



50TH ANNIVERSARY 1965–2015
Celebrating a Legacy of Dance Excellence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY WITH REVIVALS AND COMMISSIONS AT THE PARAMOUNT THEATRE, SATURDAY MAY 23, 2015

Five Decades of Dance features historic works by Fokine, Guidi, Carvajal, Loring, King, Nijinska, Nijinsky and Massine, plus new commissions by Caniparoli, Erickson, Lowe, Moses, Seiwert and Lustig

East Bay DANCES, a new festival on Sunday May 24 at Laney College, showcases local dance troupes AXIS Dance, Diablo Ballet, the Turffeinz and more

VIDEO: [Oakland Ballet Company's 50th Anniversary](#)

Oakland, CA, May 1, 2015 – Oakland Ballet Company celebrates its 50th Anniversary Season this spring, with a weekend of programs that honor the company's tradition of presenting iconic ballet masterworks alongside innovative commissions; strengthen its ties to area choreographers; and continue its commitment to community engagement in the East Bay. Artistic Director Graham Lustig has created Oakland Ballet's spring season, *Five Decades of Dance*, to celebrate the past through works that built the company's reputation under founding Artistic Director Ronn Guidi, and look to the future with a series of newly-commissioned dances by alumni and choreographers close to the company. Historical works on the program include Diaghilev-era ballets by **Mikhail Fokine**, **Léonide Massine**, **Vaslav Nijinsky** and **Bronislava Nijinska**; plus revivals of important works by **Carlos Carvajal**, **Ronn Guidi**, **Eugene Loring** and **Alonzo King**; and new works commissioned from **Val Caniparoli**, **Betsy Erickson**, **Michael Lowe**, **Robert Moses**, **Amy Seiwert** and **Graham Lustig**. The spring season performance is Saturday May 23, 2015 at 4pm in the Paramount Theatre, the historic home of Oakland Ballet for many of its acclaimed productions.

As part of the company's ongoing outreach and education programs, *East Bay DANCES*, a new community dance festival presented by Oakland Ballet Company, invites an assortment of East Bay dance companies and smaller performance groups to participate in a curated showcase to close

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the spring season on Sunday, May 24, 2015 at 3pm and 5:30pm in Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center in Oakland. The inaugural East Bay DANCES program features performances by **AXIS Dance Company**, **Diablo Ballet**, the **Turffeinz**, **Danse Lumière**, the **Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company**, **Milissa Payne Project**, **Scratch Dance**, **Tessera Tribal Belly Dance**, and choreographers **Chloë Isabelle Bowman** and **Jaq Hannah Dalziel**, in addition to performances by Oakland Ballet dancers of the new works commissioned for *Five Decades of Dance*.

“Oakland Ballet Company is thrilled to present such a broad range of dance works and represent so many iconic choreographic voices. In this 50th Anniversary tribute, we both honor the legacy of founding director Ronn Guidi and celebrate the company's future with newly-commissioned dance works,” said Artistic Director Graham Lustig. “And there is no more suitable venue to celebrate this momentous anniversary than at the magnificent Paramount Theatre where so many memorable Oakland Ballet performances have taken place.”

The historical portion of *Five Decades of Dance* will include selections from the lavish Diaghilev-era ballets that built Oakland Ballet's reputation internationally: *Petrouchka* and *Scheherazade* by Mikhail Fokine; *La Boutique Fantasque* by Léonide Massine; and *Le Train Bleu* and *Les Biches* by Bronislava Nijinska. Vaslav Nijinsky's boldly innovative *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, the first Nijinsky work to be added to Oakland Ballet's repertoire, will be presented in its entirety. In addition, the company remounts excerpts of modern masterpieces from the 1930s through the 1990s, including *Billy the Kid* by Eugene Loring; *Love Dogs* by Alonzo King; and Ronn Guidi's *The Secret Garden*. *Green* by Carlos Carvajal will also be presented in its entirety.

