

DRAFT RELEASE
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Ballet Austin Opens 2025/26 Season with Stephen Mills' Dazzling *Grimm Tales*

*A provocative reimaging of three Brothers Grimm stories inspired by the
vivid artwork of Natalie Frank.*

AUSTIN, Texas (September 2, 2025) – Ballet Austin kicks off its 2025/26 season with *Grimm Tales*, a boundary-breaking ballet where dance and visual art collide to create a provocative, unforgettable experience. Choreographed by Artistic Director Stephen Mills, *Grimm Tales* runs for three performances only—September 26–28 at The Long Center.

Mayhem, Murder & Magic Take the Stage

Grimm Tales dives into the strange and fantastical heart of three 19th-century fairy tales—*The Frog King*, *Snow White*, and *The Juniper Tree*—unearthing the cautionary truths and lessons beneath their folkloric surfaces. Through Frank's sharply feminist lens, Mills reimagines these stories with choreography that is lyrical, volatile, and thrillingly alive.

Inspired by the provocative pastel, gouache, and chalk drawings of celebrated visual artist Natalie Frank, *Grimm Tales* transforms the stage into a living storybook. Frank's imagery—animated by hand and projected in real time—creates vivid, ever-shifting landscapes that surround the dancers in surreal, haunting beauty. Set design by George Tsy-pin and costumes by Tony Award-nominated designer Constance Hoffman bring bold theatricality and visual spectacle to the production, while an original score by award-winning Graham Reynolds drives the emotional pulse.

"*Grimm Tales* is not your childhood fairy tale," says Mills. "It's visually explosive, darkly funny, and emotionally rich. The collaboration with Natalie Frank and this

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extraordinary creative team allowed us to bring something wholly original to the stage—something that challenges what ballet can be.”

Performed without intermission, *Grimm Tales* features intense themes and visuals that may not be suitable for the youngest children. The result is a genre-defying performance that speaks to fans of contemporary art, fairy tales, and daring choreography alike.

Dates:

- Friday, September 26 at 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, September 27 at 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, September 28 at 3:00 p.m.

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY | Stephen Mills

COMMISSIONED BY | The Butler New Choreography Endowment

MUSIC | Graham Reynolds original score funded in part by the Texas Commission on the Arts

ARTWORK | Natalie Frank

STORY BY | Edward Carey

COSTUME DESIGN | Constance Hoffman

SET DESIGN | George Tsypin

VIDEO | Howard Werner

LIGHTING DESIGN | Tony Tucci

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

Tickets are on sale now and range from **\$25-\$115**. Visit balletaustin.org to reserve seats online, or contact Ballet Austin’s Ticketing Services Team at **512.476.2163**, weekdays from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT for personalized assistance.

ABOUT STEPHEN MILLS

Sarah & Ernest Butler Family Fund Artistic Director

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Known for his innovative and collaborative choreographic projects, Stephen Mills has created over 60 premieres for Ballet Austin and has works in the repertoires of companies across the United States and around the world. His inaugural season as artistic director in 2000 attracted national attention 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 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's first Kennedy Center invitation in January of 2002 was to perform Mills' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ballet Austin presented a variety of Mills' works at The Joyce Theater (NYC) in 2005 and returned to the Kennedy Center in collaboration with The Suzanne Farrell Ballet in 2008 and for the Ballet Across America Festival in 2013. In 2005 after two years of extensive research, Mills led a communitywide human rights collaboration that culminated in the world premiere work *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project (LIGHT)*. In 2006 *LIGHT* was awarded the Audrey & Raymond Maislin Humanitarian Award by the Anti-Defamation League. The work made its international debut in September 2013, with performances in three cities across Israel and is the subject of the award-winning documentary film, *FINDING LIGHT*. In October 2016, Mills led the company through a 16-city tour of the People's Republic of China, concluding in China's largest city, Shanghai.

In 1998, Mills won the choreographic honor of representing the United States with his work, *Ashes*, at the *Rencontres Chorégraphiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis* in Paris. In 2004, his work *One/the body's grace* won the Steinberg Award, the top honor at the *Festival des Arts de Saint-Sauveur* International Choreographic Competition in Montreal. Mills' ballets are in the repertoires of Hong Kong Ballet, Ballet Augsburg, American Ballet Theatre Studio Company, Atlanta Ballet, Milwaukee Ballet, The 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, Eugene Ballet, Oklahoma City Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre 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, visual artists Natalie Frank and Trenton Doyle Hancock, internationally renowned flamenco artist José Greco II, and composer Graham Reynolds. In 2020, Mills collaborated with filmmaker, producer, and former company artist Paul Michael Bloodgood to create the dance film *Preludes/Beginnings* for which he received a 2021 Lone Star EMMY® Award.

As a dancer, Mills performed with the world-renowned Harkness Ballet, The American Dance Machine under the direction of Lee Theodore, Cincinnati Ballet, and Indianapolis Ballet Theatre before becoming a part of Ballet Austin. Mills danced principal roles in the Balanchine repertoire, as well as works by ChooSan Goh, John Butler, Ohad Naharin,

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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. His invitations to teach include 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, Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Boca Ballet Theater, School of American Ballet, The Suzanne Farrell Ballet, Butler Ballet, Lyon Opera Ballet, and NW Professional Dance Project.

Mills is a member of the national dance service organization Dance/USA and served both in leadership roles and on the national Board of Trustees for the organization. In 2013, he became a Fellow of the Chief Executive Program of National Arts Strategies.

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

Did you know Ballet Austin is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization? [Learn more.](#)

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