

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

CHRISTOPHER STOWELL / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OREGON BALLET THEATRE'S SPRING PROGRAM EXPLORES THE "DUET" AND MARKS THE RETIREMENT OF PRINCIPAL DANCER GAVIN LARSEN

Portland, Ore... Oregon Ballet Theatre's 20th-Anniversary season resumes **April 22nd** with the first of nine performances devoted to the beauty of the duet. All shows take place over the course of eleven days in the intimate 880-seat **Newmark Theatre** in downtown Portland.

The duet, or *pas de deux*, is a quintessential balletic device. Whether embedded in an abstract work or one that tells a literal story, the alluring quality of two dancers moving together implies connection, appealing to viewers on both a visual and an emotional level. For this reason, choreographers have examined, explored, dissected and re-imagined the duet for as long as people have been making dance.

OBT's spring program explores the wide range of moods and atmosphere made possible by the *pas de deux*, matching the feisty meld of modern and every-day movement in **Twyla Tharp's *Junk Duet*** to **Trey McIntyre's** silky mix of ballet and ballroom dance in his ***Like A Samba***, and setting **George Balanchine's** quiet interaction between dancers and musicians in ***Duo Concertant*** alongside **Christopher Stowell's** bold pairing of a single dancer with a succession of new partners in ***Tolstoy's Waltz***. The works are lighthearted one moment, and filled with tension the next. Some are purely architectural, others suave and sexy. All are a special treat in the Newmark Theatre's cozy setting.

Also on the program is a world premiere by New York-based choreographer **Emery LeCrone**. Her new work for OBT, ***Divergence***, is made possible by a grant from the Jerome Robbins New Essential Works Fund. OBT is one of just four ballet companies nationwide to have a work commissioned by the fund this season, joining Boston Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet and Sacramento Ballet.

OBT's Duets program also marks the retirement of principal dancer **Gavin Larsen**. The closing show of the program on Sunday, May 2nd, will be Ms. Larsen's final performance.

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Performances of OBT's spring program will take place at the **Newmark Theatre**, at SW Broadway and Main.

Evenings: April 22, 23, 24, 25, 29 and May 1 at 7:30 p.m. / Matinees: April 24, 25 and May 2 at 2:00 p.m.

Tickets start at \$17.

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 winter program is sponsored by the **Rose E. Tucker Charitable Trust, Gretchen Alley and Dr. Seth Alley, The Jerome Robbins New Essential Works Program, OPAD Consulting** and the **Raymond Family Foundation**.

Support for the 2009-10 season is provided by **kink fm102, The Paramount Hotel, 200 Market Building, Rex Hill Winery, Geranium Lake Flowers** and **All Classical 89.9**.

Audience enrichment events for the spring program include **Dance Talks**, Monday, **April 19, at 7 p.m. in the Portland Center for the Performing Arts Rotunda** (SW Broadway and Main). This **free** forum gives audiences a chance to hear directly from artists and critics who have significantly shaped the aesthetic and the 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 career of retiring **OBT principal dancer Gavin Larsen** will be the lens through which the April Dance Talks focuses on the choices, challenges and opportunities that shape a dancer's life. With the aid of photographs and performance video, Christopher Stowell will interview Larsen about her training, her performance aesthetic, her most memorable dance experiences and her future plans with OBT. Young choreographer **Emery LeCrone**, whose *Divergence* will premiere on OBT's spring program, will also participate, presenting the perspective of a dancer at the early stages of her career whose calling to choreograph is leading her in directions different than Larsen's.

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**, will take place in the orchestra level seating area of Keller Auditorium, **one hour prior to every performance**. Performance Perspectives demystifies ballet's exacting movement vocabulary, ventures into dance history, and investigates the process of dance production.

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Oregon Ballet Theatre's Spring Program

Tolstoy's Waltz

Music: Various

Choreography: Christopher Stowell

Costume Design: Mark Zappone

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Pianist: Susan DeWitt Smith

World Premiere: June 6, 2008, Keller Auditorium, Portland

Music is often the impetus for Christopher Stowell's choreography, in this case a recording of compositions by Russian artists renowned for their work in fields other than music. These include two waltzes by Alexander Griboyedov (1785-1829), a playwright and diplomat; one by Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), author of *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*; and one by the great choreographer George Balanchine (1904-1983). In need of more music, Stowell also chose two *Preludes* by Julian Scriabin, the young son of Russian composer Alexander Scriabin who tragically drowned in a boating accident at the age of 11. "I wanted to stay within my parameters," Stowell said, "to discover music by someone who was not a full-blown professional composer. I did allow myself to step outside those constraints though, and also added a *Romance* by Georgy Sviridov." An established composer, Sviridov (1915-1998) was particularly known for his film scores and songs.

Choreographically, *Tolstoy's Waltz* is a movement experiment created upon Anne Mueller, who dances in the work with many different partners. "All of Anne's sections are very austere theatrically," said Stowell. "The focus is on new movement. But I do insert into this very abstract and constructionist work something that is unexpectedly theatrical, introducing two characters from a completely different and mysterious sphere. I hope the contrast is interesting."

