

BALLET *Austin*

Ballet Austin Stages *The Studio Theater Project*

NEA Grant Funded Showcase Features Work from Choreographers Nicolo Fonte and Stephen Mills to the Music of James Brown, Aretha Franklin, BB King, Nina Simone and JS Bach

- WHO:** Ballet Austin
- WHAT:** Ballet Austin receives National Endowment of the Arts Grant for its forthcoming *The Studio Theater Project*
12 contemporary choreography and dance performances
- WHEN:** Thursday, March 26 – Sunday, April 5, 2009
- WHERE:** Austin Ventures Studio Theater, 501 W 3rd St.
- TICKETS:** \$25 & \$30 at balletaustin.org
or at Ballet Austin's Butler Dance Education Center at 501 W. Third Street, 10 am – 6 pm weekdays

AUSTIN, TEXAS—Opening Thursday, March 26 Ballet Austin's *The Studio Theater Project* launches with world-renowned choreographer Nicolo Fonte's *Left Unsaid*, featuring music by J.S. Bach. Fonte, known for traveling the world staging his unique style of modern ballet, brings his work to Austin for the first time, a rare honor for this community. Complementing Fonte, Ballet Austin's own critically acclaimed choreographer Stephen Mills will follow suit with his world premiere of *Songs of Innuendo*, set to the soulful music of James Brown, Aretha Franklin, B.B. King and Nina Simone.

Offering the community a new ballet experience, *The Studio Theater Project* invites audiences to casually and affordably (tickets are \$25 and \$30) experience world-class choreography and contemporary dance in an intimate, more casual downtown setting. Each performance of the two week run will take place in the AustinVentures StudioTheater, Ballet Austin's 275-seat performance space built into their 34,000 sq ft, downtown facility—the Butler Dance Education Center. The venue recently came to international attention in 2008 with the premiere of *Cult of Color: Call to Color* where both the company and the work were mentioned in several national and international publications.

For this project Ballet Austin has received a \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to support its forthcoming production, *The Studio Theater Project*. The production focuses on contemporary works from two of today's hottest choreographers.

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One of only a dozen Austin arts organizations to receive NEA funding this year, Ballet Austin qualified for the grant primarily based on its artistic reputation. The grant helped to make *The Studio Theater Project* possible by supporting artistic and production expenses, including Nicolo Fonte's choreographer fees and costumes.

Nicolo Fonte, Choreographer

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Nicolo Fonte has been dancing since the age of 14. He studied at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York as well as at the San Francisco Ballet and New York City Ballet Schools while completing a Bachelor Degree of Fine Arts at SUNY Purchase. Upon graduation he danced with Peridance in NYC and later joined Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal, dancing in the works of Balanchine, Tudor, Kudelka and Spaniard Nacho Duato. In 2000 Fonte retired from performing to devote himself full-time to his choreographic career. Since that time he has created or staged his ballets for The Dutch National Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Royal Ballet of Flanders, Stuttgart Ballet, The Australian Ballet, The Göteborg Ballet, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre, The Washington Ballet, Ballett Mainz, Ballett Nürnberg, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, TANZ Ensemble Cathy Sharp, North Carolina Dance Theatre, Tulsa Ballet, Ballet British Columbia and Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal. Fonte's "Re: Tchaikovsky" appeared on the "Best of 2005" lists of both Ballet International and Dance Europe. The New York Times called Fonte "a choreographer worth knowing."

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 Dayton Ballet, 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.

About Ballet Austin

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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."

CONTACT INFORMATION

501 West Third Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Box Office: (512)476.2163
Academy: (512)476.9151
General info: (512)476.9151
Fax: (512)476.3973

IMAGES: <http://media.wyattbrand.com> for print-ready, password-free images

MEDIA: For interviews, details contact David Wyatt at david@wyattbrand.com and
(512) 450.4395

WEB: <http://www.balletaustin.org>

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