



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Lisa Mezzacappa

Lisa Mezzacappa Projects: Arts Programming and Communications

510-708-2530 // <mailto:mezzacappa.projects@gmail.com>

PHOTOS: <http://oaklandballet.org/wp/photos/>

OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY ANNOUNCES 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Season begins with Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* December 20-21, and continues with *Five Decades of Dance*, May 22-23, 2015, featuring historic Diaghilev-era works plus new commissions by Caniparoli, Erickson, King, Lowe, Seiwert and Lustig

Oakland, CA, September 24, 2014 – Oakland Ballet Company announces its 50th Anniversary Season in 2014-2015, with 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. The season begins with the fifth annual production of **Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker*** on December 20 at 2pm and 8pm, and December 21 at 2pm, at the Paramount Theatre in Oakland. Artistic Director Graham Lustig has created Oakland Ballet's spring season, ***Five Decades of Dance***, as a two-part program that celebrates the past through works that built the company's reputation under founding Artistic Director Ronn Guidi, and looks to the future with a series of newly-commissioned dances by alumni and choreographers close to the company. Historical works on the program include selections by **Vaslav Nijinsky, Bronislava Nijinska, Mikhail Fokine, Leonid Massine, Eugene Loring and Ronn Guidi**; new works will be commissioned from **Val Caniparoli, Betsy Erickson, Alonzo King, Michael Lowe, Amy Seiwert and Graham Lustig**. The spring season performances are May 22, 2015 at 8pm, and May 23, 2015 at 2pm and 8pm in Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center in Oakland.

As part of the company's ongoing community outreach and education programs, a new event, ***Show up and Dance***, will invite East Bay dance companies to participate in a curated afternoon showcase to close the spring season on Sunday, May 24, 2015 at 4pm in the Laney College Theater. Two gala fundraising events this season are planned as well, beginning with the inaugural ***Nutcracker Ball*** on December 19 at 7:30pm, and continuing with the annual ***Spring Gala*** on May 2, 2015, at 6:30pm, both at the Bellevue Club in Oakland.

[more]

Media:

Amy Seiwert & Oakland Ballet: [Les Biches](#)

Graham Lustig & Oakland Ballet: [VISTA](#)

Graham Lustig's [The Nutcracker](#)

“I am pleased to announce that Oakland Ballet’s 50th Anniversary Season will highlight everything this community has cherished about the company over all these decades,” said Artistic Director Graham Lustig. “We will rediscover beloved, historically significant works from the Diaghilev era that put Oakland Ballet on the map, and also invite back star choreographers, such as Alonzo King and Val Caniparoli, whose early careers were shaped by their work with the company, to create new dances celebrating our next 50 years.”

The “early Highlights” portion of the spring program will include selections from iconic ballets that built Oakland Ballet’s reputation internationally: *Petrouchka* and *Scheherazade* by Mikhail Fokine; *La Boutique Fantasque* by Léonid Massine; *Billy the Kid* by Eugene Loring; and *Le Train Bleu* and *Les Biches* by Bronislava Nijinska. In addition, Vaslav Nijinsky’s *The Afternoon of a Faun* will be presented in its entirety. And, chosen in consultation with founding artistic director Ronn Guidi, the company will also re-mount Guidi’s *pas de deux* from *The Secret Garden*. The “Carte Blanche” portion of the spring program invites alumni and longtime friends of Oakland Ballet to return with a birthday gift – a short new work celebrating the company’s past and looking ahead to its future. Choreographers Val Caniparoli, Betsy Erickson, Alonzo King, Michael Lowe, Amy Seiwert and Artistic Director Graham Lustig will all contribute new commissioned works.

Oakland Ballet Company returns to the Paramount Theatre for its fifth annual holiday season production of Graham Lustig’s *The Nutcracker*, danced to live music by the Oakland East Bay Symphony, conducted by Michael Morgan, in three performances December 20-21. Conceived and choreographed by company Artistic Director Graham Lustig, the production has been praised for refreshing the holiday classic with new choreography, clever storytelling, and vivid sets and costumes, while still preserving the work’s timeless appeal.

[more]

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. In partnership with the Alameda County School District, on-site educational performances of Graham Lustig’s *The Nutcracker* will be delivered at eight East Bay elementary schools in December 2014. Additionally, 2,000 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 rehearsals of Graham Lustig’s *The Nutcracker* and *Five Decades of Dance*. Community outreach tickets will 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 and music performance.

The spring 50th Anniversary season concludes with a new program, *Show up and Dance*, an afternoon showcase of East Bay dance organizations curated by Graham Lustig on Sunday, May 24 at 4pm in the Laney College Theater. The program offers subsidized theater space and production facilities for smaller area dance groups, and subsidized tickets for audience members to help develop new, and broader audiences for diverse genres of dance in the East Bay.

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 freelance career as choreographer that has encompassed more than sixty works over four continents. As a young dancer Lustig was coached by Kurt Joos, Ninette de Valois, John Taras, Kenneth MacMillan, Nikolai 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, where he expanded the organization’s education and outreach programs, touring the company to New York City venues such as the Joyce Theater and Symphony Space as well as nationally. In addition to ballet and contemporary dance works, Lustig has also directed and choreographed *West Side Story*, and choreographed *The Boyfriend*, *Aida*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Carmen*, *Ariodante* and *Francesca di Rimini*.

