

For Immediate Release

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The Northwest Florida Ballet Opens 40th Anniversary Season with The Nutcracker

November 11, 2009 – Fort Walton Beach, Fla. – The Northwest Florida Ballet’s (NFB) 40th Anniversary Season will open with its annual production of “The Nutcracker” Saturday, Nov. 21 and Sunday, Nov. 22.

It’s never too early to think about Christmas, and while the festive traditions may have survived, Christmas in our world today may also have lost a little bit of its luster. If you are looking for a spark of magic this holiday season, consider being a part of this magical event. There’s no better time to start!

Set to Tchaikovsky’s whimsical music and based on a traditional tale adapted by the French writer, Alexandre Dumas, “The Nutcracker” ballet was first performed at St. Petersburg’s Mariinsky Theatre in December 1892. It has since become a magical part of Christmas tradition for adults and children all over the world.

The story opens with a fabulous Christmas party, centering on Clara and an enchanted Nutcracker doll. The sparkling Christmas tree, which grows to a dazzling height, hints at the magic and fantasy to come. Clara witnesses a battle between a legion of rats and life-sized mechanical toy soldiers. The death of the Mouse Queen breaks the spell on the Nutcracker and Clara’s journey begins through flurries of snowflakes to the Kingdom of the Sweets. Patrons will thrill to leaping Cossacks, dancing Reed Flutes and exotic Arabian dancers as a young girl’s holiday dream comes to life.

The role of Clara will be performed by Gemma Garlisch and Maxwell Murdock will play the part of the high-spirited Fritz. Katia Garza of the Orlando Ballet will portray the enchanting Sugar Plum Fairy and Andres Estevez of Ballet Met performs the role of the Prince Cavalier. Sean Hilton and Andre Kisselev will round out the cast of international guest artists with their portrayals of the Snow King and the Russian dancer.

Also featured in this year’s production will be NFB soloist Jerod Zerbe as the Harlequin Doll, Spanish and the Nutcracker Prince. The Dew Drop Fairy will be performed by NFB soloist Amanda Wiley and the role of the Snow Queen will be played by NFB principal dancer Jennifer Jones.

NFB will be hosting Clara's Kingdom of the Sweets Party following the Sunday, November 22 performance from 4 – 6 pm. The party begins with a reception on stage! Cast members will pose for photos and give autographs to attendees. Parents are encouraged to bring cameras. The event will move up to the balcony where children will decorate holiday cookies, be treated to fancy sandwiches and dreamy hot chocolate and sample Nutcracker sweets. Clara, her brother Fritz and the Mouse Queen will make a visit and everyone will leave with a gift bag full of Nutcracker memorabilia.

Performances will be Saturday, Nov, 21 at 7:30 p.m. (sponsored by Boeing) and Sunday, Nov. 22 at 2 p.m. (sponsored by Whitney Bank) at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center at the Northwest Florida State College campus in Niceville. Ticket prices for "The Nutcracker" are \$32 for adults and \$16 for children 12 and under. Tickets for the Kingdom of the Sweets Party are \$25 for adults and children 12 and under and must be purchased separately.

Please call the Northwest Florida Ballet office at (850) 664-7787 for tickets or additional information.

The Northwest Florida Ballet celebrates its 40th year as a regionally recognized semi-professional ballet company and school. In addition, NFB has developed the nationally acclaimed Academie' – 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 Arts Council.

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