



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Updated November 27, 2017

[Carolyn@cwcommunications.info](mailto:Carolyn@cwcommunications.info)

612-414-9661

[Susan@cwcommunications.info](mailto:Susan@cwcommunications.info)

651-335-1834

*Ballet Minnesota presents the 30th Annual  
Production of The Classic Nutcracker,  
December 15 -17 at the O'Shaughnessy*

*It's a magical holiday tradition for all ages!*

---

Saint Paul, MN – Ballet Minnesota celebrates their milestone 30th Anniversary of performing *The Classic Nutcracker* at The O'Shaughnessy with two nationally renowned principals, Dusty Button and Rasta Thomas, performing as the Sugar Plus Fairy and her Cavalier. The performances take place on the campus of St. Catherine University, 2004 Randolph Ave., Saint Paul, **December 15-17, 2017**. Ticket prices range from \$21 to \$46 with discounts for seniors, students, active military and groups. To purchase tickets, visit <http://oshag.stkate.edu/events/category/series/the-classic-nutcracker-2017/>,

or call The O'Shaughnessy box office at 651-690-6700.

*Pointe Magazine* has called guest soloist Dusty Button, “a new brand of ballerina,” known for her fierce individualism as well as her perfect pirouettes. She began dancing at age 7 in her native North Carolina, and moved to New York at age 15 to study at the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at the American Ballet. At age 18 she received a scholarship to the Royal Ballet School in London and in 2012, at age 23, moved back to the US to join Boston Ballet, where she was promoted from corps de ballet to principal dancer in just two years. She left the company in 2017 to continue her rise in the dance world as a teacher, choreographer and guest artist. She has danced with American Ballet Theatre, K Ballet of Japan and Alvin Ailey. In addition to cover feature in *Pointe Magazine*, Dusty and has been featured in *Dance Magazine*, *Shape* and *Glamour*.

Nationally-renowned dancer, Rasta Thomas, has just been selected to be the Cavalier. Thomas is the founder and artistic director of the “Bad Boys of Dance.” He studied martial arts before training in ballet at the Kirov Academy. Critics have called him "a force of nature," and described his dance style as a mix of Mikhail Baryshnikov, Bruce Lee, and Michael Jackson. In the theater realm, Thomas has performed *Movin' Out* on Broadway (director Twyla Tharp), *Carmen* (director Rob Ashford), and *Soul Possessed* (director Debbie Allen). Film and television credits include *Ted 2*, *One Last Dance* with Patrick Swayze, *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Never Stand Still*, as well as performances at the White House and Academy Awards. He has been a featured principal with over 25 companies including American Ballet Theater, the Kirov Ballet and the legendary Dance Theater of Harlem.

These two headline-making dancers raise the ante on a holiday classic with their incredible talent and raw energy.

Ballet Minnesota’s *The Classic Nutcracker* has grown radically from its humble beginnings 30 years ago. “Our loyal audience members may recall that we staged our first *Nutcracker* performance as a lunch hour matinee in Galtier Plaza, just two blocks from our studios in Lowertown,” said Andrew Rist, Ballet Minnesota’s Artistic Director. “We had a very appreciative crowd for our cast of 20 dancers. Gratefully, we have only grown since then, both in our school, Classic Ballet Academy, and our Ballet Minnesota Company.”

Today, Ballet Minnesota's production of *The Classic Nutcracker* draws an audience annually of between 8,000 and 10,000, and remains a holiday tradition by bringing magic and majesty to the stage with more than 130 local and national dancers.

Here is a sampling of what the critics have said about Ballet Minnesota's *The Classic Nutcracker*:

"The production has a flair for innovative design and a passion for preserving the ballet's classical roots." **Dance Critic Caroline Palmer**

"Ballet Minnesota's Nutcracker is the destination dance performance of the Year." **Rob Hubbard, Pioneer Press**

"This radiant production brought the spirit of Christmas thundering back." **Borcht Arts Magazine**

*The Classic Nutcracker* story begins on a snowy Christmas Eve. We join a charming young girl, Clara, her mischievous brother, Fritz, and their family hosting a lively Christmas party. In the midst of holiday greetings, a mysterious latecomer, Clara's Godfather Drosselmeyer, joins the merry gathering. He is a favorite to all the guests and children as he makes life-size toys dance to life. Godfather Drosselmeyer presents Clara with an especially marvelous gift, a Nutcracker doll. As Clara goes to sleep that night, we are transported into her dream of the Rat King fighting the Nutcracker and his army of toy soldiers. After the defeat, the Nutcracker Prince escorts Clara through an enchanted snow-covered forest and into the Kingdom of the Sweets where Clara accepts the throne from the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Ballet Minnesota's high-caliber stage production brings the *Nutcracker* story to life with flying sparks in the sword battle, snowflakes drifting to the stage in the Land of Snow, a grandfather clock that grows in size and exquisite, hand-made costuming designed by Ballet Minnesota co-founder Cheryl Rist.

### **History of Ballet Minnesota and Classical Ballet Academy**

Husband and wife team Andrew and Cheryl Rist are at the helm of **Classical Ballet Academy**, founded in 1987, and *Ballet Minnesota*, which they co-founded in 1990. Andrew Rist serves as

Ballet Minnesota's Artistic Director and Cheryl Rist serves as Costume Designer and Director of Classical Ballet Academy, Ballet Minnesota's official school. To view Ballet Minnesota's performance history and events, visit [www.balletminnesota.org](http://www.balletminnesota.org).

**Purchase your tickets now by calling The O'Shaughnessy box office at 651-690-6700. Ask about group rates! Order online at <http://oshag.stkate.edu/events/category/series/the-classic-nutcracker-2017/>.**

**Performances:**

**Friday, December 15, 7:30 p.m.**

**Saturday, December 16, 2 p.m.**

**Saturday, December 16, 7:30 p.m.**

**Sunday, December 17, 2 p.m.**

**Tickets: \$21-\$46; special group rates available.**



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Ballet Minnesota also gratefully acknowledges the support from Target Foundation, Schuler Shoes, The Pioneer Press, Minnesota Public Radio, The St. Paul Hotel, Minnesota Monthly Magazine, Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine, Wells Fargo Foundation, Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, and McCarthy-Bjorklund Foundation.