

**PRESS CONTACT:**

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



February 1, 2016 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
OREGON BALLET THEATRE PROUDLY RESTORES  
JAMES CANFIELD'S *ROMEO & JULIET* TO ITS REPERTORY

Following an absence of over 15 years, Oregon Ballet Theatre is thrilled to present the return of James Canfield's beloved production of *Romeo & Juliet* to Portland's Keller Auditorium February 27<sup>th</sup> through March 5<sup>th</sup>. The work, created by Canfield in 1989 for Pacific Ballet Theatre, was immensely popular as soon as it appeared and continued to be so when Pacific Ballet Theatre merged with Ballet Oregon to become OBT in 1990. *Romeo & Juliet* was performed many times during Mr. Canfield's tenure as Artistic Director and is rightfully restored to the OBT repertory this season.

"If there is one unifying theme to our performances this season," observes Artistic Director Kevin Irving, "it is that our future includes and embraces our past." Rehearsals for this production from OBT's storied past began in mid-January appropriately in the brand new OBT studios on Bancroft Street in the South Waterfront with a picture window view of the Willamette River.

Canfield's passion for *Romeo & Juliet* began when he first performed the role of Romeo in John Cranko's production for the Joffrey Ballet. At six-foot-three he felt his physical presence was at odds with the look of an innocent teenage boy in love. He worked that much harder on developing the character and conveying youthful exuberance, love, and despair through every movement. Canfield won raves from New York Times critic Anna Kisselgoff, who described his Romeo as "the production's most persuasive character. He gives us a Romeo all too ready for love."

In his own approach to the work Canfield digs deeper into the development of every character. During rehearsals he has the dancers switch roles to better understand the motivation and complexity in a scene. The focus is on telling an emotionally rich and complex story in a way that is clear and very real to the audience, at the same time enhancing the feeling of passion between the two lovers with an ethereal quality that ballet uniquely provides.

Two incredible casts will alternately perform the production's iconic roles. Principal Artist Xuan Cheng who charmed audiences as Cinderella last season will be partnered by Soloist Peter Franz who debuted with Oregon Ballet Theatre last fall. Soloist Ansa Deguchi will be partnered by Principal Artist Brian Simcoe. This pair was featured last season in the roles of Romeo and Juliet receiving high praise for their performance of the bedroom scene during OBT25. Among the many incredible male roles in the work Principal Artist Chancey Parsons and Soloist Michael Linsmeier will alternate as

Mercutio raising swords against Tybalt alternately danced by Company Artists Jordan Kindell and Thomas Baker.

Drawing the audience further into the production is the glorious score by Sergei Prokofiev which guides the story all the way through to its tragic end. Prokofiev “created themes that identify the characters, or the power of what was going on — and brilliantly,” says Canfield. “From a dance standpoint — to me, that’s the ultimate.” Oregon Ballet Theatre is thrilled to have the OBT Orchestra performing live at every performance.

---

## **PERFORMANCE DETAILS AND PRICING**

James Canfield’s *Romeo & Juliet*  
February 27<sup>th</sup> – March 5<sup>th</sup> | Keller Auditorium

- **Saturday, February 27 – 7:30 orchestra**
- **Sunday, February 28 – 2:00 orchestra**
- **Thursday, March 3 – 7:30 orchestra**
- **Friday, March 4 – 7:30 orchestra**
- **Saturday, March 5 – 2:00 orchestra**
- **Saturday, March 5 – 7:30 orchestra**

Tickets start at \$29

Groups start at \$15

**Groups of 6 or more attending Thursday evening’s performance March 3<sup>rd</sup> will automatically be invited to OBT’s Blue Ribbon Society – an intermission party complete with ballet trivia, door prizes, free snacks and 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.

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 JAMES CANFIELD**

James Canfield, Artistic Director of Nevada Ballet Theatre (NBT) and Founding Artistic Director of Oregon Ballet Theatre (1989-2003) was born in Corning, New York and received his early dance training at the acclaimed Washington School of Ballet under the direction of Mary Day.

During his career with The Joffrey Ballet and Washington Ballet, Mr. Canfield danced an extensive repertoire of works by noted choreographers such as Sir Frederick Ashton, Anthony Tudor, George Balanchine, Gerald Arpino, Robert Joffrey, William Forsythe, John Cranko, Marius Petipa, Jiří Kylián, José Limón, Agnes de Mille, Choo San Goh and Val Caniparoli among others.

After leaving The Joffrey Ballet, Mr. Canfield was appointed Oregon Ballet Theatre's (OBT) Founding Artistic Director where he along with Haydee Gutierrez established the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre to provide the best classical ballet training to young students and dancers throughout the Northwest.

In 1993, Mr. Canfield and Board Member Kiki Hillman, raised the capital for an original \$1.2 million dollar production of The Nutcracker. Conceptualized and choreographed by Mr. Canfield, this undertaking proved to be a financial and artistic success for the company as well as the catalyst that introduced ballet to new audiences.

In August 1999, OBT made the first of its two New York City debuts when it performed to sold-out houses at the famed Joyce Theater.

In addition to his choreographing and teaching, Mr. Canfield also played a leading role in establishing OBT as a major arts institution in Portland through artistic programming, education and outreach, sound financial footing, community visibility, and national recognition.

To help establish OBT as one of Portland's top performing arts organizations, Mr. Canfield and a committed group of individuals secured a permanent home for the future

of OBT. In September 2000, the 21,000 square foot former Wells Fargo Bank, housed OBT's offices and dance studios.

After leaving OBT, Mr. Canfield went on to further his studies and enrolled at The East West College of the Healing Arts. After graduating, he joined the team at The West Portland Physical Therapy Clinic as well as opening his own massage therapy practice. During this period of time, at the invitation of friend and colleague Sarah Slipper (Founding Artistic Director, Northwest Dance Project), he remained active by teaching and choreographing for her company.

In 2009, following an international search, Mr. Canfield was appointed Artistic Director of NBT and has established several new initiatives for the company including NBT Unveiled, 4 x 8, The Studio Series and 3 appearances in Dance for Life: Palm Springs.