



Graham Lustig, Artistic Director

Inspiring the Community since 1965

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**OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY ANNOUNCES FULL PROGRAM
FOR SPRING 2016 SEASON**

**COMPANY TO RECEIVE 2016 IZZIE AWARD
FOR 50th ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM LAST SEASON**

***A CAPPELLA—OUR BODIES SING* FEATURES WORLD PREMIERES BY
VAL CANIPAROLI and JANICE GARRETT & CHARLES MOULTON, and
WEST COAST PREMIERE by GRAHAM LUSTIG**

MUSIC PERFORMED LIVE BY BAY AREA CHORAL GROUPS

**COMPANY'S SPRING SEASON EXPANDS TO INCLUDE THREE BAY AREA THEATERS
IN OAKLAND, SAN FRANCISCO and HAYWARD IN APRIL 2016**

**PARTICIPANTS ANNOUNCED FOR COMMUNITY DANCE FESTIVAL,
EAST BAY DANCES, NOW IN ITS SECOND YEAR**

Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, Oakland

Thursday, April 14 at 8:00 pm

Friday, April 15 at 8:00 pm

Saturday, April 16 at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm

Brava Theater Center, San Francisco

Thursday, April 21 at 8:00 pm

Reed L. Buffington Performing Arts Center, Chabot College, Hayward

Saturday, April 23 at 8:00 pm

Oakland, CA, February 24, 2016—Oakland Ballet Company announced program information today for its 2016 spring season, *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*, with six performances in three cities celebrating

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the power of the human voice and the grace of the human body. The program features world premieres of newly-commissioned dances by **Val Caniparoli** and **Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton**, as well as the West Coast premiere of a recent work by Artistic Director **Graham Lustig**. Bay Area choral groups the **Berkeley Community Chamber Singers**, the women's early music ensemble **Vajra Voices**, and members of the Oakland gospel choir, **Nona Brown and the Inspirational Music Collective**, will perform live with Oakland Ballet company dancers. Lustig's vision for the program is to showcase the beauty of the unaccompanied voice in concert with the artistry of the company's accomplished dancers.

Oakland Ballet Company this year is a proud recipient of a **Special Award from the Isadora Duncan Awards Committee**, in recognition of its 50th Anniversary Season, presented in spring 2015. In this 51st year, the Company expands the reach of its programs, growing the spring season to include performances in San Francisco, and at Chabot College in Hayward, which will host extensive community engagement activities, master classes and workshops as part of a new partnership between the Ballet and the College. Performances are Thursday and Friday, April 14–15 at 8pm; and Saturday, April 16 at 2pm and 8pm at Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, Oakland; Thursday, April 21 at 8pm at Brava Theater Center, San Francisco; and Saturday, April 23 at 8pm at the Reed L. Buffington Performing Arts Center, Chabot College, Hayward.

"This spring season Oakland Ballet Company celebrates the most timeless and ubiquitous forms of expression—movement and song," said Artistic Director Graham Lustig. "My hope is that by bringing together the renowned choreographers Val Caniparoli, Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton with these marvelous vocal groups from different corners of our community, that we can celebrate our common humanity through music and dance. This is a very special opportunity for the Company to present a program with entirely live music."

Val Caniparoli continues his long association with Oakland Ballet with the world premiere of a new work, set to songs by iconic American composer Stephen Foster. Caniparoli collaborates with the 14-voice **Berkeley Community Chamber Singers**, directed by Derek Tam, who perform *a cappella* versions of the music, including well-known songs such as "Oh Susanna," "Hard Times Come Back

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Again No More,” and “Beautiful Dreamer.” The esteemed Bay Area choreography duo of **Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton** creates a new work, receiving its world premiere. Garrett and Moulton enlist the nine women of **Vajra Voices**, the Bay Area early music vocal ensemble specializing in the music of Hildegard von Bingen, in their first work for Oakland Ballet.

