

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

CHRISTOPHER STOWELL / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 2, 2009

MEDIA CONTACT
Erik Jones
503.227.0977
erik.jones@obt.org

OREGON BALLET THEATRE'S SPRING PROGRAM TO SHOWCASE PREMIERES BY THE CREATORS OF *ALMOST MOZART AND BOLERO*

Portland, Ore... Oregon Ballet Theatre's annual spring performances (**nine shows, April 17-26** in Portland) will feature **premieres** by two of the most popular and critically acclaimed choreographers from recent company history. **James Kudelka**, who in 2006 created one of OBT's signature works, *Almost Mozart*, returns with *Hush*, a new ballet featuring nearly the entire company of dancers, along with two harpists performing live onstage. It's paired on the program with the Portland premiere of **Nicolo Fonte's** *Left Unsaid*, an intimate work set to the music of Bach and bearing the same marriage of atmospheric mood and inventive movement that brought OBT audiences to their feet in 2008 for the choreographer's *Bolero*. Rounding out the bill are **George Balanchine's** showy *Tarantella* and **William Forsythe's** *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude*.

Performances of OBT's Spring Program, *Left Unsaid*, take place at the intimate, 900-seat **Newmark Theatre**, located inside Antoinette Hatfield Hall at SW Broadway and Main. **The first two evening performances are sold out.**

Evenings: April 17*, 18*, 23, 24, and 25 at 7:30 p.m. / Matinees: April 18, 19, 25, and 26 at 2 p.m. ***Sold Out**

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

Oregon Ballet Theatre's 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**.

-more-

Audience enrichment events for *Left Unsaid* include **Dance Talks**, Monday, **April 13th, 7 p.m., at the Newmark Theatre**. 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.

The April 13th Dance Talks will focus on **the creation of *Hush*. Joining Christopher Stowell for a roundtable discussion will be choreographer James Kudelka and composer Rodney Sharman**. Together, the three will explore the importance of creating new work and commissioning music for dance.

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 the Newmark Theatre, **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 Spring Program

***The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude* (1996)**

Music: "Allegro Vivace" from *Symphony No. 9 in C major; D944*

Composer: Franz Schubert

Choreography: William Forsythe

Original Staging: Noah Gelber

Costume Design: Stephen Galloway

Original Lighting Design: William Forsythe

Lighting Execution: Michael Mazzola

OBT Premiere: October 13, 2007, Keller Auditorium, Portland.

The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude "shoots out with cannonball force." – *The New York Times*

Throughout his extraordinarily creative, thirty-year career, **William Forsythe** has boldly fashioned connections between the timeless vocabulary of classical ballet and current attitudes and aesthetics. In doing so, he has helped define dance in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

-more-

Like the Schubert symphony that provides its score, *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude* is *allegro vivace*: fast, bright and lively. It is an exploration of the extreme limits of classical ballet technique, demanding lightning-quick accuracy and daunting aerobic capacity of its five dancers. In an interview on BBC Radio 3, Forsythe commented on ballet's "very prescribed counter turnings and counter twistings," describing how, "if you prioritize your consciousness towards creating these forms that are inherent in ballet, you actually arrive at a kind of euphoric state." That sentiment is expressed again in the title of this work; dancers who attain the required precision at the necessary tempo are both dizzy and thrilled, as is their audience.

"Watching this ballet, you find yourself engaged and interested in everything Forsythe has to say," said OBT Artistic Director Christopher Stowell, who worked with the choreographer while dancing at San Francisco Ballet. "I guess that's not surprising from someone who has the ability to make this kind of impact on an art form."

