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PRESS RELEASE

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Inland Pacific Ballet engages world class Artists from Europe and New York for their Spectacular Nutcracker

For thousands of southern California families the holiday season officially starts with attending *The Nutcracker* ballet, a treasured tradition for adults and children alike. Leading the way is Southern California's most prominent professional ballet company, Inland Pacific Ballet, who will present fifteen performances of their spectacular *Nutcracker* production from Dec. 4-19.

Celebrating its sixteenth season, the critically acclaimed Company will present this holiday favorite with more than 100 dancers on stage at two of the Inland Empire's most prestigious theaters - three full weekends at Bridges Auditorium in Claremont and for the first time two special weekday evening performances at the Lewis Family Playhouse at the Victoria Gardens Cultural Center in Rancho Cucamonga.

Gracing this year's cast are Principal Guest Artists from across the globe. Direct from Europe, Shawn Bryan will reprise his delightful interpretation of the doting godfather Drosselmeyer who gifts the magical nutcracker doll to Clara. Bryan is an internationally acclaimed mime and actor, who studied at the famous Ecole de Mimodrame in France and performed with legendary mime Marcel Marceau as Marceau's hand-picked apprentice. Originally from southern California, Bryan studied languages and history at France's leading University, the Sorbonne, and received a Master's Degree in Slavic Linguistics from the University of Chicago. He has toured throughout the world for more than thirty years, and his mastery of movement and silent expression elevates his performance of the role of Drosselmeyer beyond expectations.

New York Artists Laura Feig and Eric Michaels will dance the roles of the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. Feig, a Principal Dancer formerly with Atlanta Ballet and National Ballet of Canada has danced starring roles in major ballets including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella* and *Coppelia*. In addition to her accomplishments as a classical ballerina, she also toured the U.S., Canada and Japan starring in Twyla Tharp's "Movin Out" in the role of Judy.

Eric Michaels formerly of the New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and New York's Metropolitan Opera Ballet was an original Broadway cast member of Twyla Tharp's "Come

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Fly Away,” dancing the lead role of Sid, and also danced the principal role of James in the Broadway and touring companies of Tharp’s “Movin’ Out.”

Additional featured performers include Daniel Kirk of the famed Body Vox Dance Company, IPB Principal Jennifer Friel, longtime favorite IPB Principal Sarah Spradlin formerly of Broadway’s smash hit productions of Oklahoma and Phantom of the Opera, former Miami City Ballet Soloist Allynne Stoller and IPB Principal Stephanie Orza.

This year’s production also boasts exciting new choreography. The role of Clara will be given more prominence and be danced by IPB Principals Jennifer Friel, and Marina Fabila, the Dance of the Reed Flutes will incorporate charming milkmaids in exquisite new costumes, and a splendid 60 foot long traditional Chinese dragon will delight audiences in the Chinese Tea dance.

Founded in 1994 by Victoria Koenig and Kevin Myers, Inland Pacific Ballet has become one of Southern California’s cultural jewels and the region’s most prominent professional company, producing exquisitely-staged productions of full-length classic story ballets as well as the best in contemporary choreography.

Tickets for all performances and information are available online at TheBestNutcracker.com and at the following theater box offices:

Bridges Auditorium:

Performances are offered on weekends beginning Saturday, Dec. 4 through Sunday, Dec. 19.

Bridges Auditorium is located on the Pomona College campus at 450 N. College Way, Claremont, CA 91711. Tickets are also available through the Box Office 909-607-1139, Mon. through Fri. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Parking is free, but may be limited due to ongoing construction. Additional parking and a free shuttle service will be available at the Claremont Metrolink parking lot on First Street. Visit ipballet.org for more details.

Lewis Family Playhouse:

Weekday evening performances will be presented on Thursday, Dec. 16 and Friday, Dec. 17. The Lewis Family Playhouse is located in the Victoria Gardens Center at 12505 Cultural Center Way, Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91739. Tickets are also available through the Lewis Family Playhouse Box Office at 909-477-2725, Mon. through Fri. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sat. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.