

Hamlet

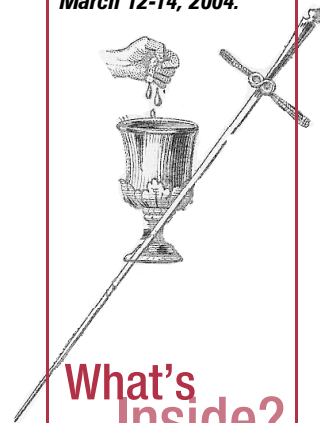
"Stark. Modern. Unforgiving."

Susan Elliott, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*



Welcome

Footnotes is a performance guide published by the Community OutReach and Education (C.O.R.E.) Department of Ballet Austin. We hope this **Footnotes** furthers your enjoyment of our performance, **Hamlet**, opening in Austin **March 12-14, 2004.**



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BALLET
Austin

Hamlet

"Breathtaking to behold..." *Dance Magazine's* description of Ballet Austin's *Hamlet*.

Color is used in the costume design to tell the audience more about each character.

The orange costumes worn by Polonius, Ophelia and Laertes let you know that they are somehow related. What is their relationship to each other?

Once cast in their role, each dancer must go through fittings, trying on costumes for adjustments specific to his or her body.

Dancers: Anthony Casati and Gina Patterson in mirrors
Photographer: Andrew Yates
Photo/Illustration by Action Figure (on front cover)

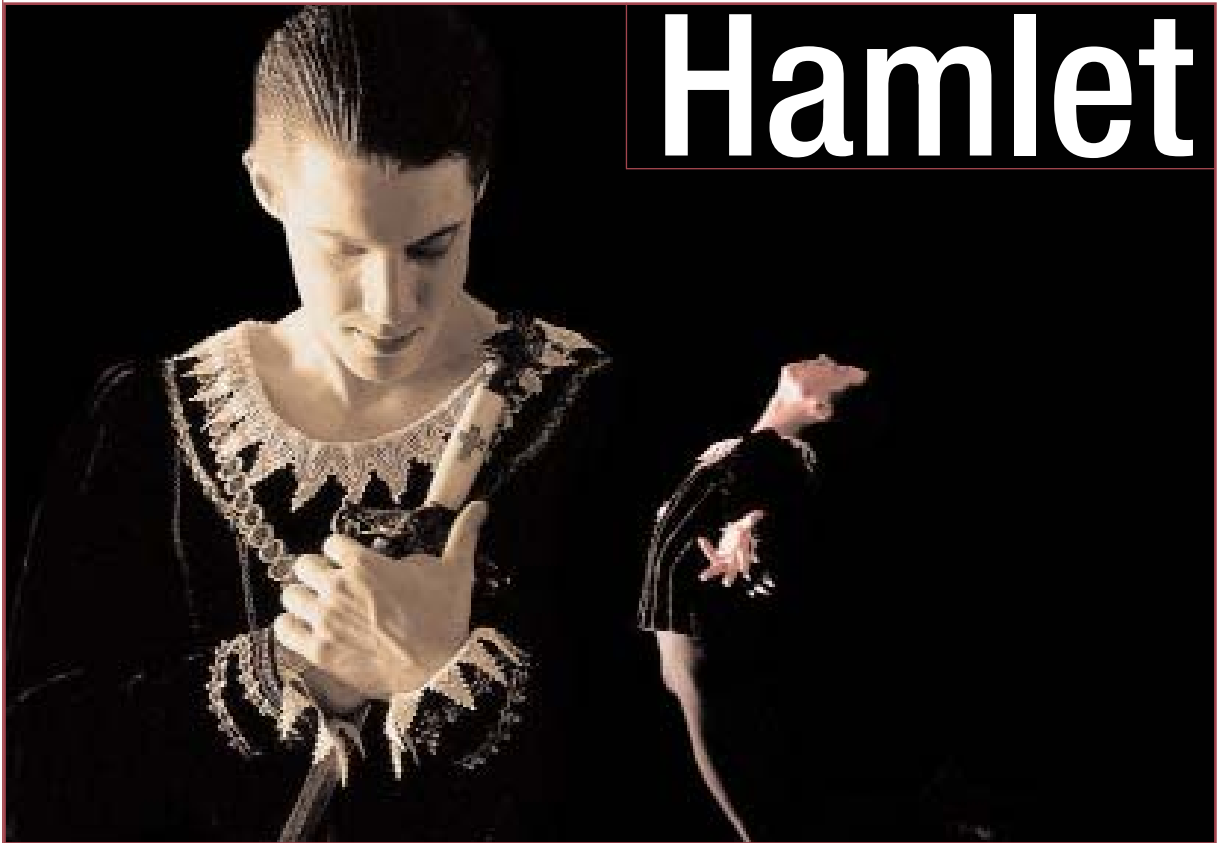
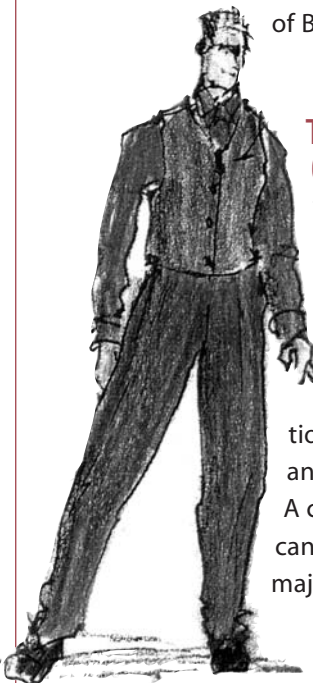


