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❖ today's focus

Live music key feature of 30th Gwinnett Ballet Theatre

By Holly Calmes

Special to GwinnettForum.com

JAN. 4, 2007 -- When Gwinnett Ballet Theatre dancers took their final bows on December 17 on the stage of the Gwinnett Performing Arts Center, an historic chapter closed on the 30 year-old company and a new chapter began. Close to 9,000 people were in the audience this year.

GBT's "The Nutcracker" enjoyed 11 public performances to predominantly sold-out houses. Six of these performances were accompanied by the 30-piece Gwinnett Ballet Theatre Orchestra under the direction of Predrag Gosta. The Atlanta Youth Choir also participated for the first act "Snow" scenes. The live music brought new patrons to the theatre and created a wave of excitement in Gwinnett's blossoming arts community.

Says GBT Artistic Director Lisa Sheppard Robson, "The public flocks to enjoy this holiday classic, and they have delighted in our 'Nutcracker' for years. The addition of live orchestration and chorus brought the house down. I hope we can afford to continue to delight our audiences with this collaboration and offer this privilege to our incredibly talented dancers. Strings, voice, winds, percussion and dance filled the theater with the festive magic of each enchanting note of Tchaikovsky's incredible score."

Gwinnett Center's Executive Director Preston Williams said, "The addition of live music was particularly unique for a venue of our size. We received nothing but positive feedback from attendees and staff. The live music was really a plus for it. We give GBT kudos. It was the best effort yet!"

The ballet company, headquartered in Snellville, has been quietly gathering forces over the past several years under the leadership of Board Chairman Stan Hall. He says, "This year's Nutcracker' performances had placed Gwinnett Ballet among the very elite of metro-Atlanta arts organizations. We have always known that Gwinnett Ballet was a hidden treasure. But this year's performances, with the full orchestra and choral addition, have allowed the treasure to be discovered."

The addition of a live orchestra this year gave GBT the distinction of being the only company in the Atlanta area performing "Nutcracker" to live music. Ms. Robson

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NOTABLE: Suwanee Resic Fellowship; Gwinnett Place
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TODAY'S QUOTE: One Su Toward a Happier Life



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❖ notable

Suwanee resident selected for Harvard Neighborworks fellow

The executive vice president of Consumer Credit Counseling Service, Mark N. Cole, of Suwanee, has been selected as a NeighborWorks Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Cole is one of 49 individuals chosen to participate in Achieving Excellence, a training program offered by NeighborWorks® America through the Kennedy School of Government.



Cole

Cole directs all operational aspects of Consumer Credit Counseling Service (CCCS), a 250-employee non-profit organization serving consumers through offices in four states, including a Gwinnett office at 3473 Satellite Boulevard. The agency also offers help around the clock online at www.cccsinc.org and via telephone at 800-251-CCCS (2227). CCCS provides budget and housing counseling, debt management plans, financial education and the bankruptcy counseling and debtor education now required by federal law.

Cole serves on the Board of Directors of the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Atlanta, the Board of Community Friendship and the Advisory Board of TechBridge.

Achieving Excellence is an 18-month educational program for seasoned executives in community organizations focused on affordable housing, community revitalization or economic development. Participants work on specific challenges, striving for solutions to enable their organizations to make lasting change in their communities.

Achieving Excellence includes three sessions at Harvard University and coaching by Douglas K. Smith, principal designer of the program. The remaining sessions are scheduled for February and October.

✧ **More improvements beginning to show for Gwinnett Place CID**

Another heavily traveled pedestrian corridor now includes new sidewalks and landscape beautification for those enjoying what the Gwinnett Place area has to offer.

The Gwinnett Place CID has coordinated the installment of sidewalks along one side of Market Street from Satellite Boulevard to Venture Parkway. The new sidewalks connect to sidewalks the CID previously worked to add along Venture Parkway.

Additionally, significant landscape improvements were made throughout the area, including new sod, ground cover plants and maple trees. The CID worked to clean up years of overgrown right-of-way space and beautified a retention pond near Venture Parkway. Long-term plans call for revitalizing the area to produce a park-like environment.

Joe Allen, CID executive director, says: "Market Street is a key walking area for those frequenting the great restaurants and entertainment venues in the District.". "These new improvements will prove safer and more pleasant surroundings for those working in or visiting our area." The street connects the motel area of the CID with shopping and entertainment areas.

At the same time, crews are busy preparing the gateway monument and park at the intersection of Commerce Avenue and Satellite Boulevard. More information on CID projects and other district events is available online at www.GwinnettPlaceCID.com



❖ recommendation

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❖ georgia tidbit

In Memoriam: James Brown

Legendary artist and Georgia native James Brown, known as the "Godfather of Soul" and "Mr. Dynamite," was hailed as one of the most influential musicians of the 20th century. He began his career in Georgia during the 1950s, and in the 1960s he helped to forge a new musical style known as "soul." His energetic stage presence and rhythmic innovations influenced generations of later musicians, particularly funk, disco, rap, and hip-hop performers.

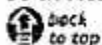


Brown

Brown also used his music as a vehicle for nonviolent protest during the civil rights movement, and he was a well-known philanthropist in his hometown of Augusta.

Brown was honored with three ceremonies in the week following his death on December 25, 2006: a procession and public viewing at the Apollo Theater in New York City; a private service in North Augusta, S.C.; and a public viewing and memorial service at the James Brown Arena in Augusta. The arena was renamed in Brown's honor just months before his death.

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❖ thought for the day

Sure way to work toward having a happier life