The production involves close collaboration with many key figures who built Oakland Ballet over the years, including former Production Stage Manager **Ian Britton**, and Lighting Designer **Bob Klemm**. Longtime Oakland Ballet lighting designer **Patty Ann Farrell** returns to recreate her design for Carvajal's *Green*, and will create a new design for frequent collaborator, Betsy Erickson's new work. Bay Area choreographers Guidi and Carvajal will work closely with company dancers to restage their ballets for the 50th anniversary revivals, and **Howard Sayette**, ballet master for Oakland Ballet for 25 years, will return to offer his insights in the final stage of rehearsals. **Abra Rudisill**, who worked for Oakland Ballet for twenty years as principal ballerina and ballet mistress, will collaborate with Michael

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Lowe to set *Le Train Bleu*, and former company dancers (and current Oakland Ballet School faculty) **Joy Gim** and **Joral Schmale** will coach the company dancers in *Scheherazade*.

The Company will perform *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* from Ann Hutchinson Guest's now-definitive reconstruction of Nijinsky's original choreography, last performed by Oakland Ballet in 2009. Lustig's own history with many of these works is an integral part of the process as well – he learned *Petrouchka* from Nikolai Beriosov while dancing at the Dutch National Ballet; Beriosov later set the work on Oakland Ballet, including then-company dancer Michael Lowe. As a young dancer, Lustig also danced the can-can from *La Boutique Fantasque* with the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet. Oakland Ballet's costume designer **Christopher Dunn** is creating new costumes for the commissioned works, and re-creating the original costumes of the historic works.

The second portion of the spring program invites alumni and longtime friends of Oakland Ballet to return with a birthday gift – a short new work of five minutes, celebrating the company's past and looking ahead to its future. Choreographers **Val Caniparoli**, **Betsy Erickson**, **Michael Lowe**, **Robert Moses**, **Amy Seiwert** and **Graham Lustig** will all contribute newly-commissioned works. Caniparoli's choreography was a mainstay of the company's programming in the 1980s and 1990s, and here, he offers a new work for a sextet of dancers set to Leopold Mozart's playful *Toy Symphony*. Erickson, who will create a new duet for the program, served as the company's much-respected ballet mistress for much of the 1980s, choreographing many works for the company as well.

Lowe was a principal dancer with the company for more than 30 years, and famously recreated the role of Beau Gosse in the company's 1989 production of Nijinska's *Le Train Bleu*. He also created six ballets for Oakland Ballet, including *Bamboo*, which received the Isadora Duncan Dance Award for Best Choreography. Lowe's new work, *Horse Head Strings*, is a lyrical trio influenced by his recent trips to Mongolia. Seiwert and Moses have both created fresh new contemporary ballet works for the company in recent years, most recently as part of the programs *Diaghilev Imagery* and *Oakland-esque*. Seiwert's new work is a quintet set to the Allegro section of Vivaldi's Violin Concerto in G Minor, and Moses's new duet is set to Satie's *Gnosienne* No. 3. Pianist **Roy Bogas** will perform both the Satie, as well as Poulenc's *Hymne*, the score for Alonzo King's *Love Dogs*, live as part of the Paramount performance. Lustig's new work, *Luminaire*, is an ensemble piece for nine dancers set to *September*, a composition by German-born British composer Max Richter.

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Following the performance, Oakland Ballet hosts a 50th Anniversary Reception in the Paramount Theatre foyer, featuring refreshments, an exhibition of historic photos, and a once-in-a-lifetime gathering of alumni – from dancers to ballet masters and mistresses, choreographers, lighting and costume designers, stage managers and stage hands. The reception is ticketed and open to the public.

The spring 50th Anniversary season concludes with *East Bay DANCES*, a showcase of East Bay dance organizations curated by Graham Lustig with two performances on Sunday, May 24 in the Laney College Theater. The program offers subsidized theater space and production facilities for smaller area 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* is a catalyst to bring together diverse corners of the East Bay dance community, and help develop new and broader audiences for a range of dance genres. The inaugural *East Bay DANCES* lineup includes **AXIS Dance Company, Diablo Ballet, the Turffeinz, Danse Lumière, the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company, Milissa Payne Project, Scratch Dance, Tessera Tribal Belly Dance**, and choreographers **Chloë Isabelle Bowman** and **Jaq Hannah Dalziel**. Oakland Ballet will perform alongside these groups, presenting the new commissions from *Five Decades of Dance* as part of the program.

