

BALLET *Austin*

Largest Season Opener in Ballet Austin History

Nearly 7,000 patrons pack The Long Center for *Carmina Burana & Kai*

WHO: Ballet Austin
WHAT: Record-Breaking Season Opener: *Carmina Burana* and *Kai*
WHEN: September 24 - 26
WHERE: The Long Center for the Performing Arts, Michael & Susan Dell Hall

AUSTIN, Texas—For its 2010/11 season opener of *Carmina Burana* at The Long Center this past weekend, Ballet Austin broke a historical attendance record. 6,920 attendees enjoyed three sold-out performances at the Dell Hall, which is more than any previous season opening production. Notably, that was 1,700 more people than attended the world premiere of *Carmina Burana* in 2005 (at the time a record in itself).

Record crowds packed The Long Center for two of Ballet Austin's most inspiring and powerful dances—*Carmina Burana* and *Kai*—showcasing the magnificent choreography of Stephen Mills to celebrate his 10th year as artistic director. Mills was chosen as the company's artistic leader in 2000 and has led Ballet Austin to critical and popular acclaim across central Texas and nationally.

In a rare dance/choral/symphonic performance, audiences had an opportunity to experience the iconic grandeur of music performed live by more than 150 choral singers (standing behind the dancers on stage) from the Grammy®-nominated choir *Conspirare* as led by Craig Hella Johnson and the Austin Symphony Orchestra as led by conductor Peter Bay. Mills' choreographic interpretation of this beloved opus is a visually and aurally textured dance work set to the haunting rhythms of Carl Orff's 1936 masterpiece.

Created by Mills in 2006 for the company's 50th anniversary season, *Kai* is set to the rhythmically exotic music of pioneering composer John Cage. Inspired by the undulating waters of the South Pacific and accompanied by Cage's cutting edge music, *Kai* follows a mysterious couple and a tribe of people during a celebration.

Mills' First 10 Years

In his first decade as artistic director, Mills has created 10 full evening productions: *Light/The Holocaust & Humanity Project*, *Cult of Color: Call to Color*, *Truth and Beauty/The Bach Project*, *Touch*, *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Cinderella*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew* (commissioned by The Kennedy Center), and *The Nutcracker*. In that same time, he has created 15 "mixed rep" dance works and has directed 12 company premieres of acquisitions by internationally noted choreographers including George Balanchine and Twyla Tharp. Mills has had 12 of his own works licensed to national and international companies, launched the *New American Talent/Dance* biennial national choreographic competition, and has been profiled and reviewed in publications such as *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Dance Magazine*, *Pointe Magazine* and *Dance International*.

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STEPHEN MILLS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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. The 2010/11 Season marks Mr. Mills' 10th year as artistic director.

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, 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."

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This project is funded in part by the City of Austin through the Cultural Arts Division and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts.

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