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# News Release

FOLK DANCE ENSEMBLE

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Brigham Young University

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**Artistic Director**

Contact: Performing Arts Management  
(801) 422-3576  
[perform@byu.edu](mailto:perform@byu.edu)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Edwin G. Austin Jr. and a production team of talented dance specialists, musicians, and technicians head the International Folk Dance Ensemble (IFDE) from Brigham Young University. This year they debut their new show *The Gathering*, a stunning showcase of cultural dances throughout the world complete with costumes, lights, and thrills. *The Gathering* is a breath-taking evening of pure entertainment at (PLACE) on (DATE) at (TIME).

Directing a large cast of dancers, musicians, technicians, and additional support crew is a tough job as it is. Then add the largest and most diverse world dance program in the United States with some of the most talented dancers from several countries, and you have a herculean task. BYU tapped Ed Austin to take the reins, and his work is beyond compare.

“Working with these talented young performers provides a unique kind of challenge and rhythm to my life,” Austin said of his career. Austin transfers that rhythm into the shows he directs, giving audiences something fresh, exciting, and exotic with every show. Courtney Austrian of the US State Department in the Ukraine said of her experience, “The dancers and the musicians were absolutely magnificent. Everyone in my office who was lucky enough to attend the performance has been talking today about the energy, enthusiasm, and sheer talent that was on stage last night. The overwhelming feeling here is that it’s extremely unfortunate that there could only be one performance!”

Austin is supported by a production team of seasoned professionals: Delynne Peay and Jeanette Geslison, world dance specialists and choreographers; Benjamin Sanders, technical director; Mark Geslison, director of the Mountain Strings folk music ensemble; and Diane Allen, wardrobe supervisor and costume designer. In addition, specialists from around the world bring new choreography each year to enrich the group’s diverse repertoire.

*Performing Arts*  
Management

PO Box 28500 • Provo, UT 84602-8500 • 801-422-3576 • Toll-Free: 800-432-3576 • Fax: 801-422-0546  
E-mail: [perform@byu.edu](mailto:perform@byu.edu) • Internet: <http://pam.byu.edu>

“An extraordinary amount of time, talent, and resources go into a production of this size,” Austin said.

“Hundreds of hours are used [in] planning, researching, and dance training to create a repertoire portraying so many international cultures.”

The group’s repertoire also includes many of Austin’s own choreographic works. His extensive experience began more than 30 years ago when a passion for international dance and music led him to study with a variety of international artists. He began dancing with IFDE as a performer in 1976 and later returned to BYU as a member of the dance faculty in 1984. After more than two decades as the troupe’s artistic director, he has become the driving force for the ensemble traveling the globe, performing, staging and adjudicating ethnic dance works, and instructing in dance-related folk arts. Austin has also served as president of the National Folk Organization of the United States (NFO).

The International Folk Dance Ensemble originates in the Department of Dance in the College of Fine Arts and Communications Performance at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. BYU is one of the nation’s largest private universities with an enrollment of more than 30,000 students from throughout the United States and 110 foreign countries.

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