

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

M E D I A R E L E A S E

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OREGON BALLET THEATRE OPENS AN EXCITING NEW CHAPTER WITH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR KEVIN IRVING
Celebrates The Incomparable Alison Roper In Her Last Full Season With The Company

August 13, 2013 - Portland, OR

Oregon Ballet Theatre (OBT) is pleased to announce its upcoming 2013-2014 performance season, which includes several noteworthy items.

- New Artistic Director Kevin Irving
- First-ever production of a Nacho Duato ballet
- Welcoming Helen Pickett, dynamic American choreographer
- Final season of Principal Dancer Alison Roper after 18 seasons with OBT
- 2013-2014 season preview

This will be the company's first season under **newly appointed Artistic Director Kevin Irving**, and he has seized the opportunity to inject a spirit of renewal into the company's profile, and to introduce exciting new works to Portland audiences.

Highlights of the upcoming season include **OBT's first-ever production of a Nacho Duato ballet** – the dreamy and romantic *Por Vos Muero*, which will share the bill with former artistic director Christopher Stowell's witty and ebullient *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the company's fall performances at the Keller Auditorium (October 12 - 19). Duato, currently Artistic Director of the Mikhailovsky Ballet in St. Petersburg Russia and Artistic Director designate for Berlin Staatsopera, is one of the dance world's most sought-after stars. Companies the world over vie for the chance to present his ballets, and the Spanish choreographer has been awarded numerous prizes and medals in recognition of his contribution to dance. Irving has staged *Por Vos Muero* successfully on many companies, including The Royal Ballet Covent Garden and Australian Ballet, and will be doing the honors here in Portland as well. Work on this first program of OBT's season begins when the company presents OBT Exposed at Director Park August 26-29.

Another **new name for Portland audiences is Helen Pickett, a dynamic American choreographer.** Currently Pickett is Choreographer in Residence at Atlanta Ballet and is internationally known for her fusion of classical ballet technique and contemporary sensibilities. Pickett's *Petal* will be the opening work in the company's April performances at the Newmark Theater. That program will also bring another new acquisition: Nacho Duato's riveting *Cor Perdut* – a tour de force pas de deux.

These new works signal the beginning of a new era for Oregon Ballet Theatre as it builds upon years of artistic high points: many of the most beloved works presented in the past ten years will be danced in the balance of the season's offerings. Significantly, OBT looks forward to a new work to be created by former artistic director Christopher Stowell that will premiere February 12, 2014 at the Keller.

The 2013-2014 season will also mark another milestone for Oregon Ballet Theatre: after 18 seasons with the company, **Principal Dancer Alison Roper will retire from dancing at season's end.** Few dancers anywhere can equal the impact that this extraordinary dancer has had on OBT and the company plans to celebrate her unique qualities throughout the entire season. Roper will feature prominently in every program through April 2014, with leading roles in Duato's *Por Vos Muero*, Christopher Stowell's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, James Kudelka's *Almost Mozart* and Christopher Wheeldon's *Liturgie* already planned.

From Alison Roper: *Dance is, for me, just like breathing. I dance when I am happy and when I am sad. I dance around the house when I am not dancing at work. I dance at the beach when I am on vacation. None of that will change because I've left the stage. I hope that when the audience here in Portland remembers me that they'll think of me dancing my way through the next chapter in my life.*

OBT is especially excited to **announce that former Principal Dancer Artur Sultanov is coming out of retirement** especially to reprise his partnership with Roper in Nicolo Fonte's spectacular *Bolero*: these two magnetic stars will dance at every performance at the Keller Auditorium in February! Roper and Sultanov were justly and loudly acclaimed for the sparks they set off in Fonte's hugely popular take on the Ravel score – this is one last time to soak up the magic that these incredible artists create in a program not to be missed.

From Artistic Director Kevin Irving: *Alison Roper is a world-class ballerina who could have been a star in any company the world over – the fact that she made Portland and OBT her home for all these years was an incredible boon for dance lovers here. She leaves OBT at the peak of her abilities and we are looking forward to celebrating her this entire season.*

Our celebration of all things Alison Roper will conclude next April in our performances at the Newmark Theater, during which we will not only take a fond look back on some of the many milestones in Alison's remarkable career, but also see a new facet of this incredible dancer as she makes her debut in Duato's *Cor Perdut*, a sultry and powerful duet to the music of Maria del Mar Bonet. This program is at one time both a going away party for one of Portland's most beloved performing artists and a chance to experience the exciting future of OBT and ballet in Portland.

