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OAKLAND BALLET ANNOUNCES 2011-2012 SEASON

**OAKLAND BALLET PRESENTS FIVE PERFORMANCES OF GRAHAM LUSTIG'S
THE NUTCRACKER**

**Dec. 22-24 at the Paramount Theatre, Oakland Features Intimate
Holiday Spectacle Set in Early 20th Century Viennese Splendor
and Enchantment**

**SPRING 2012 PROGRAM FEATURES DIAGHILEV IMAGERY IN NEW BALLETS
BY GRAHAM LUSTIG, AMY SIEWERT AND VAL CANIPAROLI**

**May 18-20 at Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts in
Oakland**

Oakland, CA, November 1, 2011 – Oakland Ballet Company Artistic Director Graham Lustig has announced details of the Company's 2011-2012 Season of two programs in December 2011 and May 2012, commencing with five performances of Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* with music performed live by the Oakland East Bay Symphony conducted by Michael Morgan. The season culminates in *Diaghilev Imagery*, a fresh and innovative program that pays homage to the famed Ballets Russes--for which Oakland Ballet has long been internationally recognized for reviving and preserving--with contemporary choreographers drawing inspiration from Diaghilev classics in intimate, forward-looking new ballets inspired by the originals. Lustig will stage his own version of *Pulcinella* for *Diaghilev Imagery* and has engaged Bay Area choreographers Amy Seiwert and Val Caniparoli to create new ballets based on Diaghilev originals for the evening. The two-program, nine-performance season runs December 22, 2011, through May 20, 2012. For more information about Oakland Ballet and the 2011-2012 season, visit www.oaklandballet.org

Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* Opens the Season Dec. 22-24

Five performances of Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* will be given Thursday, December 22 at 2 and 7 pm; Friday, December 23 at 2 and 7

pm; and Saturday, December 24 at 11 am at the Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway in Oakland. Sweet Dreams Parties follow the 2 pm matinees and allow children and families to meet characters from the ballet and enjoy sweets, refreshments and holiday cheer for an additional ticket price.

Oakland Ballet Artistic Director Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* brims with the kind of cheery holiday enchantment that is a requirement for the seasonal ballet, but where it truly shines is in the ebullient details and charming re-setting of the enduring tale in Vienna in the early 20th century. Zack Brown's crisp, bright sets, stylish yet delightfully modern costumes and the restrained elegance of period interiors replace gaudy bric-a-brac and engage audiences in the athleticism of the choreography and the details of the traditional story. Details that have caught the attention of media and audiences include the expansive snowball scene in the first act where Company members are joined by a storm of energetic young snowballs careening merrily about the stage in a full-on blizzard of dancing. Lustig's production is full of smart details that delight *Nutcracker* aficionados and amuse newcomers to ballet.

Music for the performances will be provided live by the Oakland East Bay Symphony conducted by Music Director Michael Morgan and features local choral groups: Mt. Eden High School Women's Ensemble and Pacific Boychoir Academy.

Tickets for Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* are priced \$20-\$59 with a \$5 discount for a donation of a canned food item (supporting the Alameda County Community Food Bank). Sweet Dreams Parties with OBC dancers and refreshments follow the 2pm Matinees and are priced an additional \$12. Tickets may be purchased at www.ticketmaster.com. For more information, visit www.oaklandballet.org.

In partnership with the Oakland Unified School District, onsite outreach performances of Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* will be delivered to eight low income schools in December, 2012. Additionally, 1,000 tickets will be distributed to low income students and their families to attend a performance at the Paramount Theatre. A special one hour matinee of *Diaghilev Imagery* will be presented to 300 middle school aged students at the Malonga Casqueleour Center for the Arts on May 18, 2012.

Community outreach tickets will be distributed through the Community Access Ticket Service (CATS) organization, reaching hundreds of underserved families, adults, and youth throughout the East Bay.

***Diaghilev Imagery* Features New Ballets Inspired by Ballets Russes**
May 18-20, 2012

For the Spring of 2012, Graham Lustig has scheduled an innovative and forward looking program that honors the traditions of Oakland Ballet and the Ballets Russes while engaging contemporary choreographers to create new ballets for the Company. OBC will present its Spring program, *Diaghilev Imagery*, which features the re-imagining of several ballets that were originally commissioned at the beginning of the 20th century for the Ballets Russes by Sergei Diaghilev. Choreographers Amy Seiwert and Val Caniparoli will create new works inspired by Ballets Russes repertoire, each of them freshly re-interpreted for the 21st century audiences and dancers and set to the original musical scores. Rounding out this program will be Graham Lustig's re-imagining of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, composed in 1920 to themes written by Pergolesi and evocative of renaissance *commedia dell'arte*.

