

# OREGON BALLET THEATRE

CHRISTOPHER STOWELL / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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MEDIA CONTACT  
Erik Jones  
503.227.0977  
erik.jones@obt.org

OREGON BALLET THEATRE PRESENTS  
**GEORGE BALANCHINE'S THE NUTCRACKER™**  
A HOLIDAY FAVORITE FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

Five Years of Praise for OBT's Production of *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*™

*Beautiful fairies, a handsome prince, flowers that dance and toys that come alive; this is the stuff of childhood fantasies. And when they come with wonderful dancing and music to melt your heart, they are a dream come true.*

**Anchorage Daily News, 2007**

*OBT's annual extravaganza...again weaves its special spell.*

**The Oregonian, 2007**

*[J]ustifies the love with both its traditionalist concept and its rigorous, refined execution.*

**The Oregonian, 2006**

*A must-see for the season, OBT's [Nutcracker] is a hit that sells out quickly.*

**The Oregonian, 2005**

*The Queen of Portland's Christmas season.*

**The Oregonian, 2004**

*A total joy to watch – and thrilling. I was warmed down to my toes.*

**Critical Dance, 2003**

For thousands of families from all across the region, the holidays wouldn't be complete without **George Balanchine's The Nutcracker™**, performed by **Oregon Ballet Theatre** December 12 – 24, 2008 at Portland's Keller Auditorium, SW Third at Clay.

Acclaimed for its bravura dancing, *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker™* has been a signature cultural event in the United States for more than 50 years. Hundreds of thousands of children and adults have delighted at the

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Battle of the Mice and the Toy Soldiers, the Christmas tree that grows and the bed that travels into the German forest where the Snowflakes dance - all set to Tchaikovsky's unforgettable score. Now in its sixth year at OBT, *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*<sup>TM</sup> has been embraced by Oregon audiences and remains the only production of the ballet west of the Mississippi.

With Portland performances throughout December, multiple casts will take the stage, underscoring the depth of Oregon Ballet Theatre's dancer roster. OBT Principal Dancers **Yuka Iino**, **Gavin Larsen**, and **Kathi Martuza**, Soloists **Ansa Deguchi** and **Daniela Deloe**, and Company Artist **Grace Shibley** will all share the role of the **Sugarplum Fairy** – with Deloe and Shibley making their Sugarplum debuts during this year.

Principal Dancers **Artur Sultanov** and **Ronnie Underwood**, and Soloists **Brennan Boyer**, **Adrian Fry**, will dance the part of the Sugarplum Fairy's **Cavalier** – as will Soloist **Chauncey Parsons**, also making his debut. Iino, Martuza and Deloe will also appear as the **Dewdrop Fairy**, along with Principal Dancer **Anne Mueller** and Soloist **Candace Bouchard**.

Oregon Ballet Theatre's production of *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*<sup>TM</sup> is sponsored by **The Oregonian** and **Mentor Graphics**, and the December 13<sup>th</sup> matinee performance is sponsored by **U.S. Trust**. *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*<sup>TM</sup> is licensed by the Balanchine Trust.

This season's schedule, with many holiday matinees, is:

Evenings, Dec 12\*-13\*, 18-20, 22-23 at 7:30 PM

Matinees, Dec 14\*, 21 at 1:00 PM

Dec 13\*, 20\*, 22-23 at 2:00 PM

Dec 14\*, 21 at 5:00 PM

Dec 24 at 12:00 PM

A full orchestra led by OBT music director **Niel DePonte** performs Tchaikovsky's enchanting score at six shows, indicated by an \* in the performance schedule above. The remaining performances are danced to recorded music.

**Tickets start at \$15 (\$13.50 for children).**

**Online:** [www.obt.org](http://www.obt.org) / [www.ticketmaster.com](http://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

**Put a toy under a child's tree and save 10% on tickets / Purchase a ticket for a deserving youngster and receive a tax credit.**

**OBT is proud to support the Newschannel 8 Great Toy Drive**, brought to you by Regence BlueCross BlueShield and Les Schwab Tire Centers. **Patrons bringing a new, unwrapped toy to the OBT Box Office, will save 10% on tickets to any performance between December 18 and 24.** Conditions apply. Call 503.2.BALLET for details.

