



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

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Oregon Ballet Theatre Appoints Danielle Rowe as New Artistic Director



Photo by: Alexander Reneff-Olson

Oregon Ballet Theatre (OBT) today announced the appointment of Danielle Rowe as its new artistic director, and the first female to officially hold this title in the nearly 35-year-old company. Rowe comes to OBT with extensive experience both as a principal dancer and as a critically acclaimed choreographer. Her work *MADCAP* recently premiered as part of San Francisco Ballet's ambitious *Next @90 Festival* featuring nine commissions pointing to the future of ballet. The *San Francisco Chronicle* praised Rowe's risk taking and "vulnerability in pursuing an idiosyncratic vision in this high-stakes commission." Rowe will begin her tenure with OBT on February 27, 2023, joining newly named Executive Director Shane Jewell. Together they will build on OBT's legacy of artistic excellence and grow the overall impact of the organization in the community and region.

Rowe began her career in 2001 with the Australian Ballet where she quickly rose to the rank of principal dancer. After a ten-year career in Australia, Rowe went on to dance with Christopher Wheeldon's *Morphoses* and Houston Ballet before pivoting to contemporary dance and joining the acclaimed Nederlands Dans Theater. There she worked intimately with respected dance luminaries such as Jiří Kylián, Crystal Pite, Mats Ek, Paul Lightfoot, and Sol León among others. Her rich and varied career steeped in both classical and contemporary technique has informed her choreographic approach and taste as a curator.

"I am thrilled to join the Oregon Ballet Theatre team to cultivate the inquisitive and progressive energy of the company and the Portland community as we work together to thoughtfully re-imagine a more inclusive and exhilarating future for ballet," says Rowe.

"Dani brings an inspiring and clear vision for the future of OBT and ballet," says OBT Board Chair Cate Sweeney. "She has a deep well of creativity, a variety of experiences at the highest levels of dance internationally, and a personality that melds with OBT and our community."

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE



OBT dancers in Danielle Rowe's *Dreamland*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert

OBT fans were treated to Rowe's choreography last season with her titular work *Dreamland* on the Spring program. Interim Artistic Director Peter Franc invited Rowe - a friend and former colleague from Houston Ballet - to stage the work and is delighted that this "new powerhouse talent," will be coming to Portland. OBT is deeply grateful to Franc for helping successfully navigate the company through this transition period and delighted he will stay on as Artistic Consultant.

With the appointments of Jewell as executive director last December and now Rowe as artistic director, OBT has completed a strategic, deliberative, and inclusive international search for new executive leadership to lead the organization into the future while honoring the past. Arts Consulting Group (ACG) led the eight-month search for both positions, working collaboratively with two hiring committees comprised of OBT Board members, staff and dancers, and community advisors.

The OBT Board extends its gratitude to ACG for leading this transparent and equitable process as well as its donors and members of the Artistic Director Search Committee: Catherine Levi and Charlie Jones, Artistic Director Search Committee Co-Chairs, and committee members Allison Lyneham, Bailey Shaw, Betsy Warren, Jeff Stanton, Cate Sweeney, Niel DePonte, Mike Weddle, Natasha Kautsky, Subashini Ganesan, and Tracey Sartorio.



ABOUT DANIELLE ROWE

From 2001-2015, Dani Rowe, born in Shepparton, Australia, was a Principal Dancer with the Australian Ballet and Houston Ballet and danced with the prestigious Nederlands Dans Theater. She originated roles in creations by Paul Lightfoot/Sol Leon, Christopher Wheeldon, Wayne McGregor, Alexander Ekman, Crystal Pite, Marco Goecke, and Medhi Walerski and worked with choreographers Mats Ek, Jiri Kylián, Hans van Manen, Alexei Ratmansky and Christopher Bruce. Rowe has also performed in works by Kenneth McMillan, Jerome Robbins, George Balanchine, Mark Morris, and Nacho Duato as well as the title roles in *Giselle*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Kitri in Don Quixote* and Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*.

After retiring as a dancer in 2015, Rowe turned to choreography. She has created works for San Francisco Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater's SWITCH program, Royal New Zealand Ballet, Co.Lab Dance (featuring dancers from American Ballet Theatre), Milwaukee Ballet, Ballet Idaho, Grand Rapids Ballet, SFDanceworks, Dance Aspen, Barak Ballet, Diablo Ballet, Oakland Ballet, and Berkeley Ballet Theater. She has been dubbed a "choreographic storyteller" (Toba Singer, Culture Vulture), and her work "merits much praise" (Allan Ulrich, San Francisco Chronicle).

Her choreographic style has been described as "using a myriad of intricate hand and arm gestures that built on each other like the blocks in a Jenga game, along with a rich, flowing, contemporary ballet movement aesthetic" (Steve Sucato, culturedGR) and "impressing with the clarity of its intentions and the easy use of a multi-lingual vocabulary" (Rita Felciano, Danceview Times).

In addition to her work as a choreographer, from 2018-2019, Rowe served as the Associate Artistic Director of SFDanceworks, a contemporary repertory company in San Francisco, California, acting as the intermediary between the Artistic Director and dancers.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Rowe explored filmmaking as a new and lasting way to reach audiences. Her highly regarded creations include *Wooden Dimes* for San Francisco Ballet, *The Animals* for Ballet Idaho, and *The Misfits* for Louisville Ballet. She also collaborated with filmmakers Garen Scribner and Alexander Reneff-Olson on *Shelter*, *I Am Spartacus*, and *Wilis in Corps-en-tine* for the Australian Ballet, which was voted "one of the best things to come out of quarantine" by Vogue.



ABOUT OBT

Founded in 1989, OBT is among the nation's leading professional ballet companies, employing 250 people and attracting artists from around the globe with its reputation for excellence. 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.

In addition to the quality of its artistic product, OBT continues to thrive organizationally and has emerged from COVID exceptionally well-positioned for the future. The nationally acclaimed OBT School is robust, with 300 students from across the country. Education and Community Engagement reaches thousands of students in classrooms across the state, 50% of whom are 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; and, 2022 was its eighth consecutive year operating in the black. Learn more at obt.org.

ABOUT ACG

ACG is the leading provider of hands-on interim management, executive search, revenue enhancement, strategic planning & community engagement, and facilities & program planning services for the arts and culture industry. ACG consultants are located in communities throughout North America to best serve the needs of our clients. ACG team members have decades of combined senior leadership experience in every artistic and cultural discipline and area of functional management expertise.

As specialists in the management of arts and cultural institutions who are personally and passionately committed to the creative industries, ACG is recognized internationally for our expertise, personalized approach, and extraordinary results.