



PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET

PETER BOAL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET ANNOUNCES GUEST CONDUCTORS FOR

Nutcracker

Stowell & Sendak

November 27-December 30, 2009

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

321 Mercer Street at Seattle Center

Seattle, WA 98109

SEATTLE, WA – Pacific Northwest Ballet has announced the schedule of guest conductors for upcoming performances of the Stowell/Sendak *Nutcracker*. Guest artists include Niel DePonte, Carolyn Kuan, Alastair Willis, and Judith Yan. For the lion's share of performances, the baton will be wielded by PNB's acting music director/conductor, Allan Dameron. (See complete schedule with bios below.) The only production of its kind in the world, PNB's *Nutcracker* combines PNB Founding Artistic Director Kent Stowell's charming and dramatic choreography with magnificent sets and costumes by renowned author and illustrator Maurice Sendak (*Where the Wild Things Are*) and features the live magic of the PNB Orchestra and more than 200 roles danced by PNB's professional dancers and students. Twenty-six years young, *Nutcracker* is the Northwest's favorite holiday tradition.

The guest conductors and their performances are:

NIEL DePONTE

Conducting Thursday, December 10 (student matinee); Friday, December 11 (7:30 pm); and Saturday, December 12 (7:30 pm)

Niel DePonte has been the Music Director for Oregon Ballet Theatre and its predecessor, Pacific Ballet Theatre, since 1985. He has appeared as a guest conductor for Boston Ballet, the Ballet of the Mussorgsky (Maly) Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia, and at the Nureyev Ballet Festival. He has also conducted symphonic, pops, and youth concerts with the symphonies of Oregon, Syracuse, and Charlotte, among others. Mr. DePonte's arrangement of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is his latest in a series of compositions and arrangements written for the ballet stage. These include Christopher

Stowell's *Adin* in 2004, Houston Ballet's 2002 production of *Peter Pan*, and OBT's 1993 version of *The Nutcracker*. He holds a Master's degree and the Performer's Certificate from the Eastman School of Music, and a degree in Education from the State University of New York.

CAROLYN KUAN

Conducting Sunday, December 27 (1:00 pm); Monday, December 28 (5:30 pm); and Tuesday, December 29 (1:00 pm)

Carolyn Kuan was recently Associate Conductor of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. Previous appointments have seen her as Artist-in-Residence at New York City Ballet, Assistant Conductor for the Baltimore Opera Company, and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, where she continues to return annually. A serious ballet dancer as a child, Ms. Kuan made her ballet-conducting debut at New York City Ballet's American Music Festival. Additional credits include PNB and Moscow Classical Ballet in a wide range of productions, including *Ballo della Regina*, *Divertimento No.15*, *The Four Temperaments*, *Nutcracker*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Prodigal Son*, and *Symphony in Three Movements*. As an orchestral conductor, Carolyn Kuan has performed with prestigious orchestras such as the Baltimore Symphony, Bournemouth Symphony (UK), Detroit Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, and Festival del Sole. Ms. Kuan graduated cum laude from Smith College, and received a Master of Music from the University of Illinois and a Performance Diploma from the Peabody Conservatory.

ALASTAIR WILLIS

Conducting Saturday, December 12 (2:00 pm); Sunday, December 13 (5:30 pm); Tuesday, December 15 thru Thursday, December 17 (7:30 pm); Friday, December 18 (2:00 pm); Saturday, December 19 (7:30 pm); Sunday, December (1:00 pm); Monday, December 21 and Tuesday, December 22 (7:30 pm); and Wednesday, December 23 (2:00 pm).

Alastair Willis received his bachelor's degree with honors from Bristol University and earned a post-graduate Certificate of Education degree at Kingston University. In 1996, he won a scholarship to study at Rice University, graduating with a Master of Music degree. In 1999, Mr. Willis was one of six conductors chosen to participate in American Symphony Orchestra League's National Conductor Preview and was awarded a conducting fellowship to attend Tanglewood Music Festival. He has appeared with dozens of the nation's foremost symphonies and orchestras, and internationally with China National Symphony Orchestra Beijing, Orchestre de Bretagne, Graz Opera orchestra, and Hong Kong Sinfonietta, among others. Mr. Willis served as Associate Conductor of the Seattle Symphony from 2000-2003. In 2002, he was asked by Yo-Yo Ma to conduct several performances of his Silk Road Project residency and was subsequently re-invited to conduct for the project all over the world. He previously held the position of Assistant Conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony and Pops Orchestras and Music Director of the Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestra.

JUDITH YAN

Conducting Friday, December 4 (7:30 pm); Saturday, December 5 (2:00 pm); and Sunday, December 6 (5:30 pm)

Judith Yan was recently appointed Music Director and Principal Conductor for Opera on the Avalon, a summer festival in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. Her 2006 debut with the National Ballet of

Canada led to the subsequent invitation to conduct more than 85 performances for the company. Prior that, Ms. Yan served as the Staff Conductor of the San Francisco Opera. While in San Francisco, she met American composer Jake Heggie, which led to her conducting the Houston Grand Opera's workshop recording of *The End of the Affair*. Prior to her appointment at SFO, she served as the Canadian Opera Company's Conductor-in-Residence. During her tenure with the Canadian Opera Company, she collaborated with members of Stratford Festival, Ballet Jorgen, and the Toronto Symphony on a program of Prokofiev, Bernstein, and Gounod. In 2005, Ms. Yan made her German debut conducting productions of *La Cenerentola* and *Idomeneo* with Ulmer Oper. In 2007, she made her Italian debut with COSI Festival's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She returned to Italy in 2008 to conduct *La Bohème*.

**All remaining performances – a total of 25 – will be conducted by
ALLAN DAMERON**

Pacific Northwest Ballet's acting music director and conductor, Allan Dameron, has been company pianist at PNB since 1990 and conductor since 1992. Originally from North Carolina, Mr. Dameron is a graduate of North Carolina School of the Arts and studied conducting at the Pierre Monteaux School in Maine. Mr. Dameron has been music director and conductor for Chicago City Ballet and assistant conductor at Chicago Lyric Opera. Prior to joining PNB, he taught chamber music at Northern Illinois University. As a chamber music pianist, Mr. Dameron has been a guest artist with the Vermeer and Audubon Quartets and is a member of the Ariel Trio.

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Celebrate the season with PNB's *Nutcracker*, playing November 27 – December 30, 2009. Tickets start at \$26 and may be purchased by contacting the **PNB Box Office** at **206.441.2424**, online at **www.pnb.org** or in person at the PNB Box Office, **301 Mercer Street** at Seattle Center. Subject to availability, day-of-show tickets are sold 90 minutes prior to each performance at McCaw Hall, 321 Mercer Street. A limited choice of tickets is also available at select Ticketmaster outlets, by calling 206.292-ARTS or online at ticketmaster.com. **PLEASE NOTE: No other ticket outlets are authorized to sell Pacific Northwest Ballet *Nutcracker* tickets.**

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Programming subject to change. For further information, please visit: www.pnb.org.

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