

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CHI CAO, STAR OF THE FEATURE FILM "MAO'S LAST DANCER," LEADS CAST OF  
BALLET HAWAII'S "NUTCRACKER"**

*Carolina Ballet's Lilyan Vigo Ellis and Timour Bourtasenkov, New York City Ballet's Andrew Veyette, and Broadway star John Selya round out all-star cast for 2011 production; more than 160 young dancers from across Hawaii join them on-stage in lavish "Nutcracker"*

HONOLULU (October 12, 2011) – Ballet Hawaii is thrilled to announce that Chi Cao, Birmingham Royal Ballet principal dancer and star of the Bruce Beresford film "Mao's Last Dancer," will join a distinguished cast and more than 160 dancers from across Hawaii in Ballet Hawaii's 2011 production of "Nutcracker," this holiday season at Honolulu's Blaisdell Concert Hall. The fairy-tale magic begins at 8:00 p.m. on Friday December 16, 2011 with a festive opening night for this stellar production featuring Carolina Ballet's Lilyan Vigo Ellis (Sugan Plum Fairy) and Timour Bourtasenkov (Arabian), New York City Ballet's Andrew Veyette (Snow King and lead Russian), and Broadway star John Selya (Soldier Doll and Spanish). The enchantment continues with two additional performances: Saturday, December 17 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 18 at 2:00 p.m. Tickets go on sale Saturday, October 15.

"Chi Cao is a virtuoso classical dancer and it is an honor to welcome him to Honolulu as he interprets the role of Cavalier in our 2011 'Nutcracker' production," said Ballet Hawaii artistic director Pamela Taylor-Tongg. "Not only is it a thrill for our young dancers to rehearse and perform with an artist of his caliber, it adds a new level of artistic and creative innovation to have Chi Cao part of our time-honored production."

In addition, Ballet Hawaii warmly welcomes the return of two dancers who are familiar faces to Honolulu audiences, Carolina Ballet's Lilyan Vigo Ellis and Timour Bourtasenkov. Beloved for their beautiful interpretation, Vigo Ellis and Bourtasenkov were featured in the 2010 production of "Nutcracker." Rounding out the cast is Andrew Veyette, a principal dancer with New York City Ballet, as well as John Selya, who most recently starred in the new Twyla Tharp Broadway musical "Come Fly Away," the 2009 Broadway revival of "Guys and Dolls," as well as "Damn Yankees" (2008) and "The Times They Are A-Changin'." Born and raised in New York City, Selya's dance career was inspired when, at age 10, he saw his sister perform in "The Nutcracker."

Ballet Hawaii's "Nutcracker" boasts beautiful sets, lavish costumes, surprise touches and of course, the captivating music of Tchaikovsky. The production offers unique performance opportunities to aspiring young dancers from a variety of backgrounds while sharing a time-honored holiday tradition with the greater community. Based on the E.T.A. Hoffmann tale "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King" and showcasing the unique spirit of holiday magic, Ballet Hawaii's "Nutcracker" is what Christmas is all about.

Prices range from **\$35 to \$75** and are sold at Ticketmaster: 1-800-745-3000 or ticketmaster.com, as well as the Ward Avenue Blaisdell Box Office. For more information, please visit [ballethawaii.org](http://ballethawaii.org).

The 2011 Ballet Hawaii production of Nutcracker is sponsored by **INSERT SPONSORS**.

### ***About Chi Cao***

Born in China, Chi Cao trained at the Beijing Dance Academy and the Royal Ballet School. He joined Birmingham Royal Ballet in 1995 and was promoted to Principal in 2002. Chi is a virtuoso classical dancer and often leads the Company in the classic repertory. His superb technique won him the gold medal in 1998 at Varna, the 'Granddaddy' of all ballet competitions. Chi's talents however are not just restricted to his considerable technical abilities. He is also an exciting interpretive artist with a number of created roles to his credit. With his frequent partner, Nao Sakuma, Chi has also represented the Company at a number of prestigious occasions, dancing at the NATO gala in Birmingham (2000) and Birmingham's gala to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's golden jubilee (2002). In 2008, he took a six-month leave of absence from the Company to star as Li Cunxin in Bruce Beresford's film *Mao's Last Dancer*. – *Courtesy Birmingham Royal Ballet*

