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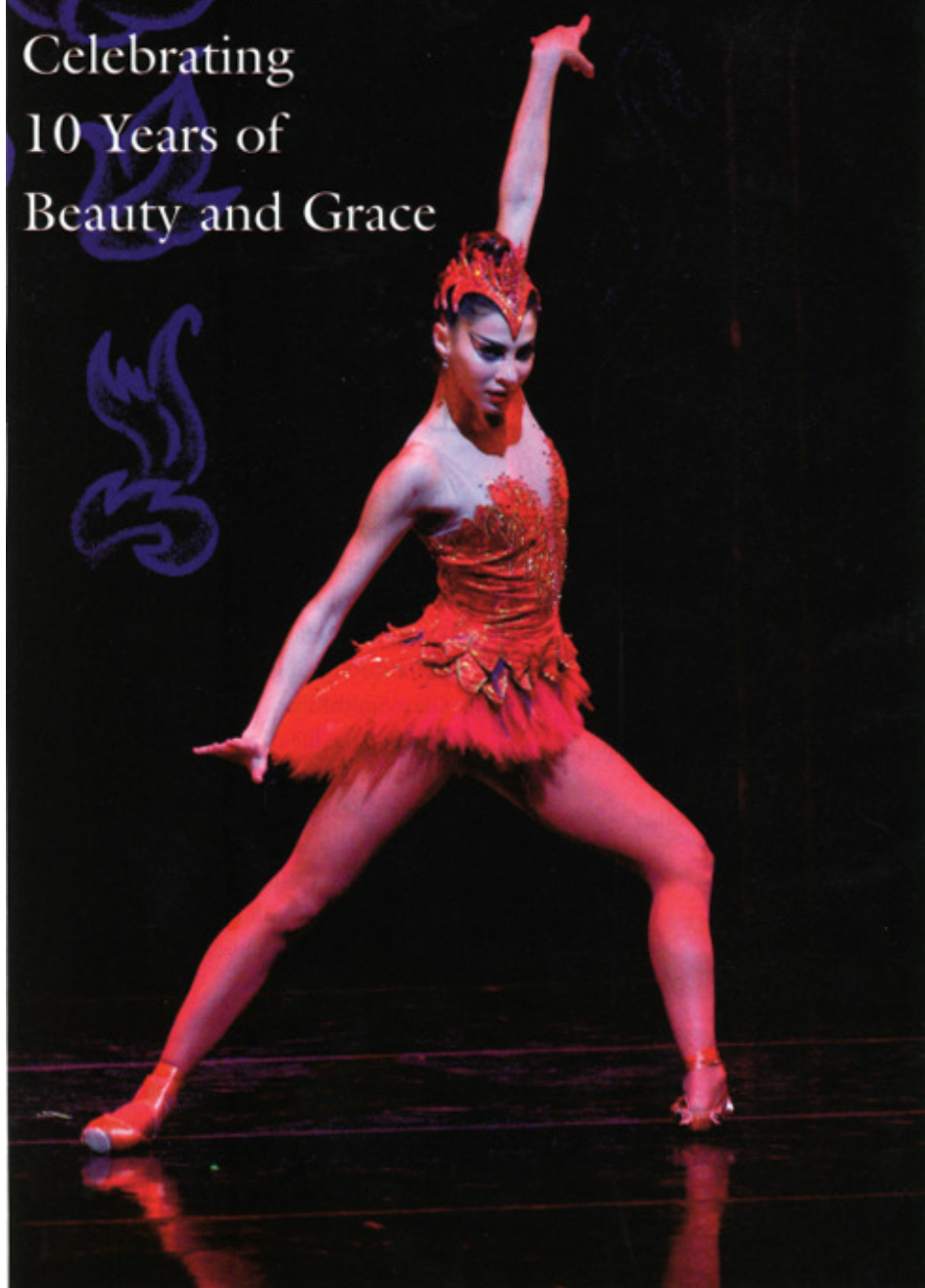
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The Carolina Ballet

Celebrating
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photos: The Carolina Ballet

A dancer performs in "Firebird."



