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Istanbul to mark 60 years of Turk ballet

ISTANBUL

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Ballet will be dancing its way onto Istanbul's cultural center stage, with a competition held by the Directorate General of State Opera and Ballet. The First Istanbul International Ballet Competition, which will be held Sept. 8-13, aims to celebrate Turkish ballet's 60th anniversary as well as give young dancers a chance to expose themselves to the international dance world.

"We will be holding a number of events to celebrate the 60th birthday of Turkish ballet this year. But one that needs to be emphasized is the ballet competition that will be held in Istanbul, which has now become a world city and which was elected as the 2010 European Capital of Culture," said professor Rengim Gökmen, artistic director of State Opera and Ballet, at a press conference Friday. He said the opening of the first ballet school in Istanbul's Yeşilköy district in 1948 is seen as the start of Turkish ballet. Deputy Istanbul Governor Cumhuriyet Taşbaşı said he hoped such competitions would help the public enjoy and appreciate the art form more.

Chairman of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency, Nuri Çolakoğlu, said Istanbul 2010 European

Capital of Culture presented a significant and important opportunity to realize the artistic potential of the city and turn it into dynamism. "I do not believe our job ends in 2010; I believe the projects we have started in the framework of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture are longer-termed," he said. Çolakoğlu added that in this regard, the Istanbul International Ballet Competition came as an opportunity that fit right into this. He said the competition will help present Istanbul positively in the international arena and uncover young people's interest in this art.

Istanbul as a host

Ballet dancer Mehmet Balkan will also be serving as jury member in the competition. "It is very important for me that such a competition is being held in Istanbul," said Balkan. Another ballet dancer, Tan Sağtürk, agreed with Balkan about the importance of competitions for the art form. "Competitions are events that help reveal the energy," he said and added, "The competition will help young students at conservatories decide on a goal for themselves."

Gökmen believes the competition will grow and occupy a significant place in the international ballet world.