

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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Oregon Ballet Theatre returns home to the stage, to live happily ever after!



Oregon Ballet Theatre is thrilled to announce its return to the stage this fall with a season certain to warm hearts and lift spirits through the longed for return of live performance. Among the highlights, OBT celebrates Resident Choreographer Nicolo Fonte's fifth anniversary with three pivotal works from the repertory: *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Bolero*, and *Beautiful Decay*. In perhaps the surest sign that life is indeed returning to normal, OBT, its dancers and students alike, are delighted to share that Portland's holiday tradition of *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*® will return to the Keller stage for a full run, including performances with the OBT Orchestra. In February the company will premiere *Ever After*, a romantic and irresistible ballet mashup created by OBT Artistic Director Kevin Irving and dedicated to those whose wedding plans were postponed due to the pandemic. Other season stand outs include George Balanchine's thrilling *The Four Temperaments*, and the long awaited second installment of OBT's series *The Americans*, featuring a first-time commission from rising star Michelle Manzanales.

"During the pandemic OBT proved its resilience by continuing to share our art with the community. We built sound stages, launched a broadcast channel, hosted watch parties, live streamed, and produced original

dance films. This experience made the company, and its connection to our community, stronger than ever," notes Irving. "But nothing can replace the delight of live performance. We are overjoyed to be returning to the stage, our home, which we hope never to leave again."

In addition to the return of Company performances OBT's entire organization is ramping up its return to 100% activity. OBT's School will be resume in person training this fall serving over 300 students and its junior company OBT2 is planning runouts to community partner organizations across Oregon from Hood River to Lincoln City. During the pandemic OBT's Education and Community Engagement department developed many new programs in support of remote learning – including the popular *Dance Snacks*, a creative movement break for children, which was shared with Portland area schools. This series will continue next season in conjunction with the return and expansion of OBT's in-person programs including the OBT Learn About Ballet project as well as exciting new initiatives to be announced later this summer.

RHAPSODY | October 15-16, 2020

Keller Auditorium

3 performances only!

This fall OBT is thrilled to present two audience favorites as diverse in nature as OBT itself. The program opens with Resident Choreographer Nicolo Fonte's *Rhapsody in Blue*, a powerful love story with themes of betrayal, discovery, and the awesome power of forgiveness. Portland's own Thomas Lauderdale and Hunter Noack perform their unique and innovative arrangement of Gershwin's beloved score.

Adding a thrilling counterpoint, OBT pairs "Rhapsody" with George Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*, an iconic work of such purity and verve that it never fails to inspire and impress. *The Four Temperaments* is a plotless ballet that nevertheless aims to explore the supposed 'temperaments' of the human condition – but as with almost all things Balanchine, it is truly about the pure possibilities and joys of the dancing. What a fitting way to celebrate OBT's return to live performance!

GEORGE BALANCHINE'S THE NUTCRACKER® | December 11 – 26, 2021

Keller Auditorium

15 performances including 9 with the OBT Orchestra

Since 1989, OBT has thrilled Portland audiences with its annual performances of *The Nutcracker*. Last year this cherished tradition was suspended leaving an empty stage in place of our beloved production. As OBT returns to a more familiar world, it is with a sense that nothing can be taken for granted – especially a time honored tradition that engages audiences through music and dance. Once again Marie and her charming

Nutcracker Prince will be swept away by dancing snowflakes to a magical land of sweets ruled by the Sugar Plum Fairy and all to the music of Tchaikovsky's brilliant score!

EVER AFTER | February 19 – 26, 2022

Keller Auditorium

This February, OBT fills the Keller Auditorium with passion and romance in an irresistible double bill that is as unique as Portland itself.

Ever After is an innovative mash up and love letter to all those whose hearts were crushed as wedding plans were dashed due to the pandemic. In solidarity with them, some of the most iconic characters in Balletland have planned a joint wedding celebration. Look forward to seeing the fiery *Don Quixote* pas de deux, the steely verve of *Raymonda*, and the sparks that fly between Swanhilda and Franz in *Coppélia* as they express their mutual devotion accompanied by some of the most fun and uplifting music ever written.

The evening closes with the thrilling return of Nicolo Fonte's *Bolero*. "If ever there was a red-blooded American ballet, it's this one!" wrote Oregonian dance critic Martha Ullman West at its premiere in 2008. Set to Maurice Ravel's hypnotic score, the ballet is like an endlessly fascinating Russian nesting doll, revealing, layer after layer, a smoldering playfulness that leads to all out, no-holds barred, passion.

BEAUTIFUL DECAY | April 8 – 10, 2022

Newmark Theatre

When Resident Choreographer Nicolo Fonte's *Beautiful Decay* premiered in Portland in 2016, it was met with rapturous applause and audiences that were blown away by this incredibly entertaining and ultimately touching full-evening work. Weaving together high-wire athleticism, poetic stagecraft, and much beloved music, Fonte succeeds in creating an unforgettable experience that stays with the viewer long after the curtain has come down. Portland contemporary dance icon Gregg Bielemeier and former principal ballerina and New York Theatre Ballet founder Diana Byer perform alongside OBT company members, evoking the sense that although age may bring a more fragile state – it is one that resonates nonetheless with the power, beauty, and memory of robust youth.

THE AMERICANS – TAKE TWO | June 3 – 11, 2022

Newmark Theatre

After performance cancellations in 2020 and 2021, OBT is excited to finally present the second installment of its popular *The Americans* series celebrating the unique voices and rich history of American

choreographers. In this program OBT features a first time commission from rising star Michelle Manzanales whose piece *Con Brazos Abiertos* for Ballet Hispánico was lauded by the LA Times as one of “heart tugging beauty.” In high demand, Ms. Manzanales will premiere work on both coasts next season with commissions from Paul Taylor Dance Company as well as OBT.

Rounding out this innovative production OBT is delighted to perform two audience favorites: Darrell Grand Moultrie’s whimsical *Fluidity of Steel* celebrating maleness without conformity; and Ashley Roland and Jamey Hampton’s *Big Shoes* harkening back to that moment when children dressed in grown-ups’ clothes and imagined the vast road that stretched on ahead, forever beckoning, daring us.

ON STAGE | June 11 – 12, 2022

Newmark Theatre

No season would be complete without OBT School’s annual On Stage performance which showcases the artistry and technique of its students and of the OBT2 company dancers. Many OBT School students go on to join professional companies. Here is an exciting chance to see them before they embark on their professional careers!

OBT 2021/22 season subscriptions go on sale June 21, 2021

Three packages available:

- Choose Your Own
- Company Package
- Family Package – with reduced pricing for children

Purchase online at obt.org or contact the OBT Box Office

OBT Box Office

0720 SW Bancroft Street

9am – 5pm | M-F

503-222-5538

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 30 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, Jirí Kylián, and James Kudelka, while investing in American choreographers such as Alvin Ailey, Twyla Tharp, and William Forsythe as well as new dance makers Helen Pickett, Darrell Grand Moultrie and OBT's Resident Choreographer, Nicolo Fonte. During the pandemic, Irving successfully led the company through a digital transformation, working across artistic, production, and marketing teams to launch a broadcast channel OBTv, and produce live stream and on demand performances, as well as site specific dance films.

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 families in need.