



Ballet Austin Announces
Three Choreographer Finalists and Jurors for
3rd Biennial *New American Talent/Dance*

WHO: Ballet Austin
WHAT: Finalists Announced, Jurors Revealed the 3rd Biennial
New American Talent/Dance
WHEN: March 25 – April 4, 2010
WHERE: Austin Ventures Studio Theater at the Butler Dance Education Center
501 West Third Street, Austin, Texas 78701

AUSTIN, TX – Ballet Austin today announces the finalists for the 3rd Biennial *New American Talent/Dance* choreographic project. The latest installment in this national choreographic contest brings the country's most compelling American dance-makers together to showcase their latest world premieres in a competitive arena. When it began in 2006, the contest foraged a then unheard of model in this country, investing in American choreographers with significant cash prizes as decided by a nationally renowned jury and live voting audiences. Still today, Ballet Austin maintains its commitment to cultivating new work.

FINALISTS:

KT Nelson, San Francisco, CA
Nelly van Bommel, New York City, NY
Dominic Walsh, Houston, TX

New American Talent/Dance was and remains a groundbreaking model for American choreographic competition. The process culminates in the on-stage competitive display of artistry between three of the most promising, choreographers in the nation—as chosen by three internationally renowned judges as well as voting by the attending audiences after each performance. While iterations of this model exist in Europe, American competitions did not previously offer substantive cash prizes for the choreographers to develop their career. Ballet Austin saw both an opportunity—and a responsibility—to act.

Months ago, Ballet Austin initiated the project by calling out to the national dance community for choreographer contestants. The jurors then culled the national pool of entrants to three choreographers on the cusp of their own creative breakthrough.

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Finalists will complete a 2-week choreographic residency with Ballet Austin company dancers and then return to Austin to premiere their work on stage for Ballet Austin at the AustinVentures StudioTheater in Austin, Texas in March 2010. Each of the three jurors will have a \$5,000 discretionary fund to be allocated to the winners following the premiere. Additional prize money will be awarded to the choreographer garnering the most audience votes each night. Today, Ballet Austin also releases the names of the panel of jurors, who will judge and award the prizes for the production.

JURORS:

Meg Kowalski Booth – Director/Dance Programming, Kennedy Center

Julie Nakagawa – Artistic Director/Co-founder, DanceWorks Chicago

Paul Vasterling – Artistic Director, Nashville Ballet

FINALIST BIOS

KT Nelson, San Francisco, CA

Ms. Nelson joined San Francisco's ODC Dance 1976 while attending Oberlin College and is now the Co-Artistic Director. She danced with the company from 1976 to 1997. Since 1976, Nelson has choreographed more than 54 works as well as composing and commissioning numerous scores. She has been awarded the Isadora Duncan award (San Francisco's highest dance honor) three times: in 1987 for Outstanding Performance, in 1996 for Outstanding Choreography, and in 2001 for Sustained Achievement. She has received 10 Isadora Duncan nominations in all categories. Nelson's collaborators have included Bobby McFerrin, Geoff Hoyle, Kim Turos, Gina Leishman, Rinde Eckert, Marcelo Zarvos, Zap Mama and Linda Bouchard. She has been a guest choreographer for Mikko Nissinen when she danced with San Francisco Ballet, Diablo Ballet, Ballet Met and Maximum Dance. In 2002, Nelson received the California Dance Educators Association's Artist Award for outstanding artistry, creativity, outreach, and dedication to the field of dance.

Nelly van Bommel, New York City, NY

Since the inception of her company 'nøa dance' in 2004, Ms. van Bommel has presented four acclaimed New York City seasons. Her work has been featured in France, Taiwan and in the US in major festivals and venues including The Alvin Ailey Citigroup Theater, Dance Theatre Workshop, Symphony Space, P.S. 122, Jacob's Pillow, Pabst Theatre, and Joyce SoHo. Born in France to Dutch parents, Ms. van Bommel received her training at the *Académie de Danse Claudie Plaçais-Rocher* and the *Centre National de la Danse* in Paris. In addition to her performing career, Ms. van Bommel also attended *Université de Paris VIII -Sorbonne* (France) and graduated with an MA in Comparative Literature. In 2002, Ms. van Bommel moved to NYC thanks to a fellowship from the Conseil

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Régional d'Ile de France. Ms. van Bommel is a co-founder of the Reverb Dance Festival, and she has received recent commissions from Milwaukee Ballet, CorbinDances, Springboard Danse-Montréal, Neuberger Museum of Art, and Purchase College Conservatory of Dance. John Rockwell of *The New York Times* wrote, "Nelly van Bommel has talent, a sense of passion and intensity...and a quirky sense of humor [...] She seems to be working her way smartly up the American dance ladder."

Dominic Walsh, Houston, TX

Mr. Walsh began dancing in Elgin, Illinois with Lisa Boehm and joined Houston Ballet in 1989 and danced there until 2004. In 1998, he created *Flames of Eros*, when Mr. Stevenson invited him to choreograph on Houston Ballet. This work won the Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography. He continues to set and create works for other companies most recently including, Ballet Florida, ABT Studio Company, Asami Maki Ballet Tokyo, New National Theatre, Tokyo, and Sarasota Ballet of Florida. In 2002, he formed Dominic Walsh Dance Theater, a Houston-based contemporary ballet company. In May 2006, Mr. Walsh created *Romeo & Juliet*, his first full-length, multi-sensory production that received praise from *Dance Magazine*. In 2007, he premiered a new full-length ballet, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, for New National Theatre, Tokyo and a full-length *Sleeping Beauty*. In July 2008, he won a Princess Grace Award for Choreography for *Mozart*. 2009-10 marks his first season as "Resident Choreographer" of Sarasota Ballet of Florida.

ABOUT BALLET AUSTIN

Stephen Mills, Artistic Director

Mr. Mills has created more than 40 works for companies in the United States and abroad. His ballets are in the repertoires of such companies as The Atlanta Ballet, Washington Ballet, Cuballet in Havana, Cuba, BalletMet Columbus, The DaytonBallet, The Sarasota Ballet of Florida, Ballet Pacifica, Dallas Black Dance Theater, The Louisville Ballet, The Nashville Ballet, Fort Worth/Dallas Ballet and Kaleidoscope. He has worked in collaboration with such luminaries as the eight-time Grammy Award-winning band, Asleep at the Wheel, and Shawn Colvin. In addition to his work as a choreographer, Mr. Mills is committed as a master teacher to developing dancers. He has been a teacher at many pre-professional academies including Goucher College; Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing Arts in Dallas; The Virginia School of the Arts; The New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts; Stephens College and Point Park College in Pittsburgh. Mr. Mills also serves on the Board of Trustees of the national dance service organization, Dance USA.

Ballet Austin

As distinctive and dynamic as the city it calls home, Ballet Austin welcomes audiences

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near and far to participate in its "classically innovative" vision for the democratization of dance. With a rich history spanning five decades, acclaimed productions, and one of the nation's largest classical ballet academies, the organization is poised for an even greater future. From their new home at the Butler Dance Education Center and Community School in downtown Austin, Ballet Austin and artistic director Stephen Mills actively engage the community, dancers, and audiences alike. *The New York Times* proclaims Ballet Austin "a company with big ambitions" originating work that is "absorbing."

NEW CONTACT INFORMATION

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