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CATSKILL BALLET THEATRE PREMIERES 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

A Gift to the Community, New Ballet Asks "Who...Loves...Who...Loves...Who"

Kingston, New York (April 4, 2008) – At Catskill Ballet Theatre Company, everyone is counting down the days. The anticipation is mounting. The curtain rises on the ballet company's world premier of a new Davis Robertson ballet of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on April 25– 27 at Ulster Performing Arts Center.

Commissioned specifically for Catskill Ballet Theatre Company, (CBT), the 'Dream' production will enchantingly ask "who... loves... who... loves... who?" in its interpretation of Shakespeare's comedy of star-crossed love.

All involved in the birth of this major production hope it will become a gift to the community that keeps on giving long after the last curtain call.

This intriguing production encompasses the talents of a world-renowned choreographer, a Broadway set designer legend, a brilliant costume design star and Manhattan-based principal dancers from distinguished dance companies in addition to a corps de ballet of classically trained dancers from the Kingston, New York-based Anne Hebard School of Ballet.

It originates with the vision and dance steps developed by New York-based choreographer Davis Robertson. A former principal dancer of the Joffrey Ballet, Robertson has developed original ballets for dance companies as diverse as the Milwaukee Ballet, Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, Ballet Pacifica and the Florida Ballet and for ballet superstar Mikhail Baryshnikov. Robertson's choreography is influenced by his dance experience on Broadway and as one of the original break dancers of MTV Live.

"Creating a new ballet set to the wonderful music of Felix Mendelssohn about love, misunderstanding, reconciliation and general silliness is easy," says Robertson. "The big challenge to interpreting Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is to make it appealing, bewitching and above all, accessible to new audiences of all ages. I invite the public to come see whether we've succeeded."

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Robertson has tapped seven celebrated professional dancers from the Joffrey Ballet, Suzanne Farrell Ballet, Metropolitan Opera and Fugate/Bahiri Ballet, amongst others to take on the principal roles of Shakespeare's famous star-crossed lovers Oberon and Titania, Lysander and Hermia, Helena and Demetrius, and the whimsical trouble-making Puck.

CBT Artistic Director Anne Hebard has overseen the demanding training of the local cast comprised of 23 young dancers, ages nine to 18, and two adult dancers taking on the roles of the actor turned donkey Bottom and Theseus, Duke of Athens.

"Audiences will be delighted when they see Catskill Ballet Theatre's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," predicts Hebard. "They can expect to experience a New York City-caliber performance right here in our own Hudson Valley but without the high cost and long travel. Our dancers are that talented and highly trained."

This 'Dream' production is staged with stunning and vibrant scenery created by Richard Prouse, legendary Broadway set designer and Rhinebeck, NY resident. Prouse has been called the finest scenic artist working in America today and, over 20 years, has worked on more than 50 Broadway shows including: *Beauty and the Beast*, *Hairspray*, *Spamalot*, *The Color Purple*, and most recently *Mary Poppins*.

The costumes transform dancers into lovers, fairies, changelings, rustics. Even the donkey is conceived by rising costume design star Alixandra Englund. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and her design credits include numerous shows in New York City as well as around the northeast and at international festivals.

The curtain rises on Catskill Ballet Theatre's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Ulster Performing Arts Center (UPAC); 601 Broadway, Kingston on April 25 and April 26 at 8 PM; April 27 at 2 PM. Tickets are \$18 (students and seniors) and \$25 for adults. Contact the UPAC box office at (845) 339-6088 or TicketMaster www.ticketmaster.com for tickets.

This new production has been made possible by a generous gift of Peter and Judy Hauser of Accord, New York with grants from the Dutchess County Arts Council and Stewarts shops, that believe in enriching the Hudson Valley community through the active support of the performing arts.

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Editors Note: Photos of CBT's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and rehearsals are available by contacting Hilary Chalmers at 917.797.3325. Members of the media are also welcome to attend an exclusive rehearsal of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and meet the team behind the production Saturday, April 12 from 3 – 5 pm at the Anne Hebard School of Ballet. Contact Hilary Chalmers for more details.

Relevant web sites:

Catskill Ballet Theatre - www.catskillballet.org

Davis Robertson, Choreographer - www.davisrobertson.com

Richard Prouse, Set Designer - www.selectbackdrops.com

Ulster Performing Arts Center – www.upac.org