

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Artistic Director Kevin Irving enriches a beloved classic as Oregon Ballet Theatre premieres his adaptation of *Swan Lake*

Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2016-2017 "season of giants" continues this February with Artistic Director Kevin Irving's bold adaptation of perhaps the most legendary ballet of all time, *Swan Lake*. While maintaining much of the original Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa choreography which is the foundation of this unforgettable work, Irving enhances the story by weaving in a more complex drama surrounding Prince Siegfried. The new focus brings an exciting opportunity for a tour-de-force performance for the male lead in a ballet that has traditionally been considered a hallmark only for the prima ballerina. Irving's staging is supported by OBT's stellar artistic staff including Resident Choreographer Nicolo Fonte, School of OBT Director Anthony Jones, and Rehearsal Director Lisa Kipp. The OBT Orchestra will be performing Tchaikovsky's glorious score.

In his adaptation Irving takes inspiration from the composer's early life as Tchaikovsky was remembered as a very sensitive, and impressionable boy. Similarly Irving's Prince Siegfried is loved and doted on in a way that would arrest his development had destiny not intervened. Suddenly the young prince is thrust into position to marry and ascend to the throne - responsibilities for which he is completely unprepared. Irving further grounds the work by removing the traditional character of the sorcerer von Rothbart. Instead it is Siegfried's father, the frail and dying King, who conjures up the famous Odette/Odile fantasy to teach his son to distinguish between reality and illusion. By the time of his coronation Prince Siegfried has matured into a capable leader. In an ending overflowing with hope, he realizes that love is its own magic and that the beautiful swan princess may have been by his side all along.

Since coming to OBT Irving has worked not only to challenge the company technically – as evidenced by the recent premiere of William Forsythe's *In the Middle Somewhat Elevated* – but also to bring a theatrical richness to their every step, particularly in story ballets. Whether finding humor and poignancy in Ben Stevenson's *Cinderella* or mining the emotional depths of James Canfield's *Romeo & Juliet*, OBT's dancers have gained recognition for their dramatic ability. *Swan Lake* will be no exception. OBT Principle Artists Peter Franc and Brian Simcoe will alternate in the role of Prince Siegfried. Both dancers are remembered for their raw and moving portrayals as Romeo in last season's *Romeo & Juliet*. OBT favorite Xuan Cheng and the

company's newest Principal Artist Jaqueline Straughan will dance the quintessential roles of Odette and Odile. The drama is set off along the way by delightful characterizations particularly during the traditional dances of Act I which are fleshed out to make for a bright and even comic line up of maidens hoping to wed Prince Siegfried.

While known to be a champion of contemporary ballets, Irving has a great love for the classics and is eager to add this *Swan Lake* to OBT's repertory. "The reason *Swan Lake* endures among ballet's most loved masterpieces is due in great part to the majesty, beauty, and emotional depth of Tchaikovsky's incredible score," he observes." Along with the extended sequences of 19th century choreography that form the backbone of classical ballet, the music helps us believe in a beautiful Swan Princess, and makes us believe as well in the power of love."

PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

Oregon Ballet Theatre presents *Swan Lake*

FEB. 18 –25, 2017

Keller Auditorium | 222 SW Clay Street, Portland, OR 97201

DATES & TIMES

Saturday, February, 18 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, February, 19 at 2:00 PM

Thursday, February, 23 at 7:30 PM

Friday, February, 24 at 7:30 PM

Saturday, February, 25 at 2:00 PM

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TICKETS

- Single tickets start at \$29
- Groups of 10 or more start at \$15
- Thursday, February 23rd is a Blue Ribbon Society Night -
 - Groups of just 6 or more are invited to enjoy ballet in a new way. Dress casual. Enjoy the performance and join OBT for a free intermission party with snacks, dance trivia, door prizes, and free PBR Tall Boys.

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 James Kudelka.

Under Irving's leadership OBT seeks to develop a unique approach to American ballet in the 21st Century that promotes a greater affirmation of the art form's connection to the world around us.