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September 15, 2015 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oregon Ballet Theatre Launches its 26th Season with an exciting double bill celebrating the passion and exuberance of Italy

Oregon Ballet Theatre opens its 2015|2016 season October 10th at the Keller Auditorium, with an exciting double bill that presents the spirit of Italy from two very different perspectives: one by way of Denmark and a centuries old tradition that delights in the local color of Naples; the other a world premiere work by internationally acclaimed choreographer James Kudelka that explores the complex choral music of an infamous Italian Renaissance composer driven to murder by the betrayal of his wife. The evening opens with a local twist as self-proclaimed rock violinist Aaron Meyer and his ensemble perform selections of Italian compositions, including an excerpt from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.

Followers of OBT have been fortunate to have experienced work by Canadian born Kudelka twice before: *Almost Mozart*, a bit of gorgeously contained dynamism danced primarily in silence, was created for OBT in 2006, and *Hush*, an abstract, large-ensemble piece, premiered in 2009. He returns to Portland this fall, to create a third world premiere titled *Sub Rosa*, a Latin phrase that conveys secrecy and confidentiality. The work is inspired by the poignant madrigal *Moro Lasso*, written in 1610 by the brilliant - yet mad - Italian Renaissance composer, Carlo Gesualdo. *Moro Lasso* is the tragic lament of a neglected lover who is dying from the agony of a broken heart. Gesualdo knew firsthand how it felt to be betrayed, having caught his wife in bed with her lover. His rage knew no bounds and he murdered them both in grizzly fashion. "It is extraordinary that a man capable of such jealousy and violence and paranoia could also be such a genius of harmony in vocal writing," Kudelka observes. "In my choreographic world of love, sex, and death, all three of these share a place in the score as in the composer's life."

The *Amore Italiano* program culminates with the company premiere of Act III from Danish ballet master August Bournonville's *Napoli*. "Bournonville is as essential to a ballet company's repertoire as Anton Chekov is to theater," says OBT Artistic Director Kevin Irving. "Bringing the Bournonville style to Portland was a major undertaking, and I could not have imagined attempting it without the stellar team that we have assembled, headed up by the illustrious Frank Andersen—Founder of The Bournonville Foundation and the former Artistic Director of both the Royal Danish and the Royal Swedish Ballets." Topping off this exciting cultural exchange, and demonstrating further commitment to an authentic interpretation of this delightful ballet, OBT is thrilled to present Portland audiences with Royal Danish Ballet star Amy Watson, who will dance in both *Napoli* and the world premiere of *Sub Rosa*. Watson is an exceptional and versatile artist who excels both in neoclassical Balanchine ballets as well as Bournonville's work.

Through Bournonville's choreography, and *Napoli* in particular, there is an unbroken chain of ballet tradition dating back nearly 200 years. Dancers of the Royal Danish Ballet have childhood memories of standing on the famous bridge during the third act of *Napoli* and watching the wedding festivities of Teresina and Gennaro. *Napoli* was August Bournonville's ultimate triumph and won him the status of "Danish ballet poet," as Hans Christian Andersen called him in a letter following the premiere performance in 1842. The ballet was choreographed after Bournonville visited Naples, where he had been impressed by the local color and the vibrancy of life on the harbor of Santa Lucia. It appeared to be a city in constant movement. The first and third acts of *Napoli* were inspired by these Italian street scenes. Bournonville wrote in his memoirs: "From my window, in the course of an hour, I would witness more tableaux than I could use in ten ballets!" Act III of *Napoli* is a wedding celebration offering a joyous, intoxicating, and seemingly endless stream of dance. At the 1842 premiere, an eye witness noted that the Danish audience which then, as now, had a reputation for being reserved, "was completely carried away and became really quite Italian!"