Four performances of *Diaghilev Imagery* will be given Friday, May 18, 2012, at 8 pm; Saturday, May 19, at 2 & 8 pm and Sunday, May 20, at 2pm at the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, 1428 Alice Street, Oakland.

Tickets are priced \$21-\$38, on sale February 1, 2012, at www.tickemaster.com.

Oakland Ballet Welcomes New and Returning Dancers for 2011-2012 Season

OBC welcomes new Company Dancers: DuRron Chambers, Rachael Jensen, Samuel Lopp, Alec Lytton, Edward McPherson, Rachael Negron, Catherine Turner and Nicole Vitale. The new additions bring a diverse array of artistry and experience to the company.

Lytton has danced with New York Theater Ballet, the New York Metropolitan Opera Ballet and Company C Contemporary Ballet; McPherson's work has taken him to Sacramento Ballet, Charleston Ballet, Ballet Montana, and The Opera Company in Chicago.

Chambers joins OBC from Missouri Ballet Theatre in St. Louis and Nashville Ballet. Lopp has danced with Kansas City Ballet and with Missouri Ballet Theatre, while Ms. Negron and Ms. Turner arrive following complete of the Lines Ballet training program in San Francisco. Ms. Vitale had danced with the Washington Ballet and was awarded 2nd Place in the San Francisco Youth American Grand Prix competition, and Jensen joins OBC after performing with the Sacramento Ballet.

These dancers join returning Company Dancers: Joseph Copley, Coreen Danaher, Jamielyn Duggan, Brandon Freeman, Emily Kerr, Jacob Kremer, Damon Mahoney, Chantelle Pianetta, Stephanie Salts, Denise Schmale, Rachel Speidel Little, Connolly Strombeck, Mariko "Mari" Takahashi and Sharon Wehner.

About Artistic Director Graham Lustig

Internationally recognized choreographer and teacher Graham Lustig was trained at the Royal Ballet School in London. He danced with the Dutch National Ballet and the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet before embarking on a freelance choreographic career that has encompassed more than sixty works over four continents. As the Artistic Director of American Repertory Ballet and ARB's Princeton Ballet School for eleven years, Mr. Lustig was able to strengthen its education and school programs as well as raise the artistic profile of the company.

His professional career began at the Dutch National Ballet where he quickly rose to the rank of soloist. With the largest repertoire of Balanchine outside of New York City Ballet, and works by many of Europe's leading choreographers, Mr. Lustig performed the lead role in ballets such as *Prodigal Son*, *The Green Table*, and *Petrushka*, and created roles in the works of Rudi van Dantzig and Toer van Schaijk. It was during this time that he was coached by such luminaries as Nikolai Beriosov, Kurt Jooss, Peter Wright, John Taras and, most notably, Rudolf Nureyev. Van Dantzig's *Blown in a Gentle Wind* featured Lustig as a younger version of Nureyev's character.

While dancing with the Dutch National Ballet he choreographed his first work, *Thanatos Instinct*, earning him a Dutch Ministry of Culture Award. He followed this with *After A Fashion*, which was taken into the repertoire of the main company. At the invitation of Peter Wright, he returned to England to join the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet. For the next twelve years, Mr. Lustig toured the world performing soloist and principal roles in the critically acclaimed re-stagings of the classics by Peter Wright in addition to many ballets by Kenneth MacMillan and Frederick Ashton, as well as numerous created roles in the works of David Bintley.

After joining the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet (later to become the Birmingham Royal Ballet), he choreographed four works for the company's repertoire including *Inscape*, for which he received a Laurence Olivier nomination. In 1987, he was awarded a Winston Churchill Traveling Fellowship, enabling him to visit a variety of American dance companies over a twelve-week period. He later returned to the States for summer residencies at the Carlisle Project's Choreography Program under the direction of Barbara Weisberger and soon other dance companies began offering him commissions.

In 1989, he created a full-length *Peter Pan* for the Scottish Ballet, followed by a series of six works for Introdans, a contemporary Dutch company, including *The Shrew*, which received a Dutch Choreographic Award nomination. With the move of Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet to the city of Birmingham, and the increasing number of commissions he was receiving, Mr. Lustig made the transition to free-lance choreographer.

Sought after by companies as diverse as Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Ballet West, Singapore Dance Theatre, Northern Ballet Theatre, Hong Kong Ballet, Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company and Sacramento Ballet, his repertoire ranges from the tongue-in-cheek sophistication of *Paramour*, inspired by the writings of Anais Nin, to the wildly imaginative, dramatically costumed *Pomp*, created for North Carolina Dance Theatre.

