

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

CHRISTOPHER STOWELL / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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OREGON BALLET THEATRE CLOSSES *GRAND TOUR* SEASON IN RUSSIA AND INVITES PORTLAND TO *BIKE TO THE BALLET*

Portland, Ore... **Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2007-08 Grand Tour season** reaches its final destination **June 6-8** at Portland's Keller Auditorium with four season closing performances of the **Russian program**. The show boasts **two world premieres**, including a thrilling new staging of *Raymonda* by Bolshoi-trained choreographer **Yuri Possokhov**. This is Possokhov's third collaboration with OBT. Previously, he created *La Valse* and *Firebird*, which was last seen a year ago as part of the 2006-07 season.

Raymonda, with its stunning virtuoso solos and stirring **Alexander Glazounov** score, is 19th-Century Russian ballet at its opulent best. It calls for a company's worth of elegant, blue *tutus*, all newly created for this production by the OBT costume shop. It enters the Oregon Ballet Theatre repertoire alongside *Tolstoy's Waltz*, a new ballet by OBT artistic director **Christopher Stowell** set to the music of such unlikely composers as author **Leo Tolstoy** and choreographer **George Balanchine** - and **Julian Scriabin**, a child prodigy who died tragically at the age of eleven just as his budding musical career was auspiciously beginning.

Also performed is **George Balanchine's Stravinsky-scored masterpiece *Rubies***, the ballet that five years ago opened Christopher Stowell's first program as OBT artistic director.

The presenting sponsor of OBT's Russian program is **Mentor Graphics**. The 2007-08 season is sponsored by **American Airlines**, **Gerding Edlen Development** and **The Oregonian**. Season media support is provided by **KGW**, **kink fm102** and **Northwest Cable News**.

Performances of the Russian program take place at **Keller Auditorium**, SW Third at Clay.

Evenings: June 6-7 at 7:30 p.m. / Matinees: June 7-8 at 2 p.m.

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

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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

OBT invites the public to ***Bike to the Ballet*** for the **2:00 p.m. matinee on June 7** and enjoy **refreshments, valet bike parking**, and a chance to compete in a **“Best Legs” contest** onstage during intermission. Prizes include two free registrations for Cycle Oregon’s “Weekend at the Beach” ride this August.

All seats to the June 7 matinee are just \$20 for cyclists. Call 503.2.BALLET for details or visit www.obt.org/bike. *Bike to the Ballet* is generously sponsored by **Bike Gallery** and **KGW**, and supported by the **Bicycle Transportation Alliance** and **Cycle Oregon**.

Audience enrichment events for the Russian program include **Dance Talks**, Monday, **June 2nd, 7 p.m., at Keller Auditorium**. 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 historical video footage and photography to assist audience members in contextualizing the work(s) under discussion. Introduced as part of Stowell's initial year as artistic director, The Dance Talks series is unique among Portland's artistic opportunities and was an instant success with the city's dance-going community. Nearly 500 patrons, dance lovers, students of dance and academics attended the forums in the first year.

This Dance Talks program features **Costume Designer Mark Zappone** and **OBT Wardrobe Manager Kathy Scoggins**, who join **Christopher Stowell** to illuminate the process of designing and building costumes for ballet. From cutting stretch fabric to constructing a tutu (the net and tulle in one *Raymonda* tutu, laid out flat, are longer than a football field), learn how the Wardrobe Department keeps everyone covered.

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 Keller Auditorium, **one hour prior to each performance**.

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Oregon Ballet Theatre's Russian Program

***Rubies* (1967)**

Music: Igor Stravinsky – *Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra* (1929)

Choreography: George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust

Original Staging: Colleen Neary

Costume Design: Karinska

Lighting Design: Ronald Bates

Lighting Execution: Michael Mazzola

Premiere: April 13, 1967, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater.

OBT premiere: October 11, 2003, Keller Auditorium, Portland.

Rubies opened Christopher Stowell's inaugural season as OBT artistic director, and was the first of seven Balanchine ballets added to the company repertoire over the following five years. Its return bookends the first half-decade of the Stowell era, and serves as a benchmark by which to gauge the company's growth.

Though frequently performed as a stand-alone work, *Rubies* is the sassy and angular centerpiece of *Jewels*, a three-part ballet inspired by George Balanchine's visit to the jeweler Van Cleef and Arpels. The combination of *Emeralds*, *Rubies* and *Diamonds* was hailed as the first plotless, evening-length ballet. Audiences initially felt that Stravinsky's *Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra*, with its jazzy syncopations, evoked an American atmosphere in the choreography. Balanchine insisted, however, that he "did not have that in mind at all. It is simply Stravinsky's music." When the ballet was performed in Russia in 1972, a critic wrote that Balanchine "succeeded in 'interweaving' with finesse the classic technique and complexly patterned movements corresponding to the musical inflections of the composer."

Rubies was created in 1967 for Patricia McBride, Edward Villella, and Patricia Neary. Villella called the ballet "a gut-buster," and felt that the choreography reflected the swagger and attitude he had exuded upon his arrival at the School of American Ballet as a brash kid from Queens. McBride too said *Rubies* is "all about stamina." *Rubies* was staged for OBT by Los Angeles Ballet artistic director Colleen Neary, the sister of original cast member Patricia Neary.

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.

