

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PRESS CONTACT:

Kate Kerns
503.227.0977x225
kate.kerns@obt.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Portland, OR (April 19, 2018)

OREGON BALLET THEATRE NAMES NEW SCHOOL DIRECTOR

After a rigorous search that drew a large number of applicants from around the country and from as far away as the United Kingdom, Australia and Portugal and a process that included the OBT board and staff, current and past OBT School students, as well as members of the community, Oregon Ballet Theatre Artistic Director Kevin Irving today announced the selection of **Marion Tonner** as the new Director of Oregon Ballet Theatre School.

“After the tremendous growth and expansion we have experienced with our school over the past four years we are extremely excited to welcome Marion into the OBT family! We all look forward to working with her to continue our mission of sharing world class ballet and dance training in our community,” he said.

Tonner, who officially joins the company in June, comes to OBT from the Orlando Ballet School, where she has served as Principal. A native of England, she has called the U.S. her home since 1974, and danced professionally with the Maryland Ballet, where she later served as Ballet Master. A career dance educator, Tonner was a senior faculty member of the University of the Arts, the Miami City Ballet, and the Boston Ballet. She also directed her own school for ten years in Philadelphia.

She received her education and dance training in London, graduating from the Royal Academy of Dance with credentials including a Licentiate Diploma and Advanced Teaching Degree. She is also an American Ballet Theatre © Certified Teacher of the ABT National Training Curriculum (P-5). She has an extensive knowledge of the major dance training systems used worldwide and enjoys analyzing body mechanics and designing classes to promote artistry and injury prevention.

Tonner has been a summer guest teacher for 23 years at the world renowned Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet. Her other guest teaching includes the American Academy of Ballet in New York, the Orlando Ballet, Sarasota Ballet, Pittsburgh Youth Ballet, ISOMATA, and many dance teacher organizations throughout the country. She also created and developed a

professional dance program for the Lake Wales Charter Schools in Florida, bringing classical ballet to hundreds of underserved K-12 students in Central Florida.

“My hope,” she said, “is to encourage a vibrant, collaborative environment where each and every person involved feels valued and considered. An arts education helps young people cope with and navigate their pathways through life. I am happy to greet and guide them through some of those milestone accomplishments.”

OBT School is the official training ground of Oregon Ballet Theatre, serving over 600 students ranging in age from three to 80 at its two studios, located on the South Waterfront in Portland, Oregon and in West Linn, Oregon. Students receive exemplary training from the world-class faculty in year-round programs, emphasizing pure classical technique. This experience is enhanced by invaluable opportunities to perform in fully staged productions at the 3,000-seat Keller Auditorium alongside the professional dancers of Oregon Ballet Theatre. Many of the students have gone on to successful professional careers at companies including the Joffrey, the Dutch National Ballet, and within OBT.

#

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 Compañia 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 Irving’s own update of *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 world premieres from internationally acclaimed

contemporary choreographers such as Nacho Duato, William Forsythe, Nicolo Fonte, Darrell Grand Moultrie, and Helen Pickett.

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 those in need.