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## Ballet pointes to indie-pop

For its 25th anniversary,  
San Francisco's Smuin  
Ballet breaks with tradition



“Ballet is expanding,” says Smuin Contemporary Ballet choreographer Nicole Haskins. “It doesn’t always have to be tutus and tiaras.” Her upcoming indie-pop-infused ballet, *Merely Players*, kicks off the company’s out-there 25th anniversary program (debuting Sept. 21), which will also feature an Etta James-inspired ballet and an anti-Nutcracker extravaganza. *Merely Players* is set to tunes from bands like Vampire Weekend and Fleet Foxes. “My challenge was to use music that people don’t necessarily think of as ballet.” She was also inspired by friendship. An ethereal routine featuring Bon Iver’s “Flume” is punctuated with breaks where the dancers stop on stage to watch each other perform. “I want everyone to feel like they are an integral part of the group and that nobody is the star—or worth more than the others.”

[smuinballet.org](http://smuinballet.org)

Smuin's previous productions included a dance inspired by YouTube videos



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