

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Oregon Ballet Theatre leaps down a rabbit hole with the
West Coast Premiere of Septime Webre's *ALICE (in wonderland)*
February 24- March 4, 2018 at Portland's Keller Auditorium

Oregon Ballet Theatre has been drawing record-breaking crowds this season, with its fall show, *Rhapsody in Blue*, and George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* this past December. Now the company prepares for its most ambitious project yet, the West Coast premiere of Septime Webre's *ALICE (in wonderland)* – a highly athletic and vibrant production that brings the Lewis Carroll classic to exuberant life through dance. The production boasts choreography, costumes, and sets on a *Cirque du Soleil* scale, an original score from composer/violinist Matthew Pierce to be performed by the OBT Orchestra, and a cast of nearly 100 dancers – including 50 students from the OBT School. “It’s a huge undertaking and requires our whole team to pull out all the stops,” says Artistic Director Kevin Irving. “I’m delighted to be sharing this spectacular work with Portland!”

Choreographer Septime Webre was Artistic Director of Washington Ballet in 2012 when “Alice” premiered at the Kennedy Center to enthusiastic reviews. The Washington Post called it “..a giddy parade, a pop-art dream, a feat of fevered imagination.” Webre’s vision draws broad brushstrokes of Carroll’s work, harnessing the whimsical and familiar elements and personalities of both *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. These characterizations are enhanced by Liz Vandal’s costume design. Vandal, whose work was featured in *Cirque du Soleil*’s “Ovo” show, created nearly 130 highly theatrical costumes for *Alice*. “I think Septime came to me because he knows I’m a bit crazy,” says Vandal. “And he likes to innovate.”

Beyond the extravagant sets and costumes, it is the challenging choreography – a mix of ballet and acrobatics - that brings *Alice* to life and makes it appealing to both novice and experienced ballet goers. On stage – and at times flying high above it – from start to finish, *Alice* is a real tour de force role for a dancer. The many whimsical cameo roles offer challenges too, as dancers must navigate between making technical feats look effortless and finding the right mix of sauce and charm in their portrayals. Irving and company are up for the challenge. “*Alice is the perfect vehicle to show off the considerable skills and artistry of the Oregon Ballet Theatre dancers,*” observes Irving. “We can’t wait!”

Oregon Ballet Theatre presents *ALICE (in wonderland)*
February 24 – March 4, 2018
Keller Auditorium
Tickets start at \$29

Group tickets start at \$15

Thursday March 1st is Blue Ribbon Performance night. Groups of 5 or more can enjoy a free pre-show and intermission party, complete with complimentary PBR's.

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 those in need.