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**Oregon Ballet Theatre has also teamed with the Boys and Girls Club of Portland to help make children's' holiday wishes come true. Call 503.2.BALLET to make a tax-deductible purchase of a *Nutcracker* ticket for a deserving child.**

Audience enrichment for *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*<sup>TM</sup> includes **Performance Perspectives**. Providing context for the entire program and led by dance historian **Linda Besant**, these fun and informative pre-show talks take place in the orchestra level seating area of Keller Auditorium, **one hour prior to all performances except on Sundays, Monday and Tuesday matinees, and Christmas Eve.**

**"If an adult is a good person, in his heart he is still a child."**

Thus Balanchine explained, in part, the lasting appeal of *The Nutcracker*, and his own connection to it. Debuted in February 1954, Balanchine's *Nutcracker* was not the first version of the ballet, nor even the first American version. It was, however, Balanchine's first full-length story ballet and the version that Americans took to their hearts, not just in New York City where it premiered but throughout the nation as well.

The ballet is based on a short story, originally written by E.T.A. Hoffman and adapted by Alexandre Dumas père. The large cast and the length of the run results in principal roles being triple, quadruple and even quintuple cast, adding variety and depth of experience for dancers and audience alike.

Opening at a Christmas Eve party in the comfortable home of a 19<sup>th</sup> century German family, *The Nutcracker* portrays a child-centered story of all the excitement, wonder and magic of the holiday season. A childish tug-of-war characterizes the relationship between Marie, an imaginative young girl, and her spoiled brother, Fritz. A temper tantrum prompts Fritz to break Marie's cherished Nutcracker, a doll-like toy soldier from the eccentric Herr Drosselmeier. At the end of the evening, Marie falls asleep beneath the shimmering Christmas tree and all the dancing, sweets and sibling strife conjure a fantastic dream.

As the tree grows – and grows – and grows, mice scurry across the floor, led by a hideously huge Mouse King with seven crowned heads. The Nutcracker comes to life to battle the vermin and is on the verge of being vanquished when Marie throws her slipper to distract the Mouse King, allowing the Nutcracker to deliver a fatal blow. The Nutcracker presents Marie with the crown of victory, transforms into a handsome Prince and escorts Marie into the forest where the snowflakes dance a beautiful blizzard. The two are welcomed into the Land of the Sweets by the Sugarplum Fairy and her angels. The Sugarplum Fairy, as fragile, airy and pretty as cotton candy, dances her magical solo.

This passage, forever associated with *The Nutcracker*, is played on a celeste, a sophisticated toy piano discovered by Tchaikovsky when he was writing the score and specially ordered by him for this piece. He called its sound "divinely beautiful."

With a beneficent gesture, the Sugarplum Fairy opens the Land of the Sweets for Marie and the Prince to survey from their thrones of honor. The center of the second act is a cavalcade of toothsome delicacies, each more wonderful than the last and representing dance forms from around the world. They include:

- *Hot Chocolate* – spicy flamenco
- *Arabian Coffee* – Middle Eastern sensuality

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- *Chinese Tea* – whimsical
- *Candy Canes* – brisk athleticism
- *Marzipan Shepherdesses* – rapid footwork en pointe
- *Mother Ginger and the Polichinelles* – a comical figure with an enormous hoop skirt from which *polichinelles* (miniature *commedia dell'arte* clowns) emerge and dance

Next, the lovely Dewdrop leads the romantic *Waltz of the Flowers*, surrounded by 14 attendants costumed like “a garden of lushly petaled blossoms.” (Robert Greskovic, *Ballet 101*). Finally, the Sugarplum Fairy dances a majestic *pas de deux* with her Cavalier, concluding with a special effect in which the ballerina appears to glide across the stage.

The ballet ends with a cavalcade of the second act’s delightful and colorful characters. With a wave of her wand, the Sugarplum Fairy sends Marie and the Prince back home in a splendid boat.

