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Beth Chiarelli Graces Ballet Austin's Stage as a Celebrity "Mother Ginger" in the 42nd Annual Production of *The Nutcracker*

Ballet Austin's Production of 'The Nutcracker' Features Celebrities ranging from national music, television and print celebrities to local community and business leaders

AUSTIN, TX – December 17, 2004 – Ballet Austin's production of *The Nutcracker*, which runs December 5 – 21, has an eight-year tradition of featuring local celebrities in the loveable and outrageous role of Mother Ginger. This year Ballet Austin has, yet again, assembled a star-studded cast of Mother Gingers. Beth Chiarelli, wife of Major General Peter Chiarelli, will make her stage debut as "Mother Ginger" on Dec. 18 at 2:00 p.m. at Bass Concert Hall.

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 "Mother Ginger" campaign honors prominent community leaders and celebrities by casting the notable personalities in the role of "Mother Ginger." Past "Mother Ginger" personalities have included Tom Kite, Michael Dell, Lance Armstrong Ann Richards, Kay Bailey Hutchinson and Judy Maggio. Responsibilities of this coveted role include wearing outrageous makeup, including red lipstick and bright blue eye shadow, and climbing into a dress on a platform five feet off the ground, which covers 14 children dressed as bon bons.

Perched atop a large red satin dress, this year's "Mother Ginger" celebrities include Kinky Friedman, Texas Monthly columnist, Amy Henry, contestant on NBC's "The Apprentice", Peter Bay, music director and conductor of the Austin Symphony, Olga Campos, anchor KVUE Austin, Will Wynn, mayor of Austin, Kevin Rollins, president and CEO of Dell, Grammy-Award winner

Shawn Colvin, Joe Long, chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Long Performing Arts Center, Beth Chiarelli, wife of Major General Peter Chiarelli, Fort Hood, Dale Dudley, KLBJ and Jim Dunaway, Elgin city manager.

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

For tickets, please call Star Tickets PLUS at 469-SHOW, online at 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 pm	Kinky Friedman
Friday, 12/10 at 7:30 pm	Amy Henry, NBC's "The Apprentice"
Saturday, 12/11 at 2:00 pm	Peter Bay, Austin Symphony Orchestra
Saturday, 12/11 at 7:30 pm	Olga Campos, KVUE Television
Sunday, 12/12 at 2:00 pm	Hon. Will Wynn, Mayor of Austin
Friday, 12/17 at 7:30 pm	Kevin Rollins, CEO, Dell
Saturday, 12/18 at 2:00 pm	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 pm	Shawn Colvin, Grammy Award Winner
Monday, 12/20 at 7:30 pm	Jim Dunaway, Elgin City Manager
Tuesday, 12/21 at 7:30 pm	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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