The spring season features the West Coast premiere of **Graham Lustig’s** work, *Stone of Hope*, set to modern arrangements of spirituals, including “The Battle of Jericho,” “Mary Don’t You Weep,” “We Shall Overcome” and others, with spoken text drawn from Dr. Martin Luther King’s historic “I Have a Dream” speech. The work has a cast of 20—five female dancers, five male dancers, five female singers and five male singers—and live music provided by **Nona Brown and the Inspirational Music Collective**. Lustig created the work in 2015 as a response to the racially-motivated violence and intolerance that has come to the surface of American society in the wake of the events such as Ferguson, MO. “*Stone of Hope* is intended as a work of healing and uniting, for us to all take inspiration in our actions from Dr. King’s words,” says Lustig. The Company has commissioned accomplished Oakland gospel vocalist and composer, Nona Brown to write a new song, setting text from Dr. King’s speech, for these performances.

Participants have been announced for **East Bay DANCES ‘16**, the Company’s second annual community dance celebration, on Sunday April 17 at 4:00 pm in the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts theater. This year, **AXIS Dance Company, Diablo Ballet, Jubilee American Dance Theater, Savage Jazz Dance Company, the Milissa Payne Project, and Quicksilver Dance** offer short performances as part of the program, with members of Oakland Ballet performing alongside the invited groups, presenting excerpts from the spring season. The program offers subsidized theater space and production facilities for smaller local dance groups, and low-cost tickets for audience members. Bringing together an array of groups working in classical, folk, popular and contemporary dance styles, *East Bay DANCES ‘16* is a catalyst to bring together diverse corners of the East Bay dance community, and to help develop new and broader audiences for a range of dance genres.

Two additional events have been announced to offer Bay Area audiences opportunities to engage with Oakland Ballet’s spring season. On Saturday, April 16, from 9:00am to 11:30am Oakland

Ballet hosts an **open technique class**, taught by Company dancers and artistic staff, featuring repertoire from *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*. The workshop, held onstage in the theater of the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, is \$25 to attend and open to advanced community dancers; the public is welcome to observe for free. Dancers may RSVP at www.oaklandballet.org. In addition, the company hosts a “Meet the Artists” **panel discussion and Q&A session** with Caniparoli, Garrett, Moulton and Lustig, plus the artistic directors of the season’s guest choral groups, following the 2:00pm performance on Saturday, April 16 at Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts. The program is free to performance ticket holders.

TICKET INFORMATION

Ticket prices for Oakland Ballet’s spring season performances of *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*, Thursday and Friday, April 14–15 at 8pm; and Saturday, April 16 at 2pm and 8pm at Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts; Thursday, April 21 at 8pm at Brava Theater Center; and Saturday, April 23 at 8pm at the Reed L. Buffington Performing Arts Center, Chabot College, range from \$20.00–\$50.00.

Tickets for *East Bay Dances ’16* on April 17 at 4pm are priced from \$10-\$20. Tickets for Oakland performances are on sale now at www.oaklandballet.org or by calling (510) 893-3132. Tickets for the San Francisco and Hayward performances go on sale March 1.

GUEST CHOREOGRAPHER BIOGRAPHIES

Val Caniparoli’s versatility has made him one of the most sought-after choreographers in the United States and abroad. He has contributed to the repertoires of more than 35 dance companies, including Pacific Northwest Ballet, Northern Ballet Theatre, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Israel Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet, Singapore Dance Theatre, Atlanta Ballet, State Theatre Ballet of South Africa, Oakland Ballet, Ballet West and Tulsa Ballet, where he has been resident choreographer since 2001. Caniparoli is most closely associated with San Francisco Ballet, his artistic home for more than thirty years, where he began his training and was later appointed resident choreographer. He continues to perform with the company as a principal character dancer and to choreograph for the company under Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson.

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Janice Garrett is an internationally active choreographer and dance educator who began her career as a dancer with Dan Wagoner and Dancers. Honored in 2004 as one of *Dance Magazine's* top "25 to Watch," she has received commissions from companies throughout the US and Europe. Honors include a 2010 Isadora Duncan Dance Award ("Izzie") for Best Company Performance for her collaboration with Charles Moulton on *The Illustrated Book of Invisible Stories*, three 2011 Izzie nominations for *The Experience of Flight in Dreams* and recognition by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for *StringWreck* as one of the "Top 10 Performances of 2008."

