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**Ballet Austin Receives Trailblazer Award from Texas
Commission on the Arts**

AUSTIN, TEXAS – September 2, 2004 – Ballet Austin is proud to announce that it recently received the Trailblazer Award from the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) as part of the opening ceremonies of this year’s TCA Texas Arts Exchange Conference. The Texas Trailblazer Awards recognize efforts that have profound and powerful impact on the arts industry of Texas. The organizations honored each year are blazing new trails with their innovation, creativity and generosity in forging partnerships and collaborations that have beneficial effects on the whole state of Texas.

Ballet Austin in collaboration with The Meadows Foundation received this award in recognition of a three-year project that developed a unique approach to providing technical assistance for arts organizations and presenters across the state. Ballet Austin’s *Community Development Initiative* funded by The Meadows Foundation, defines a step-by-step process for supporting community-based organizations in the field with a goal of creating sustainable arts communities.

“The award from the TCA was a complete surprise,” said Cookie Ruiz, Ballet Austin, executive director. “It was an enormous honor to be recognized with The Meadows Foundation for the work they funded. The Community Development Initiative revolutionized the manner in which Ballet Austin approaches its work with our neighbors across the state. Seeing this toolkit, written over a three-year period by our Ballet Austin Team, in the hands of all of the conference attendees is a memory we will treasure forever.”

The first successful model took place in Paris, Texas, underscoring the need for developing and codifying this support process. Partnership with The Meadows Foundation allowed Ballet Austin to expand upon the Paris model and create a written toolkit, detailing exactly how this process works. The toolkit set the theme for the TCA conference and became the basis for the TCA’s own toolkit which was distributed to every arts organization across the state during the conference. This toolkit offers advice,

tips, samples and templates for fundraising and development, programs and exhibitions, cultural tourism, marketing, advocacy, and nonprofit basics.

“Cookie Ruiz is a true Texas treasure. She is innovative, creative and brilliant. Her passion extends beyond Ballet Austin to the whole arts community of Texas. She generously gives of her time and expertise to improve the landscape of the arts in Texas,” said TCA Executive Director Ricardo Hernandez.

Ballet Austin

Under the leadership of artistic director Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin has uniquely combined classical dance with innovative style and movement. Ballet Austin presents five productions each year in Austin, tours nationally and is a financially stable \$4 million organization. The Company employs 21 professional dancers from around the world to live in Austin for 34 weeks each season. Ballet Austin II and the Ballet Austin Academy serve as educational arms that strengthen the organization’s core purpose. The Ballet Austin Academy is one of the largest in the United States, serving nearly 1,000 students annually. Ballet Austin has established itself as a world-class company that makes ballet accessible to all and enhances Austin’s reputation as a city that thrives in the arts.

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