Photo by Scott Harbin

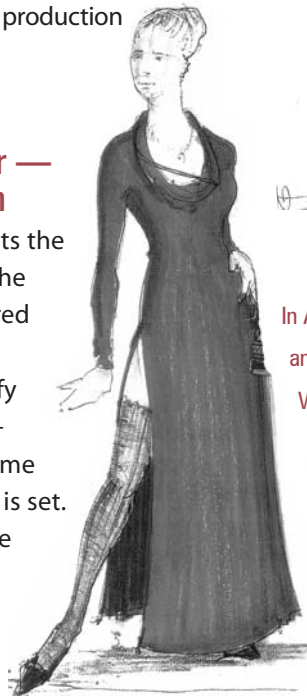
Dancer Anthony Casati as Hamlet.

Hamlet is the tale of a tormented son driven to avenge his father's death. Many artists work together, or **collaborate**, to turn the play *Hamlet* into a ballet. Here are some of those artists whose talents shine in this production of Ballet Austin's *Hamlet*.



The Costume Designer — Christopher McCollum

The costume design reflects the contemporary feeling of the work, using Armani-inspired suits and sleek dresses. Costumes help us identify the characters, their relationship to others, and the time and place in which the story is set. A character's costume change can often be a signal that a major event has taken place.



In Act I, Hamlet's costume is black and Gertrude and Claudius wear red. What might these colors represent?

In Act 2, the use of color reverses for all cast costumes with Hamlet now wearing red. What do you think this means?

Costume sketches by costume designer, Christopher McCollum.



Photo by José Medina

Act 1 of *Hamlet*.

There is little use of pantomime, or gestures, in this ballet. The story primarily told only through movement. Can you identify certain movements used to express specific emotions or actions?

In Act 2, pantomime is used more frequently. What gestures used in *Hamlet* have you seen in other story ballets?



Photo by José Medina

Gina Patterson as Ophelia.

The Choreographer — Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin Artistic Director

The original choreography of *Hamlet* is a blend of classic and contemporary ballet. It clearly tells the story without the typical use of pantomime with dramatic results.



Photo by José Medina

Dancers Gina Patterson and Chris Hannon.

Stephen selected music for each scene from the previously recorded music of **Philip Glass**. He knew this haunting, percussive and richly textured music was perfect for his vision of *Hamlet*.

Stephen was assisted by **Jeffrey A. Main** with the **scenic design**.

Metallic surfaces and translucent fabrics help define the mood of *Hamlet*. The castle, represented by tall, cylinder-shaped towers

gives a sense of richness and beauty. Many parts of the stage design can be used in multiple ways to define different settings.

The Lighting Designer — Tony Tucci

Tony develops the lighting design early in the creative process of developing the ballet. The quality of the music as well as the “visual impression” left by watching rehearsals shapes a lot of his ideas. The lighting style for *Hamlet* is quite contemporary. The use of light with fog gives a loud, pulsing, rock concert feeling. The **light plot**, the specific way the lights are hung, calls for **intelligent lighting**, a complex and expensive lighting technology which allows for movement of lights after being hung. Due to the sophisticated lighting, the lighting designer travels to assist other companies with their *Hamlet* productions.

Scrim:

a semitransparent curtain used as a stage backdrop.

When you light a scrim from the front you cannot see through it. When you light a scrim from the rear you can see behind it. How is a scrim used in *Hamlet*?

What other pieces of the set are hung from the ceiling?

