

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PRESS CONTACT:

Natasha Kautsky | Director of Marketing & Communications
PHONE: 503.227.0977 | EMAIL: natasha.kautsky@obt.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Portland, OR (January 11, 2021)

Oregon Ballet Theatre Appoints Thomas Bruner as Executive Director through December 2021

Faced with the unprecedented and ongoing challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, Oregon Ballet Theatre's Board of Trustees has made the strategic decision to appoint nationally-recognized business leader [Thomas Bruner](#) as executive director through December 2021.

Bruner has been serving as OBT's interim executive director since June 2020. He has been instrumental in sustaining the organization following the cancellation of the remainder of its 35th anniversary season, and supporting OBT Artistic Director Kevin Irving in rethinking programming for 2021. The result was last September's launch of the ambitious [OBT MOVES](#) season - an innovative combination of site-based, digital, and live-streamed performances by the company's accomplished dancers.

"We are excited to have Thomas leading OBT as executive director at such a pivotal moment for the arts in Oregon," says Board Chair Allison Lyneham. "Thomas' expertise will develop and strengthen all aspects of our work. The co-leadership of Artistic Director Kevin Irving and Thomas Bruner will position OBT to emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever."

Bruner brings a wealth of experience to OBT, including 25 years of executive-level organizational leadership, a master's degree, a diversity management certificate from Cornell University, numerous awards and recognition, and an impressive portfolio of volunteer community engagement. As OBT's position is part-time, Bruner will continue working with other clients through his consultancy, Bruner Strategies, LLC.

OBT will launch its search for a permanent executive director in late spring 2021, and plans to have its new leader in place prior to Bruner's December departure. Organizationally, OBT remains sound. The [OBT School](#) remains robust, with 240 students enrolled. OBT's Board is strong and actively engaged, its FY 20 audit showed strong results, and the organization is meeting revenue targets while tightly managing expenses.

"I couldn't think of a better partner for this challenging time," says Irving. "With Thomas' support we have not only been able to survive, but to innovate in ways unimagined prior to the pandemic. This kind of innovation and resilience is the result of smart leadership. We are fortunate to have Thomas on board to help see us through this critical period."

To reach Thomas Bruner, email thomas@obt.com or call 503.732.6014.

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 Gothenburg 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* and Christopher Stowell's *The Sleeping Beauty*. 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 American choreographers such as Alvin Ailey, Twyla Tharp, and Agnes de Mille as well as new dance makers 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 and Community Engagement 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.

#