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DRAFT RELEASE

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BALLET AUSTIN ANNOUNCES 2025/26 SEASON

A Landmark Year Celebrating 25 Years of Stephen Mills' Artistic Vision

AUSTIN, Texas (July 30, 2025) – Ballet Austin proudly announces its 2025/26 season—an extraordinary lineup of productions that recognize a remarkable milestone: the celebration of Stephen Mills and his 25th anniversary season as Artistic Director. Over the past quarter-century, Mills transformed Ballet Austin into a nationally recognized company defined by bold creativity, technical excellence, and a commitment to pushing the boundaries of classical ballet. This milestone season is both a reflection of Mills' groundbreaking legacy and a bold continuation of the creative spirit that defines his tenure. With five mainstage productions—including a world premiere, a provocative reimagining of fairy tales, and an intimate evening of deeply personal works—this is not just a season. It's a celebration of the ideas, collaborations, and stories that shape Ballet Austin under Mills' extraordinary artistic leadership.

Tickets and season subscriptions are available now at balletaustin.org.

A SEASON MARKED BY LEGACY AND BOUNDARY-BREAKING WORK

From the first curtain rise to the final bow, each production in the 2025/26 season reflects Mills' hallmark style—classically rooted, fiercely contemporary, and emotionally resonant.

Whether revisiting beloved traditions or premiering ambitious new works, every moment on stage is infused with the innovation, passion, and artistic risk-taking that shaped Ballet Austin into the powerhouse it is today. "This season is a reflection of both the journey that led me here, and a glimpse into where we are headed next," said Stephen Mills.

GRIMM TALES

September 26–28, 2025 / The Long Center

Not all fairy tales are meant for children. Kicking off the season is the darkly compelling *Grimm Tales*, a provocative reimagining three of the cautionary stories from the Brothers Grimm, inspired by the vivid, feminist lens of the artwork of Natalie Frank. With an original score by composer Graham Reynolds, this haunting production draws audiences into a shadowy world where innocence meets experience.

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY | Stephen Mills

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

ARTWORK | Natalie Frank

COSTUME DESIGN | Constance Hoffman

SET DESIGN | George Tsypin

VIDEO | Howard Werner

LIGHTING DESIGN | Tony Tucci

STORY BY | Edward Carey

COMMISSIONED BY | The Butler New Choreography Endowment

THE NUTCRACKER

December 5–23, 2025 / The Long Center

Austin's favorite holiday tradition returns for its 63rd year. *The Nutcracker* enchants with twinkling sets, exquisite costumes, and Tchaikovsky's beloved score performed live by the Austin Symphony Orchestra. Follow Clara and the Nutcracker Prince on a magical journey through the Land of Sweets in this joyful, memory-making spectacle for the whole family.

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY | Stephen Mills

MUSIC | Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

COSTUME DESIGN | Judanna Lynn

SET DESIGN | Holly Highfill

LIGHTING DESIGN | Tony Tucci

LIVE ACCOMPANIMENT | Austin Symphony Orchestra

IN MOTION / AN EVENING WITH STEPHEN MILLS

February 13–15, 2026 / The Long Center

Featuring three works spanning the 25 years of his leadership, Stephen Mills shares this collection of personal milestones that offer an opportunity to experience the heart of his artistic legacy:

- *The Pink Confetti Dance* – Bursting with energy and showcasing Mills’ signature style. Playful and vibrant, this work is a joyful exploration of movement, color, and the sheer delight of dance.

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY | Stephen Mills

MUSIC | Johann Sebastian Bach

COSTUMES | Alexey Korygin

LIGHTING | Tony Tucci

- *Four Mortal Men* – A stirring personal remembrance of the early AIDS crisis and the friends lost.

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY | Stephen Mills

MUSIC | Claude Debussy

COSTUME DESIGN | Stephen Mills

SCENIC DESIGN | Michael B. Raiford

LIGHTING DESIGN | Tony Tucci

ADDITIONAL SCENERY CONSTRUCTION | Dynamic Duo Productions

- *Liminal Glam* – A mesmerizing high impact work filled with powerful, contemporary movement in stellar, futuristic costumes that complement the driving Philip Glass score.

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY | Stephen Mills

MUSIC | Philip Glass

COSTUME DESIGN | Susan Branch Towne

LIGHTING DESIGN | Tony Tucci

Together, these pieces form a reflection on resilience, transformation, and the creative journey.

MARIE ANTOINETTE: VAMPIRE QUEEN OF VERSAILLES | A WORLD PREMIERE

March 27–29, 2026 / The Long Center

In this mysteriously seductive reimagining of Marie Antoinette's story, Stephen Mills transforms the infamous queen into a creature of the night, wielding power through allure, ambition, and an insatiable thirst. Drawing inspiration from the pages of history and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, this full-length, world premiere production blends high drama with supernatural intrigue. With hauntingly elegant choreography and a visually opulent design, *MARIE ANTOINETTE: Vampire Queen of Versailles* unveils a world where desire is deadly, betrayal is inevitable, and even the most powerful must ultimately face the blade.

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY | Stephen Mills

MUSIC | Graham Reynolds

SET DESIGN | Michael Raiford

COMMISSIONED BY | The Butler New Choreography Endowment

THE MAGIC FLUTE

May 8–10, 2026 / The Long Center

The season concludes Mother's Day weekend with *The Magic Flute*, a whimsical retelling of Mozart's beloved opera featuring playful choreography, storytelling through captivating Cambodian shadow puppetry, and an imaginative visual design. Perfect for audiences of all ages, this enchanting ballet follows Prince Tamino and Princess Pamina through a mystical world of fantastical creatures and magical trials in their quest for love and truth.

CONCEPT & CHOREOGRAPHY | Stephen Mills

MUSIC | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

MUSIC ADAPTATION | Dr. Donald Grantham

SHADOW DESIGN | Larry Reed and Caryl Kientz

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COSTUME DESIGN | Susan Branch-Towne

SET DESIGN | Michael Raiford

LIGHTING DESIGN | Tony Tucci

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

Tickets are on sale now and range from **\$25-\$125**. 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

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

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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, 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"

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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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