Robert Weiss, founding artistic director of The Carolina Ballet

"There is no secret to loving ballet," said Robert Weiss, founding artistic director of The Carolina Ballet. "No mystery to the art. You just have to come and enjoy it."

Weiss' expertise and talented dancers have proven that to thousands of North Carolinians who gave ballet a chance and grew to love it. Today, he and the dancers make up one of the country's top 10 ballet companies. Not bad considering The Carolina Ballet emerged as an idea in 1993 and began performing just 10 years ago in 1997, when Raleigh attorney Ward Purrington decided the Triangle needed to round out its arts with ballet. Purrington approached Ann Vorus, owner of the Raleigh Dance Theatre, and the theater's board, about taking the company to a professional level. They accepted the challenge.

Armed with research demonstrating the Triangle was ready for a professional ballet company, the group ran an advertisement in *Dance Magazine* for a founding artistic director. Lucky for Raleigh, the ad caught Weiss' eye, along with more than 100 applicants. "We had applicants from all over the world," Purrington said. "It was quite amazing."

A former principal dancer with the New York City Ballet and past artistic

schools. "This past year we did 'Swan Lake' and this coming year we will be taking 'Peter and the Wolf' on the road," Weiss said.

Weiss has other dreams for The Carolina Ballet. "I would like to expand the season, use more symphonic music and travel more so the nation can see what we have here in Raleigh." He also talks of future ballets. "I have plans for many ballets, some of which are dreams in my mind. We are poised to take the next step as a ballet company."

A Beautiful Season

For now, The Carolina Ballet's next step is the 2007-2008 season. The company opened in October with "Carmina Burana," choreographed by

A scene from "The Nutcracker"



photo: The Carolina Ballet



A scene from "Swan Lake"

photo: The Carolina Ballet

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Carolina Ballet
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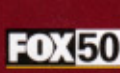
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resident guest choreographer Lynne Taylor-Corbett and accompanied by the North Carolina Master Chorale. "Cinderella" and "Peter and the Wolf" followed in November, and "The Nutcracker" again brings Christmas magic to the Raleigh stage in December. February will see "Cabaret," featuring Andrea Marcovicci, and in late February the company performs "Balanchine Favorites."

The Carolina Jamboree with Tony-winning string band The Red Clay Ramblers, an audience favorite, returns in March. In April, the ballet will present "The Waltzes of Old Vienna," which was choreographed during the summer residency. Weiss said this is the ballet his wife, Melissa Podcasy, who happens to be one of the company dancers, calls "her feel-good ballet."

A Carolina Ballet premiere of "Sleeping Beauty" with choreography by Weiss closes the season in May. "This 'Sleeping Beauty' will have new takes on the story and move faster than the


traditional one," Weiss said.

This lineup is sure to bring out a diverse range of ballet enthusiasts—from regulars to budding dancers with parents in tow. "Ballet makes for exciting entertainment. It's alive and fresh, and at the same time, classic," Weiss said. "It washes over you when you experience it. There is not enough beauty in the world, and ballet brings beauty." WL

Diane Silcox-Jarrett lives in Wake County and wishes she had the grace of a ballerina. She is a freelance writer who contributes to magazines and has written two creative non-fiction books.

Log on to www.carolinaballet.com to learn more. For ticket information, call The Carolina Ballet at (919) 719-0900 or Ticketmaster at (919) 834-4000.

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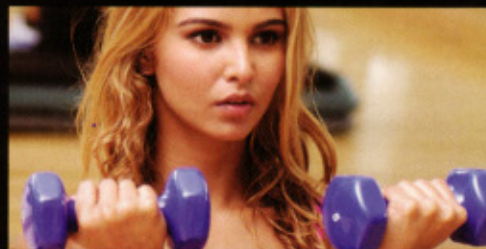
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