

Ballet Austin presents
A Special Evening with Stephen Mills
Dance Celebration of His 20th Year – and the Ballet's 50th

WHO: Ballet Austin
Choreography by Stephen Mills
Music by Johannes Brahms, John Cage, Glover Gil
Live piano performance by Anton Nel

WHAT: Production: *A Special Evening with Stephen Mills*

WHEN: May 10, 11, and 12 at 8 pm; May 13 at 2 pm

WHERE: Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress Avenue,

TICKETS: \$15 - \$59 at 1.866.4.GETTIX, balletaustin.org, or in person
710 Congress Ave. (*IronStone Bank building*) 10 am - 4 pm weekdays

AUSTIN, TEXAS – Come join Ballet Austin for a production of three works with a celebration of Artistic Director and internally award-winning choreographer Stephen Mills. As the successful 50th anniversary season closes, Mills brings forth his best yet, with vibrant performances set to the music of 19th century German composer Brahms, American avant garde composer John Cage, and the tango-laden compositions of Glover Gil.

Now in his seventh year as Artistic Director of Ballet Austin, appointed after more than a dozen years as a company dancer, *A Special Evening with Stephen Mills* marks two decades with the organization and provides a vista for the first fifty years – and what's next. In September 2007, Ballet Austin will open the Butler Dance Education Center and will embark upon a season that will end in the new Long Center for the Performing Arts. Appropriately, Mills' three selections are all based on themes of community and compassion.

Silence within Silence is a world premiere choreographed by Mills to four romantic piano ballades by classical master Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897). The music will be performed live by world renowned concert pianist, Anton Nel – a heralded soloist and Professor of Piano and Chamber music at the University of Texas at Austin since 2000. The New York Times has called him “an uncommonly elegant pianist”

Spin the Revolve is yet another world premiere – also choreographed by Stephen Mills built upon 'Three Dances' by John Cage (1912 – 1992). Audiences can expect a very percussive, energetic and athletic dance to match the dynamics of Cage's music. Cage was an early composer of what he called "chance music," where some elements are left to be decided by chance. He is also well known for his non-standard use of musical instruments. “Three Dances was composed in 1945 for two ‘prepared’ (physically altered) pianos.

Touch, featuring choreography by Mills, is set to music commissioned from Glover Gil by Ballet Austin. The full work in three sections premiered in April of 2003 and Mills has chosen the third section for this production. *Touch* lends itself to flavorful Argentine rhythms of Glover Gil, a legendary Texas tango musician, arranger, and composer. This non-narrative, contemporary work is built around the idea of community and sharing. Furthermore, *Touch* is filled with choreography that “illustrates the company's penchant for new, innovative works.” (*Dance Magazine*, 2003)



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Audiences will also be treated to a video component by Dutch Rall, the Emmy Award-winning PBS producer of a documentary on Ballet Austin's *Light/The Holocaust & Humanity Project*. Rall is working with Mills through conception and rehearsal on his reflections of his past, present, and future with Ballet Austin. This live 'DVD-extra' will likely be shown preceding each work.

Stephen Mills, Artistic Director

In 1987, when Mills first joined the troupe as a principal dancer, his choreographic skills became apparent immediately. Since 1988, at least one Mills ballet has been performed each season, offering local audiences opportunities to follow his creative growth. During an international search for a director in 2000, his track record of artistic excellence, community respect, and humility helped him win the job.

Under the artistic leadership of Mr. Mills, Ballet Austin has emerged as one of the nation's premiere developing ballet organizations. In his inaugural season as artistic director he attracted attention from around the United States with his world-premiere production of *Hamlet*, hailed in *Dance Magazine* as "...sleek and sophisticated." The *Washington Post* recognized Ballet Austin as "one of the nations' best-kept secrets" in 2004 after Ballet Austin performed *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was commissioned by and performed at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. He led the Company to perform his *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2002 at The Kennedy Center, and his work has been showcased in New York at the choreographic showcase, Ballet Builders and at the Joyce Theater

Mr. 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 The Atlanta Ballet, Washington Ballet, Cuballet in Havana, Cuba, BalletMet Columbus, The Dayton Ballet, The Sarasota Ballet of Florida, Ballet Pacifica, Dallas Black Dance Theater, The Louisville Ballet, The Nashville Ballet, Fort Worth/Dallas Ballet and Kaleidoscope. He has worked in collaboration with such luminaries as the eight-time Grammy Award-winning band, Asleep at the Wheel, and Shawn Colvin. In addition to his work as a choreographer, Mr. Mills is committed as a master teacher to developing dancers. He has been a teacher at many pre-professional academies including 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 College in Pittsburgh. Mr. Mills also serves on the Board of Trustees of the national dance service organization, Dance USA.

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.



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