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CINCINNATI BALLET WELCOMES EXTRAORDINARY NEW DANCERS

Company grows from 24 to 25 professional dancers and increases its second company

(Cincinnati) –Cincinnati Ballet is pleased to announce it’s adding five new dancers to its company and ten dancers to its second company, bringing the total number of Cincinnati Ballet professional AGMA (American Guild of Musical Artists) and pre-professional dancers to 38.

“Cincinnati Ballet is bringing a spectacular group of international, national and regional new dancers to Cincinnati,” says **Victoria Morgan**, CEO and Artistic Director of Cincinnati Ballet. “Among the 500 or so dancers auditioning for placement at Cincinnati Ballet, these dancers stood out for various aesthetic and technical reasons, and a few literally took our breath away. They bring new ideas and a diversity of training to our already very strong, talented company. I’m excited to see how the company will grow with the influx of these new artists.”

Morgan and Cincinnati Ballet Associate Artistic Director **Devon Carney** selected dancers at Cincinnati Ballet auditions conducted in New York, Boston, San Francisco, Seattle and in the company’s own studios in the early months of 2011.

Cincinnati Ballet will now have 25 professional dancers in 2011-12. Last season, 24 dancers performed with the company, and in 2009-10 that number was 22. “We are expanding, slowly but surely,” says Morgan.

The new dancers are Corps de Ballet members Rodrigo Almarales, Sirui Liu, Ruslan Mukhambetkaliyev and Patric Palkens and new Apprentice Craig Hall. Grace Reeves and Thomas Caleb Roberts, both CBII Dancers in 2010-11, return with the company as Apprentices.

“It’s crucial to grow the number of company dancers,” says Morgan. “More dancers allow us to access a broader repertoire, do more onstage, to create a bigger, brighter, more exuberant stage presence. With the biggest production in Cincinnati Ballet’s history, our new *Frisch’s Presents The Nutcracker* this season, a full company is more important than ever.”

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In addition to its expanded full-time company, Cincinnati Ballet welcomes eleven dancers into its 2011-12 Season: four new CBII Dancers and one returning and six new Trainees. CBII is Cincinnati Ballet's emerging professionals program, giving extraordinarily talented young dancers chosen from national auditions a professional company experience.

"These young dancers participate in education and outreach initiatives, allowing us to share our art form with more people in more places. They are our 'dance missionaries,'" says Morgan. "We bring dancers into the community to schools, senior centers and public spaces like airports and public squares. We surprise people and get them up and dancing with us. Our mantra is 'everybody dances.' Our second company is crucial to those efforts."

Company Bios

Rodrigo Almarales (Corps de Ballet) is originally from Cuba. He was a corps member with Boston Ballet and a soloist with Deutsche Oper Am Rhein (Germany). He trained with National Ballet School (Cuba), National Ballet School (Mexico), National Ballet School (Canada) and Hamburg Ballet School. "He really stood out in Boston Ballet's *Elo Experience*, a new contemporary production by its resident choreographer Jorma Elo," says Carney. "We were thrilled to invite this rising star to dance with us."

Craig Hall (Apprentice) joins us from Los Angeles Ballet, where he was a company dancer since 2008. He trained with Pacific Northwest Ballet School and School of American Ballet. His company performances with Los Angeles Ballet include several George Balanchine ballets: *Prodigal Son*, *Kammermusik No. 2*, *Piano Concerto No. 2*, *Violin Concerto* and *Western Symphony*.

Ruslan Mukhambetkaliyev (Corps de Ballet) was a Principal Dancer with the Russian National Ballet since 2005, performing roles such as *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, *Cinderella* and *The Nutcracker*. *The New York Times* singled him out for his performance in *Swan Lake* as "the most interesting cast member." Prior to RNB, he was a soloist with Moscow City Ballet in pieces such as *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*. "Ruslan was on tour in the United States. He drove all night to get to our audition in Cincinnati, walked in, took class and then got back in the car and drove back to New York," says Morgan. "I was impressed by his strength, stamina, power – even without sleep, he is spectacular!"

