HOUSTON BALLET

STANTON WELCH - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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HOUSTON BALLET CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS BELOVED PRODUCTION OF *THE NUTCRACKER*

Company Gives 32 Performances of Holiday Classic Between Thanksgiving and New Year's

Houston, TX – From November 23 – December 29, 2007, Houston Ballet will celebrate the 20th anniversary of Ben Stevenson's beloved production of **The Nutcracker**, seen by over 1,000,000 people since its premiere two decades ago. The ballet tells the story of a little girl named Clara who is given a magical nutcracker doll on Christmas Eve. She encounters the frightful rat king before embarking on a journey through the Land of Snow and the Kingdom of Sweets. Young and old alike will be dazzled by the production's many special effects, including the Christmas tree that "grows" to forty feet, 200 pounds of "snow" falling during the snow scene, and the firing of a cannon on stage. Houston Ballet will give 32 performances of **The Nutcracker** in the Brown Theater at Wortham Theater Center in downtown Houston. Tickets may be purchased by calling 713-227-2787 or visiting www.houstonballet.org.

Houston Ballet's production of **The Nutcracker** has been hailed by the *Houston Chronicle* as "the crown jewel of holiday entertainment." Lee Williams of the *Houston Press* called Houston Ballet's production of **The Nutcracker**, " Gorgeous . . . Desmond Heeley's set and costumes are reason enough to see this show . . . **The Nutcracker** reminds us that the holidays have always been a time of dreams, and with productions as yummy as this, sleeping never seemed so sweet." A wonderful ballet for the entire family, **The Nutcracker** is the perfect way to ring in the holiday season and to introduce young children to the power and beauty of classical dance.

In 2007, Houston Ballet is celebrating another milestone in its history: the opening of the Wortham Theater Center, the state-of-the-art facility built for Houston Ballet and Houston Grand

Opera. Moving into Wortham Theater Center in 1987 allowed Houston Ballet to greatly expand the number of performances of **The Nutcracker** that it gave each season, rising from eleven in 1986 to twenty-nine in 1987 to thirty-two in 2007. The unveiling of Houston Ballet's magical new production of **The Nutcracker** launched a Texas holiday tradition that continues today. **The Nutcracker** also plays a key role in Houston Ballet's financial picture, generating over $2.7 million in revenues (or 17% of the organization's annual budget) in 2006.

For over one hundred years, the story of the ballet has proven irresistible to both children and adults alike. Set in nineteenth-century Germany, the ballet opens at a Christmas party at which the mysterious Dr. Drosselmeyer gives his little niece Clara a magical toy that takes her on an unforgettable journey. From the battle scene between the rat king and the nutcracker in the first act to the cooks who fly magically through the air in the second act, **The Nutcracker** is sure to enchant audiences of all ages.

Houston Ballet's performances of **The Nutcracker** are generously underwritten by Continental Airlines, Shell Oil Company Foundation, Baker Botts L.L.P., and Devon Energy Corporation.

Tickets are available at a discount for select performances of **The Nutcracker**: patrons can save up to $7 off the regular price when purchasing tickets for these shows, including evening performances on Friday, November 23 and Saturday, November 24; Friday, December 7; Sunday, December 16; Tuesday, December 18; Wednesday, December 19; Thursday, December 20; Wednesday, December 26; Thursday, December 27; Friday, December 28; and Saturday, December 29. Matinee performances will also offer the discounted tickets on the following dates: Saturday, November 24 and Sunday, November 25.

The Story of *The Nutcracker*

The Nutcracker tells the story of Clara and her magical nutcracker doll. One Christmas Eve, the mysterious Dr. Drosselmeyer arrives at the Stahlbaum family's Christmas party and presents Clara with a special gift: a wooden nutcracker. After the party, as the clock strikes midnight, Clara awakens to find the room filled with giant mice. The nutcracker comes to her rescue and a

fierce battle ensues as the nutcracker leads the toy soldiers against the mice and their leader, King Rat. The nutcracker overcomes King Rat, and then is transformed into a handsome prince who takes Clara on a magical journey.

To the delight of Clara and the audience, the evening is filled with dance. The Snow Queen leads eighteen snowflakes in a brilliant waltz in the Land of Snow, where the trees are laden with icicles. Then the Nutcracker Prince takes Clara on a boat ride across the Lemonade Sea to the Kingdom of Sweets where they are greeted by the Sugar Plum Fairy. The Sugar Plum Fairy treats Clara to sweets and entertainment provided by the inhabitants of the kingdom: chocolate, a Spanish dance; coffee, an Arabian dance; and tea, a Chinese dance. Next comes the comical Madame Bonbonaire whose huge skirt is filled with tiny clowns. Then there is the Russian dance and the Waltz of the Flowers. Finally, the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Nutcracker Prince dance a grand pas de deux. As the celebration draws to a close, Clara becomes sleepy. She awakens back in her bed, as the nutcracker salutes his little princess Clara.

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HOUSTON BALLET
THE NUTCRACKER
FACT SHEET

WHAT: **THE NUTCRACKER (1987)**
Music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
Choreography by Ben Stevenson
Designs by Desmond Heeley
Lighting by Duane Schuler

Generously underwritten by:
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Devon Energy Corporation

ABOUT THE PROGRAM:
A little girl named Clara receives a magical nutcracker on Christmas Eve and sets out on a wondrous journey to the Land of Snow and the Kingdom of Sweets. Featuring breathtaking scenery and costumes by Desmond Heeley, **The Nutcracker** is the perfect yuletide gift: the ideal means of introducing children to the power and beauty of classical dance, and a delightful way for the entire family to ring in the holiday season.

WHEN: November 23– December 29, 2007

At 7:30 pm Nov. 23*, 24*,
and Dec. 1, 7*, 8, 14, 15, 16*, 18*, 19*, 20*, 21, 22, 23, 26*, 27*, 28*, 29*
At 2:00 pm on Nov. 24*, 25*
and Dec. 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29

*-Indicates discounted performance.

WHERE: Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center
501 Texas Avenue in downtown Houston

TICKETS: $17 - $125. For tickets call (713) 227 2787 or 1 800 828 ARTS.
Tickets are also available at www.houstonballet.org, the Houston Ballet Box Office at Wortham Theater Center and all Ticketmaster outlets, including all Macy's, Fiesta, and Wherehouse Music locations, and select FYE (For Your Entertainment), HEB, and Ritmo locations.