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**Northwest Florida Ballet announces four performances for the 2016-2017 season and the creation of its own symphony orchestra led by David Ott**

**FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla. – August 4, 2016** – Fort Walton Beach, Fla. – The Northwest Florida Ballet (NFB) announces programming for its forty-seventh season and the creation of the Northwest Florida Ballet Symphony Orchestra led by renowned conductor and composer, David Ott. The 2016-2017 season features four productions at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center at Northwest Florida State College, with live musical accompaniment for two of the productions by the newly created orchestra. The season will conclude with the annual Ballet at Twilight, a free outdoor performance of mixed repertory and classical dance pieces, held in Grand Boulevard at Sandestin during the summer.

The 2016-2017 Northwest Florida Ballet season opens with Lightwire Theater's newest adventure, *Moon Mouse: A Space Odyssey* on Fri., Sept. 23 at 7:30 p.m. at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center. Audience members will join Marvin on the space adventure of a lifetime: a trip to the surface of the moon on his homemade rocket, where he meets a strange cast of misfit creatures, learns of infinite peril and views awesome beauty.

Lightwire Theater rose to national prominence on the hit show *America's Got Talent*, and brings to life a truly a unique, innovative and visually dazzling theatrical experience. Utilizing the talents of four cast members, they strap on costumes fitted with electroluminescent lights, turning their entire bodies into life sized puppets to bring the cast of creatures and scenery to life through movement and dance. Box office priced tickets for *Moon Mouse* are \$35 for adults and \$15 for children 12 and under.

The season's second production at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center, *Stars of American Ballet*, features principal dancers from the New York City Ballet performing works from acclaimed choreographer and co-founder of the New York City Ballet, George Balanchine. The performance will be held on Thurs., Oct. 27 at 7:30 p.m. Box office priced tickets for *Stars of American Ballet* are \$35 for adults and \$15 for children 12 and under.

Credited as the founder of modern American ballet, Balanchine's featured works will include *Apollo*, *Tarentella*, *Who Cares?* and more. The program also includes a stunning Pas de Deux, *After the Rain*, choreographed by former New York City Ballet resident choreographer Christopher Wheeldon. Wheeldon received a Tony Award nomination for his choreography for the Broadway show *An American in Paris*. Founded in 2008 and directed by New York City Ballet principal dancer Daniel Ulbricht, who works alongside Executive Director Andrew Robertson, *Stars of American Ballet's* mission is to one day see all parts of this country entertained, educated, lifted up and inspired by the stopping artistry and athleticism of ballet.

In November NFB will present our thirty-seventh annual performance of the brilliant holiday favorite, *The Nutcracker*. Performances will be held at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center on Fri. and Sat., Nov. 18 and 19 at 7:30 p.m. and Sun., Nov. 20 at 2:30 p.m. and will be the debut of the NFB Symphony Orchestra.

This timeless ballet is a tradition among families along the Emerald Coast as the start of their holiday season.

Performances of *The Nutcracker* will feature the return of International Ballet Stars Adiarys Almeida Santana and Joseph Michael Gatti in the principal roles of the Sugar Plum Fairy and Prince. Several other international guest artists, the NFB Company and over 100 local children round out the cast. Box office priced tickets for *The Nutcracker* are \$38 for adults and \$18 for children 12 and under. The presenting media sponsor for this season's production of *The Nutcracker* is VIE Magazine.

The final main stage production at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center, *From Russia With Love: A Celebration of The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo* pays tribute to the famous ballet company Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo by celebrating three of the world's most historic ballets by three of Russia's most prolific composers. The program also showcases new choreography of these classic ballets, including: *The Firebird* choreographed by Butler University's Derek Reid with music by Igor Stravinsky; *Scheherazade* choreographed by Lightwire Theater's Ian Carney with music by Rimsky-Korsakov and the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* choreographed by NFB Artistic Director Todd Eric Allen with music by Sergei Prokofiev.

*From Russia With Love*, will be presented on Sat., April 1 at 7:30 p.m. and on Sun., April 2 at 2:30 p.m. and feature live musical accompaniment by the NFB Symphony Orchestra. Box office priced tickets for *From Russia With Love* are \$38 for adults and \$18 for children 12 and under. The presenting media sponsor for this season's production of *From Russia With Love* is Emerald Coast Magazine.

In addition to the expansion of NFB's season from three productions to four, the company will premier the NFB Symphony Orchestra led by Ott. Under Ott's direction as NFB's Music Director, the orchestra will provide live musical accompaniment for *The Nutcracker* and *From Russia With Love* for the 2016-2017 season. The orchestra will be comprised of the finest musicians from the Southeast and abroad.

"Three years ago NFB made a commitment to bring live music back to our performances and since then we have been overwhelmed both by attendance numbers and audience feedback. In keeping with this commitment we felt that forming the NFB Symphony Orchestra would be a natural progression for our organization. With the amazingly talented David Ott as NFB's Music Director, the NFB Symphony Orchestra will add yet another layer of depth to our productions in addition to providing exciting opportunities for our NFB Academie music program in the future," said NFB Artistic Director & CEO Todd Eric Allen.

Ott ranks among America's most-performed composers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. His works have been performed or recorded by some of the most renowned American and European orchestras, including the Chicago, National, Minnesota, Atlanta and London Symphonies. He has garnered critical praise and received numerous awards for his compositions and continues to be commissioned for works by major orchestras throughout the U.S. Once nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in music by renowned cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, Ott has composed a large portfolio of compositions in every genre of music from large-scale orchestra works to short overtures.

"The Northwest Florida Ballet is one of Florida's finest cultural institutions. It is an honor to be associated with such an outstanding organization," said Ott.

Tickets to the four main stage productions individual performances at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center will be available four weeks prior to performance dates. Season subscriptions will be available on the NFB website beginning Aug. 5. Subscriptions include tickets to each of the four main stage productions and are available for \$135 per adult and \$55 per child (12 and under). Please visit the NFB website and Facebook page to purchase subscriptions, individual tickets or for additional information.

*The Northwest Florida Ballet celebrates its 47<sup>th</sup> year as a regionally recognized semi-professional ballet company and school. In addition, NFB has developed the nationally acclaimed Académie – an integrated academic and dance education program serving 156 students from the third to eighth grade. In 2012 the NFB introduced the Pre-Professional Program – an intensive dance program for the 9th to 12th grade students preparing for a career in dance .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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