

PRESS CONTACT:

Natasha Kautsky
Director of Marketing & Communications
PHONE: 503.227.0977
EMAIL: natasha.kautsky@obt.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOLIDAY FAVORITE, *GEORGE BALANCHINE'S THE NUTCRACKER™*, RETURNS FOR 17 SHOWS WITH 8 PERFORMANCES FEATURING THE OBT ORCHESTRA

This winter, Oregon Ballet Theatre proudly returns George Balanchine's immensely popular version of *The Nutcracker* to the Keller Auditorium, December 12 - 26, 2015. Last season OBT welcomed over 40,000 people to experience this festive holiday tradition. This year the company is projecting even higher attendance and is providing more than 1,600 tickets to families in need through OBT's Share the Wonder campaign – a highly successful, annual initiative driven by the generous support of individual donor contributions and sponsored this year by the Starseed Foundation and RACC's Work for Art .

Preparations for this year's *Nutcracker* are even more exciting than usual as evidence of the company's pending move to a new home in the South Waterfront is literally mounting. Bit by bit, boxes are being packed and stacked while furniture is marked for transit. It is fitting the company will say goodbye to the hallways and studios of 818 SE 6th Ave with rehearsals for *The Nutcracker*, as the production combines all the talent of OBT's company and school. Most of our audience is unaware of the considerable scheduling logistics involved in rehearsing a cast of over 100 dancers in such tight quarters. While the staff has approached this issue with good humor for 15 years, they look forward to the additional studio space in OBT's new home!

Oregon Ballet Theatre's *Nutcracker* features magnificent scenery and elaborate costumes. The company remains one of only a handful in the nation with the rights to produce George Balanchine's version of this holiday classic. OBT is pleased to announce the addition of two more shows this year featuring the OBT Orchestra performing Tchaikovsky's magical score live.

This season, the iconic role of the Sugar Plum Fairy will be danced by audience favorites Xuan Cheng, Ansa Deguchi, Candace Bouchard, and Eva Burton. The technically demanding role of the Cavalier will be shared by OBT principal artists Brian Simcoe and Chancey Parsons, as well as the company's newest soloist Peter Franc, and company artist Colby Parsons. Franc debuted with Oregon Ballet Theatre last fall in *Amore Italiano* dancing leading roles in both James Kudelka's *Sub Rosa* and August Bournonville's *Napoli*. In addition to this highly anticipated casting, OBT has challenged company artists Kelsie Nobriga and Jordan Kindell – a graduate of The School of Oregon Ballet Theatre – to learn these virtuoso roles. "No final decision has been made

yet,” comments OBT Artistic Director Kevin Irving. “We are eagerly following their progress as they prepare what could be the breakout roles of this season. This is going to be a cliffhanger. But no matter the final outcome, these dancers have already grown so much as artists, which is rewarding in itself to see.” Additional debuts in featured roles will be posted in the “Casting” section of the *Nutcracker* page on the OBT site, approximately one week prior to the performance. Visit:
<http://www.obt.org/index.php/boxoffice/single-tickets/balanchines-nutcracker/>

PERFORMANCE DATES & TIMES

Sat., Dec. 12, 2015 at 2pm 🎵
Sat., Dec. 12, 2015 at 7:30pm 🎵
Sun., Dec. 13, 2015 at 2pm 🎵
Sun., Dec. 13, 2015 at 7:30pm
Thurs., Dec. 17, 2015 at 7:30pm
Fri., Dec. 18, 2015 at 2pm
Fri., Dec. 18, 2015 at 7:30pm 🎵
Sat., Dec. 19, 2015 at 2pm 🎵
Sat., Dec. 19, 2015 at 7:30pm 🎵
Sun., Dec. 20, 2015 at 2pm 🎵
Sun., Dec. 20, 2015 at 7:30pm
Tues., Dec. 22, 2015 at 7:30pm
Wed., Dec. 23, 2015 at 2pm
Wed., Dec. 23, 2015 at 7:30pm
Thurs., Dec. 24, 2015 at 12n
Sat., Dec. 26, 2015 at 2pm 🎵
Sat., Dec. 26, 2015 at 7:30pm
🎵 Features live orchestra

TICKETS

Tickets for **George Balanchine’s *The Nutcracker*** are on sale now and range in price from **\$23 to \$146**.

Groups larger than 10 can receive discounts up to 50%. 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. For information about this program, please call 503.222.5538.

