

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **“IT’S A WONDERFUL NUTCRACKER” FOR MENLOWE BALLET**

**Menlo Park, CA–September 14, 2015**–Menlowe Ballet unveils the world premiere of Michael Lowe’s **“It’s a Wonderful Nutcracker”** December 12-20, 2015 at Menlo-Atherton Performing Arts Center, 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton, CA. Inspired by Frank Capra’s classic film, “It’s a Wonderful Life”, Menlowe’s “It’s a Wonderful Nutcracker” is set in the 1940s and boasts all the magical trimmings of a traditional Nutcracker enhanced with a heartwarming message about family and what’s truly meaningful about the holidays. Eight performances take place Saturday, December 12 at 2pm & 7pm, Sunday, December 13 at 2 & 7pm, Friday December 18 at 7pm, Saturday, December 19 at 2 & 7pm and Sunday, December 20 at 2pm. Tickets ranging from \$28-\$55 are available at [www.menloweballet.org](http://www.menloweballet.org) or by calling 800-595-4TIX (4849).

“I’ve always wanted to create a Nutcracker that touches people’s hearts in a different way” says choreographer, Michael Lowe. “I first watched Frank Capra’s film “It’s a Wonderful Life” over 40 years ago and was captivated. I always felt that the movie’s tone and storyline could translate beautifully into a new kind of Nutcracker that celebrated the best of of both stories.”

To bring his vision to life, Lowe collaborated with Artistic Associates Julie Lowe and Sarah-Jane Measor to craft the ballet’s narrative. Set in the early 40’s in a fictional American small-town, the production honors most of the traditional elements that make Nutcracker a holiday favorite. Says Lowe, “Our tale is refreshed with unique twists and a heartfelt message illustrating that while giving and receiving “presents” is part of what makes the holidays wonderful, it is the physical “presence” of those who are important in our lives that imparts lasting meaning.”

**More**

**MICHAEL LOWE**  
Artistic Director

**LISA SHIVELEY**  
Executive Director

**SARAH-JANE MEASOR**  
Associate Artistic Director

**JULIE LOWE**  
Ballet Master and Artistic Associate

Prior to founding Menlowe Ballet in 2011, Michael Lowe enjoyed an illustrious performing career as a dancer, appearing in numerous traditional Nutcrackers. In Menlowe's production of "It's a Wonderful Nutcracker", Lowe returns to the stage as Drosselmeyer, a character who embodies the heart and spirit of the film's lead character George Bailey, famously portrayed by Jimmy Stewart. Menlowe's production also features a taste of 1940's swing dance performed by professional ballroom champions Chelsea Farah and Eric Koptke. Joining the professional cast are students from Menlowe Ballet's official ballet school, The Menlo Park Academy of Dance.

Costume Designer, Connie Strayer, is a Senior Lecturer and Design teacher at Stanford University, who has designed costumes and textiles for companies including San Francisco Ballet, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Smuin Ballet, ODC, Oakland Ballet, TheaterWorks, ACT, Opera San Jose and Teatro Zinzanni. Scenic Designer, Brent Brimhall is a designer and fine artist whose work spans the globe. Most recently he completed the design and execution of the exterior facade of the 5-star resort, the Baha Mar Casino and Hotel.

Based in Menlo Park, CA, Menlowe Ballet is a professional ballet company dedicated to bringing dance to audiences throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Founded in 2011, the company performs works ranging from cultural to classical to contemporary. In addition to its artistic mission, Menlowe Ballet provides performing opportunities to aspiring students from the Menlo Park Academy of Dance, the official school of Menlowe Ballet.

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Note to Editors: Further information, interviews and artwork available upon request.