

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE

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OBT welcomes exciting new talent for the 2021/22 Season; Company bids farewell to three beloved dancers

Oregon Ballet Theatre (OBT) today announced the addition of eight company members and apprentices to its ranks for the 2021/22 season. Together these talented new dancers represent a broad range of backgrounds enhancing the diversity of the organization, and three of them have been promoted through the OBT2 program, highlighting its reputation as an elite ballet training ground. "I'm excited to welcome these gifted dancers to the studio," stated Interim Artistic Director Peter Franc. "I know their energy will reinvigorate the company following an extremely challenging year. We are all looking forward to the return of a full blooded OBT season!"

Exciting New Artists Join OBT

Joining the company as a soloist is Brazilian native **Gustavo Ribeiro**, who started at the age of 12 at Expressão e Arte Studio de Dança. After attending the Orlando Ballet School, he joined Washington Ballet's Second Company and later began his professional career with Alberta Ballet. He has also danced with Kansas City Ballet, and most recently with Miami City Ballet. Over the course of his career, he has performed many prominent roles including Blue Bird in Septime Webre's *Sleeping Beauty*, and Mercutio in Devon Carney's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Also from Brazil, OBT welcomes **Alexandre Gomes Barbosa** as a company artist. In 2016, Barbosa won the Bronze Medal in the *Seminário Internacional de Dança* and was offered a position at Sarasota Ballet. Barbosa later performed with the Orlando Ballet and with Florida Ballet where he debuted in the role of the Prince in Roger Van Fleteren's *Cinderella*. Joining Barbosa as new company artists are **Kangmi Kim** and **Juliette Ochoa**.

Originally from Seoul, South Korea, Kim moved to the US in 2016 to train on scholarship at the American Ballet Theatre School. She joined OBT2 in 2017 and was accepted to the company as an apprentice two years later.

Phoenix native Ochoa danced with Ballet Arizona and later was a member of the Professional Division at Pacific Northwest Ballet. Most recently she completed her BFA at the USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance where she had the opportunity to study with renowned artists including William Forsythe, Zippora Karz, and Jodie Gates.

Joining OBT as apprentices are **Isaac Lee** from Eugene Ballet, **Ian Stocker** from Ellison Ballet's Professional Training Program in New York City, and OBT2 company members **Bryn Perry** and **Abigail Concannon**, have both been promoted.

Dancers Transition to Exciting Opportunities

On the closing night of its sold-out summer concert *OBT LIVE*, OBT announced the departure of several beloved dancers from the company: **Peter Franc**, **Thomas Baker** and **Brian Bennet** were celebrated on stage. They were joined by former **OBT Principal Ansa Deguchi** and **Company Member Adam Hartley**, who retired last year at the outset of the pandemic.

Principal Dancer Peter Franc will be remembered by Portland audiences for his fiery on-stage presence, breathtaking technique, and remarkable versatility. In her review of OBT's 2019 *Americans* program, dance critic Martha Ullman West commented, "I begin to think that Peter Franc, who danced the opening solo in Alvin Ailey's *Night Creature*, can do anything—I can think of no technique more antithetical to Bournonville's than Ailey's, unless it's Martha Graham's, and Franc is as compelling a "night creature" as he is a Neapolitan fisherman or an American pioneer." In his years at OBT, Franc established an artistic connection with Choreographer Nicolo Fonte, who created leading roles for him in *Giants Before Us* and *Rhapsody in Blue*. Last week, OBT was thrilled to announce that Franc was [named OBT's Interim Artistic Director](#).

Soloist **Thomas Baker** joined the company in 2014. Over the years he became a well-known favorite of audiences and excelled in a wide range of repertory including: William Forsythe's *In The Middle Somewhat Elevated*, Nacho Duato's *Jardi Tanca*, and Balanchine's *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. In addition to wowing audiences, Baker was a favorite of his colleagues and co-workers for his positivity, sharp wit, and "for his encyclopedic knowledge of bun-head facts!" In the fall Baker will be moving to New York City where he has been accepted on full scholarship to study at the Parsons School of Design.

Company Artist **Brian Bennett** accepted a contract with the Joffrey Ballet in Chicago.

ABOUT OREGON BALLET THEATRE

Founded in 1989, OBT is the largest professional ballet company in Oregon, employing 250 people and attracting artists from around the globe with its 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. OBT's 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.