William Forsythe is recognized as one of the world's foremost choreographers. His work is celebrated for reorienting the practice of ballet from its identification with classical repertoire into a dynamic 21st-century art form. Raised and principally trained in New York, Mr. Forsythe arrived on the European dance scene in his early 20s, first as a dancer and eventually as Resident Choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet. In 1984, he began a 20-year tenure as Director of the Frankfurt Ballet. After the closure of the Frankfurt Ballet in 2004, he established a new, more independent ensemble – The Forsythe Company. Mr. Forsythe's choreographic thinking has engaged with and contributed to the most significant international artistic currents of our time. He has been named Choreographer of the Year several times by the international critics' survey, and has been awarded an honorary fellowship from the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in London and an honorary doctorate from the Juilliard School in New York.

***Left Unsaid* (2003) – Company Premiere**

Music: "Allemanda," "Sarabanda," "Ciaccona" from *Partita for solo violin No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004*; "Largo," "Adagio," "Fuga" from *Sonata for solo violin No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005*

Composer: Johann Sebastian Bach

Choreography: Nicolo Fonte

Costume Design: Kathy Scoggins

Original Lighting Design: Todd Elmer

Lighting Execution: Michael Mazzola

Left Unsaid is the second work by Nicolo Fonte to enter the Oregon Ballet Theatre repertoire. In 2008, his *Bolero* premiered at Keller Auditorium to standing ovations and rave reviews.

Originally choreographed for Aspen-Santa Fe Ballet, *Left Unsaid* employs three chairs, glowing light and quirky movement to create a world of ever-shifting attraction among its six dancers, finding "unexpected grace in deliberate awkwardness." (*The Denver Post*)

-more-

Whether danced to *Bolero*'s massive orchestral score or the quiet intricacy of *Left Unsaid*'s unaccompanied Bach violin, Fonte's ballets share common ground: "The choreography is inventive, creating expressive original shapes built on an undercurrent of implicit human relationships." (*Dance Europe*) "The pleasure comes from seeing how Fonte works with and against the music in space and time... There's a pleasing sense of mystery and immersion in private thoughts." (*The Australian*)

Born in Brooklyn, **Nicolo Fonte** began dancing at age 14. He studied at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York, San Francisco Ballet School and the School of American Ballet while completing a BFA at SUNY Purchase. Upon graduation he danced with Peridance in NYC and later joined Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal, where he danced a wide variety of roles. Mr. Fonte subsequently joined Nacho Duato's Compañía Nacional de Danza and forged a strong identity in the Spanish company for seven years - for both his dancing and his choreography. His work, *En los Segundos Ocultos (In Hidden Seconds)*, one of three for the company, established his presence on the European dance scene.

In 2000 Mr. Fonte retired from performing to devote himself full-time to his choreographic career. Since then, he has created and staged ballets for The Dutch National Ballet, The Royal Danish Ballet, The Royal Ballet of Flanders, Stuttgart Ballet, Cedar Lake and Tulsa Ballet, among others. Mr. Fonte's 2002 collaboration with Pacific Northwest Ballet, *Almost Tango*, received a Choo San Goh award and was voted as one of Dance Europe's "Best Premieres" when it was re-staged for The Australian Ballet in 2004.

From 2002 to 2006 Mr. Fonte enjoyed a creative partnership with The Göteborg Ballet in Sweden, creating and staging numerous works that helped establish the company's distinct profile. While there, he created his first full-length ballet, *Re: Tchaikovsky*, which was widely acclaimed in the international press and appeared on the "Best of 2005" lists of both Ballet International and Dance Europe.

Tarantella (1964) – Company Premiere

Music: *Grand Tarentelle for piano and orchestra, Op. 67 (ca. 1866)*

Composer: Louis Moreau Gottschalk, reconstructed and orchestrated by Hershy Kay

Choreography: George Balanchine

Staging: Christopher Stowell and Sandra Jennings

Costume Design: Karinska

Lighting Recreation: Michael Mazzola

Based on Neopolitan folk dancing, George Balanchine's *Tarantella* was created in 1964 as a star-vehicle for New York City ballet principals Patricia McBride and Edward Villella. For dancers who are up to its demands, it becomes a signature showpiece. Villella, himself, said that *Tarantella* requires "bravura technique, the ability to move quickly, and *joie de vivre*."

-more-

In his review the day after the premiere, critic Walter Terry called the *tour de force* “vivacious and exciting. It is a classical work balletically but, as its title suggests, it pays homage to the rhythms and some of the steps and conventions (including tambourines) of Italy.” *Tarantella* links “in the most lilting movement terms, the elegance of ballet with the buoyant and brisk qualities of folk actions.”

In the tradition of dancer-to-dancer lineage that is central to ballet, Helgi Tomasson performed *Tarantella* at the New York City Ballet, and, as artistic director at the San Francisco Ballet, passed it on to Christopher Stowell. Now Stowell has given *Tarantella* to a new generation of dancers at Oregon Ballet Theatre.

Widely regarded as the foremost choreographer in 20th century ballet, **George Balanchine** (1904 – 1983) was born in St. Petersburg in 1904 and danced and choreographed in Europe until co-founding the School of American Ballet in New York in 1934. This eventually led to the formation of the prestigious New York City Ballet and the creation of hundreds of diverse works including *Jewels*, *Serenade*, *Concerto Barocco*, *Apollo*, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* and *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux*. Mr. Balanchine’s ballets have become a part of nearly every major company’s repertoire.

***Hush* (2009) – World Premiere**

Music: *Etudes 1-7 for solo harp; dances for solo harp*

Composer: Rodney Sharman

Choreography: James Kudelka

Costume Design: Christine Darch

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Harpists: Rita Costanzi and Auna Selberg

James Kudelka’s *Hush* is set to harp compositions by the Canadian composer Rodney Sharman: seven etudes written as exercises for Celtic harp students, several pieces composed for pedal harpist Rita Costanzi, and a transition piece created especially for this ballet. The Celtic harp etudes have a clear rhythmic base and a straightforward structure, while those for the pedal harp have a delicate, shifting transparency that leaves them nearly devoid of rhythmic or melodic clues. “The predictability of the etudes,” said Kudelka, “transferred in my mind to an ordered world, while the pedal harp pieces suggest a more complicated one. To me, that transferred into childhood and adulthood. *Hush* took on an arc that goes from childhood through adulthood to the end of life.”

The creative process for a work like *Hush* is quite different than for a full-length narrative ballet. “This gives me an opportunity to be more abstract, to celebrate dance as poetry,” Kudelka said. “Though a lot of work goes into preparation, rather than having a concrete plan, each day I go into the studio and ask, ‘Where will my art take me today?’ Preconceived ideas are only little signposts along the way.”

-more-

In Kudelka's new work, the harpists perform on stage alongside a cast of 21 dancers. Their placement implies an ascending journey, and their instruments energize the dance space and the choreography. Kudelka said he hopes that audiences will approach *Hush* the way he created it, "as a meditation on the transience of life. I think this is how the power of dance best reveals itself."

James Kudelka, Resident Choreographer of The National Ballet of Canada and its former Artistic Director, is one of the world's foremost dance artists, universally respected for the quality and depth of his work. As a choreographer, he has the rare ability to marry classical tradition with modern movement and is recognized for his remarkable talent in combining both idioms. A remarkably prolific choreographer, he has created over 70 ballets. Mr. Kudelka terms himself "a conscientious observer" who creates dances that are meditations on the classic themes of love, sex and death. Major works for The National Ballet of Canada include: *Cinderella* (2004); his first full-length original ballet, *The Contract (The Pied Piper)* (2002); and *The Firebird* (2000), a co-production between The National Ballet of Canada, American Ballet Theatre and Houston Ballet. His work for other companies includes: *The Heart of the Matter* (1986) for Joffrey Ballet; *Cruel World* (1994) and *Sin and Tonic* (2002) for American Ballet Theatre; *Terra Firma* (1995) and *Some Women and Men* (1998) for San Francisco Ballet; and *Almost Mozart* (2006) for Oregon Ballet Theatre.

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™"

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**
Hush 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

-more-

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.

###