

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Oregon Ballet Theatre returns to the Keller Auditorium with *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* – featuring 10 performances with the OBT Orchestra and a final bow from a company favorite

This winter, Oregon Ballet Theatre proudly returns George Balanchine's immensely popular version of *The Nutcracker* to the Keller Auditorium. Now in its 14th consecutive year, the company welcomes over 45,000 people to experience this festive holiday tradition including 2,000 individuals in need through its "Share the Wonder" program, a highly successful, annual initiative driven by the generous support of donor contributions and sponsored again this year by the Starseed Foundation. 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.

Each season there are wonderful new memories waiting to be made – excited young dancers stand in the wings, ready to step on stage into challenging new roles and, this year, one longtime favorite will take her final bow. Audiences will not want to miss the chance to see Soloist Candace Bouchard as the Sugar Plum Fairy or Dew Drop one last time, before she retires from the stage following this production.

Bouchard joined the company in 2004 and quickly became known for her technical ability and sparkling jumps. Of her performance in 2014's *Napoli*, dance critic Martha Ullman West observed that "Bouchard's lightness and precision in the speedy footwork and the pleasure she took in achieving it contributed to the general delight (of the production)" Bouchard is equally moving and capable in contemporary works. Artistic Director Kevin Irving recognized this talent and cast her in Nacho Duato's *Por Vos Muero*, *Rassemblement*, and last season's unforgettable *Jardi Tancat*.

While she will miss life in the ballet studio, Bouchard is excited for the future. "I'm most looking forward to taking on new challenges. I've always been a little excited by the notion that my career path means I would have a built-in moment of re-evaluation. Now I have a chance to look ahead into the great unknown and see what else speaks to me." When asked about her favorite roles, Bouchard's list includes some of the most challenging works in ballet, such as William Forsythe's *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude* and *Second Detail*, and of course, Dew Drop and Sugar Plum Fairy in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*.

This season, the iconic role of the Sugar Plum Fairy will also be danced by audience favorites Xuan Cheng, Eva Burton, Ansa Deguchi, Kelsie Nobriga, and, for the first time, Company Artist Jessica Lind. Additional exciting debuts by OBT's Company Artists will be posted in the "Casting" section of the

Nutcracker page on the OBT site, approximately one week prior to the performance. Visit:
<https://www.obt.org/1718-season/nutcracker/>

This season's *Nutcracker*, which includes 10 performances with the OBT Orchestra, is not to be missed!

SCHEDULE

Oregon Ballet Theatre's performances of *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* Run December 9-24th at Portland's Keller Auditorium. For all dates and times and information about OBT Orchestra performances, please visit:

<https://www.obt.org/1718-season/nutcracker/>

TICKETS

Performances with recorded music

Single tickets start at \$23

Tickets for groups 10 or more start at \$10

Performances with OBT Orchestra

Single tickets start at \$29

Tickets for groups 10 or more start at \$15

ABOUT OREGON BALLET THEATRE

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. 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. OBT was founded in 1989 through the consolidation of Pacific Ballet Theatre and Ballet Oregon; James Canfield, a former principal dancer with the Joffrey Ballet, was the company's first artistic director. Under his leadership, 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, Kevin Irving became 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*, August Bournonville's

Napoli, and his own *Swan Lake* – 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 premieres from internationally acclaimed contemporary choreographers such as Nacho Duato, Jiří Kylián, and James Kudelka, while investing in the next generation of American choreographers such as Helen Pickett, Darrell Grand Moultrie and OBT’s Resident Choreographer, Nicolo Fonte.

We are proud to train the next generation of dance artists through the OBT School, which serves over 800 youth and adult students and attracts dancers from as far away as Spain and Japan. We now offer enhanced professional development at the upper levels of the School through our junior company, OBT2, which brings tailored ballet performances to audiences throughout the Portland Metro area and around the state.

OBT’s investment in the community extends far beyond our stages and studios. Our robust Education Outreach programming impacts nearly 40,000 people annually, including thousands of K-12 youth across 21 school districts. Ongoing efforts to ensure equitable access include: scholarships to OBT School, field trip transportation for low income and Title 1 schools, and our Share the Wonder campaign, which provides thousands of tickets to our mainstage performances for families in need.