stephen Mills' original choreography brings Ballet Austin's company of professional dancers together with a cast of 150 dancers, including Ballet Austin Academy students. Experience the enchantment of the holiday season with this beloved and enduring story of Clara's dreamy journey through the court of sweets.

Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin's Sarah & Ernest Butler Family Fund Artistic Director, says of the production: "One of the most gratifying things about *The Nutcracker* is knowing that people are sharing their holiday tradition with us, making us a part of their family during this very special time. When they leave the theater, if they leave elated or inspired or just happy to be with their family members...that's success for us."

### AN ICONIC HOLIDAY TRADITION

Ballet Austin first performed *The Nutcracker* in 1962, making it now the longest-running

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production of the holiday classic in Texas. Over the past six decades, more than two million people have enjoyed Ballet Austin's production.

"Ballet Austin continues to share this coveted family holiday tradition with Central Texas this year and for the past 61 years. We are grateful to be stewards of this magical production that brings generations of family members together, creating lasting memories," says Cookie Ruiz, Ballet Austin's Executive Director.

## FUN FOR EVERYONE BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

We encourage audience members to arrive early and experience all of the family fun taking place before the performance at the Long Center. Doors open 90 minutes before show time.

Audience activities during *The Nutcracker* include:

- **Footlights (Pre-Show)** - Get a behind the scenes look into what you'll see when the curtain goes up! Learn about the production and hear stories behind the work. Footlights begins 60 minutes before each performance and lasts approximately 25 minutes. This pre-show talk is FREE for all ticket holders.
- **Ballet-o-mania! (Pre-Show & Intermission)** - Hosted by Ballet Austin's Education Department, explore a FREE interactive discovery lounge uniquely designed for each production. Supported by The Junior League of Austin, see everything from pointe shoes to costumes, videos, and more!
- **Pose & Post Photo Stations (Pre-Show & Intermission)** - Capture your memories with selfie photo opportunities located throughout the Long Center, with scenes featuring the Nutcracker, Clara's living room, and the enchanted sleigh. Be sure to tag us [@balletaustin](#) and use [#NutcrackerATX](#) for a chance to be featured on our social media channels!
- **Ballet Austin Guild Gift Barre (Pre-Show, Intermission, & Post-Show)** – Located on every level of the Long Center, these pop-up shops feature collectible Nutcrackers, t-shirts, ornaments, and more. Proceeds benefit Ballet Austin's educational scholarship programs.

**Run-time:** 120 minutes, including a 20-minute intermission (Act I: 50 min. | Act II: 50 min.)

**Dates:** Saturday, December 2 at 2:00 p.m.  
Saturday, December 2 at 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, December 3 at 2:00 p.m.  
Friday, December 8 at 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday, December 9 at 2:00 p.m.  
Saturday, December 9 at 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, December 10 at 2:00 p.m.  
Friday, December 15 at 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday, December 16 at 2:00 p.m.

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Saturday, December 16 at 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, December 17 at 2:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, December 20 at 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday, December 21 at 2:00 p.m.  
Friday, December 22 at 2:00 p.m.  
Saturday, December 23 at 2:00 p.m.

**Concept & Choreography:** Stephen Mills  
**Music:** Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
**Live Accompaniment:** Austin Symphony Orchestra  
**Costume Design:** Judanna Lynn  
**Scenic Design:** Holly Highfill  
**Lighting Design:** Tony Tucci

## TICKETS ON SALE

Tickets for all 15 performances are on sale now and range from **\$15-\$125**. Visit [balletaustin.org](http://balletaustin.org) to reserve seats online, or contact Ballet Austin's Ticketing Services Team by calling **512.476.2163**, weekdays from noon to 5 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

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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 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 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](http://balletaustin.org).

## ABOUT OUR SPONSORS

### ***The Nutcracker Production Sponsors***

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## **ATTENTION MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES**

Arrange interviews, access high-resolution images and videos, by contacting **Sarah Pace** at **512.476.9151 ex. 118**, or via e-mail at [sarah.pace@balletaustin.org](mailto:sarah.pace@balletaustin.org). Did you know Ballet Austin is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization? [Learn more.](#)

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