

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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OREGON BALLET THEATRE SHOWCASES ALL ITS BEST WITH "REVEAL"

Featuring Reprisals of Audience Favorites from James Kudelka, Christopher Wheeldon, Return of Artur Sultanov in Nicolo Fonte's "Bolero", World Premiere by Christopher Stowell

January 15, 2014 - Portland, OR

On the heels of a highly successful run of George Balanchine's "The Nutcracker", **Oregon Ballet Theatre** will show a multitude of facets with **REVEAL** at the **Keller Auditorium, February 22 – March 1, 2014**. Four works will appear on the bill, three of which were or will be created on the dancers of OBT. Former Artistic Director **Christopher Stowell** returns to choreograph his first **new work** on the company since departing from that post a year ago. Returning to the OBT stage are **James Kudelka's "Almost Mozart"**, created for the company to much acclaim in 2006 and chosen for the ballet's most recent appearance at the **Kennedy Center** in the Ballet Across America festival last June, and **Christopher Wheeldon's "Liturgy"**, a profound meditation set to the music of **Arvo Pärt** which OBT first performed in 2012. Rounding out this feast of dance is **Nicolo Fonte's** daring and visually striking **"Bolero"**. Former Principal Dancer **Artur Sultanov** returns to the stage for only these performances to partner Principal Dancer Alison Roper in every show of this work, originally created on the duo in 2008.

DATES AND TIMES:

REVEAL opens **Saturday, February 22nd, 2014** and runs for **5** performances before closing **Saturday, March 1st**. For complete show dates and times, please visit www.obt.org

TICKET PRICES:

Tickets start at \$25. Visit www.obt.org or call **503.2.BALLET** for tickets.

OBT also participates in the **Arts for All** program, providing \$5 tickets to patrons carrying an Oregon Trail Card.

About Christopher Stowell's World Premiere Work:

From Mr. Stowell: "Dmitri Shostakovich, an important and controversial figure in classical music, lived during one of the most turbulent times of the 20th Century, and during a period of profound change in the history of the Soviet Union. At times effortlessly beautiful and, at other times, full of drama and bleakness, his music was considered both brilliant and worthless by various critics and his fellow composers. For me, underneath the pleasant, lighthearted rhythms of Shostakovich's ballet suites there lies a powerful sense of irony, a glimpse into both the glorious heights of the Russian upper-class and the dark truth of a society in decay. This tension, this feeling of conflict and danger, is what attracted me to this music and is the starting point of this new work."

About Christopher Stowell:



Christopher 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, 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, 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.

Stowell has taught and coached in San Francisco, New York, Japan, China 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.

In 2003, Christopher Stowell became Oregon Ballet Theatre's second artistic director. He made significant additions to the OBT repertoire, bringing to Portland works from some of the world's most celebrated choreographers, including Ashton, Balanchine, Robbins, Taylor, Tomasson, Wheeldon and Lubovitch. During Stowell's tenure with OBT, the company performed in Korea and at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C, as well as venues in New York, Chicago, Colorado, Washington and Wyoming. In addition to creating eight world premieres for OBT, including *Swan Lake* (2006), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2007) *The Rite of Spring* (2009), *Carmen* (2011) and *Ekho* (2012), Stowell also commissioned works by internationally prominent artists James Kudelka, Kent Stowell, Trey McIntyre, Yuri Possokhov, Julia Adam and Nicolo Fonte. Stowell served as OBT's Artistic Director from 2003-2012 and now freelances as a choreographer, ballet master and teacher in the US, Europe and Asia as well working for the Balanchine Trust. He has most recently worked in Stockholm, Antwerp, San Francisco, Cincinnati and Copenhagen and will create his first work for Los Angeles Ballet in March of 2014.

About *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 former OBT Artistic Director Christopher Stowell. It achieved critical acclaim upon its premiere, and has since been performed by OBT at the Laguna Dance Festival and the Kennedy Center as part of the Ballet Across America festival in 2012.

About James Kudelka:



James Kudelka is widely acknowledged as one of North America's most innovative choreographers. His mastery of both classical ballet and modern/contemporary dance has earned him commissions from companies—some 20 in all—as stylistically diverse as American Ballet Theatre, Chicago's Hubbard Street Dance and Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal.