Amore Italiano

Keller Auditorium October 10 – 17th

Saturday, October 10, 2015 at 7:30pm

Sunday, October 11, 2015 at 2pm

Thursday, October 15, 2015 at 7:30pm

Friday, October 16, 2015 at 7:30pm

Saturday, October 17, 2015 at 7:30pm

Single Tickets: 31-\$146

Groups: \$15 - \$100 | NEW Group Benefit!!! Blue Ribbon Society – Thursday, 10/15 includes PBR sponsored intermission party

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ABOUT OREGON BALLET THEATRE

Oregon Ballet Theatre is committed to sharing our passion for the expressive power of ballet, inspiring an enduring appreciation of dance, and connecting in meaningful ways to our community through excellence in performance, training and educational programs. OBT is the largest professional ballet company in Oregon, employing nearly 200 people and attracting artists from around the globe with our reputation for excellence. The company is rooted in the traditions of classical ballet, with a repertoire that ranges from the great classics to premieres from some of the most exciting choreographic voices in the field today. Our mission is dedicated to the vitality of, and access to, world-class ballet performance and training in our region. Founded in 1989 by James Canfield, a former principal dancer with the Joffrey Ballet, OBT quickly developed a distinctive style and unique repertoire that grew to comprise over 80 ballets. From 2003-2012, under the direction of Christopher Stowell, OBT presented nearly 350 performances and added 51 ballets, including 20 world premieres, to its diverse body of work. In June 2013, we were delighted to name Kevin Irving as the company's third Artistic Director. Irving brings over 25 years of experience performing with and managing world-renowned cultural organizations and dance companies, including The Göteborg Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, and Compañía Nacional de Danza (Spain). His tenure has been marked by a commitment to collaborative partnerships with other Portland artists and organizations, including the Portland Art Museum, Multnomah County Library, Kenji Bunch, and Pink Martini. He has expanded the company's classical repertoire – with the premieres of Ben Stevenson's *Cinderella* and August Bournonville's *Napoli* – while preserving OBT's legacy and restoring major works such as James Canfield's *Romeo & Juliet*. At the same time, he continues to build a diverse body of work with world premieres from internationally acclaimed, contemporary choreographers such as Nicolo Fonte, Darrell Grand Moultrie, and James Kudelka. Irving will be working with OBT to develop a unique approach to 21st century American ballet that reflects the vigor of the art form as it continues to evolve.

ABOUT AUGUST BOURNONVILLE

August Bournonville was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, on August 21, 1805. As a dancer, choreographer, teacher, and ballet director of the Royal Danish Ballet for nearly 50 years, he established the Danish style of dance based on bravura dancing and expressive mime. His distinctive style is noted for its precision, neatness, lightness, and gaiety. It is filled with bouncy jumps, speedy footwork, small quick steps, and beats done while the upper body is held still. He was trained by Vincenzo Galeotti, the Italian dancer and choreographer who became the founder of The Royal Danish Ballet, as well as by his father, French dancer Antoine Bournonville, who arrived in Copenhagen from Stockholm in 1792. Bournonville became a solo dancer at the Royal Ballet in Copenhagen at an early age. He created a style which while influenced by the Paris ballet was entirely his own in which elegance and grace dominated. As a choreographer, he made a large number of original ballets with varied settings: from Denmark, Italy and Scotland, to Russia and South America. In *Le Conservatoire*, Bournonville dramatized memories of his years of study in Paris where the key theme was harmony and grace. In his ballets, the harmony of the dance reflects the harmony of the soul: ballet steps are infused with joyful exuberance. Among his ballets still performed, three have become treasures of the Danish ballet repertoire. *La Sylphide*, *Napoli*, and *A Folk Tale* represent the

essence of Bournonville's artistic outlook. In these ballets, Bournonville maintained that art should be positive, its purpose to elevate us and to make us harmonious human beings. They are dedicated to a world of order, meaning, beauty, and harmony in which balance prevails. Bournonville also directed the Swedish Royal Opera at Stockholm from 1861–64 and staged several of his works in Vienna from 1855–56. In 1877, following his return to Denmark, he retired and was knighted. Bournonville was a central figure in Danish culture who also fought to improve the social status and security of his dancers. He died on November 30, 1879 in Copenhagen.

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 25 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, Kudelka demonstrated a choreographic interest in exploring innovative approaches. While adept in the classical ballet vocabulary, he infuses it with a contemporary sensibility acquired from his intense interest in modern movement idioms. 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.

Kudelka 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) James Kudelka continues to undertake collaborative projects that engage and challenge him as a choreographer.