Philip Glass composes music for opera, theater, dance, and film. He most recently received an Oscar nomination for his film score to the movie *The Hours*.

Hamlet is about....

Photo by Scott Harbin



The following dancers have danced the role of Hamlet in Ballet Austin's productions in Austin, Texas:

- Chris Hamon, 2000
- Anthony Casati, 2000, 2004
- Desmond Richardson, 2004

How many different versions of himself does Hamlet see as he fights to keep his sanity?

What does each vision tell us about Hamlet?

Act 1

The ballet begins near the play's ending with Hamlet mortally wounded. As he lies dying, he relives the events that brought him to this place. Hamlet arrives home from school and learns of his father's untimely death. Hamlet's Uncle Claudius becomes king after marrying Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, barely two months after his father's death. Scene one shows the wedding celebration of Claudius and Gertrude.

Ophelia comforts Hamlet during his intense mourning for his father. Seeing this, Polonius, Ophelia's father, forbids her to see Hamlet.

The ghost of Hamlet's father appears to tell Hamlet that his death was not an accident. In his sleep, he was murdered by his own brother, Claudius.

Hamlet agrees to avenge his father's murder. Hamlet fights to keep his sanity as he is confronted by three additional visions of himself.

Obeying her father's orders, Ophelia attempts to return love letters she received from Hamlet. Hamlet questions Ophelia's motives and rejects her.

Hamlet convinces a group of street performers to re-enact the story of his father's death in a performance for Gertrude and Claudius. Upon seeing the play, Claudius becomes disoriented, enraged, and flees the scene. This confirms for Hamlet that his father was murdered by Claudius.

A distraught Claudius begs the heavens for forgiveness. Polonius takes the overwhelmed Gertrude back to her room, but hides when he hears Hamlet enter. Gertrude tries to explain why she married Claudius so quickly after his father's death. She and Hamlet argue and Polonius tries to escape without being seen. Thinking he is Claudius, Hamlet accidentally stabs Polonius. Gertrude is horrified, and promises to stay away from Claudius as Hamlet flees.

After the rejection of Hamlet and the death of her father, Ophelia sinks deeply into despair, grief, and insanity. She drowns while swimming in a river.

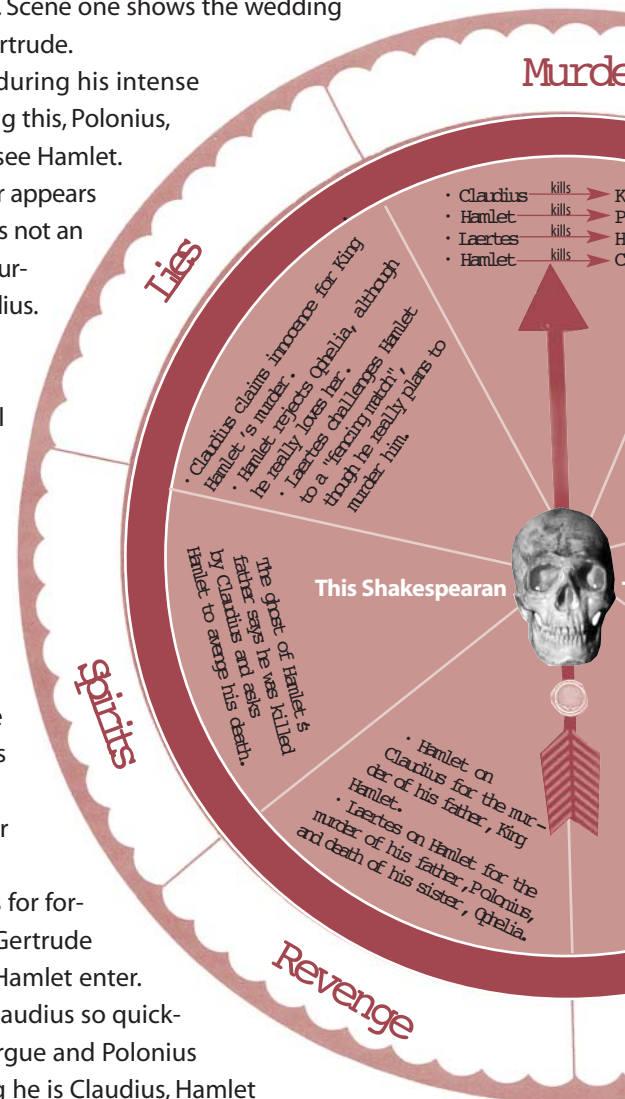




Photo by S.José Medina

Act 2, Ophelia's funeral.

