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NEVADA BALLET THEATRE PROUDLY PRESENTS A *BALANCHINE CELEBRATION* ON NOVEMBER 7 & 8 AT THE SMITH CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS, SHOWCASING THREE OF GEORGE BALANCHINE'S ICONIC WORKS

*Prior to the show guests are invited to **Insights**, a pre-performance educational discussion featuring special guests: The George Balanchine Trust Co-Founder Barbara Horgan and former New York City Principal Dancer Heather Watts*

Las Vegas, NV (Oct. 20, 2015) – Nevada Ballet Theatre (NBT) is proud to present *A Balanchine Celebration* as the Company's opening performance at The Smith Center for the Performing Arts for its 2015-2016 season. Each piece will be accompanied by a full orchestra featuring members of the Las Vegas Philharmonic, under the direction of guest conductor, Leif Bjaland. Performances will take place on **Saturday, November 7 at 7:30 p.m.** and **Sunday, November 8 at 2 p.m.** with tickets starting at \$29. Tickets can be ordered by calling The Smith Center Box Office at (702) 749-2000 or by visiting www.nevadaballet.org.

This exciting trio of ballets begins with one of Balanchine's most meaningful and historical works, *Serenade*, the first ballet he choreographed in America. *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* – a Las Vegas premiere – is next on the program and ushers in Broadway dreams, Russian dancers and the Mob from the classic Rodgers and Hart comedy *On Your Toes*, which demonstrates Balanchine's triumphs on both stage and screen. A celebratory finale of romance and love set against a city skyline completes the evening with *Who Cares?* where the bubbly Americana songbook of George Gershwin is brought to life with colorful ensemble dancing, romantic duets and sparkling solos.

"The combination and range of these three works demonstrate what a genius George Balanchine was and the influence he has had on the dance world," said NBT Executive Director & CEO Beth Barbre. "From jazz to classical ballet, he was able to seamlessly blend so many styles of the art form. Our dancers are thrilled to perform these world-renowned pieces here in Las Vegas."

Insights

Nevada Ballet Theatre will also present a free pre-performance educational presentation, called *Insights*, in the **Troesh Studio Theater** at The Smith Center, starting 45 minutes prior to each performance time (6:45 p.m. Nov. 7; 1:15 p.m. Nov. 8). Designed to illuminate the creative process and narrative of each work, *Insights* for *A Balanchine Celebration* will feature a Q&A session with Mr. Balanchine's longtime personal assistant and one of the founders of his Trust, **Barbara Horgan** and will be moderated by famed "Balanchine Ballerina" and *Vanity Fair* contributing editor **Heather Watts**.

About the Performance

Serenade is considered “a milestone in the history of dance.” A signature work of New York City Ballet, it has rarely been out of their repertoire. Without a narrative, it contains four movements: “Sonatina,” “Waltz,” “Russian Dance” and “Elegy.” This beautiful work originated from an evening ballet class where Balanchine taught his students the differences between class work and stage technique. Balanchine even incorporated spontaneous rehearsal “mishaps” into the work, such as a dancer falling or a student arriving late to class. Its first presentation was in 1934 by students at the School of American Ballet at an estate in White Plains, New York. Since then, it has been performed and admired worldwide.

Serenade is staged by Balanchine Trust Repetiteur, Sandra Jennings. A former New York City Ballet dancer, Jennings performed Balanchine’s *Tarantella* at New York’s City Center at the young age of 15. At the request of George Balanchine, she joined New York City Ballet in 1974 and for the next nine years, danced principal and soloist roles in works by Balanchine and Jerome Robbins among others. Since 1985, she has been staging Balanchine’s ballets for companies around the world.

Balanchine originally choreographed *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* in 1936 for the musical *On Your Toes*. The show was a parody of Broadway, Russian ballet, and the mob. Briefly told, it is the story of a jealous Russian premier danseur who hires a mobster to kill a rival during the opening evening of a new ballet. A Las Vegas premiere for NBT, *Slaughter* is the ultimate combination of ballet, Hollywood and Broadway. The thrilling choreography effortlessly blends fundamental elements of jazz, tap and classic ballet as well as showcases Balanchine’s incredible ability to tell a story through movement and music.

Slaughter on Tenth Avenue is staged by Balanchine Trust Repetiteur, Philip Neal. After being recognized by Edward Villella at the age of 11, Neal was offered a summer scholarship to the School of American Ballet, the official school of New York City Ballet. His 23-year career at the company began in 1987 when he joined the corps de ballet, eventually rising through the ranks to principal dancer during the 1992-1993 season. Neal is also a repetiteur for the Jerome Robbins Rights Trust, staging the ballets of both Balanchine and Robbins for companies throughout the world.

Who Cares?, a ballet that consists of a series of dances set to the music of George Gershwin, premiered in 1970 at New York’s City Center. Also staged by Sandra Jennings, the work is set to 16 songs Gershwin composed between 1924 and 1931, including "Strike Up the Band," "The Man I Love," "Build a Stairway to Paradise," "Embraceable You," "Fascinatin' Rhythm," "Who Cares?," "My One and Only," "Liza," and "I Got Rhythm," among others. The title of *Who Cares?* came from an old song that George and Ira Gershwin wrote in 1931 for the musical, “Of Thee I Sing.” *Who Cares?* is largely seen as Balanchine’s tribute to America, with its patriotic nuances and energetic and exuberant choreography. In addition, Balanchine’s love of Manhattan is also incorporated into this lively and popular work, with some pieces reminiscent of a stylish night on the town.

This production is supported by a grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, in honor of Nancy Houssels.

About George Balanchine (1904-1983)

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, George Balanchine is regarded as the foremost contemporary choreographer in the world of ballet. He came to the United States in late 1933 and founded The School

of American Ballet in 1934 and the New York City Ballet in 1948 along with Lincoln Kirstein. A major artistic figure of the twentieth century, Balanchine revolutionized the look of classical ballet. Taking classicism as his base, he heightened, quickened, expanded, streamlined, and even inverted the fundamentals of the 400-year-old language of academic dance. His ballets are now performed by all the major classical ballet companies throughout the world.

About Nevada Ballet Theatre

Under the artistic direction of James Canfield, Nevada Ballet Theatre is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and the largest professional ballet company and dance Academy in the state. Committed to the highest artistic standards, this classically-based company is at home in an eclectic repertory, moving easily from the classics to the high-energy contemporary ballets. The mission of Nevada Ballet Theatre is to educate and inspire statewide, regional and national audiences and vitally impact community life through professional company productions, dance training and education and outreach. Nevada Ballet Theatre is the Resident Ballet Company of The Smith Center for the Performing Arts.

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