



TimeOut



Ballet Austin's principal dancer is ending his career with a bang—and a bow

Written by [Andrew Friedenthal](#) Tuesday December 5 2017



ADVERTISING

When principal dancer Paul Michael Bloodgood dances in his 25th consecutive *Nutcracker* in [Ballet Austin's](#) annual production this winter, he'll be doing so for the final time. After a decade and a half with the company, Bloodgood is retiring this year to begin a new phase in his career and at Ballet Austin.

"Thirty years of my life have been dancing," says Bloodgood, who worked at Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle and Ballet Pacifica in Irvine, California, before joining Ballet Austin in 2001. "It's been a part of my identity since I can remember."

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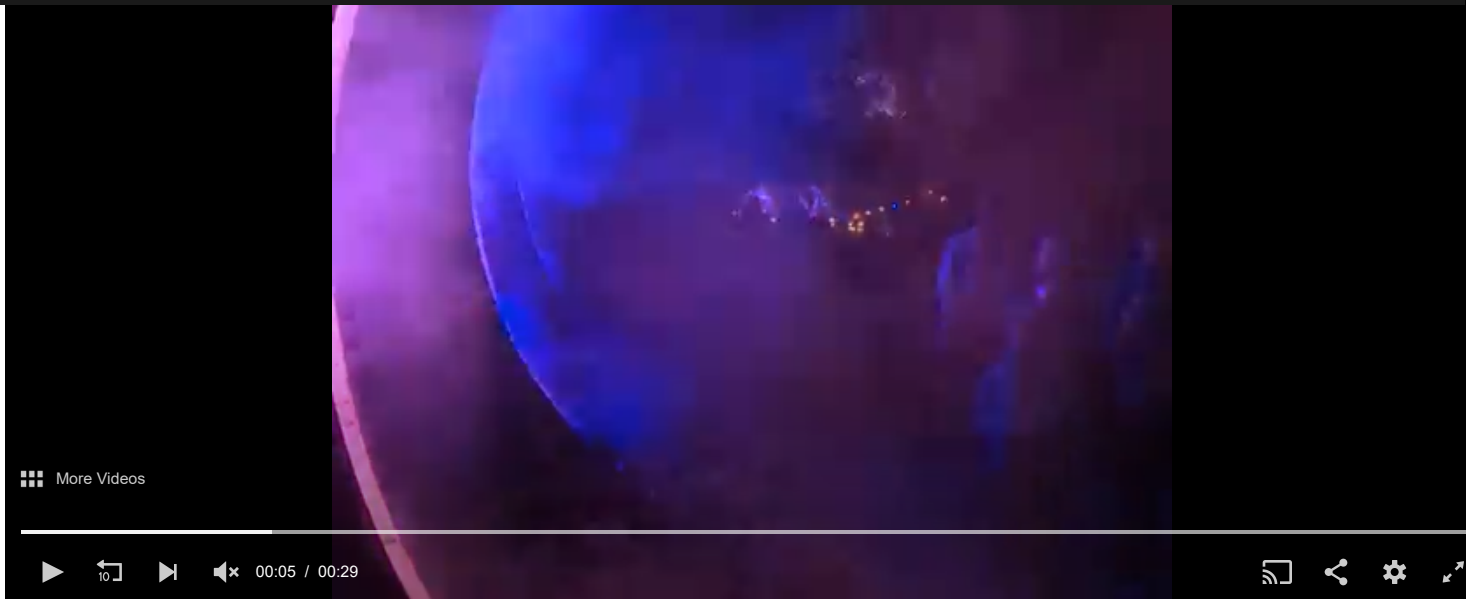
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Bloodgood's career at the company has featured constant technical refining and a slow and steady growth into "a really beautiful artist," says Ballet Austin artistic director and *Nutcracker* choreographer Stephen Mills. "He has been one of those people who just took every opportunity provided to him and treated as a chance to learn."

The seasoned dancer intends to use all of that experience as he segues into a life beyond ballet, beginning with his directorial debut in the documentary film *Trenches of Rock*, which follows the 30-year career of Christian heavy-metal band Bloodgood (founded by the dancer's father, Michael Bloodgood). The film has already gained festival placements and plaudits, including awards for Best Documentary Feature from the SND Variety Film Festival in Los Angeles, the Mindfield Film Festival in Albuquerque and the Romford Film Festival in England.

Bloodgood's impending transition is cause for plenty of uncertainty. "Ultimately, I'm thinking a lot about the experiences with the people who I've danced with over the years. The future remains to be seen. It's sort of an exciting but absolutely scary time." Regardless of his foray into film, however, Bloodgood knows where his heart lies. "I'm going to be doing something in a creative field. For better or worse, money or no money, that's where I'm headed."

When it comes to Ballet Austin's future, Mills is excited to introduce Austinites to 2018 world premieres by New York choreographer Pam Tanowitz, resident choreographer at the New York City Ballet Justin Peck and Mills. As for the Christmas production, the show must go on. "The thing that refreshes *The Nutcracker* is that people change," says Mills. "Every time an audience comes back and there's somebody different in the role, it's like it's a new ballet."

Ballet Austin's 55th annual production of The Nutcracker runs Dec 8–23 at the [Long Center](#). Tickets, \$12–\$96, can be found [here](#).

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