



Three New York-Based Choreographers Are Texas-Bound for Ballet Austin's 4th Biennial *New American Talent/Dance*

WHO: Ballet Austin
WHAT: Finalists and Jurors Selected for 4th Biennial *New American Talent/Dance*
WHEN: February 17-19, 2012
WHERE: Dell Hall at The Long Center for the Performing Arts
TICKETS: \$15 - \$74 at www.balletaustin.org, 512.476.2163
Ballet Austin Box Office at 501 W. 3rd Street

AUSTIN, TX – December 5, 2011 – Ballet Austin announces the finalists and jurors for the 4th Biennial *New American Talent/Dance* competition on February 17-19 in Austin, Texas. The latest installment in this national choreographic competition brings the country's most compelling young American dancemakers together to showcase their latest world premieres in a competitive arena.

When it began in 2006, Ballet Austin's *New American Talent/Dance* forged a then unheard of model in this country: investing in American choreographers by giving them significant studio time with world-class dancers and artistic staff, along with major cash prizes as decided upon by a nationally renowned jury and a live voting audience.

"*New American Talent/Dance* is born out of Ballet Austin's commitment to foster new talent, among both dancers and dancemakers," says Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin's Artistic Director and creator of the event. "It serves as a platform for choreographers to develop their craft in an environment that gives them access to some of the best production facilities, staff and dancers in the industry."

Finalists for Ballet Austin's 4th Biennial *New American Talent/Dance* are:

- **Gregory Dolbashian**, Founder of The DASH Ensemble
- **Loni Landon**, Founder of Loni Landon-projects
- **Bradley Shelver**, Artistic Director of Bradley Shelver Contemporary Dance Theater

In a surprising, first-time twist, all three choreographers are based in New York City, with Dolbashian and Landon serving as co-founders of “The Playground”, an open-door, critically acclaimed choreographic program.

Winners and previous finalists of *New American Talent/Dance* include Thaddeus Davis, Thang Dao (Thang Dao Dance Company), Victor Kabaniaev, Sidra Bell (Sidra Bell Dance New York), Dominic Walsh (Dominic Walsh Dance Theater), Nelly van Bommel (NØA DANCE), KT Nelson (ODC Dance), and Amy Seiwert (Resident Choreographer, Smuin Ballet).

Selected as jurors for 2012’s competition are:

- **Anik Bissonnette**, Artistic Director of the Festival des Arts de Saint-Sauveur and President of the Regroupement Québécois de la Danse (RQD)
- **Molly Lynch**, Assistant Professor of Dance in the Claire Trevor School of the Arts at the University of California, Irvine; Founder and Artistic Director of the National Choreographers Initiative; and former Artistic Director for Ballet Pacifica (1988–2003)
- **Zachary Whittenburg**, former dancer and current writer including Dance editor of *Time Out: Chicago*

About the Selection Process

In early 2011, Ballet Austin initiated the process by calling out to the national dance community for choreographer contestants. Ballet Austin Artistic Director Stephen Mills and staff then culled the national pool of entrants to the three finalists.

The chosen finalists are currently in the process of completing a 40-hour choreographic residency with Ballet Austin Company dancers. They will return to Austin in February 2012 to debut their world premiere work at The Long Center for the Performing Arts. There, the finalists’ original works compete for over \$24,000 in cash prizes to be awarded by the industry renowned jury and an audience who will be voting by text-message. In the end, overall a Jurors’ Award winner and runner up prizes are handed out, in addition to daily Audience Award prizes.

About Stephen Mills, Artistic Director

Known for his innovative and collaborative choreographic projects, Stephen Mills has works in the repertoires of companies across the US and around the world. From his inaugural season as Artistic Director in 2000, Mills attracted attention from around the United States with his world-premiere production of *Hamlet*, hailed by *Dance Magazine* as “...sleek and sophisticated.” *The Washington Post* recognized Ballet Austin as “one of the nation’s best-kept secrets” in 2004 after Ballet Austin performed Mills’ world premiere of *The Taming of the Shrew*, commissioned by and performed at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The Company was first invited to perform at Kennedy Center in January of 2002 with the Mills production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and at The Joyce Theater (NYC) in 2004. In 2005 after two years of extensive research, Mills led 13 organizations through a community-wide human

rights collaboration that culminated in the world premiere work *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project*, after which the Austin Anti-Defamation League awarded Mills its 2006 Humanitarian Award.

In 1998 Mills was the choreographer chosen to represent the U.S. through his work, *Ashes*, at the *Rencontres Chorégraphiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis* in Paris. Most recently, Mr. Mills was awarded the Steinberg Award, the top honor at the *Festival des Arts de Saint-Sauveur* International Choreographic Competition for *One/The Body's Grace*.

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 Hong Kong Ballet, American Ballet Theatre Studio Company, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, The Atlanta Ballet, The Milwaukee Ballet, Washington Ballet, Cuballet in Havana, Cuba, BalletMet Columbus, The Dayton Ballet, The Sarasota Ballet of Florida, Ballet Pacifica, Dallas Black Dance Theater, The Louisville Ballet, The Nashville Ballet, Fort Worth/ Dallas Ballet, The Sacramento Ballet, and Dance Kaleidoscope. He has worked in collaboration with such luminaries as the eight-time Grammy Award-winning band Asleep at the Wheel, Shawn Colvin, and internationally renowned flamenco artist José Greco II.

About Ballet Austin

As distinctive and dynamic as the city it calls home, Ballet Austin welcomes audiences near and far to participate in its “classically innovative” vision for the democratization of dance. With a rich history spanning five decades, acclaimed productions, a commitment to creating access to programs and one of the nation's largest classical ballet academies, the organization is poised for an even greater future. From their home at the Butler Dance Education Center 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.”

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Ballet Austin
501 West Third Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Box Office:	512.476.2163
Academy:	512.476.9150
Butler Community School:	512.476.9150
General info:	512.476.9151

PRESS CONTACT: LuAnn Glowacz luann.glowacz@balletaustin.org; 512.476.9151, ext. 101
IMAGES: Contact LuAnn for access to a downloadable image library
WEB: <http://www.balletaustin.org/atb/natd.php>

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