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CONNECTICUT BALLET OPENS 30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON WITH FULL-LENGTH *SLEEPING BEAUTY* IN STAMFORD & HARTFORD

HARTFORD & STAMFORD, CT ----- Connecticut Ballet opens its 30th anniversary season with a revival of Brett Raphael's full-length production of *The Sleeping Beauty* featuring company ballerina **Oksana Maslova** and New York City Ballet principal dancer **Charles Askegard** as Princess Aurora and Prince Florimund. The production opens October 22nd at 7:00pm and Sunday, October 23 at 2:00pm at Palace Theatre, Stamford Center for the Arts, 61 Atlantic Street, Stamford, and continues on Saturday, October 29th (2:00pm & 7:00pm) at the Belding Theater at Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, 166 Capitol Avenue, Hartford.

With music by Peter Tchaikovsky and sets and costumes by Vozrozhdenie Theatrical Workshops in St. Petersburg, Russia, the production is the largest in Connecticut Ballet's repertoire and features 24 company dancers, 12 character performers and 25 children. HSBC Bank is the sponsor for the company's 30th Anniversary Opening Gala at Palace Theatre in Stamford. The gala, entitled 'An Evening in the French Court,' features a rare appearance by the New York Baroque Dance Company followed by an onstage dinner/dance with music by Silver Streaks. Tickets for the event may be obtained by calling 203-964-1211 In addition to the main theater dates listed above, Connecticut Ballet performs a 'family matinee' version of the classic ballet at Katherine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center (October 16) and Ridgefield Playhouse (Oct. 30).

Mr. Askegard will make his debut with Connecticut Ballet with these appearances. A long time favorite of the ballerinas at New York City Ballet, Askegard joined American Ballet Theatre as a member of the corps de ballet in 1987, and was promoted to soloist in 1992. In 1997, he left ABT

to join New York City Ballet as a soloist. He was promoted to principal in 1998. Since that time, he has danced in virtually every major role in the repertoire and has been a guest artist with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Ballet Etudes of South Florida, Bavarian State Ballet, Philippine Ballet Theatre, The Daring Project and the Stars of American Ballet. He can also be seen in the documentary, *Ballet*, directed by Fred Wiseman. On Sunday, October 9th, New York City Ballet will honor him with a farewell gala celebrating his 25-year career.

Tickets for performances at Stamford Center for the Arts are priced between \$50-\$25 and tickets at The Bushnell Center for Performing Arts are priced between \$55 and \$31.50. Purchase tickets online at www.scalive.org or www.bushnell.org.

Xerox Foundation is the exclusive corporate sponsor of the production, with additional support from City of Stamford, Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, Connecticut Public Radio & Television, FactSet Research Corporation, General Reinsurance Corporation, Hartford Business Journal, Hartford Courant, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, HSBC Bank, Karl Chevrolet, Marriott Stamford Hotel & Spa, Moffly Media, Purdue Pharma, Star 99.9, Marcia Selden Catering, Stackpole, Moore, Tryon, The Travelers Companies, and Connecticut Light & Power & Yankee Gas.

Founded in 1981, Connecticut Ballet is based in Hartford and Stamford and is the state's year-round professional ballet company. For further information, visit www.connecticutballet.com.

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