

# OREGON BALLET THEATRE

## KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**PRESS CONTACT:**

Natasha Kautsky  
Director of Marketing & Communications  
PHONE: 503.227.0977  
EMAIL: [natasha.kautsky@obt.org](mailto:natasha.kautsky@obt.org)

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Oregon Ballet Theatre Unleashes a Season of “Giants”

Oregon Ballet Theater’s 2016-2017 season is audacious in scope as it traces the evolution of ballet through iconic works from the giants of the field including Petipa, Balanchine, Forsythe, and Duato, and includes world premieres by two of the most innovative creators working in the art today, Helen Pickett and Nicolo Fonte. In addition to this ambitious “season of giants”, Oregon Ballet is thrilled to make several important announcements: due to capacity crowds last year, the company has extended its *Nutcracker* run; The OBT Orchestra will be performing with the company for three programs this season; and the company is delighted to welcome Nicolo Fonte as Oregon Ballet Theatre’s resident choreographer.

Oregon Ballet Theatre’s fall repertory program begins with George Balanchine’s celebrated *Serenade*. This was the first work that Balanchine created in America and forever established his legacy of neo-classical choreography infused with the romance and rigor of old Russia. *Serenade* is set to Tchaikovsky’s sweeping *Serenade for Strings* which will be performed live by the OBT Orchestra at every performance. Next on the program is the OBT premiere of William Forsythe’s groundbreaking *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*. Created for the Paris Opera Ballet in 1987, *In The Middle* pushes Balanchine’s neoclassical style to the limit and indeed became an instant classic and the cornerstone of post neo-classical dance upon its premiere. Thom Willem’s powerful score sends electronic shudders throughout the piece as dancers prowl the stage insolently sizing each other up, throwing themselves into technically exhilarating movement. The evening closes with a world premiere and the title work for this program, *Giants*, by OBT’s newly named resident choreographer, Nicolo Fonte.

Well-known to Portland audiences for a stunning roster of works including *Bolero*, *Left Unsaid*, *Petrouchka*, and last season’s exciting collaboration with Pink Martini *Never Stop Falling (In Love)*, Fonte is recognized throughout the world as a choreographer equally comfortable with classical and contemporary dance forms. He has worked with companies as varied as The Dutch National Ballet, The Australian Ballet, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet and BalletX. It is with great pleasure that Oregon Ballet Theatre names Fonte as its resident choreographer. The company is excitedly looking forward to mining Fonte’s richly varied talent for years to come.

Oregon Ballet Theatre's thrilling "season of giants" continues with one of the company's most ambitious projects yet – a unique adaptation of *Swan Lake*. While remaining true to the pure classicism of the Petipa / Ivanov original, Artistic Director Kevin Irving weaves in nuances which are sure to connect audiences more deeply with the story, reinvigorating the traditional narrative ballet from the inside out. This adaptation goes beyond the established Odette/Odile fantasy to focus on the prince, a young awkward figure ignored and left to his own devices until he is drawn into a web of illusion designed to hasten his passage to adulthood. This incredible work is set off by Tchaikovsky's glorious score which will be performed live by the OBT Orchestra.

The season closes with TERRA a mixed repertory program that welcomes the spring and light back into our lives with double helpings of works by Nacho Duato and Helen Pickett. From *Duato* the company adds an important piece to its repertory, *Jardí Tancat*. This work is every bit as iconic as Balanchine's *Serenade* or Forsythe's *In the Middle*. *Jardí* was Duato's very first ballet and catapulted him to fame. Also on the bill is Duato's *El Naranjo*, a gorgeous pas de deux from the longer work *Gnawa* which Duato is allowing to be performed on its own for the very first time. From Pickett OBT is thrilled to return *Petal*. This wonderfully colorful ballet was an instant success with Portland audiences at its Portland premiere in 2014. The evening closes with a world premiere from the American born Pickett, who has been hailed by critics as among a new generation of boundary-pushing choreographers. OBT eagerly awaits this latest creation.

Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2016-2017 OBT season traces the evolution of dance, including significant, even iconic, works of the classical, neo-classical, post neo-classical, and contemporary ballet styles – and it looks to a future of ballet that is inclusive of all of these styles. Artistic Director Kevin Irving points out: "With this 'season of giants', OBT simultaneously exalts the significance of American choreography – which can be traced from Balanchine's *Serenade* through Forsythe, Pickett, and Fonte AND the continuing appeal of our classical traditions. The season is a dance-lover's dream!"

## **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 Compañia 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 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.