The Washington Ballet chose him as its distinguished Choreographer-in-Residence. During his three-year tenure, he choreographed *Hearts of Light* (1994) and his works, *Evening* and *Transit* were performed at the Joyce Theatre in New York and the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

In 1996, he created a modern retelling of *Cinderella* set to the Prokofiev score for Singapore Dance Theatre, and, in 1998, *Medrano*, based on Picasso paintings of circus acrobats for American Ballet Theatre's Studio Company.

In 1999 he was appointed Artistic Director of the American Repertory Ballet and its affiliated school, the Princeton Ballet School. For eleven years he held this position making him the longest serving Artistic Director in the company's thirty-one year history. During three different periods he also served as the acting Executive Director.

He expanded the Education and Outreach programs, strengthening the previously established Dance Power program with a new syllabus. Annual Princeton Ballet School performances of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Don Quixote*, *Swan Lake*, and *Coppelia* increased the technical standard of the students, and he choreographed nine other works for the school students. By creating his Dancing Through The Ceiling program, a forum was offered to the often underrepresented voice of female ballet choreographers, and twelve new works have been created for the company.

Mr. Lustig brought American Repertory Ballet to prestigious New York City venues like the Joyce Theater and Symphony Space and choreographed eleven new works for the company, including *VISTA*, *Dialogues*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *The Nutcracker*, which premiered in 2000. In addition, he led choreographic workshops with both company dancers and school students.

Outside of ARB, Mr. Lustig created *Six Pianos* for Configuration Dance Theatre, *Fanfare* for Singapore Dance Theatre, *Between Stillness* for the Louisville Ballet, and *Yield* as part of the National Choreographers Initiative in Irvine, California. He has choreographed the operas *Aida* for Boheme Opera, *Eugene Onegin* for Cleveland Opera, and most recently Handel's *Ariodante* for the Princeton Festival. In 2007, he directed and choreographed *West Side Story*.

In 2003, Mr. Lustig was invited to become a charter member of the

Artists Committee for Americans for the Arts of Washington, D.C. He currently serves on the Advisory Boards of the Princeton Festival and the Terpsichore Theatre of Dance and has served as a panelist for the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation and numerous times for the National Endowment for the Arts. In August of 2010 Mr. Lustig was named Artistic Director of the Oakland Ballet Company.

About Oakland Ballet Company

For over 45 years, Oakland Ballet Company has maintained its commitment to inspiring the East Bay community and beyond by keeping the tradition of ballet exciting, vibrant, and accessible, especially through the presentation of works of the Diaghilev repertoire and modern masterpieces. Oakland Ballet was founded in 1965 by Ronn Guidi, an Oakland native and student of Raoul Pausé, himself a former student of Ballets Russes dancer and choreographer Adolf Bolm. Oakland Ballet gained international recognition through its historical reconstructions of ballets from the legendary Ballets Russes of Serge Diaghilev, mounting of classic works of Americana, and creation of innovative contemporary choreography. Noted revivals by Oakland Ballet include works by Kurt Jooss, Michel Fokine, Charles Weidman, and Antony Tudor and the first restaging of works by Bronislava Nijinska in the United States. Championing American masterpieces as well, Oakland Ballet has presented Eugene Loring's Billy the Kid, Ruthanna Boris's Cakewalk, and Agnes de Mille's Fall River Legend. Oakland Ballet has produced works by local choreographers such as Val Caniparoli, Carlos Carvajal, Margaret Jenkins, Alonzo King, Michael Lowe, and Amy Seiwert.

In 2000, Ronn Guidi retired and Karen Brown succeeded as Artistic Director. Brown continued Oakland Ballet's commitment to performing great works of classical ballet, and focused especially on 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 – with ballets like Vaslav Nijinsky's Afternoon of a Faun and Mark Wilde's Bolero – and family classics – like Guidi's Secret Garden and Carlos Carvajal's Nutcracker – to Oakland and the East Bay communities. Oakland Ballet Company's continues a partnership with Michael Morgan and the Oakland East Bay Symphony.

A cornerstone of Oakland Ballet Company's over 40-year legacy has been engagement with the community, from school visits by dancers to performances at Children's Fairyland and Oakland's Children's Hospital. Through partnerships with the Oakland Unified School District and Community Access Tickets Service, Oakland Ballet Company has brought the gift of ballet and live music to those who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience live theater.

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 is pleased to have as its 2011-2012 corporate sponsors Bank of America, Chevron, Clorox Company Foundation, Nestle/Dreyers Grand Ice Cream Foundation, with special thanks to the City of Oakland Cultural Arts Funding and The San Francisco Foundation.

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