ABOUT FRANK ANDERSEN

Frank Andersen became Artistic Director of The Royal Danish Ballet in 1985. His first term ended in 1994 when he took over as Artistic Director of the Royal Swedish Ballet until 1999. He then resumed his post at The Royal Danish Ballet from 2002 until 2008. In 2002, Andersen was among five artists to receive the Dance Magazine Award in recognition of outstanding contribution to the field of dance. In 2004 the American Scandinavian Foundation made Andersen "Man of the Year" in the U.S. In 2008, Andersen was awarded Commander of the Danish Dannebrog Order. Born in Copenhagen, Denmark, Andersen began training at The Royal Danish Ballet School at the age of seven. He also studied under Vera Volkova, Stanley Williams, and Nora Kiss. He was accepted to the corps of The Royal Danish Ballet in 1971 and became a principal in 1977. His dancing has been described as conveying a love of life, humor, and charm in roles such as Geert in *The Kermesse in Bruges*, Gurn in *La Sylphide*, Franz in *Coppélia*, and Puck in John Neumeier's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 1976, Andersen and Royal Danish Ballet principal Dinna Bjørn founded the Bournonville Group. Known in the U.S. as "Soloists of The Royal Danish Ballet," this ensemble of 8–10 dancers toured the world for ten years as ambassadors of Bournonville's work. They performed in the U.S., Canada, Central America, France, Italy, Sweden, Holland, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Andersen has staged more than 30 productions of August Bournonville's ballets for many internationally recognized companies including: *A Folk Tale* for The Royal Danish Ballet in 1991—with set and costumes by Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II, *La Sylphide* for the National Ballet of China in 1999, and *Napoli act III* for the National Ballet of Cuba in 2008. In 2010, Andersen, together with his wife Eva Kloborg staged Bournonville's *La Conservatoire* and *The Flower Festival* in Genzano for the Vietnam National Opera and Ballet, and this culminated in major presentations at the Hanoi Opera House in May 2010. Since 1997, he has been Artistic Advisor to the National Ballet of China, visiting the People's Republic on many occasions. In 2014, he published the first book in Chinese about The Royal Danish Ballet and August Bournonville. In 2013, he became the first Dane to be a Professor with the Beijing Dance Academy. Andersen is thrilled to share his passion for August Bournonville's choreography with Portland audiences in this Oregon Ballet Theatre premiere production of *Napoli Act III*.

ABOUT AMY WATSON

Originally from Washington, DC, Watson trained at the School of American Ballet and performed with the Suzanne Farrell Ballet before joining the corps de ballet of the Royal Danish Ballet in 2000. In 2003 she was appointed soloist and, in 2007, principal dancer. Watson's roles as a principal included Other Dances, Princess Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*, Teresina in *Napoli*, Kitri in *Don Quixote*, Anita in *West Side Story*, Titania and Hermia in *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, the Ballerina in *Études*, Myrtha in *Giselle*, Irma in *Abdallah*, Victorine in *La Conservatoire*, Lescaut's Mistress in *Manon*, Olga in *Onegin*, Sophie in *The Kings Volunteers on Amager*, Effy in *La Sylphide*, Calypso and Kirke in *The Odyssey*, Eleonora and the pas de deux in *The Kermesse in Bruges*, Princess Henriette in *The Little Mermaid*, Mercedes in *Don Quixote*, Betsy in *Anna Karenina* and Babe in *Twyla Tharp's Come Fly Away*. Watson created a leading role in *Bournonville Fantasy* by Thomas Lund, Jacopo Godani's *Uncontaminated*, the principal part in Jo Strømgren's *Air* and in Jorma Elo's *Lost on Slow* and the soloist part in Anna Lærkesen's *Wings* and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *L'Homme de bois*. Watson has performed at Alexander Kølpin's *Copenhagen International Ballet* as well as with soloists and principals of the Royal Danish Ballet at the *Dance Salad Festival* in Houston, Texas. Watson has received a *Helena Rubinstein Scholarship*, a *George Balanchine Scholarship*, the *Grant of Albert Gaubier* (2004) and the *Grant of Ulla Poulsen* (2005). In 2011, she received the *Order of the Dannebrog* from Queen Margrethe II of Denmark.