



Oregon Ballet Theatre Presents NAPOLI

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Oregon Ballet Theatre opens its season as the first U.S. company to build a production of - and stage - this fiery full-length work, originally created in 1842 for Denmark's Royal Ballet, popular for over 175 years of August Bournonville's Napoli.

August Bournonville was an observer of life. While visiting Naples, Italy, he was impressed by the vibrancy and dynamism of both its streets and residents. With a Danish sensibility, Napoli portrays Neapolitan life and triumphant young love. It tells the story of a beautiful Italian girl, Teresina, who falls in love with a poor fisherman named Gennaro.

Teresina's mother hopes for a wealthy suitor, and opposes the match between Teresina and Gennaro. Yet the young couple cannot be parted - even as Teresina becomes lost at sea, lured to an underwater world by an evil sea spirit. It is only the couple's true love can break the spirit's spell and save their lives! With August Bournonville's stylistically graceful yet thrilling footwork, Napoli is a hallmark of classicism infused with warm naturalism, and a symbol of The Royal Danish Ballet. Napoli is sure to charm you and yours.

"It is a tremendous and thrilling honor for OBT to present August Bournonville's Napoli to our audiences here in the Portland metro area. What makes the work so successful, and endearing enough for Napoli to have become The Nutcracker of Danish ballets (because of its unending popularity over generations) is the light touch of the master, the playful joy seen in the colorful crowd scenes, and the overflowing exuberance of the dancing - which, by the way, is devilishly tough to master! My hope is that it becomes an exciting journey of discovery that our audiences will whole-heartedly embrace!" - Kevin Irving, Artistic Director

August Bournonville was a dancer and choreographer who directed The Royal Danish Ballet for nearly 50 years, and established the Danish style based on bravura dance and expressive mime.

Having studied under his father, the esteemed dancer Antoine Bournonville, Bournonville then trained in Paris under Auguste Vestris and Pierre Gardel. Following appearances at the Paris Opéra as well as in London, Bournonville returned to Copenhagen as a soloist and choreographer for The Royal Danish Ballet. In 1836, he staged his own version of La Sylphide, a ballet by Filippo Taglioni, with his pupil and protégée Lucile Grahn in the title role. Many of Bournonville's most important ballets were based on observations he made on tour.

Napoli (1842), for example, was inspired by his trip to Italy; Bruges (1851), 17th-century Flemish art; Wedding in Hardanger (1853), Norway; and, From Siberia to Moscow (1876), Russia. Ballets set in Spain (The Toreador and La Ventana), Austria (In the Carpathians), and the Orient (Abdallah) - as well as imagined dances from around the world (Far From Denmark) - were matched by ballets celebrating Denmark (Valdemar, regarded as the Danish national ballet, and A Folk Tale). Finally, Bournonville's Konservatoriet (1849) is the only surviving ballet to show classical dance exercises practiced in the classroom in the early 19th century.

A strong elevated dancer and an accomplished mime, Bournonville emphasized the same qualities in his ballets. His choreography, too, reflected his teacher Vestris' pre-Romanticism. Many of Bournonville's ballets have remained in Royal Danish Ballet repertoire for over a century. He also directed the Swedish Royal Opera in Stockholm (1861-1864), and staged works in Vienna (1855-1856). In 1877, after returning to Denmark, he retired and was knighted.

In 1979, on the 100th anniversary of Bournonville's death, The Royal Danish Ballet presented a week-long Bournonville Festival in Copenhagen that included performances of his existing ballets, lecture-demonstration programs, art exhibits, special publications, open classes, and rehearsals of Bournonville ballets and techniques.

ABOUT THE PRODUCER AND STAGER

Bournonville authority Frank Andersen began ballet training in 1960: Entering The Royal Danish Ballet School as a seven-year-old, he became a company apprentice after nine years. A mere eight years later, he was promoted to principal dancer, and in 1985 named Artistic Director. After nearly a decade, Andersen parted ways with The Royal Danish Ballet, to direct the Royal Swedish Ballet, before being asked to return as Artistic Director from 2002-2008.

Andersen also belongs to a balletic family: His connection to The Royal Danish Theatre dates to the early 1900s, when his grandmother was a dresser for the company. His mother was a principal dancer at Tivoli Gardens and partnered with Eric Bruhn in his debut; her sister was also a dancer. Andersen himself married dancer Eva Kloborg, and their son Sebastian performed with the company.

ABOUT THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

A rare dancer whose career spanned multiple disciplines, Kevin Irving began dancing with jazz classes in his hometown dance school (Long Island, New York), before joining the school and training ensemble of Alvin Ailey - an experience that impacted him deeply. From 1982-1985, he danced with The Elisa Monte Dance Company of New York, a company often referred to as 'post-modern' but, at 24, he took a sharp turn toward classical dance, and joined Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montréal.

