

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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June 8, 2016 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oregon Ballet Theatre is thrilled to announce the promotion of Soloist Peter Franc to Principal Dancer

Oregon Ballet Theatre's (OBT) Artistic Director Kevin Irving has announced additional changes to the company's 2016/2017 dancer roster: following a stand out inaugural season, Soloist Peter Franc has been named Principal Dancer, newcomer Keenan English a trainee with the Cincinnati Ballet, will be joining the company as an Apprentice, and Company Artist Jordan Kindell has accepted a contract with the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Franc joined OBT at the beginning of its 2015/2016 season which quickly became a tour de force year for this exciting dancer. Possessing both exquisite classical and gritty contemporary technique, he was featured in every production including: James Kudelka's *Sub Rosa*, August Bournonville's *Napoli*, as the Cavalier in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*, as Romeo in James Canfield's *Romeo & Juliet*, and in Nicolo Fonte's *Beautiful Decay* – where he outdid himself dancing every performance as he stepped into second cast for the injured Colby Parsons. "Between all these works, I think Peter has partnered nearly every woman – and man – in the company," laughed Irving while making the announcement. "All kidding aside, Peter is an incredible artist. This promotion is well deserved!"

Franz along with Jaqueline Straughan from Ballet West will join Xuan Cheng, Brian Simcoe, and Chauncey Parsons to enhance the rank of OBT's principal dancers as the company prepares for one of the most challenging and exciting seasons in its history.

It is with a mix of sadness and pride that OBT wishes farewell to Company Artist Jordan Kindell. Kindell originally a student of The School of Oregon Ballet Theatre, joined the company in 2012. During his four seasons he delighted and moved audiences in many memorable works including: Darrell Grand Moultrie's *Instinctual Confidence*, as the Candy Cane in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*, and in Nacho Duato's *Rassemblement*. Kindell has accepted a contract with Dance Theatre of Harlem. OBT wishes him all the best in this unique opportunity to dance with a racially diverse company which mixes classical ballet along with works that use the language of ballet to celebrate African American culture.

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 a 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 Helen Pickett. Irving is 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 PETER FRANCO

Originally from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Peter Franco began dancing in Atlanta at the Metropolitan Ballet Theatre and continued training with the Louisville Ballet School. He then joined the Houston Ballet, rising to the rank of demi-soloist. Notable performances include works by Jerome Robbins, George Balanchine, Jirí Kylián, Hans Van Manen, and Stanton Welch. He then spent three seasons touring with the Aspen Santa Fe Ballet performing a variety of contemporary ballets. This is his first season dancing with OBT.

ABOUT KEENAN ENGLISH

Keenan English began his formal ballet training at the age of 12 with the Baltimore County Youth Ballet. From there, he went on to attend the Baltimore School for The Arts. Upon return for his senior year at the School for the Arts, he was invited to join the trainee program at Boston Ballet School, where he studied for a year under the Pao Scholarship. While there, English had the opportunity to perform with Boston Ballet in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Don Quixote*,

The Nutcracker and the Annual Gala. In the summer of 2012, he attended the summer course at The School of American Ballet, and later that year enrolled as a full time student on the Carolyn Wright-Lewis Scholarship. During his two years at SAB he performed in Balanchine's *Serenade*, *Coppelia*, and *Western Symphony* which was a Live at Lincoln Center PBS Broadcast. In 2014, he joined the company at Dance Theatre of Harlem. While there he danced works by George Balanchine, Nacho Duato, Ulysses Dove, Francesca Harper, Darrell Grand Moultrie, and Robert Garland. In 2015 English joined Cincinatti Ballet as a trainee. He joins Oregon Ballet Theatre as an apprentice effective with its 2016/2017 season.