"We have invited a broad swath of East Bay choreographers and dance groups, welcoming their participation in this festival," said Lustig. "With *East Bay DANCES*, Oakland Ballet Company looks forward to celebrating the diverse styles of dance troupes that continue to express and enrich our local community."

In its 50th Anniversary Season, Oakland Ballet also continues its longstanding commitment to community outreach, bringing its "Discover Dance" educational outreach program to East Bay students and community members – making the art of dance accessible to thousands of East Bay residents through open rehearsals and free performances throughout April and May. Donated tickets to *Five Decades of Dance* will also be distributed through the Community Access Ticket Service (CATS) organization, reaching hundreds of families, adults, and youth throughout the East Bay who may not otherwise have access to live dance performance. From May 19-21, area school groups have also been invited to observe the company in rehearsal in its studios at the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts in Oakland, and experience the rehearsal process firsthand. [more]

GUEST CHOREOGRAPHER BIOGRAPHIES

Ronn Guidi founded Oakland Ballet Company in 1965 and served as its Artistic Director for 33 years. He is recognized internationally for the repertoire he created for the company during his tenure, and for the many masterpieces of the Diaghilev Ballets Russes-era which he reconstructed to great acclaim for Bay Area audiences, including *Scheherazade*, *Le Train Bleu*, *Les Biches*, *Petrouchka*, *La Boutique Fantasque*, *Bolero*, *Les Noces* and *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*. Guidi has been active in the California dance community for decades as an educator, arts leader, and adjudicator, as well as a critically-acclaimed choreographer of more than 50 ballets, including *The Nutcracker*, *The Secret Garden*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Romeo & Juliet*. During his directorship of Oakland Ballet, the company toured extensively throughout the United States, Mexico, Canada and Europe.

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.

Carlos Carvajal, a native San Franciscan, is an internationally-renowned choreographer of more than 200 works for ballet, opera, musical comedy and Spanish *zarzuela*. He began his ballet studies with San Francisco Ballet and soon joined the company. Later, he was soloist with the Ballet of the Marquis de Cuevas, and principal dancer and choreographer for the Bremen Opera, the Opera of Bordeaux and the Ballet Nacional de Venezuela. In 1965 he returned to San Francisco Ballet as ballet master and associate choreographer, where he created 18 ballets. In 1970 he formed San Francisco Dance Spectrum, and produced more than 50 original works for the company. He has also created works for Oakland Ballet, Peninsula Dance Theatre, Dance Theater of Harlem, San Francisco Opera, Ballet Nuevo Mundo de Caracas and many others. His works for Oakland Ballet include *Cinderella's Crystal Slipper*, *Shapes of Evening*, and *Synergies*. Carvajal is currently serving his tenth season as co-artistic director of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival. [more]

Betsy Erickson was born in Oakland and began her formal dance training at San Francisco Ballet School, where she studied with Lew and Harold Christensen and Anatole Vilzak. From 1964 to 1967, Erickson was a soloist with San Francisco Ballet, and then was a soloist for five years with American Ballet Theatre, where she danced in ballets by Antony Tudor, Agnes de Mille, Jerome Robbins and Léonide Massine. In 1972 she returned to San Francisco Ballet, where she performed principal roles with the company until her retirement. Beginning in 1984, Erickson served as ballet mistress for Oakland Ballet Company for more than seven years, where she also choreographed many works, including *Songs* (1990), *Sfumato* (1986), and *Waterways* (1982).