Guggenheim Award recipient **Charles Moulton** began his career dancing with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from 1973-1976. He has created works for the Joffrey Ballet, Baryshnikov's White Oak Project and many other dance companies in the US and abroad. He is the winner of a 1989 Dorothy Chandler Arts Achievement Award and has received support for his work from the NEA, NYSCA, The Jerome Foundation, and Meet the Composer/Choreographer. Moulton has directed theater and opera and has created works for film and television including choreography for 1,000 dancers in the film *Matrix Reloaded*. Moulton has also been active as a visual artist for 12 years.

GUEST PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

The women's vocal ensemble, **Vajra Voices**, directed by Karen R. Clark, sings medieval to modern music in a clear, sweet, and strong singing style inspired by Hildegard von Bingen. Vajra Voices debuted at the prestigious early music gathering, the Berkeley Festival and Exhibition of Early Music, in 2010. The ensemble's debut recording of the music of von Bingen is released on the Music & Arts label in May 2016. In Eastern spiritual traditions, the Sanskrit word *vajra* symbolizes the thunderbolt of clarity, and the indestructible nature of the diamond, together signifying strength of spirit.

Berkeley Community Chamber Singers (BCCS), directed by Derek Tam, is the outreach ensemble of the Berkeley Community Chorus and Orchestra (BCCO), a non-auditioned community chorus that performs major classical works. The Berkeley Community Chamber Singers sing a varied a cappella repertoire that spans several centuries. The group performs for those unable to attend BCCO's concerts, often at retirement homes and hospitals, as well as at other non-commercial

community musical events. Derek Tam, the first assistant conductor for BCCO (2011-2014) serves as music director for BCCS.

Nona Brown and the Inspirational Music Collective is an eclectic group of Bay Area vocalists singing contemporary gospel music. Brown, an acclaimed performer, producer and composer active in the Bay Area for more than 30 years, formed the group in 2014.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR GRAHAM LUSTIG

Since his appointment as Artistic Director in 2010, Graham Lustig has revitalized Oakland Ballet Company and helped the organization reclaim its position as a leading San Francisco Bay Area arts institution and first-rate dance company. Lustig's stewardship has brought the company long-term vision and a reputation for nurturing community-based programming, deep audience engagement, and organizational stability. For the past six seasons, Lustig has presented his critically-acclaimed production of *The Nutcracker* at Oakland's Paramount Theatre, as well as an annual spring season rooted in contemporary works, including the 50th anniversary program, *Five Decades of Dance* (2015); *Oakland-esque* (2014), *Diaghilev Imagery* (2013) and *Forwards!* (2011). In collaboration with Oakland Unified School District, under Lustig's watch Oakland Ballet has expanded its educational outreach program, Discover Dance, to provide educational arts programs to more than a dozen area schools annually. Educational events such as in-school assemblies and open rehearsals reach more than 5,000 local school children each year.

Trained at the Royal Ballet School in London, Lustig danced with the Dutch National Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet before embarking on a freelance choreographic career that has included operas, ballets and musicals. He serves as a founding member of the Artists Committee of Americans for the Arts, and has served numerous times on the Dance and Policy Committee of the National Endowment for the Arts.

OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY

For 50 years, Oakland Ballet Company has inspired the East Bay community and beyond by keeping the art of ballet exciting, vibrant and accessible, primarily through the presentation of works of the Diaghilev repertoire and modern masterpieces. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Graham Lustig since 2010, the Company has renewed its commitment to artistic excellence with imaginative programs that seek to engage contemporary audiences—through close relationships with living choreographers, the commissioning of vibrant new works, innovative collaborations with diverse artists and communities, and compelling educational programs that cultivate the next generation of dance lovers.

Oakland Ballet was founded in 1965 by Ronn Guidi, and gained international recognition through its historical reconstructions of ballets from the legendary Ballets Russes of Serge Diaghilev; its mounting of classic works of Americana; and its creation of innovative contemporary choreography. In 2000, Ronn Guidi retired and Karen Brown succeeded him as Artistic Director. Brown continued Oakland Ballet's commitment to performing great works of classical ballet, and focused especially on the work of local and contemporary choreographers. Since then, Oakland Ballet Company has brought its mix of contemporary and classic programs to the Oakland and East Bay communities and continued its longstanding partnership with Michael Morgan and the Oakland Symphony.