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 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

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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.

***Known By Heart Duet* – Company Premiere**

Music: Selections from *Junk Music*
Composer: Donald Knaack
Choreography: Twyla Tharp
Staging: Tom Gold
Original Costume Design: Santo Loquasto
Original Lighting Design: Jennifer Tipton
Lighting Execution: Michael Mazzola

World Premiere: June 23, 2001, Twyla Tharp Dance, Los Angeles Performing Arts Center

With roots as a modern dancer, Twyla Tharp is among the world’s most versatile and sought-after choreographers. She has created work for ballet, Broadway, film and television. This program marks the first time Oregon Ballet Theatre will have performed her work.

The central *pas de deux* from Tharp’s *Known By Heart* is commonly called “*Junk*” *Duet* because of its “gleefully raucous” score (*Dance Magazine*) by Donald Knaack. Known as “The Junkman,” Knaack is a classically trained percussionist who composes and performs exclusively on recycled materials including old wrenches, trash drums and discarded bicycle wheels.

Tharp’s choreography for “*Junk*” *Duet* centers around a solid core of ballet movement vocabulary and is built on the structure of a classical *pas de deux*—partnered *adagio*, two solos, and a coda—but quickly cuts loose within that framework. The dancers slide and glide, box, toe tap, and even mime a little for a power-packed, technically and aerobically challenging eleven minutes.

Twyla Tharp has choreographed more than 125 dances, five Hollywood movies, directed and choreographed two Broadway shows, written two books and received one Tony Award, two Emmy Awards, seventeen honorary doctorates, and numerous other awards. In 1965, Ms. Tharp began the dance company Twyla Tharp Dance, for which she

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made 80 pieces, including *Nine Sinatra Songs* and *In the Upper Room*. In 1988, Twyla Tharp Dance merged with American Ballet Theatre, where Ms. Tharp created more than a dozen works. Since that time, Ms. Tharp has choreographed dances for many companies, including Paris Opera Ballet, the Royal Ballet, New York City Ballet, Boston Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance and the Martha Graham Dance Company. In 1991, Ms. Tharp regrouped Twyla Tharp Dance and the company has been touring internationally to critical acclaim since 1999. Ms. Tharp's work first went to Broadway in 1980 with *When We Were Very Young*. In 2002, Ms. Tharp's and Billy Joel's award-winning dance musical, *Movin' Out*, premiered on Broadway and a national tour opened in January 2004. In film, Ms. Tharp has collaborated with director Milos Forman on *Hair* (1978), *Ragtime* (1980) and *Amadeus* (1984); with Taylor Hackford on *White Nights* (1985); and with James Brooks on *I'll Do Anything* (1994). Ms. Tharp continues to create works and lecture around the world.

***Divergence* – World Premiere**

Music: String Quartet No. 1, *Falling*, String Quartet No. 2

Composer: Joby Talbot

Choreography: Emery LeCrone

Costume Design: Katherine Scoggins

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

As its title implies, Emery LeCrone's new work for OBT uses movement to explore and express the state of divergence. Whether caused by a conflict of opinions, interests or wishes, a fundamental difference of attitude exists throughout among the performers. The dancers move around, in-between, and on top of a stunning and geometrically clean set piece. The massive construction literally divides and transforms the space, creating alternate environments that shape the movement and transform the group.

Divergence is a commissioned piece made possible by the Jerome Robbins New Essential Works (NEW) Program, established during the current financial crisis to help dance remain a viable and relevant part of the American arts sector.

Emerging choreographer and North Carolina native, **Emery LeCrone**, began her training at the Greensboro Ballet. At age 14 she began training year-round at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, spending her summers at the School of American Ballet. In 2005 Ms. LeCrone joined the North Carolina Dance Theatre where she performed in works by George Balanchine, Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux and Salvatore Aiello and worked closely with Dwight Rhoden of Complexions Dance Company. During her free time with the company she began choreographing, creating her first work in 2006. The New York Times has called Ms. LeCrone's choreography "...a delightful whole, exploring innovative partnering as well as the ways spinning full-throttle movement can echo and incorporate the planes of space around it."

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Ms. LeCrone currently resides in New York City where she continues to dance and choreograph. She will premiere new works this season for Oregon Ballet Theatre, The Columbia Ballet Collaborative, the Greensboro Ballet, and Novaballet.

Duo Concertant

Music: Duo Concertant, for violin and piano

Composer: Igor Stravinsky

Choreography: George Balanchine

Original Staging: Sean Lavery

Original Lighting Design: Ronald Bates

Lighting Execution: Michael Mazzola

Pianist: Susan DeWitt Smith

Violinist: Margaret Bichteler

OBT Premiere: May 7, 2004, Newmark Theatre, Portland

World Premiere: June 22, 1972, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater

When the New York City Ballet planned its 1972 Stravinsky Festival, George Balanchine took the opportunity to choreograph a *pas de deux* to one of his favorite pieces of music.