Michael Lowe, Artistic Director of Menlowe Ballet, began his professional career with Oakland Ballet Company in 1972. As a principal dancer with the company for more than thirty years, Lowe danced in many of the Diaghilev-era revivals brought to life by the company under the leadership of Ronn Guidi, working closely with Agnes de Mille, John Butler, Léonide Massine, Frederic Franklin, Eugene Loring, Anna Sokolow, Irina Nijinska and William Christensen. As a choreographer, Lowe also created six ballets for Oakland Ballet Company, including *Bamboo*, which received the Isadora Duncan Dance Award for Best Choreography. In 2011, he founded Menlowe Ballet, presenting works encompassing cultural, classical and contemporary dance genres, and based in Menlo Park, CA.

Robert Moses is the founder and artistic Director of Robert Moses' Kin (RMK), which he founded in 1995. Moses has created a broad repertory of works of varying styles and genres, exploring topics as diverse as oral traditions in African American culture (*Word of Mouth*); the life, times, and work of James Baldwin (*Biography*); the dark side of contemporary urban culture (*Cause*); and the complexities of parentage and identity (*The Cinderella Principle*). In addition to his work for RMK, Moses has choreographed for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, San Francisco Opera, Ailey II, Philadanco, Cincinnati Ballet, African Cultural Exchange (UK), Moving People Dance and Oakland Ballet Company, among others. While touring nationally and creating more 90 original works, Robert Moses' Kin has earned four Isadora Duncan Awards, the Bonnie Bird North American Choreography Award, a *San Francisco Bay Guardian* "Goldie" award, and an *SF Weekly* Black Box Award for Choreography.

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Amy Seiwert, a native of Cincinnati, moved to San Francisco in 1999, the same year she won the Festival des Arts de Saint-Sauveur Choreography Competition in Quebec. A former dancer with the Smuin and Sacramento Ballets, she is currently Choreographer in Residence for Smuin Ballet and Artist in Residence at ODC Theater. Named one of "25 to Watch" by *Dance Magazine* in 2005, Seiwert is artistic director of Amy Seiwert's Imagery, an acclaimed contemporary ballet company based in San Francisco which she formed in 2004 and whose recent performances include *WestWave Dance*, *Left Coast Leaning*, *Move to the Now*, *Dances From the Heart*, and *Sunken Cathedrals*. Seiwert's work is in the repertory of the Atlanta, Colorado, Sacramento, Oakland, Louisville, American Repertory, and Carolina Ballets, as well as Ballet Nouveau Colorado, Robert Moses' Kin and Ballet Austin.

ABOUT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR GRAHAM LUSTIG

An internationally-recognized choreographer and teacher, **Graham Lustig** danced with the Dutch National Ballet and the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet before embarking on a career as choreographer that has encompassed more than sixty works on four continents. As a young dancer Lustig was coached by Kurt Joos, NINETTE de Valois, John Taras, Kenneth MacMillan, Nicholai Beriosov and Rudi van Dantzig, and worked with Galina Samsova, Eva Evdokimova and Rudolf Nureyev. Lustig was Choreographer-in-Residence at the Washington Ballet, and served for eleven years as Artistic Director of the American Repertory Ballet. In addition to ballet and contemporary dance works, Lustig has also directed and choreographed for musical theater and opera. Since his appointment as Artistic Director of Oakland Ballet Company in 2010, Lustig has presented five seasons of his *Nutcracker* and three spring repertory productions, *Forwards!* (2011), *Diaghilev Imagery* (2013), and *Oakland-esque* (2014). Lustig also initiated the company's annual summer *Ballet Boot Camp*, as well as ongoing ballet training opportunities at the Academy at Oakland Ballet Company.

ABOUT OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY

For fifty years, Oakland Ballet Company has maintained its commitment to inspiring the East Bay community and beyond by keeping the art of ballet exciting, vibrant and accessible, mainly through the presentation of works of the Diaghilev repertoire and modern masterpieces. 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. [more]

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 on the work of local and contemporary choreographers. Oakland Ballet closed in 2006, but was revived in 2007 with Guidi returning as Artistic Director. Since its rebirth, Oakland Ballet Company has brought its classic mix of drama and family classics to the Oakland and East Bay communities and continues a longstanding partnership with Michael Morgan and the Oakland East Bay Symphony.

