

NEWS MEMO

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

TEXAS BALLET THEATER OPENS 4TH SEASON OF CANNED MUSIC

- WHO:** The Dallas-Fort Worth Professional Musicians Association, affiliated Local 72-147 of the American Federation of Musicians, which represents more than 1700 professional musicians across North Texas and Southern Oklahoma, including musicians of the Dallas and Fort Worth Symphony Orchestras and The Dallas Opera Orchestra.
- WHAT:** Professional musicians will continue their protests of the canned music policies of Bass Hall's resident ballet company – Texas Ballet Theater.
- WHY:** Despite assurances that the use of taped music starting in 2008 was temporary and the company would bring back its orchestra, the Texas Ballet Theater opens its 4th consecutive season tonight with an empty pit. Having saved over \$1.5 million in the last three years from cutting out live music and set to save another \$1.5million in the 2011-12 season from moving most of its Dallas productions out of the Winspear Opera House while continuing to use tape, the TBT seems committed to a business model of ballet without live music, according to the area's professional musicians. "It's very frustrating," said Ken Krause, President of the Dallas-Fort Worth Professional Musicians Association. "Our musicians in both Dallas and Fort Worth who played for the ballet have lost a major portion of their livelihoods because the Texas Ballet Theater mismanaged its money." "The Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra permanently cut 6 weeks from its schedule due to the ballet's use of canned music. The Dallas Opera Orchestra has lost its work for the entire month of December at the Winspear while the ballet performs The Nutcracker with tape as well as several other productions during the season. Doesn't the company realize it is hurting itself with this artistic fraud? By weakening the 'goose that lays the golden egg' -- the actual performances – fewer people want to attend the ballet, fewer tickets are sold, and less money is raised, accelerating a downward spiral. We feel for the professional dancers who have taken multiple pay cuts over the past several years, and our musicians have suffered as well. Most important, the TBT is killing itself by sacrificing the quality of its productions and not offering a complete product." On its website the TBT touts its "artistic excellence" and calls itself a "world class professional ballet company," a label that raises eyebrows and ire from the musicians as well as many patrons. "How can a ballet company be either truly professional or 'world-class' without a real orchestra?" asks Stewart Williams, the musicians association's Secretary-Treasurer and an oboist who has performed for the ballet many times in the past as a member of The Dallas Opera Orchestra. "And how can there be true artistic excellence? With canned music the quality, sound, fluidity and in-the-moment creation of art is lost. The dancers are forced to perform exact repetitions of movements every night with no artistic spontaneity or collaboration with the musicians." Krause notes that none of the advertisement for the TBT's 2011-2012 productions tell the truth about using canned music. "There is no mention that the season won't have an orchestra and every year this surprises audience members who are expecting -- and wanting -- the full show. The TBT has saved millions of dollars over the past three years while the dancers and musicians have struggled to make ends meet. I'd like to know where all that money is going. It's time to bring back the orchestra and give the audience a real world-class ballet. They deserve it." He continued, "The TBT told us three years ago that they just needed one year without an orchestra to get back on their feet. Here we are three years later and still no orchestra." The Texas Ballet Theater's Managing Director Margo McCann said in April the company was in good shape and ended the 2010-11 season in the black.