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**Ballet Austin Docents Provide Arts and Inspiration for Students in
their Community**

*Volunteers reach more than 15,000 children in the Austin Area
through The Nutcracker School Show Series*

AUSTIN, TX – December 2, 2004 - It is her toughest performance of the season. Armed only with her handbook, overhead visuals and bag of supplies, she looks out into the crowd of third and fourth graders and begins to speak. Laurel Lacy is a docent for the Nutcracker School Show Series and will spend the next 45 minutes sharing with these children the magic and wonder of the Nutcracker ballet.

“We all look back to our childhood and remember *The Nutcracker* as a treasured part of our holiday season, and this is many children’s first introduction to what will become a lifelong tradition,” Michele Starkloff, Ballet Austin Community Outreach and Education (CORE) director said.

In Luling, Laurel Lacy takes on the responsibility of introducing this classic ballet to her neighbors in the community first in the classroom, and then on a field trip to see one act of *The Nutcracker*, December 7 – 9 at Bass Concert Hall. Her presentation includes a review of the history of ballet; a discussion of the four parts of the ballet – dancing, music, décor and drama; and a preview of the story of *The Nutcracker*.

Halea Hayden, Chair of the Docent Program for Ballet Austin Guild said, “The Docent Program introduces the magic of ballet to thousands of school children in more than 100 schools.” The approximately 35 docents are comprised of Ballet Austin Guild members and volunteers who will help Ballet Austin’s Nutcracker School Show Series reach more than 15,000 students in Central Texas. “The School Show Series and the Docent Program not only allow children the opportunity to participate in the production of *The Nutcracker*, but it also offers a program of educational curriculum taught in the classroom before they ever arrive in the theater,” said Ms. Hayden.

The Ballet Austin Guild is a volunteer organization formed in 1975 to support and promote the interests of Ballet Austin in greater Austin and surrounding communities through educational

programs, fundraising and special events. For more information on the Guild, log onto www.balletaustinguild.org.

Choreographed by Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin's artistic director, and set to the timeless music of Pyotr Tchaikovsky, with live accompaniment by the Austin Symphony Orchestra, *The Nutcracker* delights children of all ages. *The Nutcracker* runs December 5 – 21, 2004 at Bass Concert Hall and tickets range from \$17 – 75. For tickets, please call (512) 469-SHOW.

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 more than 900 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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