



NEWS RELEASE

**For More Information:
Wendy Lane Stevens
503.490.2904**

New Artistic Leadership at OBT: Peter Franc Named Interim Artistic Director, Kevin Irving Celebrated

Portland, Ore. – June 25, 2021. The [Board of Trustees](#) of Oregon Ballet Theatre (OBT) today announced the resignation of Artistic Director Kevin Irving, bringing a successful eight-year tenure to a close. Irving joined OBT in 2013, and led the organization through significant artistic growth, maturation and sophistication.

“We are grateful for Kevin’s vision and leadership,” stated Allison Lyneham, board chair. “His contributions to, and imprint on, OBT will be felt and appreciated for years to come.” Irving will remain artistic advisor to OBT through July.

“OBT and the OBT School are both in a better place financially and artistically than when I arrived eight years ago,” stated Irving. “I leave with many fond memories of my years here and of the talented professionals with whom I worked.”

Peter Franc, Interim Artistic Director

The board also announced today the appointment of Peter Franc as interim artistic director. Franc joined OBT in 2015 as a soloist, was promoted to principal dancer in 2016, and currently serves as manager of OBT2, OBT’s junior company.

Franc began training with the Metropolitan Ballet Theater and graduated from the Houston Ballet Academy, receiving the Michael Wasmund Award upon his promotion to the company. He danced for eight seasons as a Demi-Soloist with Houston Ballet and danced for three seasons with Aspen Santa Fe Ballet before joining OBT. In addition to his most recent work managing OBT2, Peter has choreographed new ballets for OBT and OBT2, developed a beginner boys ballet program and contemporary curriculum for the OBT School, and produced and directed a video series as part of OBT’s 20-21 digital season.

“I am honored and enthused to take on this important position,” stated Franc. “The dancers and team at OBT have an extraordinary depth of talent and passion upon which we will build. Great things are ahead.”

Franc joins OBT's Executive Director [Thomas Bruner](#) in leading the organization. Bruner is a nationally recognized leader, with 25 years of executive leadership experience in organizations across the country, a master's degree, a diversity management certificate from Cornell University, numerous awards and recognition, and an impressive portfolio of civic engagement.

Strong Organizational Structure

In addition to the quality of its artistic product, OBT continues to thrive organizationally, even throughout the COVID pandemic. The nationally acclaimed [OBT School](#) is robust, with 240 students enrolled last year. [Education and Community Engagement](#) reached 34,000 students in classrooms across the state, 50% of whom were youth of color. OBT has a multi-year action plan to advance diversity, equity and inclusion. The board is actively engaged in oversight, strategy and fundraising. OBT remains debt-free, 2021 will be its seventh consecutive year operating in the black financially, and the organization maintains a board-designated building fund approaching \$5 million.

In June, 1,200 people attended six sold out performances of [OBT Live](#) on OBT's outdoor Schnitzer Summer Stage. Its COVID-friendly hybrid fundraising event, OBThappening 🌸, raised \$520,000. on June 5. The organization recently announced its [2021-22 season](#), returning to a season of live performances with six productions that will bring 55,000 people back to the urban core.

About OBT

Founded in 1990, OBT is the largest professional ballet company in Oregon, employing 250 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 today. Our mission is to share our passion for the expressive power of ballet, inspire an enduring appreciation of dance, and connect to our community through excellence in performance, training, and education. Learn more at obt.org.

###



Peter Franc, Interim Artistic Director



Peter Franc was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and began dancing at the age of 11 in Atlanta, Georgia. He received his early training with Metropolitan Ballet Theatre under Maniya Barredo, Robert Barnett, Olivier Muñoz, and Kathryn Wheeler. He also trained for a year at the Louisville Ballet School with Alun Jones, Helen Starr, and Patrick Hinson before joining the Louisville Ballet company during his senior year of high school under the artistic direction of Bruce Simpson.

Additionally, Franc grew up spending his summers training with Houston Ballet Academy and moved to Houston after high school to train with Claudio Munoz at HBII. He was given the Michael Wasmund Award upon graduation from HBII and promoted to the first company by Artistic Director Stanton Welch. During his eight years with Houston Ballet, he rose to the rank of Demi-Soloist featuring in a variety of classical and contemporary ballets. Notable performances include: Jerome Robbins' *Afternoon of a Faun*; "Louis Auguste" in Stanton Welch's *Marie*, "Lucentio" in John Cranko's *Taming of the Shrew*; "Gurn" in August Bournonville's *La Sylphide*; Antony Tudor's *Leaves are Fading* and "Prince" in Ben Stevenson's *The Nutcracker*. Contemporary highlights include: "White Couple" in Jiří Kylián's *Forgotten Land*; Solo by Hans Van Manen; *One/End/One* by Jorma Elo; Christopher Bruce's *Grinning in your Face* and *Rooster*; and Stanton Welch's *Clear*, *Divergence*, *Carmina Burana*, *Velocity*, *Tutu*, *Play*, *Tapestry*, and *Red Earth*.

After almost a decade in Houston, Franc sought new inspiration and joined Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, a contemporary ballet company known for their innovative style and extensive touring schedule. In his three years with ASFB, he performed featured roles in *Silent Ghost* by Alejandro Cerrudo, Cayetano Soto's *Beautiful Mistake*, "Blue Couple" in Jiří Kylián's *Return to a Strange Land*, Jorma Elo's *Over Glow*, Norbert De La Cruz's *Square None*, Trey McIntyre's *Like a Samba*, Nicolo Fonte's *Heart(s)pace & Where We Left Off*, among others.

Yearning to return to some of his classical roots, Franc joined OBT as a Soloist in 2015 and was promoted to Principal dancer at the end of his first season. Performing "Romeo" in James Canfield's *Romeo & Juliet* in his first season became a favorite role, along with: "Gennaro" in the American Premiere of Bournonville's full length production of *Napoli*; "Siegfried" in Kevin Irving's adaptation of *Swan Lake*;

“Prince” in Christopher Stowell’s *Sleeping Beauty*; and “Cheshire Cat” in Septime Webre’s *Alice in Wonderland*. Contemporary highlights include: William Forsythe’s *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*; Nacho Duato’s *Jardí Tancat* and *El Naranjo*; Alvin Ailey’s *Night Creature*, Helen Pickett’s *Petal and Terra*, Gioconda Barbuto’s *BRINGINGOUTSIDEIN*, and Darrell Grand Moultrie’s *Fluidity of Steel*. Peter also featured in numerous works by OBT resident choreographer Nicolo Fonte including *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Beautiful Decay*, *Left Unsaid*, and *Never Stop Falling in Love*.

In addition to his dance career, Franc is also a passionate teacher, coach and choreographer. Most recently serving as Rehearsal Director of OBT2, he has also choreographed original works on OBT and OBT2, produced and directed a series of video projects as part of OBT’s 20/21 digital season, created a beginner boys ballet program and contemporary curriculum for the OBT school, and restaged the children’s roles alongside the Balanchine Trust for George Balanchine’s *The Nutcracker*. Peter currently serves on the OBT Board of Trustees while teaching for both the company and the OBT school. “I am always hungry to expose myself to new ways of seeing things and hope my diverse dance background gives me a balanced approach to bringing joy and success to the people around me.”

For more information about Mr. Franc or OBT, visit obt.org.