[more]

Since his appointment as Artistic Director of Oakland Ballet Company in 2010, Lustig has presented four seasons of his *Nutcracker* and three spring repertory productions, *Forwards!* (2011), *Diaghilev Imagery* (2013), and *Oakland-esque* (2014), with a focus on commissioned works by esteemed Bay Area choreographers. Lustig's ballet *Infinitum* was included in the West Wave Dance Festival (2011) and he initiated Oakland Ballet Company's annual summer *Ballet Boot Camp*, a two-week dance and choreography workshop now in its fifth year, as well as ongoing ballet training opportunities at The Academy at Oakland Ballet Company. In 2010 Lustig founded his own non-profit dance organization, Lustig Dance Theatre, encompassing a dance and wellness studio, plus a professional dance company dedicated to serving the central New Jersey community.

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.

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. 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

[more]

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, the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program, Bank of America, Clorox, the Matson Foundation, Wells Fargo, East Bay Sotheby's International, the Alameda County Arts Commission/ARTSFUND Grants and McGuire and Hester.

TICKETS

General admission tickets for Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker*, priced from \$22-\$70.50, are on sale now. Tickets for *Five Decades of Dance*, priced at \$35 (\$30 seniors/\$20 ages 17 and under and college students), go on sale March 1, 2015. Tickets for *Show up and Dance*, priced at \$20 (\$15 seniors/\$10 ages 17 and under and college students), go on sale March 1, 2015. For more information and to purchase tickets visit www.oaklandballet.org or call (510) 893-3132.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

- What:** Oakland Ballet Presents Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker* with the Oakland East Bay Symphony
- When:** Saturday, December 20 at 2pm and 8pm, and Sunday, December 21 at 2pm
- Where:** Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway, Oakland, CA
- Tickets:** Tickets are priced from \$22-\$70.50, with discounts of 15% available for seniors, children 12 and under, and groups of 10 or more. Tickets are available online at www.ticketmaster.com or in person at the Paramount Theatre box office.
- Description:** Oakland Ballet presents Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker*, a beloved East Bay holiday tradition, with three magical performances featuring live music by the Oakland East Bay Symphony, this December 20-21. For more information, visit www.oaklandballet.org.

#####

[more]

- What:** Oakland Ballet Company's Nutcracker Ball
- When:** Friday, December 19 at 7:30pm
- Where:** The Bellevue Club, 525 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland CA
- Tickets:** Tickets start at \$100 and will be available online beginning October 1 at www.oaklandballet.org, by phone at 510-893-3132, or by mailing in a check to Oakland Ballet Company at 2201 Broadway, Suite 206, Oakland, CA 94612
- Description:** Oakland Ballet Company presents its inaugural Nutcracker Ball, a gala fundraising event featuring refreshments and entertainment, with proceeds supporting the 2014 production of Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker*.

#####

- What:** Oakland Ballet Company presents "Five Decades of Dance"
- Program:** ***Carte Blanche: New Works by Oakland Ballet Alumni and Friends***
- New work by Val Caniparoli (world premiere)
New work by Betsy Erickson (world premiere)
New work by Alonzo King (world premiere)
New work by Michael Lowe (world premiere)
New work by Amy Seiwert (world premiere)
New Work by Graham Lustig (world premiere)
- Early Highlights: 50 Years of Oakland Ballet***
- Petrouchka; Scheherazade* by Mikhail Fokine
La Boutique Fantasque, by Léonid Massine
Billy the Kid by Eugene Loring
Le Train Bleu; Les Biches by Bronislava Nijinska
The Secret Garden by Ronn Guidi
The Afternoon of a Faun by Vaslav Nijinsky
- When:** May 22, 2015 at 8pm, and May 23, 2015 at 2pm and 8pm
- Where:** Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center, 900 Fallon Street, Oakland
- Tickets:** Tickets are \$35 (\$30 seniors/\$20 ages 17 and under and college students), and go on sale March 1, 2015 online at www.oaklandballet.org.
- Description:** Oakland Ballet celebrates its 50th Anniversary Season with "Five Decades of Dance," a program that celebrates the past with classic works by Vaslav Nijinsky, Bronislava Nijinska, Mikhail Fokine, Leonid Massine, Eugene Loring, and founding artistic director Ronn Guidi, plus new works by Val Caniparoli, Betsy Erickson, Alonzo King, Michael Lowe, Amy Seiwert and Graham Lustig.

#####

[more]

What: Oakland Ballet Company's Spring Gala

When: Saturday, May 2, 2015, at 6:30pm

Where: The Bellevue Club, 525 Bellevue Ave, Oakland, CA 94610

Tickets: Tickets start at \$200 and will be available online beginning March 1, 2015 at www.oaklandballet.org, by phone at 510-893-3132, or by mailing in a check to Oakland Ballet Company at 2201 Broadway, Suite 206, Oakland, CA 94612

Description: Oakland Ballet Company's spring gala features a dinner, silent auction and live performance highlights, with proceeds supporting the company's 50th Anniversary season.

#####

What: Oakland Ballet Company presents "Show up and Dance"

When: Sunday May 24, 2015 at 4pm

Where: Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center, 900 Fallon Street, Oakland

Tickets: Tickets are \$20 (\$15 seniors/\$10 ages 17 and under and college students); available online beginning March 1, 2015 at www.oaklandballet.org

Description: "Show up and Dance," a new initiative by Oakland Ballet, is an afternoon program featuring the best and brightest in East Bay dance, curated by Oakland Ballet Artistic Director Graham Lustig.

##END##