In thinking back on her long career with Oregon Ballet Theatre, Alison points to her roles in Trey McIntyre's *Like A Samba*, James Kudelka's *Almost Mozart*, Nicolo Fonte's *Bolero*, Christopher

Wheeldon's *Rush*, "Odette/Odile" in Christopher Stowell's *Swan Lake* and "Myrtha" in James Canfield's *Giselle* as being among her personal favorites. We know that Portland audiences will have their favorite memories as well and we expect some new favorites may be among the programs offered by OBT in this coming season!

2013-2014 Season At A Glance

DREAM

October 12-19, 2013 / Keller Auditorium

Por Vos Muero (Company Premier) Duato/Savall

A Midsummer Night's Dream Stowell /Mendelssohn

George Balanchine's The Nutcracker

December 14-24, 2013 / Keller Auditorium

Balanchine /Tchaikovsky

REVEAL

February 22-March 1, 2014 / Keller Auditorium

World Premiere Christopher Stowell

Almost Mozart Kudelka/ Mozart

Liturgy Wheeldon /Pärt

*Bolero** Fonte /Ravel

* With guest artist Artur Sultanov

CELEBRATE

April 17-26, 2014 / Newmark Theatre

Petal (Company Premiere) Pickett /Glass, Newman

Cor Perdut (Company Premiere) Duato /del Mar Bonet

The Lost Dance Mrozewski /Belton

+ A Special Tribute to Alison Roper

CREATE

May 28-June 1, 2014 / BodyVox Dance Center

An intimate look at the creative process

About Oregon Ballet Theatre

Founded in 1989, OBT is the state's largest full-time professional ballet company, dedicated to creating and preserving the art of ballet through the highest quality performance, training and educational programming. OBT is committed to producing compelling and diverse works that consistently inspire and entice audiences. OBT offers experiential arts education programs for youth and adults, as well as a professional ballet school for students, ages 4-18. Through all the programs it offers, OBT reaches over 130,000 members of the community each year. For more information about OBT go to: www.obt.org.

About Kevin Irving



As a dancer, Kevin Irving appeared with the Alvin Ailey Training Ensemble, Elisa Monte Dance Company, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens (as a soloist and principal dancer) and with American icon Twyla Tharp. In 1994, Kevin retired from the stage to take a position as ballet master and head of the artistic department with Nacho Duato's Compañía Nacional de Danza in Spain. From 2002 to 2007, Kevin was the Artistic Director of The Goteborg Ballet; the company under Kevin's leadership was named the most important dance company in Sweden by Ballet International Magazine. Since 2007 Kevin has been based in the U.S., while still maintaining a vast network of contacts abroad. Irving has been a frequent guest teacher with companies and schools such as, The Royal Danish Ballet, Alvin Ailey, Aspen Santa Fe, Juilliard, etc. Mr.

Irving was also Associate Director at dance company Morphoses (2011-2012). He continues to stage ballets by Nacho Duato and American choreographer Nicolo Fonte and is the Founder/Director of I-DANCE, a non-profit organization that sends teachers and choreographers to Latin American dance communities. He was appointed Artistic Director of Oregon Ballet Theatre in June 2013.

About Alison Roper



Alison Roper was born in Portland, Maine, and began her ballet training at age five with local teachers Jon and Linda Miele. Alison received her formal dance training from The Portland School of Ballet, Boston Ballet School and the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre. Alison joined Oregon Ballet Theatre in 1996 and was promoted into the corps in 1997. She was honored by *Dance Magazine* in 2002 as one of "25 to Watch," and in 2007 was ranked principal dancer. Alison's repertoire includes principal roles in works by George Balanchine, Christopher Wheeldon, Jerome Robbins, Sir Frederick Ashton, Kent Stowell, Peter Martins, Paul Taylor and Bebe Miller. She has originated leading roles in ballets by James Kudelka, Trey McIntyre, Yuri Possokhov, James Canfield, Christopher Stowell and Nicolo Fonte, among others.

In addition to her performances with OBT, Alison spent her summers performing with the Trey McIntyre Project from 2005-2007 and has since worked as a repetiteur and ballet mistress for that company. In the winter of 2010 she performed with Morphoses: The Wheeldon Company on the West Coast and in Canada.

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