



## **Ballet Austin Moves in to New Downtown Headquarters Signifying Key Changes for the Company, the District, and the City**

**34,000 sq ft complex features: Seven rehearsal studios | In-house, 287 seat performance space | Pilates, yoga and exercise studio | 60-seat community meeting room | Community School with added classrooms and classes | Administrative, Academy, and Artistic offices**

**WHO:** Ballet Austin  
**WHAT:** Ballet Austin Moves Into Its New Home As It Nears Completion  
**WEB:** [www.balletaustin.org/contribute/capinfo.php](http://www.balletaustin.org/contribute/capinfo.php)

**AUSTIN, TX** – Last week Ballet Austin’s artistic, executive, and administrative teams moved into the new, feature-rich Butler Dance Education Center located in downtown Austin – expected by Ballet and city leaders to be an active and transformative community hub. The innovative 34,000 sq ft complex, the new center boasts:

- Seven rehearsal studios
- Pilates, yoga and exercise studio
- 60-seat community meeting room
- Locker rooms with showers
- Community School with added classrooms and classes, more room for more students and expanded curriculum
- A two-story glass wall with a retractable scrim for massive projections
- AustinVentures StudioTheater: an in-house performance space with capacity to seat 287 people, made possible by a million dollar donation by Austin Ventures for state of the art lighting, sound equipment, and retractable seating.

For the first time in 25 years, the Ballet Austin Company, Academy, Box Office, and Administrative offices are under one roof – transforming the organization into an urban dance company and the first anchor of the emerging downtown Arts and Entertainment District located at 3rd and San Antonio.

"The Butler Community School allows Ballet Austin to expand and develop our educational programs, providing an invaluable opportunity to transform our educational role in the community," says Cookie Ruiz, Executive Director of the Ballet. "It will make the greatest possible cultural, social and educational contribution to Central Texas while supporting our vision of democratizing dance, breaking down key barriers to accessibility, including finances, physical challenges, cultural context and geography."

The facility is located among a number of important construction projects in a 3-block area. The AMLI residential tower, the 44-story 360 Condominiums, Austin City Limits studios, the W Hotel, Austin Children’s Museum, the new main branch of the public library, and the soon to be renovated Austin Music Hall will surround the new building. Ballet Austin’s attractive and functional center will bring over 1,000 dance students and their families into the midst of this new urban, multi-use area surrounding the landmark Austin City Hall building.

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The \$10.3 million project was designed by The Bommarito Group with the support of Broaddus & Associates. Harvey-Cleary served as the construction management team. In 2002, the organization purchased the building on West Third Street, former home to Aus-Tex Printing and Mailing. Until construction began last fall, the organization used the building for its administrative offices and leased it as meeting and storage space to other nonprofit organizations.

Since 1982, Ballet Austin has leased a 9,000-square-foot historical firehouse from the city of Austin on Guadalupe and 30th streets. With a \$4.5 million annual budget, Ballet Austin employs 20 professional dancers on nine-month contracts. The Ballet Austin Academy, the fourth largest classical ballet academy in the United States, enrolls more than 1,000 students annually.

With the guidance of a tenacious board and the support of inspired donors, the organization has succeeded with a prudent approach to fundraising in a post tech bust 9/11 world – delivering a dynamic community and workspace ahead of their deadline and on budget. What's more, the impressive center will invite the community to participate in dance education and personal conditioning up to six days every week.

The completion of the capital campaign is being made possible in large part to citywide visionaries and longtime leaders in arts philanthropy, Sarah and Ernest Butler, who in April donated an additional \$1 million community challenge gift to Ballet Austin to match gifts that would help to close the capital campaign of the \$10.3 million downtown dance center named in their honor. In 2005, the couple gave \$2.5 million toward the creation of the center. Since the announcement in late April over \$300,000 has been contributed by the community to date.

While Ballet Austin is working with the City of Austin on the Great Streets project connecting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Retail District to the Seaholm power plant redevelopment at Ballet Austin's north sidewalk, planning is underway for a grand opening celebration in early September, to invite the community to experience the new facility.

**New Contact Information**

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**About Ballet Austin**

Ballet Austin is one of the preeminent dance companies in the United States. Under the leadership of artistic director Stephen Mills, whose experience includes choreography and directing both classical and contemporary ballets, Ballet Austin has adopted a unique blend of classical dance with innovative style and movement. Ballet Austin Academy, the Company's classical ballet school and the 4th largest classical ballet academy in the United States, teaches students from 3-years and older. Ballet Austin Academy rehearses and administers the twenty member professional company, which is employed thirty-four weeks a year, to dance in five different main-stage productions under Stephen Mills' direction.

**IMAGES:** <http://media.wyattbrand.com> for print-ready, password-free images  
**MEDIA:** For interviews, details David Wyatt at [david@wyattbrand](mailto:david@wyattbrand) and (512) 450.4395  
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