



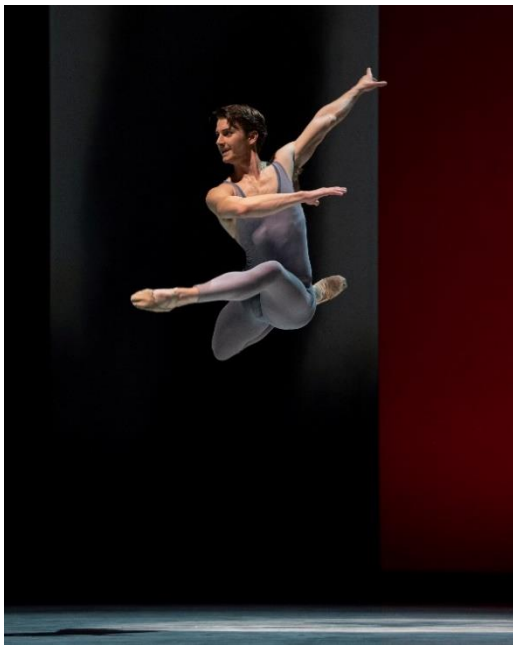
PRESS CONTACT: Natasha Kautsky
Director of Marketing & Communications
PHONE: 503.227.0977
EMAIL: natasha.kautsky@obt.org

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Oregon Ballet Theatre welcomes four dynamic dancers to the company
including
San Francisco Ballet's John-Paul Simoens as Soloist
and bids farewell to two beloved veterans

Oregon Ballet Theatre (OBT) Artistic Director Danielle Rowe has announced exciting additions to the company's dancer roster effective with the 2023/24 season opening this fall with the highly anticipated return of Christopher Stowell's *Swan Lake*. As the company welcomes these new artists it also bids a fond farewell to two veteran dancers Makino Hayashi and Christopher Kaiser, who are both embarking on bright new chapters in their dance careers.

"It is my great pleasure to welcome four incredibly talented dancers to OBT," said Rowe. "These dynamic artists each bring a depth of classical and contemporary performance experience reflecting the hallmark of OBT's demanding repertory."



Welcome Soloist John-Paul Simoens

John-Paul Simoens joins OBT as a soloist. Simoens grew up in Los Angeles where he began studying ballet at the age of seven. In 2012, he was a semi-finalist in the prestigious Prix de Lausanne ballet competition where he received a scholarship to attend the San Francisco Ballet School. In 2014, he became an apprentice with the company.

Simoens went on to dance with San Francisco Ballet for nine seasons during which time he appeared in principal roles in many ballets including Helgi Tómasson's *Don Quixote*, *Concerto Grosso*, and *The Fifth Season*; Jerome Robbins's *Fancy Free* and *The Cage*; Val Caniparoli's *Ibsen's House*; Benjamin Millipied's *The Chairman Dances*; Arthur Pita's *Bjork Ballet*; Yuka Oishi's *Bolero*; and Liam Scarlett's *Fearful Symmetries*.

Simoens also had the privilege of participating in the creative development of new works by renowned choreographers such as Christopher Wheeldon, William Forsythe, Cathy Marston, and Oregon Ballet Theatre's very own, Danielle Rowe.



Lauren Flower



Benjamin Simoens



Ruby Mae Lefebvre

Joining OBT as company artists are Lauren Flower and Benjamin Simoens. Flower arrives from San Diego where she was a soloist with Golden State Ballet. A multi-talented artist, she simultaneously held the role of resident choreographer with The Rosin Box Project. Her work has also been performed by Ballet Arizona and Boston Ballet.

Simoens (brother of John-Paul Simoens!) earned a degree in dance from The Juilliard School before joining Milwaukee Ballet in 2019 where he was featured in works by Darrell Grand Moultrie, Aleix Mañé, and Danielle Rowe. He also made guest appearances in project-based works with both SFDanceworks in San Francisco, California, and Chamber Dance Project in Washington, D.C.

Finally, following two seasons with OBT2, **Portland native and OBT School alumna Ruby Mae Lefebvre has been promoted to apprentice** with the company. Lefebvre most recently appeared in OBT School's annual performance where she wowed the sold-out Newmark Theatre audience with her performance as Swanhilda in *Coppélia*.

While welcoming these talented dancers, Rowe extended her gratitude and well wishes to retiring artists Christopher Kaiser and Makino Hayashi who were both honored at the season's closing performances of *Made in Portland*. Kaiser, who gave OBT audiences chills in his performance of *Dracula*, was accepted to the prestigious MFA program at the University of Washington's Department of Dance. He will begin in the fall. Hayashi, whose work *The Rose* premiered during the *Made in Portland* program, will now devote all her time to her choreographic career. She already has a new commission with OBT next season in June 2024 on the next installment of *Made in Portland*.



2023/24 DANCER ROSTER

Principals

Eva Burton
Jessica Lind
Brian Simcoe

Soloists

Hannah Davis
Michael Linsmeier
John-Paul Simoens
Carly Wheaton

Company Artists

Priyana Acharya
Alexandre Gomes Barbosa
Asia Bui
Lauren Flower
Leigh Goldberger
Gavin Hounslow
Kangmi Kim
Mathilde Lambert
Isacc Lee
Zuzu Metzler
Charlotte Nash

Juliette Ochoa

Nicholas Sakai

Bailey Shaw

Benjamin Simoens

Ben Youngstone

Apprentices

Ruby Mae Lefebvre

Cameron Pelton

Bryn Perry

Medea Cullumbine-Robertson

Isichel Perez Rivero

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.