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***Tolstoy's Waltz* (2008) – World Premiere**

Music: Leo Tolstoy, *Waltz in F Major*; Alexander Griboyedov, *Waltz in A Flat Major* and *Waltz in E Minor*; G. Sviridov, *Romance*; Julian Scriabin, *Prelude for Piano in B Major, Op. 3/1* and *Prelude for Piano in C Major, Op. 2: Lento-Presto*; George Balanchine, *Valse Lente*

Choreography: Christopher Stowell

Costume Design: Mark Zappone

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Piano: Susan Smith

Tolstoy's Waltz is supported by a 2007 Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography from the Choo-San Goh & H. Robert Magee Foundation.

Music is often the impetus for Christopher Stowell's choreography. Upon discovering a CD called *Tolstoy's Waltz*, comprised of compositions by Russian artists renowned in completely different fields, he was intrigued. As is often the case however, the creative process ran into reality. Even with exhaustive searching, it was possible to find sheet music for only four of the six pieces Stowell had hoped to use. All of them were waltzes—two 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). Griboyedov's and Tolstoy's waltzes are written in the style of the salon miniatures of their time, with sweet melodies, while Balanchine's waltz is said to fuse Russian tradition with American culture.

In need of more music for his ballet, Stowell looked next to Julian Scriabin. "I wanted to stay somewhat within my parameters," said Stowell, "to discover music by someone who was not a full-blown professional composer." Julian Scriabin was a child prodigy and the son of Russian composer Alexander Scriabin. He drowned tragically in a boating accident at the age of eleven, leaving behind a surprisingly mature collection of compositions, two of which appear in this ballet. Stowell also added to the mix a work by 20th-Century Russian composer Georgy Sviridov (1915-1998), known for his film scores and songs set to the words of such poets as Boris Pasternak and Robert Burns.

Tolstoy's Waltz is primarily a movement experiment with one woman, OBT principal dancer Anne Mueller, and a cast of changing partners. "Anne is a wonderful colleague when stretching for new vocabulary," Stowell said, "and I wanted her to be the common denominator, while both her partner and the approach shift throughout the work. All of her sections are very austere theatrically. The focus is on the movement. But I do insert into this very abstract and constructionist work something that is unexpectedly theatrical, introducing two characters from a completely different sphere. I hope the contrast will be interesting."

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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 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 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.

***Raymonda* (2008) – World Premiere**

Music: Alexander Glazounov - *Raymonda*, Op. 57

Choreography: Yuri Possokhov, after Marius Petipa

Costume Design: Mark Zappone

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Marius Petipa's *Raymonda* was first performed at the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg in 1898, when Petipa was 80 years old. Following the success of *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* it proved to be the choreographer's final masterpiece. Despite a story considered to be, in the words of British dance writer Clement Crisp, both "inane and incomprehensible," major ballet companies around the world have mounted both abbreviated and full-length versions of *Raymonda* since its creation. "The truth is that *Raymonda* has endured in various versions less because of its thin-soup story than because of its glorious ballet score by Glazounov and because Petipa poured a cornucopia of high-style classical choreography and character dancing into the three-act original," wrote Anna Kisselgoff in *The New York Times* in 2004.

Yuri Possokhov's new staging of the ballet only hints at the underlying story, focusing instead on its wealth of virtuoso dancing. "The base of this *Raymonda* is, of course, the

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famous *Grand Pas Classique* from the Third Act,” said Possokhov. “For a ballerina, Raymonda is one of the richest roles existing in classical ballet. She has tons of variations [i.e. solos]; it’s one of the hardest roles. But if you see only the *Grand Pas*, there are not so many variations for Raymonda. So I have incorporated Petipa’s variations for her from other acts.

“I had to be in the sense of Petipa and the classical way, controlled by old-school philosophy. I am excited because the dancers are technically ready for it. I think it’s a good time. We don’t see the full-length ballet, but we have these treasures, these genius variations.”

After receiving his dance training at the Moscow Ballet School, **Yuri Possokhov** danced with the Bolshoi Ballet for ten years, working primarily with Ballet Master Yuri Grigorovich. He joined the Royal Danish Ballet in 1992 and performed there for two years before moving west to join San Francisco Ballet as a principal dancer. Mr. Possokhov has danced numerous major roles throughout his career, ranging in style from classical to contemporary. In 1999, he organized a tour entitled “Ballet Beyond Borders,” where sixteen dancers from SFB, including Mr. Possokhov, performed in more than ten cities throughout Russia.

As a choreographer, Mr. Possokhov’s credits include *Songs of Spain*, choreographed in 1997 for SFB Principal Dancer Muriel Maffre, *A Duet for Two* created the same year for SFB Principal Dancer Joanna Berman, and *Impromptu Scriabin* for former SFB Soloist Felipe Diaz, performed at the 1997 Jackson International Ballet Competition. In 2000, Mr. Possokhov completed a new work for a dancer at the Maryinsky Ballet and that same year choreographed *5 Mazurkas* for the Marin Dance Theatre.

His *Magritomania*, a work inspired by the paintings of René Magritte, premiered in March 2000 at San Francisco Ballet, and garnered him the 2001 Isadora Duncan Award for Outstanding Choreography. It has since been added to the Bolshoi Ballet’s repertoire. Mr. Possokhov’s ballet *Damned*, based on the Euripides’ play *Medea*, premiered in 2002. In 2003 he collaborated with SFB Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson on a new staging of *Don Quixote*. He has created two works for OBT: *Firebird* in 2004 and *La Valse* in 2005.

In 2006, Mr. Possokhov choreographed a new *Cinderella* for the Bolshoi Ballet. The work premiered in Moscow and was subsequently performed by the company in London and at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

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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**

Pas de Deux Parisien (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**

“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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