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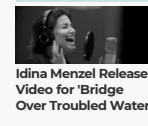
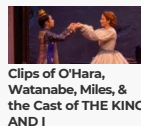
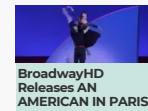
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Promoted to Principal and then Principal, Irving became a well-known figure wherever LGBC performed, excelling in classical, neoclassical, and contemporary roles - including roles and ballets created by LGBC's Resident Choreographer James Kudelka. In 1993, Irving joined [Twyla Tharp](#) Dance, touring the U.S. and Europe with the acclaimed choreographer, including performances at L'Opéra de Paris, and the PBS filming of Tharp's much-lauded ballet in the Upper Room.

From 1994-2002, Irving was Ballet Master and Associate Director with Nacho Duato's Compañía Nacional de Danza in Madrid. From 2002-2007, he was Artistic Director of The Göteborg Ballet in Sweden. The company, during Irving's tenure, was named the most important dance company in Sweden in [Ballet International's](#) critic poll. From 2007-2013, Irving was a frequent guest ballet master with The Royal Danish Ballet, where he staged and rehearsed works by Jiří Kylián, [George Balanchine](#), and [Jerome Robbins](#). He has also been a guest teacher with numerous companies and schools in the U.S. and abroad for over 20 years. Additionally, he staged ballets by Nacho Duato and Nicolo Fonte for companies such as The Royal Ballet Covent Garden, Nederlands Dans Theater, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Lyon Opera Ballet, and The Australian Ballet, to name just a few.

In the U.S., Irving became the Associate Director at Morphoses (formerly The Wheelodon Company) from 2011-2012, coordinating special initiatives aimed at defining the company's unique profile in the dance world. In 2010, he founded I-DANCE (Inspiring Dance: American Nations' Choreographic Exchange), a nonprofit that sends teachers and choreographers to dance communities in Central and South America. Irving was named Artistic Director of Oregon Ballet Theatre in July 2013.

ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

[Michael Greer](#) brings leadership experience from both for-profit and nonprofit worlds. Most recently, he led an arts nonprofit through a successful transition; previously, he led China side operations, projects, and sales teams for multinational companies. A native of Missouri, Greer spent the early part of his life as a dancer at the world's most prestigious institutions: Interlochen Arts Academy, School of American Ballet, San Francisco Ballet School, and The Royal Ballet School. Upon completing his training, he danced professionally with Ballet West in Salt Lake City, Utah, under the direction of Jonas Kage.

After retiring from performing, Greer completed an economics degree with emphasis in industrial organization - as an Arturo Schomburg Scholar at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. He was offered a merit scholarship to continue economics at Stanford University, but declined - to gain international business experience as a Gilman Scholar through the U.S. State Department. Greer then worked with companies in India and China for nine years; he managed teams and operations for several multinational corporations. A Mandarin speaker, he fully enjoyed life in China with his wife and two children.

In 2015, Greer returned to the U.S. and the dance world, to direct Portland Ballet in Portland, Maine. Combining considerable business experience with his passion for the arts, he worked to increase earned and contributed revenue, which resulted in Portland Ballet's major turnaround. Now, Greer and his family are thrilled to be a part of the Portland, Oregon community. He looks forward to working with Kevin Irving and OBT's exceptional team.

ABOUT OREGON BALLET THEATRE

OBT shares passion for the expressive power of ballet, inspires an enduring appreciation of dance, and connects in meaningful ways to our community through excellence in performance, training, and education. OBT is the largest professional ballet company in Oregon; we employ nearly 200 people, and attract artists from around the globe through our reputation for excellence. The company is rooted in classical ballet traditions, with repertoire ranging from the classics to premieres from today's most exciting choreographic voices. Our mission is dedicated to the vitality of - and access to - world-class ballet performance and training in the Pacific Northwest region.

Founded in 1989 by James Canfield, a former principal dancer with the Joffrey Ballet, OBT developed a distinct style and unique repertoire that comprised 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, the OBT Board named Kevin Irving as our 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, The Royal Danish Ballet, and Compañía Nacional de Danza. Irving's tenure is marked by a commitment to collaborative partnerships with Portland artists and organizations, including the Portland Art Museum, Multnomah County Library, Kenji Bunch, and Pink Martini. He is expanding the company's classical repertoire with premieres of [Ben Stevenson's](#) Cinderella and his own updated Swan Lake, while preserving OBT's legacy by restoring major works such as James Canfield's Romeo and Juliet. Irving is diversifying our repertoire with world premieres from internationally-acclaimed and contemporary choreographers: Nacho Duato, [William Forsythe](#), Nicolo Fonte, [Darrell Grand Moultrie](#), and [Helen Pickett](#).

ABOUT OBT SCHOOL

OBT's investment in the community extends far beyond our stages and studios, as we enrich the community and invest in our art form. We provide ballet training to over 800 students through the OBT School, which attracts dancers as far away as Spain and Japan - and through our junior company OBT2. OBT2 provides rigorous training and performance experience to facilitate the transition from student to professional dancer in a small, nurturing environment.

OBT2 is led by Program Director Lisa Sundstrom, within guidelines established by both OBT's Artistic Director Kevin Irving, and the Director of the School of OBT Marion Tonner. OBT2 dancers participate in daily technique, pointe class, men's class, strength and conditioning, pas de deux, and flexibility training. Dancers take class with OBT's professional company on certain days of the week, and perform for the community at large and underserved audiences throughout Portland.

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