

NORTHWEST FLORIDA



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For Immediate Release

NORTHWEST FLORIDA BALLET PRESENTS

THE NUTCRACKER

A TIMELESS HOLIDAY FAVORITE FEATURING STARS OF THE BOSTON BALLET

Fort Walton Beach, FL – October 26, 2011 – This November the Northwest Florida Ballet (NFB) will once again grace the stage with visions of dancing sugar plums, graceful snow flurries, and magical dolls come to life in its 31st annual presentation of ***The Nutcracker***.

Two performances will be held at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center on November 19th at 7:30 pm and November 20th at 2:30 pm. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$12.50 for children 12 and under. Tickets are available for purchase online at www.nfballet.org or by calling 850-664-7787.

The Nutcracker has been an annual favorite for thousands of families all over the world. Although it was first performed to Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's captivating score in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1892, the first American production of the ballet wasn't introduced until 1944 when Willem Christensen staged it for the San Francisco Ballet. Ten years later George Balanchine immortalized ***The Nutcracker*** with his famous production at the New York City Ballet which featured an immense Christmas tree magically rising from the stage during the first act. Since that time ***The Nutcracker*** has become the most widely attended ballet in America.

So why do families keep coming back to see ***The Nutcracker*** year after year? "There is really nothing like it to give you the holiday spirit and to make unique memories that will last forever," explains Todd Allen, Northwest Florida Ballet's Artistic Director/CEO and choreographer. "Every year we see generations of families that come to share the experience with each other. It's a celebration of childhood fantasy and the power of human imagination and that is something everyone can relate to."

Allen adds, "We are especially delighted this year because, in addition to our talented cast of company dancers and guest artists, we will be joined by Boston Ballet principal dancers Kathleen Breen Combes and Yury Yanowsky who will be performing as the Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier."

Combes formerly trained with the Northwest Florida Ballet. In addition to achieving principal dancer status with the Boston Ballet, she was awarded the Lefkowitz Award for Special Achievement at the New York International Ballet Competition at Lincoln Center in 2003 and has been featured on the cover of Dance Magazine.

Mr. Yanowsky was born in Lyon, France and grew up in Madrid and Las Palmas, Spain. In 1992 he won first prize at the Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland and the Silver Medal at Varna International Ballet Competition, and in 1994 he won the Silver Medal in the Senior Division at the International Ballet Competition in Jackson, Mississippi.

The production has a cast of over 100 dancers which includes many local children, NFB Company members and an impressive array of international guest artists.

The role of Clara will be performed by Brooklyn Burbidge and Stuart Edwards will play the part of the high-spirited Fritz. Sean Hilton, J Ryan Carroll and David Goud will round out the cast of international guest artists with their portrayals of the Harlequin Doll, Nutcracker Prince, Snow King, and the Spanish, Russian and Arabian dancers.

Also featured in this year's production is NFB principal dancer Sarah Comstock Goud as the Snow Queen and Dew Drop Fairy. NFB demi-soloist Christa Henry will perform the role of the Columbine Doll and Arabian dancer will be performed by Company member Darby Hooton.

The Nutcracker performances are sponsored by Boeing and Barlotta Financial Group of Wells Fargo Advisors. In addition to its two public performances, NFB will also present two special performances for area school children and special needs groups on November 17 & 18 at 10:00 am as part of its arts and education outreach initiatives. Please call NFB at 664-7787 for further information.

The Northwest Florida Ballet celebrates its 42nd year as a regionally recognized semi-professional ballet company and school. In addition, NFB has developed the nationally acclaimed NFB Académie – an integrated academic and dance education program serving 140 students from the third to eighth grade. The NFB is led by Artistic Director and CEO Todd Eric Allen, an area native. The NFB is funded in part by the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs.

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Photo credit: Bob Barton

Additional photos available upon request.