Even as a student at Canada's National Ballet School, Mr. Kudelka demonstrated a choreographic interest in exploring innovative approaches. Adept in the classical ballet vocabulary, he infuses it with a contemporary sensibility acquired from his intense interest in modern movement idioms. Mr. Kudelka's work covers an impressive range, from virtuoso *pas de deux*, through large-scale and always arresting adaptations of such classics as *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker* and *Cinderella*, to boldly innovative creative collaborations with dancers, designers and musicians. He has never been afraid to tackle psychologically challenging subject matter in his story ballets—he views dance as a primary medium of artistic discourse—and through his gift for movement metaphor infuses poetic, emotional meaning into his many non-narrative works. After nine distinguished years as artistic director of the National Ballet of Canada (1996-2005), he continues to undertake collaborative projects that engage and challenge him as a choreographer.

About *Liturgy* (2003):

Music: Arvo Pärt - Fratres for Violin, Strings and Percussion

Choreography: Christopher Wheeldon

Costume Design: Holly Hynes

Lighting Design: Mark Stanley

"[A] wondrous duet... whose mix of spareness and complexity comes out of the music." – Dance Writer Anna Kisselgoff

Liturgy was created in 2003 and is the third Christopher Wheeldon ballet to enter OBT's repertoire, following *There Where She Loved* and *Rush*. Wheeldon's smash hit adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* for the Royal Ballet has cemented his reputation as one of the foremost choreographers working in contemporary ballet today. *Liturgy*, which saw its OBT premiere in 2012, has the aura of a spiritual journey, as befits the poignant score. Arvo Pärt's 1992 version of his *Fratres* for Violin, Strings and Percussion is layered with repeating motifs that Wheeldon uses to create an elegant, deeply moving meditation on the spiritual nature of partnership.

About Christopher Wheeldon:



Born in Yeovil, Christopher Wheeldon joined The Royal Ballet in 1991 and won the Gold Medal at the Prix de Lausanne competition. In 1993 he left for NYCB, where he was promoted to Soloist in 1998. He began choreographing while at The Royal Ballet, and for NYCB created *Slavonic Dances* for the Diamond Project in 1997. In 2000 he retired from dancing, becoming NYCB's first-ever Resident Choreographer. Since then he has choreographed at least one ballet a year for NYCB, including *Carousel (A Dance)* (2002), *Liturgy* (2003), *An American in Paris* (2005), *Klavier* (2006) and *The Nightingale and the Rose* (2007). He has also been in demand with other leading companies, notable works including *Continuum*, *Within the Golden Hour*, *Ghosts and Number Nine* (San Francisco Ballet), *Tryst*, *DGV: Danse à grande vitesse* and *Electric Counterpoint* (Royal Ballet), a full-length *Swan Lake* (Pennsylvania Ballet, 2004) and *Misericors* (Bolshoi Ballet, 2007). He was appointed Artistic Associate of The Royal Ballet in 2012.

Outside the ballet world, he choreographed *Dance of the Hours* for Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* (Metropolitan Opera, New York, 2006), ballet sequences for the feature film *Center Stage* (2000) and a Broadway version of *Sweet Smell of Success* (2002). Recent premieres include *The Sleeping Beauty* (Royal Danish Ballet, 2010), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (The Royal Ballet, February 2011), *Thirteen Diversions* (ABT, May 2011) and *Les Carillons* (NYCB, January 2012). He collaborated with Alastair Marriott on the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games. In 2007, Wheeldon founded Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company. He has received the Martin E. Segal Award from Lincoln Center and the American Choreography Award, and in 2005 received the Dance Magazine Award. He won the Critics' Circle Award for Best New Ballet for *Polyphonia*. *DGV: Danse à grande vitesse* was nominated for an Olivier Award in 2006, and the inaugural season of *Morphoses* at Sadler's Wells won a South Bank Show Award.

About Bolero (2008):

Music: Maurice Ravel – Bolero

Choreography: Nicolo Fonte

Costume Design: Mark Zappone

Lighting and Scenic Design: Michael Mazzola

Sound Design: Duane Rodakowski

Since Nicolo Fonte retired from performing in 2000 to devote himself full-time to choreography, he has been invited to make ballets on major companies across Europe and North America. He is praised as a choreographer "who creates the new rather than reinvent the old" (The Seattle Post-Intelligencer), and who "renders his competence in surprising, stimulating dance."

(Basellandschaftliche Zeitung). Bolero was his first work for Oregon Ballet Theatre.

Ravel composed the music to Bolero for the Ida Rubenstein Ballet in 1928. Over a relentlessly repeated snare drum rhythm, he placed a plaintive melody. "Don't you think this theme has an insistent quality?" wrote the composer. "I'm going to try and repeat it a number of times without any development, gradually increasing the orchestra as best I can."

The result is Bolero's long and gradual crescendo, achieved through masterful orchestration. "The music is so unremitting that it could be restrictive," said Fonte, "but it doesn't have to be. I can follow the music rhythmically, or I can break it up as much as I want. Either way, the continuity of the music doesn't change. That makes for very interesting dynamics on stage."

