

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE
OBT/25
KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE AFTER 7:00PM August 22, 2014

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Ben Wood

Director of Development, Marketing and Communications

PHONE: 503-227-0977 ext. 230

EMAIL: Ben.Wood@obt.org

PINK MARTINI TO COLLABORATE WITH NICOLO FONTE IN OBT 25 SEASON OPENING PERFORMANCES

Beloved International Ensemble To Appear Live On Stage In World Premiere; Agon and Excerpts by Leading Oregon Ballet Theatre Choreographers Celebrate 25 Years of Ballet in Portland

August 23, 2014 - Portland, OR

Oregon Ballet Theatre announced last night during Pink Martini's concert at the Oregon Zoo that **Nicolo Fonte's** world premiere in the upcoming **OBT 25** program will feature Portland's favorite "little orchestra" sharing the stage with the dancers in the first ever full-scale collaboration between the two groups. The ballet, titled **Never Stop Falling (In Love)**, was inspired by Fonte's eagerness to create an unforgettable experience for the audience that will reveal new facets of both groups and the performers in them. In celebration of the Ballet's 25th Anniversary Season, this entirely new creation will feature singer China Forbes, who has performed with the ensemble since bandleader Thomas Lauderdale plucked her from New York City in 1995. Opening **Saturday, October 11, 2014** at the **Keller Auditorium**, OBT 25 will continue for five performances through October 18.

Mr. Fonte explains, "The piece is primarily inspired by...Pink Martini...songs I chose ...(to) create a theatrical arc - an aural landscape - that I find make for a very interesting journey. The songs themselves run the gamut from being about love, life and loss - so I suppose in very general, broad terms, the intellectual and emotional themes that are inspiring me for this work are joy, playfulness, tenderness and mystery". The piece will include iconic Pink Martini songs, as well as some brand new material, in order to create a "quintessential Portland event that is celebratory and accessible, while staying true to the ideals and integrity of the art form of ballet in the 21st century". Adding to the local flavor of the piece, Portland-based designer and Project Runway winner Michelle Lesniak will create original costumes for *Never Stop Falling (In Love)*.

Opening the OBT 25 program is **George Balanchine's** 1957 **Agon**, a plotless ballet for 12 dancers, with a complex 12-tone score by Igor Stravinsky. It made headlines at the time for both its eroticism and bold interracial casting. Sinfoni music writer Jenny Gilbert tells "In the ballet's climactic pas de deux - an almost icily detached duet danced at the premiere by the white ballerina Diana Adams and the African-American principal Arthur Mitchell - the man lifts the woman's leg up behind her and presses her head back to meet it in a gesture that is at once brutal and intimate. Moments later she is seen balancing in a classical arabesque while he lies on his back at her feet, clutching her standing leg and rotating her. Her raised leg sweeps arrogantly above his head like a helicopter's rotor blade". Last performed by Oregon

Ballet Theatre in 1999, and translating roughly to “athletic contest”, *Agon* is by turns playful, spirited, and sexy – full of intricate patterns, both visually and musically.

Central to this anniversary celebration are the three choreographers who most shaped Oregon Ballet Theatre over its first 25 years. Featuring duets from **Trey McIntyre's 2013 *Robust American Love***, **Christopher Stowell's 2011 *Carmen***, and **James Canfield's 1989 *Romeo & Juliet***, *Love x 3* is a tribute to those whose creative vision and passion helped to establish OBT's stellar reputation on the American ballet scene. The performance of Canfield's *Romeo & Juliet* marks the first time his work will be danced by the company he founded since his departure in 2003.

A celebratory party **with special guests** will follow the opening night performance. Tickets to this event can be added to one's performance package for a fee by request. Interested parties should contact Oregon Ballet Theatre Director of Development and Marketing Ben Wood via e-mail at Ben.Wood@obt.org or phone at 503.290.0022.

PROGRAM DETAILS

AGON

George Balanchine / Stravinsky

LOVE X 3

Duet from **Robust American Love Trey McIntyre / Fleet Foxes**

Pas de Deux from **Carmen Christopher Stowell / Bizet**

Pas de Deux from **Romeo & Juliet James Canfield / Prokofiev**

NEVER STOP FALLING (IN LOVE)

*World Premiere

Nicolo Fonte / Pink Martini

PERFORMANCE DATES & TIMES

Saturday, October 11 – 7:30 pm

Sunday, October 12 – 2:00 pm

Thursday, October 16 – 7:30 pm

Friday, October 17 – 7:30 pm

Saturday, October 18 – 7:30 pm

TICKETS

Tickets for OBT 25 go on sale to the general public **September 9, 2014** and range in price from **\$27-144**.

Season subscriptions are also available, and start as low as \$66 for 3 shows.

For tickets, visit www.obt.org, call 503.222.5538, or visit area Ticketmaster outlets.

Groups larger than 10 can receive discounts up to 30%. Email groupsales@obt.org or call 503.227.0977.

Oregon Ballet Theatre also participates in the **Arts For All** program, providing \$5 tickets to individuals carrying the Oregon Trail Card.

