

OREGON BALLET THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Oregon Ballet Theatre launches into its 2016-2017 season with an ambitious program presenting breakout works by the world's greatest choreographers

Oregon Ballet Theater opens its 2016-2017 “season of giants” with a bill that invites audiences to delight in the evolving vitality of the art form, featuring breakout works by George Balanchine and William Forsythe, and a world premiere by newly named Resident Choreographer Nicolo Fonte. The program by turns romantic, brazen, and riveting is inextricably entwined with incredibly evocative music. In each work the intense relationship between choreographer and composer - Balanchine paired with Tchaikovsky, Forsythe with Willems, and now, Fonte with Liszt – has inspired the creation of something truly original. A feast for the senses, this program is also a showcase for the rigorous technique of the OBT dancers who astonish with a perfect mix of artistry and athleticism

“Ballet is woman” Balanchine famously proclaimed, and *Serenade* – the work that launched his career in America – is the quintessential expression of that statement. OBT is thrilled to return this masterpiece to the Keller stage for the first time since 2003. Balanchine began creating the ballet as a lesson in stage technique, working in rehearsal events organically such as a student’s late arrival, or a fall. While there are echoes of the past in the overall look of the ballet – patterns of women dancing in long skirts reminiscent of *Giselle* or *La Sylphide*, and music by Tchaikovsky a frequent collaborator of Petipa’s – this work clearly points to the future. There are no sets, no plot, and the corps de ballets does not merely serve as an ornamental backdrop to the principal dancers. There is a new and exciting fluidity. *Serenade* is a romantic rush of dance propelled by Tchaikovsky’s irresistible *Serenade for Strings* – which will be performed by the OBT Orchestra.

Next on the program is the OBT premiere of William Forsythe’s groundbreaking *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*. An instant classic, *In the Middle* electrified the dance world during its premiere at the Paris Opera Ballet in 1987, just 4 years after Balanchine’s death. The work – all sharp, quick flashes of hyper extended lines – pushes Balanchine’s neoclassical style to the limit

and indeed, in the years since its premiere has become the cornerstone of post neo-classical dance, performed by companies all over the globe. Sylvie Guillem who became a star overnight following the premiere of the work, commented, “I think of nothing while I’m doing *In the Middle*, except the steps. They take a real physical power and violence to perform and that is all that is in my mind at the moment; line and power.” The contrast to the romantic sylph-like wraith in Balanchine’s *Serenade* couldn’t be more extreme. Six women and three men prowl the stage exploring space, at times sizing each other up, challenging each other to see what the body can achieve. The audience is not performed *to* but drawn *in* with the choreography facing all directions. Thom Willems’ crashing electronic score completes the mesmerizing experience of ballet progressing from the 20th to the 21st Century.

Following these two master works, OBT moves the conversation forward with a world premiere and the evening’s title work, *Giants*, by Resident Choreographer Nicolo Fonte. Well-known to Portland audiences for a stunning roster of ballets including *Bolero*, *Petrouchka*, *Never Stop Falling (In Love)*, and last season’s full length *Beautiful Decay*, Fonte is recognized throughout the world for his daring and original approach to dance, equally comfortable with classical and contemporary dance forms. His new ballet *Giants* is powered by the poetic athleticism of the male dancers of OBT and the virtuoso composition of Franz Liszt. Liszt’s dazzling piano performances created a sensation among audiences of his day. The adulation came to be known as Lisztomania. Fittingly Portland’s own piano sensation and winner of the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition, Hunter Noack will provide accompaniment.

Taken together Oregon Ballet Theatre’s fall program offers audiences a rare opportunity to see the trajectory of 20th and 21st century ballet in one evening. “Putting this program together has been a delight,” says OBT Artistic Director Kevin Irving. “Our audacity is to place such incredibly impactful and stylistically different works side by side in one evening. That Oregon Ballet Theatre has a roster of dancers able to pull off such a feat is a testament to the depth and artistry of Portland’s own talent. ”

PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

Oregon Ballet Theatre presents GIANTS

OCT. 8 – OCT. 15, 2016

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

DATES & TIMES

Sat., Oct. 8 at 7:30pm

Sun., Oct. 9 at 2pm

Thurs., Oct. 13 at 7:30pm (Blue Ribbon Society Night)

Fri., Oct. 14 at 7:30pm

Sat., Oct. 15 at 7:30pm

TICKETS

- Single tickets start at \$29
- Groups of 10 or more start at \$15
- Thursday, October 13 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.