

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TERRENCE S. ORR
PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE

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**High-resolution photos are available upon request.*

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School Students to Compete in International Ballet Competition



PITTSBURGH, PA (June 2017) – Joining 225 elite dancers from more than 24 countries and 20 states, two Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School Graduate Program students will compete in the final round of the 11th-annual World Ballet Competition (WBC) June 19-24, in Orlando, Florida. Pittsburgh dance fans can tune in to a live online broadcast of the competition by visiting worldballetcompetition.com and clicking “Watch Live.”

Japan natives Saki Tsuruta, who turns 20 on June 18, and Masanao Ito, 20, will perform the virtuosic grand pas de deux from the classical ballet “Le Corsaire.” This challenging showpiece takes the form of a dance for three in the full-length ballet, but is often staged as a duet for

competition settings.

Tsuruta and Ito are full-time students in PBT School's Graduate Program, a pre-professional training program for dancers who have graduated from high school and are preparing for professional ballet careers. More than half of PBT's full-time company members trained in PBT School's Pre-professional Division, and its alumni also have gone on to dance professionally with other U.S. and international companies. PBT Principal Dancer Yoshiaki Nakano, an alumni of the Graduate Program, took home a silver medal from the WBC in 2010.

Judged by major international dance masters and artistic directors, the WBC draws aspiring young dancers, of ages 9 to 24, from around the world to compete for more than \$150,000 in cash, scholarship awards, job contracts and dance merchandise. All dancers were pre-selected through a rigorous video audition process and will be competing in the categories of Soloist, Pas de Deux, Ensemble and Choreography. Prizes include the \$10,000 Grand Prix award, which is open to all categories. Tsuruta and Ito will compete in the pre-professional Pas de Deux category.

The week-long event invites audience members for each day of the competition and is also broadcast live online worldwide (except for the gala performance). Each day's livestream begins with a pre-show broadcast, which gives viewers interview and backstage access. The competition's electronic scoring system also shares results with the audience in real time.

Since 2007, the WBC has drawn elite dancers representing more than 65 countries. Over the past ten events, competitors earned more than \$1.5 million dollars in scholarship awards, cash prizes, job contracts, and dance merchandise, and 9 million video views have been generated online. Since its inauguration, the WBC has helped launch the professional careers of previous competitors now affiliated with prestigious ballet companies in five continents: North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

The event's concluding Gala Performance on June 24, will feature winning competitors and internationally recognized professional dancers, including New York City Ballet Principal Dancer Daniel Ulbricht.

The WBC is presented by the Central Florida Ballet and funded in part by the Orange County Government through the Arts & Cultural Affairs Program, sponsored in part by the Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council of Arts and Culture and the State of Florida, and supported by the United Arts of Central Florida.

ABOUT PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE SCHOOL

Under the direction of PBT Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr and School Co-directors Marjorie Grundvig and Dennis Marshall, PBT School provides a diverse dance curriculum to more than 1,000 students annually across its Children's, Student, Pre-Professional and Community divisions. Ranging from pre-ballet to pre-professional, PBT School fosters the expression, discipline and joy of ballet at every level and cultivates the next generation of professional dancers. Strengthened by daily exposure to the professional company, PBT School students experience training that extends from the studio to main-stage performance opportunities in

PBT productions at the Benedum Center.