Supplemental Materials

ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHERS

George Balanchine

Widely regarded as the foremost choreographer in 20th Century ballet, George Balanchine was at the helm of New York City Ballet from its creation in 1948 until his death in 1983. He was born in St. Petersburg in 1904 and found an early outlet for his creativity as a member of the legendary Paris company, Ballets Russes. Later, he worked in Denmark and Britain and with the new Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo before forming his own company, Les Ballets, in Paris. In 1934, Mr. Balanchine co-founded the School of American Ballet in New York. This eventually led to the formation of the prestigious New York City Ballet and the creation of hundreds of diverse works. In 1983, shortly before he died, Mr. Balanchine was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His ballets have become a part of nearly every major company's repertory.

James Canfield

James Canfield, Artistic Director of Nevada Ballet Theatre (NBT), was born in Corning, New York and received his early dance training at the acclaimed Washington School of Ballet under the direction of Mary Day.

After joining the Washington Ballet in Washington, D.C., he joined the Joffrey II Dancers in New York City. Following one season with the Joffrey II Dancers, he was invited to join the Joffrey Ballet under the direction of Robert Joffrey and Gerald Arpino.

During his career, Mr. Canfield danced an extensive repertoire of works by noted choreographers such as Sir Frederick Ashton, Anthony Tudor, George Balanchine, Gerald Arpino, Robert Joffrey, William Forsythe, John Cranko, Marius Petipa, Jiří Kylián, José Limón, Agnes de Mille, Choo San Goh and Val Caniparoli among others. In addition, Mr. Canfield was featured in two *Dance in America PBS Series'* as well as *An Evening with Diana Ross*.

Mr. Canfield left the Joffrey Ballet and was appointed Oregon Ballet Theatre's (OBT) Founding Artistic Director and served in that role from 1989 – 2003. Mr. Canfield choreographed over 30 ballets for the year-round company and established the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre to provide the best classical training to dancers throughout the Northwest. His students have gone on to dance with New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Dusseldorf Opera Ballet, Ballet West, Colorado Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre and many others.

In 2008, Mr. Canfield was asked to step in as NBT's Interim Artistic Director and in 2009, following an international search, he was appointed the company's third Artistic Director.

Several of Mr. Canfield's works have joined NBT's repertoire including *Jungle*, *Coco*, *Up*, *Neon Glass Pas de Deux*, *Equinoxe* and *Degas Impressions*. *Cyclical Night*, his first original work for the company, premiered in 2010 to rave reviews. That same year, Mr. Canfield established several new initiatives for the company including *NBT Unveiled*, *4 x 8* and *The Studio Series*, which offered subscribers new perspective

and insight into the world of dance. In spring 2011, Mr. Canfield collaborated with composer Adam Hurst on the premiere of his new ballet, *Still*, performed by NBT as part of *The Tried, The True and the New*.

Mr. Canfield remains active with the Northwest Dance Project in Portland, Oregon where he choreographs and instructs dancers from around the country along with some of the dance world's most recognized directors and choreographers. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Gerald Arpino and Robert Joffrey Foundation.

Nicolo Fonte

Choreographer Nicolo Fonte is known for his daring and original approach to dance. His work has been noted by critics for a unique movement language as well as a highly developed fusion of ideas, dance and design. Born in Brooklyn New York, Fonte started dancing at the age of 14. He studied at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York as well as at the San Francisco Ballet and New York City Ballet Schools while completing a Bachelor Degree of Fine Arts at SUNY Purchase. Upon graduation he danced with Peridance in NYC and later joined Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal, dancing in the works of Balanchine, Tudor, Kudelka and Spaniard Nacho Duato. Fonte subsequently joined 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 that time he has created or staged his ballets for The Dutch National Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Royal Ballet of Flanders, Stuttgart Ballet, The Australian Ballet, The Göteborg Ballet, The Finnish National Ballet, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre, The Washington Ballet, Ballett Mainz, Ballett Nürnberg, Ballet West, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, TANZ Ensemble Cathy Sharp, North Carolina Dance Theatre, Tulsa Ballet, Ballet British Columbia and Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal.

Fonte received a Choo San Goh award for his 2002 collaboration with Pacific Northwest Ballet, **Almost Tango**, of which R.M.Campbell of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer wrote, "Fonte is a thinker, an architect who creates the new rather than reinvent the old. He is a master of manipulating space and creating relationships". **Almost Tango** was also voted as one of Dance Europe's "**Best Premieres**" when it was re-staged for The Australian Ballet in 2004. His subsequent creation for the company, **The Possibility Space** premiered in Melbourne in September of 2008.

From 2002 to 2006 Nicolo enjoyed an ongoing creative partnership with The Göteborg Ballet in Sweden, creating and staging numerous works that helped establish the company's distinct profile. While in Göteborg he created his first full-length ballet, based on the life of Tchaikovsky, which was widely acclaimed in the international press for Fonte's marriage of narrative skill and a contemporary choreographic language. **Re: Tchaikovsky** appeared on the "**Best of 2005**" lists of both Ballett-Tanz and Dance Europe. Fonte has also played an important role in the ongoing development of Aspen Santa Fe Ballet as one of that company's most popular guest choreographers.

