

SYMPHONY

The Pointe of Conducting

BY JASMINE RIOS

Seldom does one hear about the art of conducting for the ballet. Conductors of the ballet are the eyes of the orchestra; the liaison between the musicians and the dancers. In this central role, they have a responsibility to ensure that the music we hear and the ballet we see on stage are in perfect harmony.

Classical violinist John Stubbs of the San Diego Symphony is a notable talent in the local arts community. Over the last few decades, Stubbs has demonstrated considerable versatility through his performance repertoire with the symphony, opera and ballet. Stubbs has served as California Ballet's music director and conductor for their annual "Nutcracker" production for 12 years.

Conducting for the ballet requires a strong rhythmic sense and a significant amount of tempo memorization. "This is critical when you are conducting for dance because you have to be able to duplicate the tempi that are agreed upon during rehearsals between you and the dancers," shares Stubbs. "It can't hurt that I am also married to Prima Ballerina Denise Dabrowski. Throughout the years, she has taught me a tremendous amount about what the dancers are experiencing when they are performing on stage. In addition, I took adult ballet classes for a year and a half in the hope of gaining a deeper insight into what I was seeing on stage."

Music and dance are irrefutably intertwined. Dance is the physical embodiment of music expressed through movement. Ballet experts strongly believe that live music and ballet are inseparable, and Stubbs feels no different. "I want to reach out to the public at large to educate them about the value of live music with dance; and to the philanthropic community to whom we count on for support," he said. "Live music performed by professional musicians is expensive."

Hiring a professional orchestra is an \$80,000 investment for one ballet production performed over less than a week's time. With so few days with the orchestra, rehearsals are short. A con-



John Stubbs conducting. Photo by Brad Matthews.

