

ALBANY BERKSHIRE BALLET

MADELINE CANTARELLA CULPO, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



May 1, 2009

Dear Friend,

The Albany Berkshire Ballet (ABB) has performed throughout the northeast for over 30 years. This nonprofit regional company has been under the continuous artistic direction of Madeline Cantarella Culpo. Over the years, such noteworthy choreographers as Robert Atwood, Bill T. Jones, Laura Dean, Philip Jerry, Francis Patrelle and Mary Giannone Talmi have "set" their artistic visions on dancers trained by Director Culpo in performances ranging from classical treasures through modern classics.

While the ABB has in the past received support from the New York and Massachusetts Council on the Arts and private donations, there is no endowment or corporate sponsor. Its primary funding derives from ticket sales; and, as is true of many ballet companies, the single largest funding has come from annual performances of "The Nutcracker."

For the first time, the 2008 season did not generate sufficient sales from The Nutcracker to support continued performances by the ABB – leading to cancellation of the planned "Midsummer's Night Dream" spring performances. Ticket sales were down at several locations, including Taconic Hills and Great Barrington, while costs increased.

The ABB is not alone. According to the San Diego Union Tribune (1/4/09), "In 'The Nutcracker,' the villain is the Mouse King, but it was the recession that threatened "Nutcracker" productions across the country and may put City Ballet of San Diego out of business. As families tightened their belts, ticket sales for the Christmas ballet lagged nationwide. The Cincinnati Ballet canceled one of 10 performances after selling only 140 advance tickets for a 2,700-seat hall. Dancers from the Sacramento Ballet hawked tickets on the street, and, with 'The Nutcracker' traditionally a source of significant income, the company's future is in danger." The Dayton Ballet, one of our country's oldest companies, had to lay off most of its staff. (Business Courier, 2/9/09); the 37-year old Nevada Ballet Theatre had to let dancers go and canceled its spring performance (Las Vegas Sun, 3/12/09); and Oregon Ballet, which lost Nutcracker sales due to snowstorms, has cut its budget by 28 percent (Oregon News, 4/5/09).

Our beloved Nutcracker is in jeopardy! The ABB must raise money to retire \$40,000 in its fall loan (normally repaid from Nutcracker sales), treat its backdrops to be fire retardant, restore costumes that have become worn or damaged and hire back dancers for 2009 performances.

Please help! Your tax-deductible contribution will help to ensure that audiences continue to have the opportunity to view a live performance of this holiday jewel – as well as affording children from Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and New York's Capital District the chance to dance with professional company members to the delight of young and old.

Sincerely,

Madeline Cantarella Culpo, Artistic Director
Albany Berkshire Ballet



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