

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Portland, OR (September 5, 2017)
Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2017/2018 Season Opens with *Rhapsody in Blue*

OBT opens its 2017/2018 season with *Rhapsody in Blue*, a powerhouse double bill that reunites two of Portland's most creative artists – OBT Resident Choreographer Nicolo Fonte and Pink Martini founder Thomas Lauderdale. The evening pairs a world premiere set to Lauderdale's masterful take on George Gershwin's famous "*Rhapsody in Blue*" with the return of Fonte's *Never Stop Falling (in Love)*, an audience favorite. One of the most anticipated events of the fall, OBT's season opener showcases the company's commitment to broadening the appeal of classical ballet and features not only Lauderdale, but also China Forbes and Pink Martini at every performance.

While the dynamic rhythms and melodies of "*Rhapsody in Blue*" are extremely familiar due to the iconic status of Gershwin's score, Lauderdale, together with concert pianist Hunter Noack, has created an innovative arrangement that brings out nuances in the work of which audiences may have never been aware. Lauderdale, who has been playing this music since the age of 10, imbues the score with emotion and resonance forged over a lifetime. "Thomas's arrangement brings a dreamy and mysterious quality to the work that completely inspires me," explains Fonte. Through expanded lyrical phrases, Lauderdale and Fonte seek to capture a magical time of day ripe with the potential of discovery – the blue hour. "L'heure bleue" – when day becomes night, life becomes less linear, boundaries become more fluid – and there is an electric charge in the air. Themes of betrayal, discovery, and triumphant realization are woven together into a narrative heightened by the mysterious strains of familiar melodies reimagined expressly for this production. Lauderdale and Noack will each be seated at a grand piano to perform the score.

From this ethereal setting, the program dramatically shifts gears with the much-longed for return of *Never Stop Falling (in Love)*. The 40 minute ballet, performed to a medley of Pink Martini's most popular songs, was originally created in honor of OBT's 25th anniversary. Fonte's exhilarating and athletic choreography captures the unapologetic euphoria in Lauderdale's arrangements, which are performed on stage by Pink Martini with Portland's beloved vocalist, China Forbes. Transported to what Fonte calls a "Hotel of Love", the dancers and musicians embark on a journey of intense emotion, where delirium,

hope, disillusion, and of course romance, are all intertwined. Pink Martini's trademark combination of joyful celebration and great beats permeates the entire auditorium in an explosive finale!

Performance dates and ticket information

Oregon Ballet Theatre's *Rhapsody in Blue*

October 7-14, 2017

Keller Auditorium

Saturday, October 7 – 7:30 PM

Sunday, October 8 – 2:00 PM

Thursday, October 12 – 7:30 PM

Friday, October 13 – 7:30 PM

Saturday, October 14 – 7:30 PM

Tickets start at \$24

Groups of 10 or more start at \$15

Arts for All and Student Rush tickets available. Call box office for details.

OBT Box Office

0720 SW Bancroft Street

9am – 5pm | M-F

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. Oregon Ballet Theatre 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.

OBT's investment in the community extends far beyond our stages and studios, as we seek to enrich the community and invest in our art form. We provide ballet training to over 800 students through the OBT School, which attracts dancers from as far away as Spain and Japan, and through OBT2, our junior company, which brings professional level performance to underserved audiences throughout Portland.

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.