Fonte consistently works with some of the most dynamic companies on both sides of the Atlantic: since July of 2009 he has created new works for Les Ballets de Monte Carlo and The Dutch National Ballet, a 4th creation for The Royal Ballet of Flanders, and has had work staged or revived for The Washington Ballet, The Finnish National Ballet, and Oregon Ballet Theater.

Trey McIntyre

Trey McIntyre was born in Wichita, Kansas and trained at North Carolina School of the Arts and Houston Ballet Academy. In 1989, McIntyre was appointed Choreographic Apprentice to Houston Ballet, a position created especially for him, and in 1995 he became the company's Choreographic Associate. McIntyre has worked for twenty-four years as a freelance choreographer, producing close to one hundred pieces during the span of his career so far.

McIntyre served as Resident Choreographer for Oregon Ballet Theatre from 1998-2000.

In 2005, McIntyre founded his dance company, Trey McIntyre Project, which first appeared at the Vail International Dance Festival. The company was initially a summer touring company, but its national and international success led McIntyre to establish the company year-round as of 2008, based in Boise, Idaho. TMP has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Dance Magazine*, and on *PBS NewsHour*, and has earned coast-to-coast acclaim from the likes of *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Boston Globe*, *People Magazine*, and more. In 2013, Trey McIntyre Project expanded its artistic vision and announced a crowd-sourced documentary film entitled *Ma Maison*.

McIntyre is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Choo San Goh Award for Choreography and a Lifetime Achievement Award from The National Society of Arts and Letters, as well as two grants for choreography from the National Endowment for the Arts. His works have been performed by companies such as *Houston Ballet*, *Stuttgart Ballet*, *American Ballet Theatre*, *New York City Ballet*, *Pennsylvania Ballet*, *Moscow Ballet Theatre*, *State Ballet of (Republic of) Georgia*, *Pacific Northwest Ballet*, *Hubbard Street Dance Chicago*, *Washington Ballet*, *Ballet de Santiago (Chile)*, *Ballet Florida*, *Oregon Ballet Theatre*, *Texas Ballet Theatre*, *The Carlisle Project*, *Ballet Memphis*, *Ballet Pacifica*, *Nashville Ballet*, *Aspen/Santa Fe Ballet Company*, *Cincinnati Ballet*, *Philadanco*, *Sacramento Ballet*, *Miami City Ballet*, *Milwaukee Ballet*, *Kansas City Ballet*, *Smuin Ballet* and *Trey McIntyre Project*.

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, Copenhagen and Los Angeles. He will join the artistic staff of San Francisco Ballet as Ballet Master and Assistant to the Artistic Director in September 2014.

ABOUT PINK MARTINI

In 1994 in his hometown of Portland, Oregon, Thomas Lauderdale was working in politics, thinking that one day he would run for mayor. Like other eager politicians-in-training, he went to every political fundraiser under the sun... but was dismayed to find the music at these events underwhelming, lackluster, loud and un-neighborly. Drawing inspiration from music from all over the world – crossing genres of classical, jazz and old-fashioned pop – and hoping to appeal to conservatives and liberals alike, he founded the “little orchestra” Pink Martini in 1994 to provide more beautiful and inclusive musical soundtracks for political fundraisers for causes such as civil rights, affordable housing, the environment, libraries, public broadcasting, education and parks.

One year later, Lauderdale called China Forbes, a Harvard classmate who was living in New York City, and asked her to join Pink Martini. They began to write songs together. Their first song “Sympathique” became an overnight sensation in France, was nominated for “Song of the Year” at France’s Victoires de la Musique Awards, and to this day remains a mantra (“Je ne veux pas travailler” or “I don’t want to work”) for striking French workers. Says Lauderdale, “We’re very much an American band, but we spend a lot of time abroad and therefore have the incredible diplomatic opportunity to represent a broader, more inclusive America... the America which remains the most heterogeneously populated country in the world... composed of people of every country, every language, every religion.”

ABOUT MICHELLE LESNIAK

Michelle Lesniak, Project Runway's Season 11 winner is known for her strong aesthetic and quick wit. Michelle wowed both judges and viewers with her tenacity. Nearly voted off, Michelle fought back to reveal one of the most cohesive and distinctive collections seen on Project Runway to date.

Michelle trained at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, but couldn't keep her hands off of textiles. Self-taught in both garment design and leather working, her love of art, print, texture, and music comes through to her final designs.

Michelle is committed to staying in her native hometown of Portland. Dedicated to local manufacturing and ethical business practices, Michelle is undoubtedly playing a key role in shaping and growing the Portland Fashion Industry.

ABOUT OREGON BALLET THEATRE

Founded in 1989, Oregon Ballet Theatre is the state's largest full-time professional ballet company. OBT's mission is to inspire an enduring passion and appreciation for the unique art form of dance through artistic excellence, thrilling live performances, innovative choreography and exceptional educational programs. The nationally and internationally acclaimed Oregon Ballet Theatre is recognized for its dynamic approach to both classical and contemporary ballet. For more information, please visit www.obt.org.