Sirui Liu (Corps de Ballet) trained with Shanghai Dance School and Shanghai Theatre Academy. Her professional performances include Shanghai Ballet Troupe's *Les Sylphides* in 2002 and 2004, Hong Kong Ballet's *Swan Lake* in 2008 and Chen Jia Nian's *Four Seasons*. She won multiple international competitions, including the gold in the prestigious at the China National Ballet Competition. She trained and performed internationally with the Shanghai Theatre Academy. "This young dancer has a long, elegant line with a beautiful long neck. I'm thrilled to bring Sirui Liu into our dance family," says Morgan. "She is considered to be the top graduating student in the Shanghai Ballet School, and has already earned a fine reputation in our industry."

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Patric Palkens (Corps de Ballet) is one of Orlando's leading dancers, dancing principal roles in Orlando Ballet's *Ballet of the Sexes*, *Battle of the Sexes: II*, *Bailamos*, *Homage*, *Cinderella* and *The Nutcracker*. He trained with Orlando Ballet under the famous American Ballet Theatre principal dancer Fernando Bujones and also at Escuela de Ballet del Teatro Municipal de Santiago, Chile and The Dance Syndicate, MT. Reviews cite his extraordinary presence, his ability to "light the room on fire," to "embody pain and excitement of attraction and rejection" (in *Carmen*), to draw in the audience and convert them to his cause. "This passionate dancer will be an inspiring addition to our company," says Morgan.

CBII Bios

Eli Barnes (CBII) comes to us from the Professional Division of the prestigious Pacific Northwest Ballet, where he danced Corps de Ballet and demi-soloist roles as well as the Principal role in Balanchine's *Chaconne*. In addition to PNB, he trained with National Dance Institute-New Mexico Company Xcel and University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

James Arthur Gilmer (CBII) trained with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School. He has attended summer intensive programs with Point Park University, American Ballet Theatre and Chautauqua School of Dance. His performance experience includes *The Nutcracker* and *Christmas is Comin' Uptown*.

Heather Thomas (CBII) comes to Cincinnati Ballet from a traineeship at Joffrey Ballet, where she performed key roles in *The Nutcracker* and the contemporary *Modern Times* and *Breakthrough*. She trained with Pennsylvania Regional Ballet, Canada's National Ballet and Joffrey Ballet Chicago Academy of Dance.

Grace Allison McCarthy (CBII) Professionally, McCarthy has performed with Ballet Gala Seoul, Korea and appeared as the lead ballet dancer in the film *Wings of Legacy*. She trained with Korea National University of the Arts Dept of Ballet, John Cranko Schule and with Viktor and Tatiana Kasatsky. She won numerous awards in the recent Youth America Grand Prix.

Trainees for 2011-12 are Diamond Ancion and Samantha Pille from Cincinnati Ballet Otto M. Budig Academy, Shannon Biery, Emily France, Michaela Gould, Briana Habel and Daniel Powers.

About CBII

CBII is Cincinnati Ballet's emerging professionals program, giving extraordinarily talented young dancers selected from auditions around the company a professional company experience. These talented young dancers receive unparalleled professional experience, performing corps de ballet roles in Cincinnati Ballet full-length productions and mixed-repertoires requiring a larger number of corps de ballet dancers. Typically, one or two CBII Dancers join the company after their first season.

Additionally, CBII Dancers enhance Cincinnati Ballet's education and outreach efforts by visiting schools and community centers to perform, demonstrate dance technique and act as ambassadors for Cincinnati Ballet.

By rehearsing and performing with the company and continuing dance education with Cincinnati Ballet Otto M. Budig Academy, CBII Dancers gain professional experience, make important contacts in the dance world and develop a deeper understanding of the physical challenges and joys of being a dancer.

About Cincinnati Ballet

Since 1963, Cincinnati Ballet has been the cornerstone professional ballet company of the region, presenting a mix of important classical full-length ballets and an adventurous, vibrant mix of repertory ballets, regularly with live orchestral accompaniment. Cincinnati Ballet's mission is to inspire hope and joy in our community and beyond through the power and passion of dance. Our mantra is "Everybody dances." To that end, Cincinnati Ballet presents exhilarating performances, extensive education outreach programs (including professional lecture-demos, residencies, scholarship programs and student matinees), and offers top level professional ballet training at Cincinnati Ballet Otto M. Budig Academy, which enjoys an enrollment of more than a thousand participants in multi-level programs across two studio campuses.

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