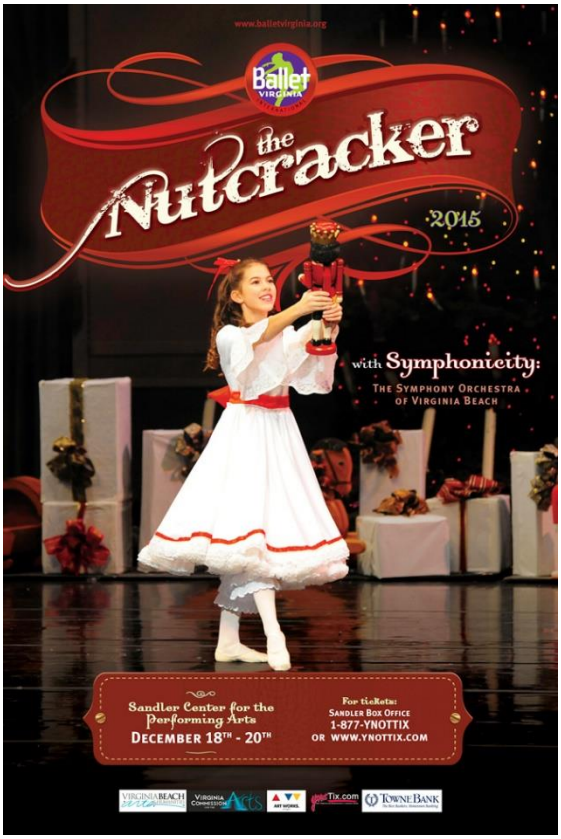

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Ballet Virginia International Presents

"The Nutcracker"

Guests Artists from Pennsylvania Ballet join the company with orchestra from Symphonicity

(Norfolk, VA—November 16, 2015) –A young girl's dream of a magical Nutcracker that comes to life will fill the stage when Ballet Virginia International (BVI) presents "The Nutcracker," Dec. 18 at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 19 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., plus Dec. 20 at 2 p.m. at the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts in Virginia Beach.

Guest artists will perform with our region's finest classically-trained dancers accompanied by orchestra from Symphonicity, the symphony orchestra of Virginia Beach. Ana Calderon will grace the stage as The Sugar Plum Fairy and Etienne Diaz will partner her as the Cavalier. Both artists are currently dancing with Pennsylvania Ballet and have performed many lead roles to critical acclaim with Pennsylvania Ballet and other ballet companies around the world. LeeAnn Walker, a BVI alumnus and current member of Roanoke City Ballet, will dance the role of Dream Clara along with Richard Villaverde as the Prince. Mr. Villaverde comes to BVI from Miami via Philadelphia where he currently dances with BalletX. Cornelius Bartlett, BVI faculty member and former Virginia Ballet Theatre dancer, rounds out the esteemed professional dancers leading our talented cast.

"BVI is delighted to have these professional artists lead our region's finest dancers in what promises to be a stunning production" said Suzanne Lownsbury, co-artistic director for BVI. In addition, Lownsbury says, "The ballet company is excited to have Symphonicity, for the fifth year in a row. Live music provides a depth to the production that gives both dancers and audiences a richer experience."

Maestro David S. Kunkel will conduct the live orchestra of over 50 musicians in all four public performances at the Sandler Center. This will be Mr. Kunkel's final season with Symphonicity after conducting the orchestra for 35 years. Without his talent, dedication and hard work, the collaboration between BVI and the orchestra would not be possible. The orchestra will perform Tchaikovsky's original score and include strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, harp, celesta and more.

This year, much effort has been made towards updating and improving costuming. In Act II the Chinese Dance has completely redesigned costumes. Many other costumes are getting new embellishments and other updates. "We continue to make our 'Nutcracker' a true Hampton Roads creation," said Janina Michalski Bove, co-artistic director for BVI. "All our new sets and costumes are

locally designed and produced, the choreography is created right here in our Norfolk studios, the musicians are local and of course BVI's dancers are growing up right here in our community."

For over a decade now, Bove and Lownsbury have produced an annual Hampton Roads "Nutcracker" as co-artistic directors. The duo's past "Nutcracker" productions have graced the stages of Chrysler Hall, Harrison Opera House and now, for the eighth year, the Sandler Center. BVI is the resident ballet company at the Sandler Center. Last year's "Nutcracker" performances drew more than 4,700 in total attendance.

Tickets for BVI's production of "The Nutcracker" at the Sandler Center range in price from $20 to $55 and can be purchased at the Sandler Center Box Office, www.ynottix.com or 1-877-YNOTTIX. Student matinees, at discounted prices, will be offered at the Sandler Center Dec. 16th, 17th and 18th at 10 a.m., providing local students the opportunity to experience this classic holiday event. Further information regarding the student matinees can be found by contacting the Sandler Center.

Please visit Ballet Virginia International's website for additional information and our season performance schedule.

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About Ballet Virginia International

BVI Academy specializes in a diverse ballet syllabus inspired by the American, Russian, Italian and French schools. This solid technical base ensures added success in Modern Dance, Jazz and Character classes also offered at BVI. Musicality and artistry are developed joyously in our supportive environment. The professional quality productions allow selected students and community dancers the opportunity to truly experience dance as a performance art.

BVI Company performs an annual "Nutcracker" with live orchestra, another classical ballet each spring, a student performance in June as well as various guest appearances and smaller performances. BVI is a member of the Southeastern Regional Ballet Association/Regional Dance America (SERBA/RDA).