

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

CHRISTOPHER STOWELL / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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OREGON BALLET THEATRE SET TO TACKLE *LAMBARENA'S* ALLURING BLEND OF AFRICAN DANCE AND BALLET

"...[*Lambarena* is] a bold and heady cocktail of classical ballet and West African dance forms...this piece breaks all the rules while simultaneously revitalizing classical ballet's canonized repertory."
– *Cincinnati City Beat*

Portland, Ore... Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2008-09 season resumes this month with four performances of *Lambarena*, **February 21-28 in Portland**. *Lambarena's* irresistible fusion of Bach and traditional African music and dance has made it an international sensation. It's the third ballet by the remarkable **Val Caniparoli** to enter the OBT repertoire, and the first since 1992. The February program pairs it with **Peter Martins' exhilarating *Ash***, and a **Christopher Stowell world premiere** set to the jagged, percussive rhythms of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

Performances of *Lambarena* take place at **Keller Auditorium**, SW Third at Clay.
Evenings: February 21, 27 and 28 at 7:30 p.m. / Matinee: February 22 and at 2 p.m.

Tickets start at \$15.

Online: www.obt.org / www.ticketmaster.com

By Phone: 503-2-BALLET (503-222-5538) or 888-9-BALLET (888-922-5538)

In Person: OBT Box Office, 818 SE Sixth Ave., M-F 9am-5pm / Ticketmaster Outlets

The opening night performance of *Lambarena* is sponsored by **Boeing**.

The 2008-09 season is sponsored by **Gerding Edlen Development** and **The Oregonian**.
Season media support is provided by **KGW**, **kink fm102**, **Northwest Cable News** and **All Classical 89.9**.

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Audience enrichment events for *Lambarena* include **Dance Talks**, Monday, **February 16th, 7 p.m., at Keller Auditorium**. This free forum gives audiences a chance to hear directly from artists and critics who have significantly shaped the aesthetic, contemporary and historic evolution of ballet and the creative process. Moderated by Christopher Stowell, the 75-minute program makes extensive use of visual aids to assist audience members in contextualizing the work(s) under discussion. Introduced as part of Stowell's initial year as artistic director, The Dance Talks series is unique in Portland and was an instant success with the city's dance-going community. Nearly 500 patrons, dance lovers, students of dance and academics attended the forums in the first year.

The February 16th Dance Talks will take a brief look back at the legacy of **Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and the tumultuous premiere of Nijinsky's original choreography for *Le Sacre du Printemps***. Christopher Stowell, Principal Dancer/Choreographic Assistant Anne Mueller and Lighting Designer Michael Mazzola will then discuss the collaborative creation of OBT's brand new *Rite of Spring*.

Reservations are requested, as seating is limited. To reserve, send name and number of seats requested to: outreach@obt.org or phone 503.227.0977, ext.213.

In addition, **Performance Perspectives**, providing context for the entire program and led by OBT Dance Historian Linda Besant, takes place in the orchestra level seating area of Keller Auditorium, **one hour prior to each performance**. Performance Perspectives demystifies ballet's exacting movement vocabulary, ventures into dance history, and investigates the process of dance production.

Oregon Ballet Theatre's Winter Program

Ash

Music: Michael Torke
Choreography: Peter Martins
Original Staging: Russell Kaiser
Costume Design: Steven Rubin
Lighting Design: Mark W. Stanley
Lighting Execution: Michael Mazzola

Premiere: June 20, 1991, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater
OBT Premiere: March 2, 2007, Keller Auditorium, Portland

The majority of ballets are designed to appear effortless, but *Ash* intentionally lays bare the physical demands placed on those who perform it. It is an aerobic work that takes its structure directly from Michael Torke's energetic score. The brisk, constantly driving music is echoed directly in non-stop movement that requires both speed and endurance

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from a lead couple and four pairs of demi-soloists. Dancing *Ash* also calls for careful concentration and precision. While most ballet scores can be counted in regular measures of three or four beats each, *Ash* has no such predictability. One characteristically atypical phrase, for example, is counted in measures of 12, 8, 9, 15, 8, 8, and 12 beats – making it a work that is as challenging mentally as it is physically.

Peter Martins was born and trained as a dancer in Denmark. He achieved international fame with the Royal Danish Ballet before coming to the United States in 1970 at the invitation of George Balanchine to join New York City Ballet. He was named the company's Ballet Master in Chief in 1990, and still holds that position. He is also the chairman of the faculty of the School of American Ballet. Martins created his first choreography in 1977. Since then he has crafted nearly 80 ballets to music of composers as diverse as Tchaikovsky and Winton Marsalis. *Ash* was his fourth ballet set to the music of Michael Torke. He has also choreographed for Broadway musicals and films.