Characters from play not in ballet:

- **Horatio:**
Hamlet's friend
- **Rosencrantz & Guildenstern:**
old school friends of Hamlet and courtiers
- **Osric:** a courtier
- **Fortinbras:**
Prince of Norway, becomes king when Hamlet dies

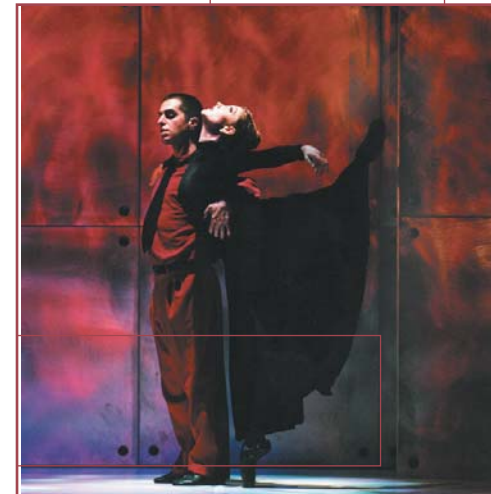


Act 2

All have gathered for the funeral of Ophelia. Upon hearing of her death, Hamlet comes out of hiding. Everyone knows of Polonius' murder and avoids him. Claudius blames Hamlet for Polonius and Ophelia's deaths and convinces Laertes, Ophelia's brother, that he must avenge them.

The shock of seeing Ophelia's lifeless body sends Hamlet into great introspection. In his mind, he replays interactions with those he loves most. Eventually the demons of his mind crush him.

Laertes challenges Hamlet to a fencing match. However, Claudius and Laertes plan to poison Hamlet with a drink. Laertes dips his fencing sword in poison that kills with just one drop. Claudius tries to persuade Hamlet to drink. Yet, Gertrude accidentally drinks from the poisoned chalice intended for Hamlet. Seeing the ruined plan, Laertes cuts Hamlet with his poisoned sword. They then fight and Hamlet stabs Laertes. At this moment, the poison takes effect upon Gertrude. As she dies, she tells Hamlet she was poisoned. At his death, Laertes confesses his and Claudius's deception. Hamlet gathers all of his strength and kills Claudius.



Dancers, Chris Hannon and Margot Brown.

CHARACTERS:

Hamlet – Prince of Denmark
Gertrude – Hamlet's mother, Queen of Denmark
Claudius – Hamlet's uncle, marries Gertrude after King Hamlet's death
Ophelia – In love with Hamlet

Polonius – Ophelia's father
Laertes – Ophelia's brother
Street performers (players)—
 re-enact the story of King Hamlet's death

Understanding Shakespeare

Since Shakespeare's works were not published until some time after they were originally performed, it is hard to say when Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*. Many believe it was around 1601 because of a reference to a company of actors that had just become popular at that time.

Shakespeare often used older tales to influence his writing rather than creating them from scratch.



William Shakespeare, 1564-1616, actor and playwright, wrote 38 plays typically divided into comedies, histories, and tragedies. Unfortunately, no manuscript of a Shakespeare play survives today. What we know about Shakespeare's life comes from public records, his works and writings from other authors of the time.

Shakespeare's plays were first published from 1603-1605 as **quartos**, small books made by folding a sheet of paper twice and making eight pages. In 1623, the **first folio**, a book made by folding a large sheet of paper one time and forming four pages, was compiled by two of Shakespeare's fellow actors and

contained 36 of his plays. About 1,000 copies of the first folio were originally printed and one of the remaining copies can be seen at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at The University of Texas at Austin.

Hamlet, recorded in both quartos and folio formats, remains one of the most popular Shakespearean tragedies spanning generations of readers. The quote from Hamlet's **soliloquy**, lines spoken as if talking to oneself, "To be or not to be, that is the question." continues to be one of the most famous quotes in literature.



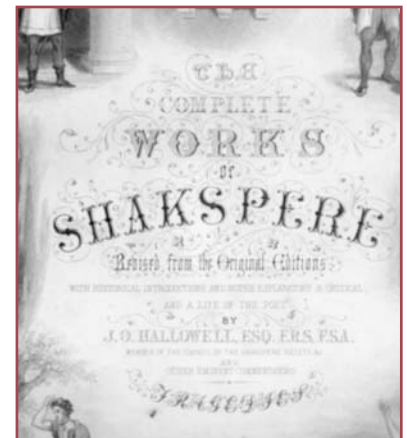
Hamlet talking to the ghost of his father. Engraving from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* Revised from the Original Editions, The London Printing and Publishing Company.

