

# Ballet Austin Announces Finalists in Its Groundbreaking *New American Talent/Dance* Competition

*Thang Dao, Thaddeus Davis and Sonya Delwaide Selected as Finalists for Ballet Austin's Choreographic Competition in February 2006*

AUSTIN, TX – November 4, 2005 – Ballet Austin announced today the finalists for its groundbreaking choreographic competition, chosen from a pool of submissions from across the country. Emerging choreographers Thang Dao, Thaddeus Davis and Sonya Delwaide will present new works set on Ballet Austin dancers before a panel of internationally-renowned jurors and before live audiences Feb 16-19, 2006 at the Paramount Theatre in Austin, Texas.

*New American Talent/Dance* is the brainchild of Ballet Austin's Artistic Director Stephen Mills in collaboration with Arthouse. Mr. Mills, an ardent supporter of contemporary work, including the visual arts, pays homage to Arthouse's annual competition.

Virginia Johnson, editor-in-chief of *Pointe Magazine*; John Meehan director of American Ballet Theatre's Studio Company; and Dwight Rhoden, artistic director of Complexions comprise the jury and recognized the potential of these three choreographers as being at the cusp of their own creative breakthrough. In addition, they will preside over the competition in February.

"Each of these young choreographers' work shows a clear understanding of structure in relation to making dance," said Mr. Mills. "Thang, Thaddeus and Sonya's work looks definitive and different. I am very excited about sharing this founding class of *New American Talent/Dance* choreographers with the Austin audience.

"Each choreographer's 'voice' will draw on the absolutely unique resources our dancers provide and develop them further. They will do so in a supportive environment that is structured to be the ultimate incubator for creativity. This is a powerful combination and the creative potential is infinite."

The finalists will complete a two-week choreographic residency to set their work on the Ballet Austin Company. In February, in front of a *live* panel of jurors and the audience they will present their work in a competition that is unprecedented in the dance world. With live voting, thousands of dollars and nationwide notoriety at stake, the chance of a lifetime will unfold. Each juror will have a \$5,000 discretionary fund to be awarded to the choreographer of his/her choice, and the audience will have \$1,000 each night to award to their favorite choreographer.

In addition to the performance, Ballet Austin will conduct a symposium about the state of the creation of dances in America with a roundtable panel of leading dance scholars, critics and choreographers from across the nation.

## The Finalists

### Thang Dao

Thang Dao was born in Danang, Vietnam. He is a graduate of the Los Angeles County High

School for the Arts and the recipient of the Dorothy Chandler Music Center' Spotlight award in 1997. After high school, he attended the Juilliard School and then the Boston Conservatory where he received his BFA in Dance. He is currently working on his MA at NYU's Gallatin School. His work has been presented in various venues throughout New York City and Boston. Thang is ecstatic to work with Ballet Austin.

### Sonya Delwaide

Sonya Delwaide is a choreographer, teacher and performer whose reputation has flourished within the United States and Canada for nearly two decades. A native of Quebec and a graduate from York University in Toronto, she is currently residing in the Bay Area where the critics favorably noticed her work. She has been profiled in San Francisco Magazine, received a Bay Area Goldie Award (from the San Francisco Bay Guardian), was named in the 2001 Top 10 list from the San Francisco Chronicle and in the Dance Magazine's Top 25 people to watch in 2002 and finally, received an Isadora Duncan Award for best ensemble performance. Ms. Delwaide has created more than 70 pieces on companies such as Ottawa Ballet, L'Ecole Supérieure des Grands Ballets Canadiens, Hubbard Street 2 (after winning their 2000 National Choreographic Competition), AXIS Dance Company, Berkeley Ballet Theater, Compagnie de Danse L'Astragale (for whom she was the artistic director from 1992 to 1999) and many more. To describe her work, the San Francisco Express wrote: "she seems to epitomize a postmodern fusion of the Balanchine/Cunningham aesthetic with the punk expressiveness of the '80s-geometric clarity and a ruminating, personal, sexually prickly style". Ms. Delwaide has received awards from the Canada Council, the Quebec and Ontario Arts' Councils, the Zellerbach Family Fund, the Gerbode Foundation, and the Irvine Foundation. She has recently been asked to speak at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco and has been previously invited to teach at the school of the National Ballet of Canada, les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Alvin Ailey Dance Company and various professional colleges and studios in the US and Canada. She is currently teaching at Mills College in Oakland.

### Thaddeus Davis

Thaddeus Davis was born in Montgomery, Alabama where he began his studies with The Montgomery Civic Ballet and The Carver Creative Performing Arts Center. After high school he studied and danced with Barbara Sullivan's Atlanta Dance Theatre and Dian Robinson's Tuskegee Cultural Arts Center. In 1993 he graduated from Butler University with a BFA in Dance. Mr. Davis has worked with Indianapolis Ballet Theatre, Fukuoka City Ballet, Atlanta Dance Theatre, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Complexions, Fugate/Bahiri Ballet NY (Dance Galaxy) and Donald Byrd/The Group where he also served as Donald Byrd's creative assistant. He was featured in *Dance Magazine's* January 2002 issue as one of "25 to watch" in the world. The premier of his first work, *Once Before Twice After*, was named one of the top ten moments in dance for 2002 by *The New York Times*, calling it, "reassuring evidence of New York Dance's promising future."

As a teacher and choreographer he has done residencies at The Juilliard School, Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, Butler University and Arizona State University. Mr. Davis has also served as a guest faculty member at The Alabama School of Fine Arts, and served as co-director of Wideman, Davis/Artist in Residence. He was also a recipient of the Choo San Goh Award for Choreography for 2003.

## 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.

###

Production Sponsors	Austin Ventures, Franklin Bank, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, Broaddus & Associates, The Driskill, George Brainard Photographer
Season Underwriter	Austin Ventures
Official Airline	American Airlines
Season Sponsors	Dell, JPMorganChase, Action Figure
Media Sponsors	KVUE, Austin American-Statesman
Season Promotion Sponsor	BMW of Austin

This project is funded in part by the City of Austin through the Cultural Arts Division and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts.