

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

CHRISTOPHER STOWELL / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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OBT OPENS THE SEASON WITH A NEW MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM AND BALLETS BY FORSYTHE AND KUDELKA

Portland, Ore... A significant company premiere is matched with an ambitious new work and the revival of an audience favorite as **Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2007-08 Grand Tour Season** opens in October with *The Germanic Lands*, a program accompanied entirely by the music of **Mozart, Mendelssohn and Schubert**. *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude* is an important addition to the OBT repertoire, marking the first time that Oregon Ballet Theatre has performed a work by **William Forsythe**, one of the most highly respected and sought-after choreographers working in the world today. In 2001, London's *Telegraph* described him as "one of only a handful of key figures in the evolution of classical ballet: a daring, thrilling talent who has pushed the human form to new physical extremes." His work makes its OBT debut alongside *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, newly choreographed by Artistic Director Christopher Stowell and featuring sets and costumes inspired by Oregon's old growth forests. Also on the program is **James Kudelka's Almost Mozart**, one of the most acclaimed OBT world premieres of the last decade. This "riveting" work (*The Oregonian*, 2006) juxtaposes a gorgeous Mozart score with stunning moments of complete silence.

Performances of *The Germanic Lands* program take place **October 13-20, 2007**, at **Keller Auditorium**, SW Third at Clay.

Evenings: October 13, 19 and 20 at 7:30 p.m. / Matinee: October 14 at 2 p.m.

Tickets start at \$14, with special rates for groups and organizations.

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

Sponsored by **Key Bank, The Standard** and **Tektronix**. Season sponsors: **American Airlines, Gerding Edlen Development, The Oregonian**.

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Audience enrichment for OBT's season-opening program includes **Dance Talks**, Monday, October 8, 2007, 7 p.m., at Keller Auditorium. Artistic Director **Christopher Stowell** joins costume and scenery **designer Sandra Woodall** and **Wardrobe Manager Kathy Scoggins** to discuss the ways in which Shakespeare's poetry, Mendelssohn's musical score and Oregon's lush forests all served as inspiration for OBT's world premiere production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A behind-the-scenes **tour** of Keller Auditorium follows the talk. The event is **free** and open to the public. 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 dance historian **Linda Besant**, takes place in the orchestra level seating area of Keller Auditorium, **one hour before each performance**. Audience members are also invited to a **Question and Answer session with Christopher Stowell** and company dancers at the front of the auditorium immediately following every performance, with the exception of opening night.

Oregon Ballet Theatre's Germanic Lands Program

***The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude* (1996) – Company Premiere**

Music: Franz Schubert - Symphony No. 9, "The Great," Mvt. IV

Choreography: William Forsythe

Costume Design: Stephen Galloway

Lighting Design: William Forsythe

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. The addition of the choreographer's work to the OBT repertoire is a major milestone for the company.

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.

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“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.

Almost Mozart (2006)

Music: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - *Mauerische Trauermusik* and Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, Mvt. II.

Choreography: James Kudelka

Costume Design: Mark Zappone

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

“A meaty experiment in restriction and exposure...the effect is riveting.” – *Willamette Week*

Created for OBT in 2006, *Almost Mozart* was the first work **James Kudelka** choreographed after stepping down as artistic director of the National Ballet of Canada. He calls the ballet “completely experimental.” In it, he weaves fragments of Mozart around extended periods of silence. “Making choreography to silence lets you in on where a composer must come from,” said Kudelka. “What you make has to have its own integrity. Creativity means restrictions. You set restrictions for yourself, then see what new ground you uncover.” The dancers in *Almost Mozart* remain physically attached to one another by hand virtually the entire time. No free turns or multiple pirouettes are possible. “Right away,” Kudelka said, “you start making real choices.”

The ballet showcases Kudelka’s “fantastic taste in music and the underlying drama he is able to draw out of the music and the dancers,” said OBT Artistic Director Christopher Stowell. It achieved critical acclaim upon its premiere, and will also be performed by OBT this October at the Laguna Dance Festival in California.

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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.

***A Midsummer Night's Dream* – World Premiere**

Music: Felix Mendelssohn

Choreography: Christopher Stowell

Costume and Scenery Design: Sandra Woodall

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

A Midsummer Night's Dream is Christopher Stowell's first entirely new story ballet. Throughout the last 150 years, more than twenty different choreographers have tackled Shakespeare's celebrated comedy – most famously George Balanchine (1962) and Frederick Ashton (1964) – but no single version is considered definitive. This absence of a standardized blueprint has left choreographers free to develop their own unique interpretations of the story.

Stowell's new version conserves the timeless themes of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—the complications and ultimate triumph of love; the blurring of reality and fantasy, waking and dreaming; the potential for change and transformation. But he takes liberties with Shakespeare's plot. "I want to tell the story in such a way that the convolutions are amusing without being cumbersome," he said. "We begin in a fanciful version of the Western world in the 20th century, at a garden party just following the wedding that usually ends the play, and move backwards." Only later did Stowell learn that many scholars believe Shakespeare originally wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for a wedding celebration. "The look of the forest scenes is based in the Pacific Northwest old-growth forest," he added, "inspired by Oregon's Opal Creek area." Created with close collaboration among Stowell, world-renowned theatrical designer Sandra Woodall, and OBT Music Director Niel DePonte, this production is entirely original to Oregon Ballet Theatre.

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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, bringing to Portland works from some of the world's most celebrated choreographers. In addition to creating four world premieres for OBT, including the company's first full-length *Swan Lake* in 2006, Mr. Stowell has also commissioned works by internationally prominent artists James Kudelka, Kent Stowell, Trey McIntyre, Yuri Possokhov and Julia Adam. 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, 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.

Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2007 – 2008 Season

“The Germanic Lands”

October 13-20, 2007 • Keller Auditorium • with Full Orchestra

The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude (1996)—Franz Schubert/William Forsythe—**Company Premiere**

Almost Mozart (2006)—W.A. Mozart/James Kudelka

A Midsummer Night's Dream (2007)—Felix Mendelssohn/Christopher Stowell—**World Premiere**

“George Balanchine's The Nutcracker™”

December 8-24, 2007 • Keller Auditorium • with Full Orchestra

“France”

February 23-March 1, 2008 • Keller Auditorium • with Full Orchestra

Zais (2002)—Jean-Philippe Rameau/Christopher Stowell—**Company Premiere**

Afternoon of a Faun (1953)—Claude Debussy/Jerome Robbins—**Company Premiere**

A New Pas de Deux (2008)—Léo Delibes/Christopher Stowell—**World Premiere**

Bolero (2008)—Maurice Ravel/Nicolo Fonte—**World Premiere**

“America”

April 18–27, 2008 • Newmark Theatre • Music: Ensembles

Through Eden's Gates (2007)—William Bolcom/Kent Stowell

Just (2006)—Henry Cowell/Trey McIntyre

Slaughter on Tenth Avenue (1968)—Richard Rodgers/George Balanchine—**Company Premiere**

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“Russia”

June 6 -8, 2008 • Keller Auditorium • Music: Ensembles

Rubies (1967)—Igor Stravinsky/George Balanchine

Tolstoy’s Waltz (2008)—Various/Christopher Stowell—**World Premiere**

Raymonda (2008)—Alexander Glazounov/Yuri Possokhov, after Marius Petipa—**World Premiere**

COMPANY ROSTER

Principal Dancers

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

Soloists

Brennan Boyer • Ansa Deguchi • Daniela Deloe • Steven Houser • Ilir Shtylla

Company Artists

Candace Bouchard • Martina Chavez • Andrea Cooper • Jacqueline Damico • Damian Drake • Adrian Fry •
Olga Krochik • Mia Leimkuhler • Matthew Pippin • Grace Shibley • Brian Simcoe • Emily Tedesco •
Lucas Threefoot • Holly Tolbert • Javier Ubell

Apprentices

Michael Davis • Kate Kearney • Patrick Kilbane • Mackenzie Martin • Abby Relic

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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