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**Pamela Taylor-Tongg Celebrates 25 Years as
Artistic Director of Ballet Hawaii**

Full orchestra to accompany Ballet Hawaii's Nutcracker at anniversary performances

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HONOLULU (December 10, 2010) – Ballet Hawaii is honored to announce that artistic director Pamela Taylor-Tongg will celebrate her 25th anniversary with the company at three upcoming performances of *Nutcracker*. Since joining the company in 1985, Taylor-Tongg has guided Ballet Hawaii through more than two decades of growth and expansion, as well as the realization of the company's full production of *Nutcracker* at the Blaisdell Concert Hall.

In celebration of Taylor-Tongg's 25th anniversary *Nutcracker* performances, Ballet Hawaii has secured a full orchestra featuring members of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra, led by Maestra Ann Krinitsky, for every performance. *Nutcracker* opens on Friday, December 17 at 8 p.m. and continues on Saturday, December 18 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 19 at 2 p.m.

"Pam is the embodiment of joy," said Amanda Schull, dancer, actor, and former performer with Ballet Hawaii. "Joy of dance, joy of art and joy of life. Her enthusiasm is an inspiration to her Ballet Hawaii students as well as all of us fortunate enough to have had the pleasure to work with her."

"Pam is truly passionate about teaching ballet and is dedicated to her art," said Romi Beppu, Ballet West principal dancer and Ballet Hawaii guest artist. "She always strives to inspire excellence from her students and enrich the community."

Among Taylor-Tongg's 25th anniversary highlights is the experience of taking students to the Youth America Grand Prix dance competition, where she received the 2010 Outstanding Teacher Award. She also launched the company's summer intensive programs; enabling local students to experience classes with master teachers from around the world without the cost of travel to the mainland. Taylor-Tongg was also instrumental in expanding Ballet Hawaii's presence to satellite campuses in Wahiawa and Kapolei.

Taylor-Tongg began her early training in Chicago, and studied with Martha Mahr in Florida and the American Ballet Center in New York. She had a ten-year association with the Atlanta Ballet from 1975 to 1985 as a soloist, ballet mistress and director of the apprenticeship program that prepared young dancers for professional careers. Taylor-Tongg credits much of her training to Atlanta Ballet's artistic director Robert Barnett. She moved to Hawaii in 1985.

“Ironically, I had intended to retire from Ballet when I moved to Hawaii and got married,” recalls Taylor-Tongg. “Then, I met the volunteers behind Ballet Hawaii and everything changed when I started teaching again. In fact, my first lessons were in the old Salvation Army gymnasium. Ballet Hawaii has since gone from a handful of students to an enrollment of more than 400 students per year.”

“One of the great joys of teaching is watching students grow from three- or four-years-old to seniors leaving for college,” continued Taylor-Tongg. “Ballet benefits these children in so many ways: from strength and coordination training to helping them stay focused on their goals.”

This year, Taylor-Tongg is once again staging a magical *Nutcracker* performance that shines the spotlight on a cast of dancers from mainland companies such as New York City Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet as well as more than 160 dancers from across Hawaii. *Nutcracker* boasts beautiful sets, lavish costumes, the captivating music of Tchaikovsky performed by the orchestra, and the magical story of Clara, her Nutcracker, the Mouse King, the Land of Sweets and the Sugarplum Fairy, plus so much more.

“Over the course of Pam’s tenure with Ballet Hawaii, she has raised the overall artistic level of the company while promoting ballet to new audiences across Hawaii,” said John Parkinson, executive director, Ballet Hawaii. “It’s no secret that Pam’s dedicated work has served to raise standards for both teaching and performance, and that her efforts have enabled Hawaii to enjoy more professional performances each year.”

“I have appreciated each and every wonderful production Pam has been involved with and I look forward to many more,” said Susan Schull, president of the board of directors, Ballet Hawaii. “Ballet Hawaii is truly blessed to have Pam as our artistic director.”

For Taylor-Tong, the best is yet to come. She hopes to bring new, more diverse audiences to Ballet Hawaii performances and continue to offer Hawaii more opportunities to experience professional performances. She also hopes to offer more adult classes, as well as other forms of dance. Making the arts more accessible and more affordable is her top priority.

Nutcracker Tickets

Tickets for all Ballet Hawaii *Nutcracker* performances are on sale now. 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.

The 2010 Ballet Hawaii production of *Nutcracker* is sponsored by Continental Airlines, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Hawaii, First Hawaiian Insurance, Kasanow and Associates Wealth Management, Pension Services Corporation, Hawaiian Telcom, and supported in part by funds from the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

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