### ***About Lilyan Vigo Ellis***

Lilyan Vigo Ellis was born in Miami, Florida where she began her study of dance training privately with Liana Navarro. Vigo Ellis attended Harid Conservatory for two years and graduated from North Carolina School of the Arts in 1996. Vigo Ellis came to Carolina Ballet from the Southern Ballet Theatre in Orlando, Florida where she was a principal dancer. A founding member of the company, she has created many principal parts in new works including Robert Weiss' *Firebird*. She is the recipient of the Princess Grace Award.

### ***About Timour Bourtasenkov***

Timour Bourtasenkov began his professional education with the Moldavian Opera House and the Bolshoi Ballet. Upon coming to America, he danced with the Pennsylvania Ballet, New Jersey Ballet and the New York-based Daring Project. In 1998, Bourtasenkov joined Carolina Ballet as a principal dancer and founding member of the company. His repertory includes ballets by Marius Petipa, August Bournonville, George Balanchine, John Cranko, Frederick Ashton, Antony Tudor, Jose Limon, Peter Martins, Robert North, Margo Sappington, William Forsyth, Richard Tanner, Lynne Taylor-Corbett and Christopher Wheeldon. Carolina Ballet's Artistic Director, Robert Weiss, has also created numerous principal roles for him in the company's repertory.

Bourtasenkov has choreographed works for Carolina Ballet, Infinity Ballet, New Jersey Ballet and most recently, the New York Choreographic Institute, using New York City Ballet members. His ballets include *Light and Dark*, sections of *Messiah*, *Rag House*, *Elements*, *Memories*, *Visions*, *Intrigue*, *Dance of the Spirits*, *Fallen Dreams* and *Tango! Tango! Tango!* Bourtasenkov won the Bronze Medal in the VII Massako Ohyo World Ballet Competition of Osaka, Japan and the V International Competition of Paris, France. He was awarded a jury prize at the Second Luxembourg International Ballet Competition. In addition, Bourtasenkov has appeared in two movies: *The Long Way* and *The Magic Star*. In 1996, he filmed *Little Red Ridinghood*, directed by Davis Koplan and choreographed by Elena Tchernichova. In 1996, Mr. Bourtasenkov became the Artistic Advisor of Infinity Ballet and in 2005, he was named the Artistic Director of Carolina Performing Arts Center in Pinehurst, North Carolina.

***About Andrew Veyette***

Andrew Veyette was born in Denver, Colorado, and began his dance training at the age of nine, studying with Betty Downs at Dance Arts in Visalia, California. Veyette continued his studies at Westside Ballet in Santa Monica, California. While at Westside Ballet, Veyette trained with Yvonne Mounsey and was personally coached by Nader Hamed. Veyette entered the School of American Ballet (SAB), the official school of New York City Ballet, in the fall of 1998. In the spring of 2000, Veyette became an apprentice with New York City Ballet, and later that season he joined the Company as a member of the corps de ballet. In 2006, he was promoted to soloist. In 2007, Veyette was promoted to principal dancer.

***John Selya***

John Selya received 2003 Tony and Drama Desk nominations and the TDF/Astaire Award for Best Male Dancer and a Theatre World Award for "Movin' Out," his Broadway debut. Most recently, he starred in the new Broadway musical "Come Fly Away" by Twyla Tharp, the Broadway revival of "Guys and Dolls" (2009), as well as "Damn Yankees" (2008) and "The Times They Are A-Changin'" (2006). He was born in New York City and trained at the School of American Ballet. Selya joined American Ballet Theatre in 1988. In 2000, he joined Twyla Tharp Dance. Most recently, he was awarded choreographic residency at the Joyce SoHo. He also appeared in Woody Allen's "Everyone Says I Love You."

**Media Contact:**

Kristin Jackson

Jackson INK

808.428.1625

[kristin@jacksonink.net](mailto:kristin@jacksonink.net)

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