Igor Stravinsky's *Duo Concertant for violin and piano* is a boldly lyrical work and Balanchine pays tribute to its dramatic appeal by placing the musicians onstage and incorporating them into the ballet. At times, we find ourselves intently watching the dancers as they themselves focus on the musicians. Nancy Goldner wrote in *The Nation*, "Watching them listen is a theatrical experience in itself. Their faces speak a multitude of unknown thoughts, but the intensity and sweet concentration with which they listen suggest that the notes are running through their bodies."

Balanchine, for his part, preferred to let the beautiful interplay of dance steps and musical notes speak for itself, saying of *Duo Concertant*, "A girl and a boy, a piano and violin. Perhaps that is what ballet is all about."

Widely regarded as the foremost choreographer in 20th century ballet, **George Balanchine** (1904 – 1983) was born in St. Petersburg 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.

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Like A Samba

Music: Various

Choreography: Trey McIntyre

Staging: Alison Roper

Costume Design: Janet R. Elam

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

World Premiere: May 9, 1997, Newmark Theatre, Portland

Since its creation for OBT in 1997, Trey McIntyre's *Like a Samba* has delighted audiences across the country – from Portland to the Joyce Theatre in New York to the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Massachusetts. "It was so much fun it made me want to dance up and down the aisles myself," wrote the critic for *The Santa Fe New Mexican*. *The Oregonian* praised *Like a Samba* for "McIntyre's warm curiosity about the inventiveness imbedded in popular cultures, which he approaches like a sympathetic anthropologist and then subtly melds with the techniques and vocabulary of ballet. (It's called "like" a samba because it isn't actually a samba; it's inspired by one.)" McIntyre has since continued to develop this choreographic gift for melding ballet and popular music, as OBT audiences observed last June in the "Dance United 2009" excerpt from *Leatherwing Bat*, danced to the songs of Peter, Paul and Mary.

Like a Samba holds a special place in OBT history as the breakthrough ballet for Principal Dancer Alison Roper, who was an apprentice dancer in 1997 when McIntyre cast her as "the girl from Ipanema." For these performances, Roper served as *repertoireur*, the person charged with reviving the work and teaching it the rest of the company.

Trey McIntyre is one of the most sought-after choreographers working today. Born in Wichita, Kansas, Mr. McIntyre studied at North Carolina School of the Arts and later with Houston Ballet Academy. In 1989, Mr. McIntyre was named Choreographic Apprentice to Houston Ballet; a position created specially for him by Artistic Director Ben Stevenson, and in 1995 elevated to Choreographic Associate. Since then, Mr. McIntyre has created a canon of more than 80 works for companies such as Stuttgart Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, New York City Ballet, Ballet de Santiago (Chile) and Trey McIntyre Project. Mr. McIntyre has served as Resident Choreographer for Oregon Ballet Theatre, Ballet Memphis, and The Washington Ballet. He has received many grants and awards, including two choreographic fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography, was named one of Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch" in 2001, one of People Magazine's "25 Hottest Bachelors" in 2003 and one of Out Magazine's 2008 "Tastemakers". Mr. McIntyre established his critically acclaimed Trey McIntyre Project, a dance company that allows him to continue his artistic and creative relationships with a select group of high-caliber dancers. In the summer of 2008, Trey McIntyre Project launched as a full-time company operating out of Boise, Idaho. In its first year as a full-time company, Trey McIntyre Project toured to more than 25 cities across the world.

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Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2009-2010 Season

“Emerald Retrospective”

October 10-17, 2009 • Keller Auditorium
Emeralds—Gabriel Fauré / George Balanchine
20th Anniversary Retrospective

“George Balanchine’s The Nutcracker™”

December 12-27, 2009 • Keller Auditorium

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”

February 27-March 6, 2010 • Keller Auditorium
The Four Temperaments—Paul Hindemith/George Balanchine
A Midsummer Night’s Dream—Felix Mendelssohn/Christopher Stowell

“Duets”

April 22–May 2, 2010 • Newmark Theatre
Tolstoy’s Waltz (2008)—Russian composers/Christophe Stowell
Known By Heart (“Junk”) Duet (1998)—Donald Knaack/Twyla Tharp—**Company Premiere**
Duo Concertant (1972)—Igor Stravinsky/George Balanchine
Like A Samba (1997)—Astrud Gilberto/Trey McIntyre
Divergence (2010) – Joby Talbot / Emery LeCrone – **World Premiere**

“Bolero”

June 4-6, 2010 • Keller Auditorium
Raymonda (2008)—Alexander Glazounov/Yuri Possokhov
Hush (2009)—Rodney Sharman/James Kudelka
Bolero (2008)—Maurice Ravel/Nicolo Fonte

COMPANY ROSTER

Principal Dancers

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

Soloists

Candace Bouchard • Brennan Boyer • Ansa Deguchi • Adrian Fry • Steven Houser

Company Artists

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

Apprentices

Ashley Smith • Adam Hartley • Olivia Ornelas • Hanh Pham • Cyrstal Serrano • Brent Slack-Wolfe

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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