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## ***Ballet Austin Recognizes A Continuing Bond between Fort Hood's 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and the City of Austin***

AUSTIN, TX – December 15, 2004 – Web cams, The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, electrical grids, Toby Futrell, polling booths, Ballet Austin? Each year, Ballet Austin sets out in search of outstanding citizens and celebrities to play the role of Mother Ginger for each performance of *The Nutcracker*. This year Ballet Austin decided to honor the service men and women serving in Iraq by inviting Beth Chiarelli, wife of Major General Peter Chiarelli to grace the stage. In the process of working with Ft. Hood to arrange to have the audience video tape greetings to be sent to the soldiers who will not be home this holiday season [during the intermission of Saturday's upcoming matinee, Dec. 18 at 2:00 p.m], Ballet Austin discovered a truly unique relationship between the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry of Ft. Hood and our City of Austin staff.

The relationship began to blossom between Ft. Hood and the City of Austin last summer when Major General Chiarelli, Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, enlisted the help of Austin City Manager Toby Futrell to educate his troops about city infrastructure. While preparing for deployment to Iraq, Major General Chiarelli discovered that Austin and Baghdad are geographically the same size. In a unique collaboration, Ms. Futrell and staff spent three long days teaching the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry how to establish a city infrastructure, including the process to establish an electrical grid, water service and trash collection.

The relationship between Ft. Hood and the city of Austin continues. Following the deployment of our Ft. Hood troops, Ms. Futrell and staff developed a "reach back" technology that allows the soldiers in Baghdad to page her with any technical questions they encounter, from garbage to sewer to electricity; the city is committed to helping the troops. Additionally, a web cam is in place that sends photos of particular problems directly to city staff... with some situations answered within 6 hours. A recent communication focused on the need for advice in setting up the infrastructure to support the country's first elections. Our City is now advising Maj. Gen. Chiarelli in establishing polling booths in Iraq.

As more than 35,000 troops from Fort Hood continue to serve in Iraq, Ballet Austin wanted to offer families of soldiers a holiday treat. During the Saturday performance featuring Mrs. Chiarelli, audience members will be able to send holiday greetings to the soldiers in Iraq. In addition, Ballet Austin is working with Fort Hood to send video footage of this special performance to the troops.

“The holidays are a special time for families and friends to gather, but with 35,000 troops from Fort Hood currently serving in Iraq, Ballet Austin wanted to recognize the importance of our military and the sacrifice that each of their families are making for this nation,” said Cookie Ruiz, Ballet Austin, executive director. “*The Nutcracker* is one of Central Texas’ favorite holiday traditions, and for families like our neighbors at Ft. Hood that are apart from their loved ones this holiday season, it will hopefully bring a little joy during this time.”

Ballet Austin’s production of *The Nutcracker* was the first production in the state and continues to bring families together annually to enjoy this holiday classic. 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.

### **Ticket Information**

SPECIAL FT. HOOD DISCOUNT – The Ballet Austin Box Office is offering a 20 percent discount to Ft. Hood families. This offer is only good by call the Ballet Austin Box Office at (512) 476-2163. For regular tickets, please call Star Tickets PLUS at 469-SHOW, online at [www.startickets.com](http://www.startickets.com), Star Tickets PLUS outlets, Albertson’s and Waterloo Records.

### **This year’s full schedule of Mother Gingers:**

Sunday, 12/5 at 2:00 p.m.	Kinky Friedman
Friday, 12/10 at 7:30 p.m.	Amy Henry, NBC’s "The Apprentice"
Saturday, 12/11 at 2:00 p.m.	Peter Bay, Austin Symphony Orchestra
Saturday, 12/11 at 7:30 p.m.	Olga Campos, KVUE Television
Sunday, 12/12 at 2:00 p.m.	Hon. Will Wynn, Mayor of Austin
Friday, 12/17 at 7:30 p.m.	Kevin Rollins, CEO, Dell
Saturday, 12/18 at 2:00 p.m.	Beth Chiarelli, wife of Major General Peter Chiarelli, Ft. Hood
Saturday, 12/18 at 7:30 p.m.	Dale Dudley, KLBJ
Sunday, 12/19 at 2:00 p.m.	Shawn Colvin, Grammy Award Winner
Monday, 12/20 at 7:30 p.m.	Jim Dunaway, Elgin City Manager
Tuesday, 12/21 at 7:30 p.m.	Joe Long, The Long Performing Arts Center

### **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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