The Rite of Spring

Music: Igor Stravinsky
Choreography: Christopher Stowell
Assistant to the Choreographer: Anne Mueller
Lighting and Scenic Design: Michael Mazzola
Piano Soloists: Carol Rich and Susan Smith

World Premiere: February 21, 2009, Keller Auditorium, Portland

With *The Rite of Spring*, OBT celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Ballets Russes. During its twenty seasons, spanning 1909 to 1929, Serge Diaghalev's legendary company catapulted the art of ballet into the modern era. Diaghalev was a catalyst for collaboration, bringing together the brightest choreographers, composers and visual artists of his time – including composer Igor Stravinsky, whose 1913 *Le Sacre du Printemps* remains a prime example of the innovative art created for the Ballets Russes.

Rather than restage a historic work, OBT artistic director Christopher Stowell has chosen to honor Diaghilev's legacy by collaborating with designer Michael Mazzola and choreographic assistant Anne Mueller on a new ballet inspired by Stravinsky's iconic score. The original narrative—ancient ritual sacrifice of a Chosen One—is abandoned. Instead, two groups of dancers are separated by walls that define and redefine the dance space. “In this ever-changing world,” said Stowell, “we explore ideas of community and separation, safety and non-conformity. Who is on what side of the wall? Which side of the wall is the right side to be on? Which side does one want to be on?”

Christopher Stowell is Oregon Ballet Theatre's second artistic director. Since his 2003-04 debut season, he has made significant additions to the OBT repertoire,

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bringing to Portland works from some of the world's most celebrated choreographers. In addition to creating seven world premieres for OBT, including the company's first full-length *Swan Lake* in 2006 and an all-new *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2007, Mr. Stowell has also commissioned works by internationally prominent artists James Kudelka, Kent Stowell, Trey McIntyre, Yuri Possokhov, Julia Adam and Nicolo Fonte. Mr. Stowell was born in New York City and received his training at Pacific Northwest Ballet School and the School of American Ballet. In 1985 he joined San Francisco Ballet where he danced for sixteen years, appearing in theaters throughout the world including the Paris Opera, New York's Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. and Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre. As a principal dancer, Mr. Stowell performed leading roles in the full-length classics *Romeo and Juliet*, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Othello*, and had roles created for him by Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson and by contemporary choreographers including Mark Morris, William Forsythe and James Kudelka. An established interpreter of the George Balanchine repertoire, Mr. Stowell appeared in almost every Balanchine ballet performed by SFB. Upon his retirement in 2001, he was accorded a gala farewell in the War Memorial Opera House. In recent years, Mr. Stowell has taught and coached in San Francisco, New York, Japan and Europe. He has created new works for San Francisco Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Diablo Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet, as well as the New York City Ballet Choreographic Institute. He has also staged the works of George Balanchine and Mark Morris.

Lambarena

Music: Johann Sebastian Bach and traditional African songs (as arranged by Pierre Akendengué and Hughes de Courson)

Choreography: Val Caniparoli

Staging: Maiqui Mañosa

African Dance Consultants: Dr. Zakarya Diouf and Naomi Diouf

Scenic and Costume Design: Sandra Woodall

Lighting Design: Lisa J. Pinkham

Lighting Execution: Michael Mazzola

Premiere: March 28, 1995, San Francisco Ballet, War Memorial Opera House

OBT Premiere: February 21, 2009, Keller Auditorium, Portland

In 1995, French composer Hughes de Courson and African musician Pierre Akendengué paid homage to Albert Schweitzer, the world-renowned medical missionary and accomplished Bach organist, with a soundscape recalling the musical juxtapositions heard as Schweitzer played his organ at home in what is now Gabon. Their creation, *Lambarena*, is a joyous overlay of Bach and West African song.

Choreographer Val Caniparoli subsequently invited African dance experts Dr. Zakarya

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Sao Diouf and Naomi Diouf into the San Francisco Ballet studios to create a new work based on the recording. The result is the ballet called *Lambarena*. According to Caniparoli, “[it] is a celebration of cultures, of music and dance and collaboration.” It simultaneously expresses the fine points of classical ballet and the subtleties of African dance. Even in the ballet’s costumes the two cultures meld: the fabrics glow with the colors and textures of African textiles, while the women’s bodices and the men’s breeches follow the cut and line of Bach’s era.

Since its creation, more than 20 companies, from South Africa to Cincinnati, have welcomed *Lambarena* into their repertoires.

