



Dear Friend of The Washington Ballet:

At this time of year, our hearts are warmed by the generosity of our angels and stars - the donors and patrons whose philanthropy allows us to enrich lives across the DC area. As I write this, thanks to your support, free and low-cost performances of *The Nutcracker* are taking place in Southeast DC and students prepare to appear alongside our world-class dancers in the magical Warner Theatre. As Tchaikovsky's sparkling score floats out of every studio, excited young dancers twirl in and out of rehearsals as if visions of sugar plums truly danced in their heads...

By five o'clock on Saturday, nine year-old Kwaku has been at The Washington Ballet for four hours, yet still he tirelessly practices his pirouettes in the corridor. Making his debut this year as the Military Boy in *The Nutcracker*, Kwaku and 400 of his ballet-classmates have been rehearsing every Saturday and Sunday since the first week of October and loving every minute of it. From the mice to Clara, every child in the production has a story to tell, but I'd like to tell you about Kwaku.

Kwaku moved to Washington, DC with his family in the summer of 2010 and enrolled at Malcolm X Elementary school in Ward 8. At school, Kwaku took part in TWB's *DanceDC* program and immediately stood out as a spirited and talented young boy, **but for Kwaku's family of four, paying the yearly \$2,000 tuition for dance classes was simply impossible.** Last year, The Washington Ballet offered Kwaku a scholarship to continue his ballet studies at TWSB@THEARC, where he now takes three classes a week, including a boys class taught by company dancer Luis R. Torres.

This year over 400 students will perform in *The Nutcracker*, many of whom, like Kwaku, come from Wards 7 and 8. Without community outreach programs and financial support, a large number of these students would never be exposed to the Arts, and certainly would not have the opportunity to perform alongside professional dancers.

Stories like Kwaku's remind us that sometimes we all need a helping hand to reach our full potential. Here at the Ballet, it is your unwavering support which has allowed us to reach communities all over the District and nurture the potential of dancers like Kwaku. But in the last three years, grants from government sources have been significantly reduced, putting additional pressure on ticket prices and tuition rates.

In order to continue offering scholarships, performing world premieres and maintaining the quality of our company and school, we are reaching out to you again.

This holiday season, please consider The Washington Ballet as a priority in your end-of-year giving. Remember Kwaku's story and the direct impact your gift will have on all aspects of The Washington Ballet.

We are truly grateful for your support.

Warmly,

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Artistic Director, The Washington Ballet