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**OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY PRESENTS
GRAHAM LUSTIG'S *THE NUTCRACKER*
with live music by the OAKLAND SYMPHONY
at the Paramount Theatre, Saturday–Sunday, December 21–22**

Related *Nutcracker* events include Sweet Dreams Parties on December 21 and 22; Encore post-performance reception on December 21; and extensive outreach in schools

Video: [Graham Lustig's The Nutcracker](#)

Oakland, CA, November 21, 2019 – Returning to Oakland's magnificent Paramount Theatre, Oakland Ballet Company is pleased to present its tenth annual production of **Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker***, Saturday and Sunday, December 21 - 22, at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. both days. This season marks the 48th year that Oakland Ballet will present a production of *The Nutcracker*.

As in previous years, Tchaikovsky's iconic score will be performed live by the **Oakland Symphony**, under the direction of **Michael Morgan**, with members from the **Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir**. Each year, the production features more than 40 Bay Area dancers, ages 7 to 17, in the roles of snowballs, mice, soldiers and candies, performing alongside the company's professional ensemble. Supplementing the weekend of public performances at the Paramount, the company will devote the entire month of December to community outreach, offering extensive educational programs and in-school performances to thousands of schoolchildren who might otherwise have no access to live performing arts.

Set in Vienna in the posh Edwardian era, Lustig's version of *The Nutcracker* is based on the original story by E.T.A. Hoffmann, in which a young girl named Marie receives a nutcracker doll from her Uncle

Drosselmeyer. Overnight, her Nutcracker Prince comes to life and battles larger-than-life mice and a Rat King. In the second act, Marie and the Nutcracker Prince meet the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier in a magical land of sweets.

The production's elegant art nouveau set design as well as its imaginative costumes are designed by Emmy- and Tony Award-winning designer **Zach Brown**. This year, **Skylar Burson** makes his debut in the role of the Nutcracker Prince, and Marie will be danced by **Paunika Jones**, a former principal ballerina with Dance Theater of Harlem who also danced with Oakland Ballet from 2005-2007. This will be Jones' first time in the role of Marie, and she will be the first woman of color to dance the part in the 55-year history of the Oakland Ballet. Returning dancers include **Jackie McConnell** as the Sugar Plum Fairy and **Thomas Panto** as her Cavalier.

Ticketed Post-Performance Events

At 3 p.m. following the matinee performances on December 21 and 22, **Sweet Dreams Parties** offer children and families an opportunity to meet characters from the ballet while enjoying refreshments. For adults, an **Encore Reception** in the Paramount Theatre Mezzanine will follow the 5 p.m. performance on Saturday, December 21. The reception will include champagne, hors d'oeuvres and desserts, in the company of Oakland Ballet dancers and artistic staff.

Educational Programs

Now in its 55th Season, Oakland Ballet continues to deepen its longstanding commitment to community outreach and access, bringing its Discover Dance educational programs to more East Bay students and community members each year. As in past seasons, on-site educational performances of Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* will be held in eight East Bay elementary schools, in partnership with the Oakland Unified School District throughout the month of December. Additionally, 2500 free tickets will be distributed to Oakland and East Bay students to attend **Production in Action**, an in-theater educational performance in conjunction with the dress rehearsal of Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* on Friday, December 20. Five hundred free community outreach tickets will be distributed through the Community Access Ticket Service organization, reaching hundreds of families, adults and youth throughout the East Bay.

Ticket Information

General admission tickets for Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* range between \$24 - \$99, with discounts available for seniors, children 12 and under, and groups of 10 or more. Tickets for the Sweet Dreams children's parties are \$15. Tickets for the Encore Reception following the 5 p.m. performance on

December 22 are \$30 for adults and \$20 for children age 12 and under. Tickets are on sale now at oaklandballet.org/wp/performances/graham-lustigs-the-nutcracker or in person at the Paramount Theatre box office.

About Artistic Director Graham Lustig

Since he joined as Artistic Director in 2010, a position which became full-time in the 2016/17 season, 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 eight 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 *Jazz Vistas* (2019); *Scene and Heard* (2018); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2017); *A Cappella: Our Bodies Sing* (2016); the 50th anniversary program, *Five Decades of Dance* (2015), which won an Izzie Award; *Oakland-esque* (2014); *Diaghilev Imagery* (2013); and *Forwards!* (2011). *Luna Mexicana*, Lustig's dance celebration for the Day of the Dead, made its Oakland premiere in 2016 and has become a fall tradition. *Jangala*, inspired by Kipling's *The Jungle Book* and South Indian Bharatanatyam dance, had its West Coast premiere in 2018.

Under Lustig's watch and in collaboration with several East Bay school districts including Oakland, Castro Valley, Dublin, Hayward, Livermore, New Haven (Union City), Pleasanton, and San Leandro Unified School Districts, Oakland Ballet has expanded its educational outreach program, *Discover Dance*, to provide educational arts programs to more than 24 area schools annually. Educational events such as in-school assemblies, open rehearsals and student matinees reach more than 15,000 local school children each year.

About Oakland Ballet Company

For 55 years, Oakland Ballet Company has inspired the East Bay community and beyond by keeping the art of ballet exciting, relevant 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 engage contemporary audiences—through close relationships with living choreographers, the commissioning of new works, innovative collaborations with diverse artists and communities, and compelling educational programs that cultivate the next generation of dance lovers.

A cornerstone of Oakland Ballet Company's 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; ticket donations to season performances; and scholarships to company training programs.

Oakland Ballet's 2019/20 season sponsors include: Chevron, US Bank, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, California Arts Council, the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program, Alameda County Arts Commission, Clorox Company Foundation, Wells Fargo, the David and Lynn Kravis Family Foundation, Snider and Associates, the Bernard Osher Foundation, Matson, Union Bank, the Unity Council, Douglas Parking and TMG Partners.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

What: Oakland Ballet Presents Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker*, with the Oakland Symphony

When: Saturday and Sunday, December 21 - 22, at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Where: Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway, Oakland, CA

Tickets: Tickets are priced from \$24-99, with discounts available for seniors, children 12 and under, and groups of 10 or more. Tickets are available online at oaklandballet.org/wp/performances/graham-lustigs-the-nutcracker or in person at the Paramount Theatre box office, Tuesday 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., Thursday 3 - 7 p.m., Friday 11 a.m. - 6 p.m., and Saturday 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Information: For more information, call (510) 893-3132, visit www.oaklandballet.org, or email info@oaklandballet.org

Description: Oakland Ballet presents Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker*, a beloved East Bay holiday tradition, with four magical performances featuring live music by the Oakland Symphony, this December 21–22. For more information, visit www.oaklandballet.org.

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