When Ravel envisioned a ballet to Bolero, he imagined a factory-like stage setting in keeping with the repetitive nature of the music. Fonte and designer Michael Mazzola abstracted that idea for this production. Corrugated metal panels, suspended in the stage space and hit with angular light, echo the mechanical character of the music. "The panels are metaphorical for me," Fonte said, "like having our guards up. As the music gets richer and stronger, we become more open. The panels fly out, the dancing becomes freer, we reveal more of who we are as people. How interesting that I'm using a very mechanical piece of music to explore something basic about what it is to be human: Can we let our guards down? And what might happen if we do?"

About Nicolo Fonte:



Choreographer Nicolo Fonte is known for his daring and original approach to dance. Portland audiences have experienced this daring with his first creation for OBT, *Bolero*, described by *The Mercury* as "tense with coiled sexuality, human fragility, and simply moving encounters between men and women onstage." The company has also danced his critically-acclaimed *Left Unsaid*, which *Willamette Week* described as "silky and muscular. . . sexy and affecting . . . truly a joy to watch." Born in Brooklyn, New York, he studied at the Joffrey Ballet School as well as at the San Francisco

Ballet and New York City Ballet Schools. Upon completing a Bachelor Degree of Fine Arts at SUNY Purchase, he danced with Peridance in NYC and later joined Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal. Fonte subsequently joined Nacho Duato's Compañía Nacional de Danza in Madrid and forged a strong identity in the Spanish company for seven years - for both his dancing and his choreography. *En los Segundos Ocultos*, (*In Hidden Seconds*), one of three ballets Fonte made for the Spanish company, was hailed as a breakthrough work of great impact with the poetic vision of a mature artist and indeed this ballet established his presence on the European dance scene.

In 2000 Fonte retired from performing to devote himself full-time to his choreographic career. Since then he has created or staged his ballets for prominent companies all over the world. While working with the Göteborg Ballet in Sweden he created his first full-length ballet, *Re: Tchaikovsky*, based on the life of the composer. The work appeared on the "Best of 2005" lists of both Ballett-Tanz and Dance Europe. Fonte also received a Choo San Goh award for his 2002 collaboration with Pacific Northwest Ballet, *Almost Tango*. In addition, he has created six highly successful works for Aspen Santa Fe Ballet that have toured throughout the US and overseas.

Fonte continues to pursue a career that keeps him involved with some of the most dynamic companies on both sides of the Atlantic. In July of 2009 he premiered his first work for Les Ballets de Monte Carlo, the critically acclaimed *Quiet Bang*, and in September created the equally well-

received *Record of Joy*, his second work for Het Nationale Ballet in Holland. *Made Man*, inspired by Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* and Fonte's fourth creation for The Royal Ballet of Flanders, premiered this past March in Antwerp and was met with ecstatic reviews and public response.

About Artur Sultanov:



Mr. Sultanov was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Russia. He trained at Vaganova Ballet Academy and at age 17, joined the Kirov ballet where he danced a classical repertoire. Artur has also performed with Eifman Ballet as a Soloist. In 2000 he moved to San Francisco to join Alonzo King's Lines Ballet. There, he worked closely with Mr. King on creating original contemporary ballets. In 2003 Artur joined Oregon Ballet Theatre. His principal roles at OBT include the Prince in *Swan Lake*, Ivan in *Firebird*, and the Cavalier in the *Nutcracker*, among others. Artur was a guest artist with Trey McIntyre Project, Complexions Contemporary Ballet and California Ballet Company where he performed the role of Romeo in their version of *Romeo and Juliet*. He has been featured on OPB as an emerging artist in Portland. While at Lines Mr. Sultanov worked and performed with a tribe of pigmies from Central Africa in the project called *People of the Forest*. He

has appeared at numerous festivals such as the Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival, the Chicago Dancing Festival and Fall For Arts- the most prestigious festival of contemporary dance in New York City. Mr. Sultanov has performed on the stages of the Metropolitan Opera House, Kennedy Center, Bolshoi Ballet Theatre, and the Mariinsky Theatre in his native city of St. Petersburg. In addition to being an accomplished dancer, Mr. Sultanov has also taught extensively throughout his professional career. In the past eight years, Mr. Sultanov has taught and choreographed for the school of Oregon Ballet Theatre and Lines Contemporary Ballet School of San Francisco. In 2011, he and his wife, Cynthia, founded Sultanov Russian Ballet Academy. Artur retired from Oregon Ballet Theatre in 2012.

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.

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