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Oakland Ballet names Graham Lustig as new artistic director

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After a yearlong hunt, the Oakland Ballet Company has found a new artistic director.

Acclaimed choreographer Graham Lustig has been named artistic director of the troupe, recently helmed by dancers Michael Lowe and Jenna McClintock after the sudden departure of Oakland Ballet founder Ronn Guidi in 2009. Guidi held dual roles as artistic director of the company and director of the Oakland Ballet Academy.

Trained in London at the Royal Ballet School, Lustig danced with the Dutch National Ballet in Holland and Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet in England before launching a career as a freelance choreographer. His critically lauded works, which mix contemporary and classical forms, have been performed worldwide by companies such as the Hong Kong Ballet, North Carolina Dance Theatre and the Sacramento Ballet.

"He is the right person to maintain our commitment to Russian and classical ballets, while also bringing in contemporary works," said Nicole Levine, who recently served as the company's interim executive director, in a news release.

The company has also named Ann Singer, who serves as development director at Children's

Fairyland in Oakland, as their new executive director.

Recently, Lustig served as the artistic director of American Repertory Ballet and ARB's Princeton Ballet School in New Jersey. His work there included stagings of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "Beauty and the Beast -- A Gothic Romance."

Lustig's

first work with the company, "Graham Lustig's The Nutcracker," debuts Dec. 23 at the Paramount Theatre in Oakland.



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