### **General Nutcracker Facts**

#### The First Nutcracker

Score commissioned in 1891 from P.I. Tchaikovsky by Marius Petipa (choreographer of the Russian Imperial Ballet), who began the ballet’s creation but became ill and passed it on to his assistant Lev Ivanov to complete. Libretto by Ivan A. Vsevolozhsky from E.T.A. Hoffman’s *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* (1816), adapted by Alexander Dumas père as *Casse-Noisette*. Debuted December 18, 1892, Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, with Antoinetta Dell-Era as the Sugarplum Fairy and Paul Gerdt as her Cavalier and Czar Alexander III in attendance.

#### Score

Petipa gave Tchaikovsky very precise instructions about the rhythm, tempo, and even the number of measures for each dance. The score, which continues in use today, is marked with detailed stage directions. While composing, Tchaikovsky was delighted to discover the newly invented celeste, which he bought for about \$240. He considered the instrument perfect for the dance of the Sugarplum Fairy and didn’t want to be “scooped” by his composer-competitors. The score includes themes from some of Tchaikovsky’s other works, such as the *1812 Overture* (battle between toy soldiers and mice) and *Fourth Symphony* (snow scene).

#### First European production

Sadler’s Wells Ballet (now Royal Ballet), January 30, 1934, under the direction of Nicholas Sergeyev, with Alicia Markova as the Sugarplum Fairy and Harold Turner as her Cavalier.

#### First U.S. production

San Francisco Ballet, December 24, 1944, with choreography by Willam Christensen. Mr. Christensen was trained in Portland and taught in the city until 1937, when he left for California to lead San Francisco Ballet. Among the ballerinas with whom he built SFB were Jacqueline Schumacher Martin and Janet Reed who followed him from Portland to San Francisco. Christensen’s *Nutcracker* was inspired by a conversation with George Balanchine and Alexandra Danilova; the two described the original Maryinsky production to him when they were passing through San Francisco with the famed Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo.

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### George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*™

George Balanchine (1904-1983) studied at the Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg (Maryinsky) from 1913 – 1921 where he danced the role of the Nutcracker Prince in the Petipa/Ivanov *Nutcracker*. Balanchine founded New York City Ballet in 1948 and debuted his own *Nutcracker* - his first full-length story ballet - at City Center on February 2, 1954. It became a huge success, creating a decades-long holiday tradition for all New Yorkers and igniting a still-thriving *Nutcracker* craze throughout the United States and Canada. CBS-TV broadcast the ballet live, nationwide, on Christmas Night in 1957 and 1958 (with narration by June Lockhart), and it was made into a Warner Brothers movie with Macauley Culkin as the Nutcracker/Prince in 1994. NYCB Sugarplums over the years include: Maria Tallchief, Diana Adams, Melissa Hayden, Patricia Wilde, Allegra Kent, Elyse Borne, Merrill Ashley, Suzanne Farrell; Cavaliers: Nicholas Magallanes, André Eglevsky, Jacques d'Amboise, Conrad Ludlow, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Kent Stowell.

### Specifics about the OBT's production of *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*™

First and only West Coast production in the ballet's 54-year history.

#### About the cast

Roles include: 12 soldiers, 8 mice, 16 snowflakes and 8 polichinelles.

76 adult roles: danced by OBT's 28 company dancers, 9 apprentices, 1 guest artist and 4 professional division students from the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre.

13 dancers learn the principal roles: Sugarplum Fairy, Cavalier and Dewdrop.

Hours spent rehearsing the adult roles: 55 - 60 hours.

95 children's roles: cast entirely from the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre

#### About Keller Auditorium

Number of seats: 2992

Size of stage: 59' 10" wide x 29' 10" high

#### Front of house

1 house manager

1 head usher

21 ushers

4 ticket takers

2 elevators operators

1 checkroom attendant

6 volunteer greeters

#### The crew

4 carpenters

3 electricians

6 flymen

4 properties

1 sound

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**“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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