

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

CHRISTOPHER STOWELL / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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OREGON BALLET THEATRE PRINCIPAL DANCER GAVIN LARSEN TO RETIRE

Portland, OR... Oregon Ballet Theatre Principal Dancer **Gavin Larsen** announced earlier this week that she will retire in May, upon the completion of OBT's annual spring performance series in Portland's Newmark Theatre. Larsen joined OBT in 2003 and was named a principal in 2007 when Artistic Director Christopher Stowell instituted the company's current artist ranking system. She will remain in Portland and take a more prominent role as a teacher at the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre, a position she has held concurrently with dancing since joining OBT.

Larsen was born and raised in New York City and received her training from Dick Andros, Francis Patrelle, the Pacific Northwest Ballet School and the School of American Ballet. Prior to arriving in Portland, she danced as a member of Pacific Northwest Ballet and Alberta Ballet and performed as a soloist with the Suzanne Farrell Ballet. At OBT, Larsen has danced leading roles in works by Julia Adam, George Balanchine, Val Caniparoli, James Kudelka, Jerome Robbins, Kent Stowell, Christopher Stowell, Paul Taylor, Helgi Tomasson and Christopher Wheeldon, among others. Her most notable include Terpsichore in Balanchine's *Apollo*, the Sugarplum Fairy in his *Nutcracker*, the Waltz Girl in *Serenade*, *Concerto Barocco*, Robbins' *Afternoon of a Faun*, Yuri Possokhov's *La Valse*, Eurydice in Kent Stowell's *Orpheus Portrait* and Helena in Christopher Stowell's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

"Truly great performers always have roles with which they become completely identified," said **Artistic Director Christopher Stowell**, "and Gavin achieved that distinction time and again at OBT—so much so that visions of her in certain ballets have already become a part of our institutional history. She's a perfect example of that rare artist who combines dedication and intelligence with a poignant musical and dramatic instinct. I am so happy that she will remain a part of Oregon Ballet Theatre and continue to instill her values and talent at every level of the organization."

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In a joint statement, **Pacific Northwest Ballet Co-Founding Artistic Directors Francia Russell and Kent Stowell** said, “Even as a student and then very young dancer with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Gavin seemed to have an invisible spotlight following her. It was impossible not to notice the ethereal beauty with her uniquely graceful composure. It has been a thrill to continue to watch Gavin as she has reached the pinnacle of her career with OBT, dancing a range of roles that define a true ballerina. Most wonderful of all has been observing the glow in the eyes of her legions of admirers. Not only do they admire her as an artist but they have fallen permanently in love.”

Ballet Victoria Artistic Director Paul DeStrooper, Larsen’s frequent partner at both Alberta Ballet and Oregon Ballet Theatre, added, “A true ‘etoile’ on and off stage, Gavin has the understated brilliance of truly great artists. A wonderful ballerina to watch and to share the stage with, she has the ability to uplift one’s heart and soul with her unforgettable performances. Gavin is also an incredible teacher and coach and has the uncanny ability to inspire dancers from the novice to the seasoned professional. Her new path will definitely follow a stellar course and I wish her great success.”

Reflecting on her decision to retire, Larsen said, “As bittersweet as it is to be saying goodbye to my performing career, I’m filled with gratitude for the many wonderful years of dancing that I’ve lived. I’ve given everything to ballet since I was a child and have been richly rewarded many times over. I’ve never felt I was making any sort of sacrifice - just the opposite, in fact. I fully recognize that the success of my career has been created from equal parts talent, drive, good luck, and the support of many other people. My family, of course, and every single teacher, coach, and mentor have all provided invaluable support and guidance. My fellow dancers have given me their friendship and laughter during the hardest times, and from them I learned innumerable lessons about technique, artistry, and what true camaraderie really is. There’s one more group of people that have been perhaps the least visible but most audible pillars of support: the audiences that I have danced for. They always remind me that we don’t dance only for ourselves, but for the art form itself and for everyone who is touched by it. So I owe a truly heartfelt thank you to all of my audiences who have given back to me the love I’ve put into each and every performance. Thank you.”

Larsen’s farewell performance will be Sunday, May 2nd, at 2:00 in Portland’s Newmark Theatre as OBT concludes its “Duets” program, featuring *Tolstoy’s Waltz* by Christopher Stowell, Twyla Tharp’s *Junk Duet*, *Duo Concertant* by George Balanchine, Trey McIntyre’s *Like A Samba* and the world premiere of Emery LeCrone’s *Divergence*. For tickets, call **503.2.BALLET** or visit **www.obt.org**.

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