Val Caniparoli’s versatility has made him one of the most sought after American choreographers in the United States and abroad. Born in Renton, Washington, Caniparoli opted for a professional dance career after studying music and theatre at Washington State University. He joined San Francisco Ballet in 1973, and is most closely associated with that company, where he was Resident Choreographer during the 1980s. He continues to choreograph for the Company under Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson. Caniparoli has contributed to the repertoires of more than thirty-five dance companies, including Pacific Northwest Ballet, Boston Ballet, Northern Ballet Theatre, Pennsylvania Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Ballet West (Resident Choreographer 1993-97), Washington Ballet, Israel Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet, Singapore Dance Theatre, Atlanta Ballet, State Theatre Ballet of South Africa and Tulsa Ballet, where he has been Resident Choreographer since 2001.

Caniparoli has created a body of work that is rooted in classicism but influenced by all forms of movement: modern dance, ethnic dance, social dancing, even ice skating. His extensive knowledge and appreciation of music is reflected in the range of composers that have inspired his choreography, a sampling of which includes Bela Bartók, Dmitri Shostakovich, Antonio Vivaldi, Bohuslav Martinu, Juan Garcia Esquivel, Uri Caine, Charlie Parker and Django Reinhardt. One of his most performed works, *Lambarena* is danced to a score that fuses Johann Sebastian Bach and traditional African, and has become an international sensation.

Caniparoli has choreographed three full-length ballets: *Lady of the Camellias* (1994), co-produced by Ballet Florida and Ballet West; *The Nutcracker* (2001) for Cincinnati Ballet, and *Val Caniparoli’s A Cinderella Story*, danced to themes by Richard Rodgers, for Royal Winnipeg Ballet (2004). He has also choreographed productions for opera, theatre and the concert hall.

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Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2008 – 2009 Season

“Swan Lake”

October 11-18, 2008 • Keller Auditorium • with Full Orchestra
Swan Lake (2006)—Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky/Christopher Stowell (after Petipa and Ivanov)

“George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*TM”

December 12-24, 2008 • Keller Auditorium • with Full Orchestra

“Lambarena”

February 21-28, 2009 • Keller Auditorium • Music: Ensembles
Ash (1991)—Michael Torke/Peter Martins
The Rite of Spring (2009)—Igor Stravinsky/Christopher Stowell—**World Premiere**
Lambarena (1994)—J.S. Bach and traditional African music/Val Caniparoli—**Company Premiere**

“Left Unsaid”

April 17–26, 2009 • Newmark Theatre • Music: Ensembles
The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude (1996)—Franz Schubert/William Forsythe
Left Unsaid (2003)—J.S. Bach/Nicolo Fonte—**Company Premiere**
Tarantella (1964)—Louis Moreau Gottschalk/George Balanchine—**Company Premiere**
A new work by James Kudelka (2009)—**World Premiere**

“Rush + Robbins”

June 5 -7, 2009 • Keller Auditorium • Music: Ensembles
RUSH (2003)—Bohuslav Martinu/Christopher Wheeldon
Afternoon of a Faun (1953)—Claude Debussy/Jerome Robbins
The Cage (1951)—Igor Stravinsky/Jerome Robbins —**Company Premiere**
The Concert (1956)—Frederic Chopin/Jerome Robbins

COMPANY ROSTER

Principal Dancers

Yuka Iino • Gavin Larsen • Kathi Martuza • Anne Mueller • Alison Roper • Artur Sultanov • Ronnie Underwood

Soloists

Candace Bouchard • Brennan Boyer • Ansa Deguchi • Daniela Deloe • Adrian Fry • Steven Houser • Chauncey Parsons

Company Artists

Leta Biasucci • Martina Chavez • Andrea Cooper • Damian Drake • Olga Krochik • Mia Leimkuhler • Matthew Pippin • Julia Rowe • Grace Shibley • Brian Simcoe • Christian Squires • Lucas Threefoot • Javier Ubell • Raychel Weiner

Apprentices

Lauren Anderson • Ian Buchanan • Michael Davis • Christina Hanna • Mackenzie Martin • Janel Meindersee • Liliana Muhlbach • Lydia Relle • Brent Slack-Wolfe • Ashley Smith

Founded in 1989, **OREGON BALLET THEATRE** is a not-for-profit, professional ballet company, with a school, based in Portland, Oregon. On July 1, 2003, **Christopher Stowell** became **OREGON BALLET THEATRE**'s artistic director and **Damara Bennett** joined OBT as school director. **OREGON BALLET THEATRE** offers the highest quality ballet, in a repertoire of classic and contemporary work, to the people of Oregon, the Pacific Northwest and the United States.

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