Shakespeare and other actors performed his plays in an outdoor theater called the **Globe Theater**, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England.

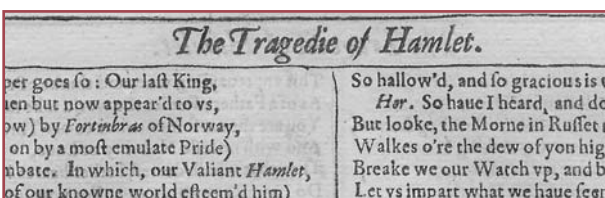
How do you think the original production done outdoors differs from our ballet production in Bass Concert Hall?



Ophelia by the river. Engraving from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* Revised from the Original Editions, The London Printing and Publishing Company.



The inside front cover of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* Revised from the Original Editions, The London Printing and Publishing Company.



Hamlet from the First Folio, The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

To be or not to be

Spotlight: Hamlet's Repetiteur



Michelle Martin working with dancers in rehearsal.



In October 2000, Ballet Austin Artistic Director, Stephen Mills's version of *Hamlet* premiered in Austin.

In October 2001, BalletMet Columbus premiered *Hamlet*.

In April 2002 Dayton and Ohio Ballets premiered *Hamlet*.

In March 2003, Atlanta Ballet premiered *Hamlet*.

A **repetiteur** is the person who teaches other ballet companies a particular ballet.

Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin artistic director, and Michelle Martin, associate artistic director, help many other ballet companies learn and perform Stephen's work.

Stephen and Michelle had just

while Stephen returned to Ballet Austin. The Atlanta **ballet mistress or master**, female or male responsible for rehearsals, took notes and videotaped the instruction process to continue rehearsals after the Ballet Austin staff returned home.

Before traveling to Atlanta, Michelle spent a great deal of time working with Stephen and studying videos of the performance. She explains, "Stephen's choreography is so specific to his style. Part of my role is to relay to the company that style along with the steps."

Sometimes Ballet Austin dancers who have danced more complicated roles will assist with the teaching. Ballet Austin's technical director,



two weeks to teach *Hamlet* to the Atlanta Ballet. The first week, Stephen traveled to Atlanta to **cast**, or select the dancers for each roll, and began teaching the the **choreography**, the specific steps of the ballet. The second week Michelle arrived in Atlanta to rehearse *Hamlet* with the dancers

lighting director and other production staff may also help with the **load-in**, or unloading of sets and props into the theater. "Depending on our schedules, we try to be there for opening night. It is always great to see our ballet performed by other companies," says Michelle.

"Stephen's choreography is so specific to his style. Part of my role is to relay to the company that style along with the steps!"

that is the question."

The Audience: the Final Collaborator

Go online..

For more information about Shakespeare

www.bardweb.net

For more information about *Hamlet*

www.shea.mit.edu/ramparts

For more information about Philip Glass

www.philipglass.com

Watch...

Hamlet:

- 1948 film directed by Laurence Olivier, starring Laurence Olivier as Hamlet and Eileen Herlie as Gertrude, 155 minutes.
- 1990 film directed by Franco Zeffirelli, starring Mel Gibson as Hamlet and Glenn Close as Gertrude, 130 minutes.

Read...

Hamlet, by William Shakespeare

Shakespeare for Everyone, Hamlet, by

Jennifer Mulherin, A.S. Publishing, 2001.

Listen to..

Philip Glass: *Violin Concerto*, 1993.

Philip Glass: *Dance Pieces, In The Upper Room*, 1987.

Philip Glass, music from the film scores:

Anima Mundi, 1992.

Mishima, 1984.



For more information about Ballet Austin's Dance Education Center visit www.balletaustin.org or call 512-476-9051.

Ballet Austin is debuting another Austin first, with the unveiling of plans for the community's sole downtown venue for a major performing arts company. With the October 2002 purchase of a building at 501 West Third Street, the Dance Education Center will allow Ballet Austin to increase its cultural, social and educational impact on Austin. The new Dance Education Center plans to eventually house seven studios, administrative offices, a box office, gift shop and the Ballet Austin Academy.

You, the audience, are the final collaborator. The dancers appreciate your applause and attention. Prepare for the unexpected as you experience Ballet Austin's

Hamlet.

2004 Season

Hamlet

March 12-14, 2004

Cinderella

May 14-16, 2004



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 Executive Director, Cookie Ruiz, C.F.R.E.
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