SPONSORS

George Balanchine's The Nutcracker is made possible by the support of presenting sponsors **Mentor Graphics**. Media support for Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2015|2016 season includes **Metro Parent, Portland Monthly, The Oregonian and Oregon Live,** and **Kink 101.9 fm.**

ABOUT GEORGE BALANCHINE'S THE NUTCRACKER™

George Balanchine debuted his *Nutcracker*, his first full-length story (and, to that date, most expensive) ballet at New York City Center on February 2, 1954. It became a huge hit, creating a decades-long holiday tradition for countless New Yorkers and igniting a *Nutcracker* craze throughout the United States and Canada. CBS-TV broadcast it nationwide, live on Christmas Night, in 1957 and 1958 (narrated by June Lockhart), and it was made into a Warner Brothers movie with Macaulay Culkin as the *Nutcracker/Prince* in 1994.

ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHER

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.

ABOUT OREGON BALLET THEATRE

MISSION

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.*

HISTORY OF ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT

OBT enriches Oregon with world-class dance. 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. Our mission is dedicated to the vitality of, and access to, world-class ballet performance and training in the 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, OBT was 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 Oregon Symphony, 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. He 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.

OBT 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 performances are praised for their artistry and high production value and have earned the company national recognition and international touring engagements. Each year, OBT's productions reach over 70,000 audience members at top-tier venues, from loyal subscribers to low-income students attending at \$2 a ticket. Our primary base is the tri-county Portland Metro area, but our audiences span 31 counties in Oregon and 4 in Washington. In recent years, the company has toured around the Pacific Northwest, as well as to New York, Chicago, Seoul, South Korea, and twice to the prestigious *Ballet Across America* festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

OBT is proud to train the next generation of dance artists through the School of OBT (SOBT). Under the direction of Anthony Jones (formerly of the Palucca University for Dance, Dresden), SOBT provides over 500 youth and adult students with a high-quality dance education from professional instructors. Alumni have gone on to train at some of the most prestigious institutions in the country, including The Juilliard School and the Alvin Ailey program at Fordham University. They have gone on to dance professionally with a number of international companies and almost every major company in the U.S. We are delighted to now offer enhanced professional development opportunities at the upper levels of the school through our newly unveiled junior company, OBT2. This smaller, more mobile performing ensemble will develop and perform its own repertoire, expanding dancer training while improving access to ballet with more and farther-reaching, tailored community engagements. Directed by Lisa Sundstrom (former principal dancer with American Ballet Theatre and Pennsylvania Ballet), OBT2 will be equipped to bring performances into a variety of settings, including schools, studios, retirement centers, corporate events, and public/community venues.

Beginning January 2016 SOBT continues its expansion by opening an ancillary location in West Linn to serve communities south of Portland. The West Linn location will house two studios and initially offer pre-ballet and early level classes for children, along with “mommy-and-me”, adult ballet and fitness classes. The curriculum will later expand to include a full complement of ballet, dance and fitness programs – all taught by SOBT’s world class instructors.

EDUCATION OUTREACH at OBT

OBT improves quality of life for youth and adults. OBT’s investment in the community extends far beyond our stages and studios, through a wealth of free and low-cost programs that unlock the world of ballet for learners of all ages and backgrounds. Dance is the least-taught art form in schools and ballet one of the least-understood artistic disciplines among adults. Under the direction of Kasandra Gruener, winner of the 2007 and 2009 Young Audiences' Sunburst Award for commitment to arts education, OBT’s Education Outreach programming improves access to culture and dance across a wide spectrum of the community, from Head Start students, to at-risk youth, to adult audience members.

Our comprehensive Education Outreach programming impacted 42,931 people last season, including 6,919 K-12 youth across 7 school districts, significantly improving access to dance. Our in-school residencies are designed to integrate seamlessly with academic curriculum and are being requested at record levels; the majority of our youth programs serve schools with over 50% Free and Reduced Rate Lunch (FRRL) participation, a common barometer of socio-economic status for schools/districts. Our tailored programming engages children’s imaginations and innate intelligence through kinesthetic activity and awareness. Together, our Education Outreach programming and artistic programming aim to reach new audiences. We are committed to breaking down economic and cultural barriers to the art form by showing the full range of classical ballet in all its complexity, making it relevant to the next generation of arts lovers by attracting youth and young adults, and improving access to underserved populations. We also engage thousands of adults in pre-performance lectures, tours and forums, offering close-up, personal experiences of ballet and the creative process, in the belief that a more knowledgeable, engaged viewer becomes a more committed arts patron.