A cornerstone of Oakland Ballet Company's legacy has been engagement with the community. OBC'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 Pride Festival; ticket donations to season performances; and scholarships to OBC training programs. In 2010, the Oakland Ballet Company welcomed Graham Lustig as Artistic Director. Lustig's career as a dancer, artistic director and choreographer parallels Oakland Ballet's tradition of presenting historically vibrant work while championing new choreography.

Oakland Ballet's 50th Anniversary Season is supported by Chevron, AT&T, the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program, the Fleishhacker Foundation, America Foy LaRue, Inc., Bank of America, Clorox, the Matson Foundation, Wells Fargo, the Bernard Osher Foundation, the East Bay Community Foundation, East Bay Sotheby's International, the Alameda County Arts Commission/ARTSFUND Grants, Torrey Pines Bank, and McGuire and Hester.

TICKETS

Tickets for *Five Decades of Dance* range from \$20-\$45, with discounts for seniors, children and groups of 10 or more. Tickets for the 50th Anniversary Reception following the performance are an additional \$25. A VIP ticket is available for \$100, which includes a pre-performance meet-and-greet with the choreographers, priority seating, access to the 50th Anniversary Reception and a 50th Anniversary commemorative pin. Tickets are on sale now, at the Paramount box office and at www.ticketmaster.com.

Tickets for *East Bay DANCES* are \$20 general admission, \$15 for seniors, \$10 for children and students. The 3:30pm and 5:00pm performances are identical; a separate ticket is required for each performance time. Tickets are on sale now, online at www.brownpapertickets.com or at the door. For more information about any event, or to purchase tickets visit www.oaklandballet.org or call (510) 893-3132.

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CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

What: Oakland Ballet Company presents “Five Decades of Dance”
Program: **New Works: Oakland Ballet Alumni and Friends**
New work by Val Caniparoli (world premiere)
New work by Betsy Erickson (world premiere)
Horse Head Strings by Michael Lowe (world premiere)
New work by Robert Moses (world premiere)
New work by Amy Seiwert (world premiere)
Luminaire by Graham Lustig (world premiere)
Historical Works: From Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes
Petrouchka; Scheherazade (excerpts) by Mikhail Fokine
La Boutique Fantasque (excerpt) by Léonide Massine
Le Train Bleu; Les Biches (excerpts) by Bronislava Nijinska
L’Après-midi d’un Faune (complete) by Vaslav Nijinsky
Revivals: Modern Masterpieces
The Secret Garden (excerpt) by Ronn Guidi
Billy the Kid (excerpt) by Eugene Loring
Love Dogs (excerpt) by Alonzo King
Green (complete) by Carlos Carvajal

When: Saturday May 23, 2015 at 4pm
Where: Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway, Oakland CA
Tickets: Tickets, priced from \$20-\$45, are on sale now, at the Paramount Theatre box office and online at www.ticketmaster.com and www.oaklandballet.org.
Description: Oakland Ballet Company celebrates its 50th Anniversary Season with “Five Decades of Dance” a program of classic works by Nijinsky, Nijinska, Fokine, Massine, Loring, Guidi, and others, plus new works by Val Caniparoli, Betsy Erickson, Michael Lowe, Robert Moses, Amy Seiwert and Graham Lustig, at the Paramount Theatre.

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What: Oakland Ballet Company presents “East Bay DANCES”
When: Sunday, May 24, 2015 at 3pm and 5:30pm
Where: Laney College’s Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center,
900 Fallon Street, Oakland CA
Tickets: Tickets, priced at \$20 general admission (\$15 seniors/\$10 ages 17 and under and students), are on sale now at www.brownpapertickets.com and www.oaklandballet.org, and will be available at the door the day of the performance.
Description: “East Bay DANCES,” presented by Oakland Ballet Company, showcases the best and brightest in East Bay dance, and features performances by Oakland Ballet, AXIS Dance Company, the Turffeinz, Diablo Ballet, Scratch Dance and others.

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