

THEATER & PERFORMANCE

MAY 30, 2018

Ballet Is for Closers

Oregon Ballet Theatre's *Closer* Removes Audience and Dancer Boundaries

by [Robert Ham](#)



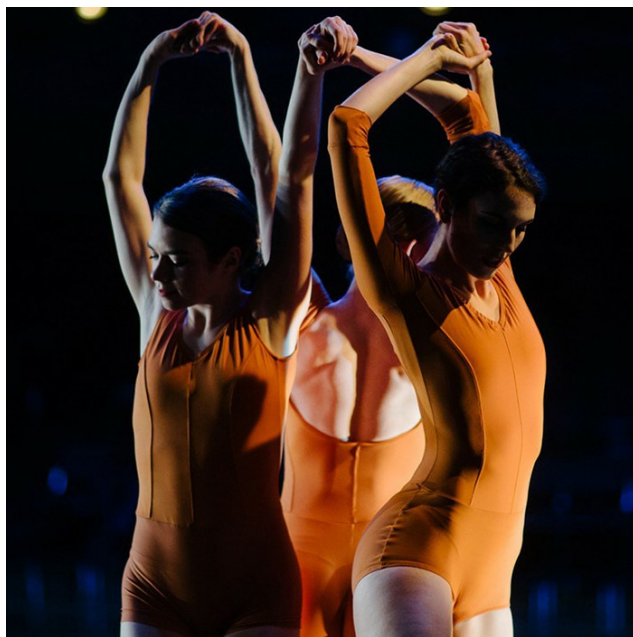
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Oregon Ballet Theatre (OBT) Artistic Director Kevin Irving chose *Closer* as the title of the company's current run of performances for two reasons: It's the last of their 2017-18 season, and it represents how near audiences are to the dancers on the stage. The humble confines of BodyVox Dance Center allows attendees to hear every squeak of a Capezio slipper across the floor, and every muttered bit of stage direction coming from the sound booth.

The chosen locale also functions as a smart way to mitigate expectations for the four choreographers who, with *Closer*, are presenting never-before-seen work. Filling all the seats in their usual home of the Keller Auditorium would have been a challenge. Shrinking their stage canvas allowed OBT to take chances, which stumbled and succeeded with equal measure.

The most potentially interesting dance was, essentially, an open rehearsal of Spanish choreographer Nacho Duato's work "Cor Perdut." After choosing two sets of dancers—one to practice segments of the piece, the other to show off the finished product—Irving worked with Kelsie Nobriga and Brian Simcoe on portions of the full piece. What started off as a quaint peek behind the curtain dragged on a little too long, amplifying an itch to see dancers Christopher Kaiser and Emily Parker perform without interruption. And when they did, their movements turned the tentativeness of the rehearsal into something more impassioned and inspired.



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The premiere works varied similarly. Makino Hayashi's "What do you see..." is startlingly original. Hayashi put herself and two other dancers through staggering, wide-eyed movements that looked like aliens disguised as humans, trying to make sense of their corporeal forms. Katherine Monogue's "Saudade" utilized clever lighting cues to become a breathtaking expression of remembrance and acceptance. It transitioned from a solo movement into a collection of bodies reflecting their steps, as if providing echoes of the past.

The two other new works—Lisa Kipp's "Trance of Wondrous Thought" and Peter Franc's "Sarkah"—were much less assured. They stuck to a standard template of ballet moves. The synchronized movements of Franc's "Sarkah" were unable to settle between a mood of curiosity or combativeness. Getting up

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close and personal with *Closer* revealed small moments for Kipp and Franc that offered promise for good times ahead but, along with it, disclosed flaws in their overall presentation. Still, they took a risk letting those cracks be as visible as they were. For that alone, they deserve respect and praise.

Past Related Events

[Closer](#)

BodyVox Dance Center, Thurs May 24, 7:30 pm, Fri May 25, 7:30 pm, Sat May 26, 7:30 pm, Thurs May 31, 7:30 pm, Fri June 1, 7:30 pm, Sat June 2, 2 pm., \$55

[Closer](#)

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Related Locations

[BodyVox Dance Center](#)

1201 NW 17th Ave., Portland, OR 97210

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