A cornerstone of Oakland Ballet Company's 50-year legacy has been engagement with the community. Oakland Ballet's "Discover Dance" outreach program features educational programs at East Bay schools; educational in-theater performances; free performances throughout the community at events such as the Oakland Art Murmur and Oakland Dance Festival; ticket donations to season performances; and scholarships to OBC training programs.

Oakland Ballet's 2015-2016 Season sponsors include AT&T, Chevron, the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program, Clorox, the San Francisco Foundation, Bank of America, the Matson Foundation, Wells Fargo, East Bay Sotheby's International, Torrey Pines Bank, Fremont Bank and the Oakland Athletics.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE

- What:** Oakland Ballet Company presents *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*
- When:** Thursday, April 14 at 8:00 pm, Friday, April 15 at 8:00 pm and Saturday, April 16 at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm
- Where:** Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, 1428 Alice St, Oakland CA, 94612
- Tickets:** Ticket prices range from \$20–\$50. Tickets are on sale now at www.oaklandballet.org or by calling (510) 893-3132.
- Description:** **Oakland Ballet Company** presents its spring 2016 season, *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*, with six performances in three cities celebrating the power of the human voice and the grace of the human body. The program features world premieres by **Val Caniparoli**, and **Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton**, and a West Coast premiere by Artistic Director **Graham Lustig**.

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- What:** Oakland Ballet Company presents *Community Dance Class*
- When:** Saturday, April 16, from 9:00 am - 11:30 am
- Where:** Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, 1428 Alice St, Oakland, CA 94612
- Tickets:** The workshop is \$25 and open to advanced community dancers; the public is welcome to observe for free. RSVP at www.oaklandballet.org.
- Description:** Oakland Ballet Company hosts an open technique class, taught by Oakland Ballet company dancers and artistic staff, featuring repertoire from the spring season program, *A Cappella - Our Bodies Sing*.

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- What:** Oakland Ballet Company presents *Post-Performance Discussion*
- When:** Saturday, April 16, following the 2:00 pm performance
- Where:** Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, 1428 Alice St, Oakland, CA 94612
- Tickets:** The program is free to performance ticketholders.
- Description:** Oakland Ballet Company hosts a “Meet the Artists” panel discussion and Q&A session with guest choreographers and musicians, following the 2:00pm matinee performance of *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*.

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What: Oakland Ballet Company presents *East Bay DANCES '16*

When: Sunday, April 17, 4:00 pm

Where: Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, 1428 Alice St, Oakland, CA 94612

Tickets: Tickets, priced at \$20 general admission (\$15 seniors/\$10 ages 17 and under and students), go on sale February 1, 2016 at www.oaklandballet.org, and will be available at the door the day of the performance.

Description: *East Bay DANCES '16*, presented by Oakland Ballet Company, showcases the best and brightest in East Bay dance, featuring AXIS Dance Company, Diablo Ballet, Jubilee American Dance Theater, Savage Jazz Dance Company, the Milissa Payne Project, and Quicksilver Dance.

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What: Oakland Ballet Company presents *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*

When: Thursday, April 21 at 8:00 pm

Where: Brava Theater Center, 2781 24th St, San Francisco, CA 94110

Tickets: Ticket prices range from \$20–\$50. Tickets go on sale March 1, 2016 at www.oaklandballet.org or by calling (510) 893-3132.

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What: Oakland Ballet Company presents *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*

When: Saturday, April 23 at 8:00 pm

Where: Reed L Buffington Performing Arts Center, Chabot College, 25555 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, CA 94545

Tickets: Ticket prices range from \$20–\$50. Tickets go on sale March 1, 2016 at oaklandballet.org or by calling (510) 893-3132.

Description: **Oakland Ballet Company** presents its spring 2016 season, *A Cappella—Our Bodies Sing*, with six performances in three cities celebrating the power of the human voice and the grace of the human body. The program features world premieres by **Val Caniparoli**, and **Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton**, and a West Coast premiere by Artistic Director **Graham Lustig**.

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