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**Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's 'The Nutcracker'
Takes the Stage Throughout December**

Month-long Run to Include Dec. 26, Sensory-friendly Performance

PITTSBURGH, PA - Complete with a colossal Christmas tree, flurrying snow and mesmerizing magic tricks, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's "**The Nutcracker**" returns to the Benedum Center for a 24-performance run **Dec 1-27**. Tickets start at \$28 and are available at www.pbt.org, 412-456-6666 or at the Box Office at Theater Square in downtown Pittsburgh.

The annual production features P.I. Tchaikovsky's iconic score, choreography and staging by PBT Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr, and costume and scenic designs by Emmy-winning designer Zack Brown. Each performance features five scene changes and 170 roles for both professional company members and student dancers from PBT School.

"For each of the 24 performances, I create a unique casting combination to ensure that no two performances are exactly alike," Orr said. "It keeps the excitement alive for both artists and audience members. One dancer can perform as many as eight roles throughout the run, which gives patrons the chance to see different dancers in principal roles."

The festivities start as soon as audience members enter the theater with opportunities to take a souvenir photo with the Sugar Plum Fairy (\$10/photo benefitting PBT School), shop for Nutcracker and holiday-themed gifts at the PBT boutique, and listen to lobby entertainment by local musical ensembles before select performances.

"The Nutcracker" is one of the best-known ballets of all time, based on German author E.T.A. Hoffman's classic 1816 tale "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King." The first ballet adaptation premiered in 1892 at the Imperial Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. PBT has performed versions of "The Nutcracker" since the 1970s and has presented

Orr's adaptation since 2002, introducing a coming-of-age story, more complex choreography and a Pittsburgh setting.

Pittsburghers can spot references to the city's own landmarks and cultural heritage, including the Snow Scene's Mount Washington view, a Kaufmann's-style proscenium clock and a Land of Enchantment inspired by Pittsburgh's historic amusement parks.

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's version of the classic tale opens with a Christmas Eve party in early 20th-century Shadyside. Here Marie Stahlbaum, a girl who is just coming of age, receives a nutcracker from her mysterious godfather Drosselmeyer and an introduction to his nephew. As midnight approaches, enchantment envelopes the household. The Nutcracker springs to life to battle the Rat King and his evil curse. Finally free, the Nutcracker transforms into a prince and invites Marie on a dreamlike journey to a Land of Enchantment.

The story unfolds through classical choreography, ranging from the ethereal Waltz of the Snowflakes to the virtuosic national dances of the Land of Enchantment. The choreography culminates with a grand pas de deux performed by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier, before the story returns to the Stahlbaum home, leaving Marie to wonder, "Was it all a dream?"

Among the 170 costumes featured in each performance, highlights include 18 shimmering snowflakes, 16 colorful tutus resembling flower petals, a stage full of elaborate Victorian party dresses and many more hand-crafted costumes. Among the total 215-costume inventory, 110 were built locally in the PBT costume shop under the direction of Costumier Janet Groom Campbell.

The scenery completes the picture with 3D set pieces, like the Land of Enchantment Carousel, and hand-painted drops. Special effects add to the enchantment with a growing Christmas tree, flurries of falling snow and magic tricks originally conceived by a professional magician.

Among the 24 performances, the company will present a Student Matinee performance, sponsored by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, at 11 a.m. Friday, Dec. 8, and a sensory-friendly performance adapted for patrons with special needs at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Dec 26.

Tickets start at \$28, and are available at www.pbt.org, 412-456-6666 or by visiting the Box Office at Theater Square.

More Nutcracker-themed Events

An Afternoon of Enchantment at PBT Studios

1-3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 19 - PBT Studios, 2900 Liberty Avenue

This ticketed event features Nutcracker-inspired dance classes, performances, crafts and photo opportunities for all ages. Tickets cost \$5 for youth, \$10 for adults and are free for children ages 3 and under. Details and tickets are available at www.pbt.org.

Ballet Fundamentals at the Library (FREE)

Participants can explore the story of “The Nutcracker,” meet a ballerina and try steps from the ballet.

- Vandergrift Public Library, 128 Washington Ave.: Nov. 18, at 11:30 a.m. Register at 724-568-2212.
- Peoples Library, 880 Barnes St., New Kensington : Nov. 18, at 1:30 p.m. Register at 724-339-1021.
- Scott Township Public Library, 301 Lindsay Road: Dec. 2, at 2 p.m. Register at 412-429-5380.

Theater Programs

Audience members are invited to join the artists for a series of pre- and post-show programs at the Benedum Center. Free and open to all ticket holders unless otherwise noted.

Afterthoughts | Dec. 1, at 9:30 p.m.

Post-show discussion with Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr and his guests

Talks with Terry | Dec. 3, at 11 a.m.

Pre-show preview, including a look at company class, with Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr

Audio-described performance | Dec. 3, at 12 p.m.

A live narration of the ballet for individuals with visual impairments. Headsets are available at the Guest Services Center with a valid ID.

Family Pointe | Dec. 9, at 1 p.m.

Pre-show opportunity to learn steps from the ballet and talk with ballet dancers. Reservations required at 412-454-9109 or education@pittsburghballet.org.

Ballet Adventures: *The Nutcracker* | Dec. 16, at 12 p.m.

Pre-show ballet class, including steps from “The Nutcracker.” Registration required at www.pbt.org or by calling 412-454-9107.

Performance Times

Friday, December 1, at 7 p.m.

Saturday, December 2, at 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 2, at 7 p.m.

Sunday, December 3, at 12 p.m.

Sunday, December 3, at 4:30 p.m.

Friday, December 8, at 11 a.m. – ***Student Matinee***

Friday, December 8, at 7 p.m.

Saturday, December 9, at 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 9, at 7 p.m.

Sunday, December 10, at 12 p.m.

Sunday, December 10, at 4:30 p.m.

Friday, December 15, at 7 p.m.

Saturday, December 16, at 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 16, at 7 p.m.

Sunday, December 17, at 12 p.m.

Sunday, December 17, at 4:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 21, at 7 p.m.

Friday, December 22, at 7 p.m.

Saturday, December 23, at 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 23, at 7 p.m.

Sunday, December 24, at 12 p.m.

Tuesday, December 26, at 2 p.m. – ***Sensory-friendly performance***

Tuesday, December 26, at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, December 27, at 7 p.m.