



Graham Lustig, Artistic Director

Inspiring the Community since 1965

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OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY PRESENTS

SPRING REPERTORY SEASON 2017 *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

A spotlight on the choreography of Artistic Director Graham Lustig
Thursday–Saturday, June 1–3

Season features revival of Lustig's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in its West Coast premiere, and world premiere of *Consort*

Community dance celebration East Bay DANCES returns in its third year,
Sunday June 4

Oakland, CA, March 16, 2017 – Oakland Ballet Company announces its 2017 spring repertory season, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, featuring two works showcasing the choreographic vision of company Artistic Director, Graham Lustig. Appointed to the post in a seasonal/part-time capacity in 2010, Lustig was invited by the ballet Board of Directors to increase his stewardship to a full-time position at the start of the 2016–17 season. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is designed as both a celebration of Lustig's leadership in this new chapter of the company's history, and as an introduction to the Bay Area arts community of a broader range of Lustig's creative output as a celebrated choreographer. He presents the West Coast premiere of his 2001 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the world premiere of a new work, *Consort*, from Thursday–Saturday, June 1–3, at 7:30pm, with a matinee on Saturday June 3 at 2:30pm, in Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center. In addition, the company presents the third year of its popular community dance celebration, *East Bay DANCES*, on Sunday June 4 at 4pm, also at Laney College.

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“The Board of Directors of Oakland Ballet Company is thrilled to announce this first spring season under the full-time direction of Graham Lustig,” said Board of Directors Chair, Roz Perazzo. “The dances in this program are a perfect example of Mr. Lustig’s broad artistic vision and stunning work as a choreographer—magical, imaginative, innovative—and significantly, inclusive and inviting to a broad range of Bay Area arts audiences.” In future seasons, Lustig plans to continue his longstanding practice of cultivating relationships with Bay Area choreographers as part of his creative leadership, and making connections between artists and communities in the East Bay.

Lustig’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is set to Felix Mendelssohn’s score based on Shakespeare’s enduring play. The 45-minute work features a cast of 22 dancers, including eight child/student dancers. The story unfolds in the realm of Fairyland, where four subplots converge around the wedding of Duke Theseus and Queen Hippolyta. A cast of “rude mechanicals” prepare to perform a play within a play for the wedding; the King and Queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania, plot and scheme with the assistance of Puck and a strong love potion; and a cast of lovesick humans are caught in a tangled web of mistaken identities and mismatched affections. In re-telling the magical and madcap Shakespearean comedy through dance, Lustig draws on themes that are universally relatable.

“I’m interested in this story as an exploration of human relationships, and of how people resolve conflicts,” Lustig explained. “And I have chosen to foreground the role of the changeling boy under the fairy Queen Titania’s care: seeing the play’s events through the innocence and wonder of a young person, and giving him a more active role in the story’s outcome.”

Lustig’s new work, *Consort*, draws its inspiration from Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, and from the poetry and music of the English Renaissance, featuring music by Thomas Tallis, William Byrd and Vaughan Williams, among others. The 20-

minute dance will feature a smaller ensemble of eight dancers from the company. Costumes for both works are by Christopher Dunn.

Participants will be announced on April 1 for East Bay DANCES '17, Oakland Ballet Company's third annual community dance celebration. This year, an assortment of area dance companies will offer short performances as part of the popular program, with members of Oakland Ballet performing excerpts of spring season repertory alongside the invited groups. 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 '17* 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.

Spring Educational Programs

Now in its 53rd 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. Two matinee performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are offered for K-12 schoolchildren from Oakland Unified School District on Friday, June 2 at the Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center at Laney College. Tickets are free for Title I schools and \$5 for students and teachers from non-Title I schools. Tickets may be arranged at www.OaklandBallet.org or by calling 510-893-3132.

Ticket Information

Tickets for Oakland Ballet's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from Thursday–Saturday, June 1–3, at 7:30pm, with a matinee on Saturday June 3 at 2:30pm, in Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center range from \$20-60, and are available at www.OaklandBallet.org and on Brown Paper Tickets. Tickets go on sale April 1. Tickets are also available at the door.

Tickets for *East Bay DANCES '17* on Sunday, June 4 at 4pm in Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center are \$25 general admission, \$20 for seniors, \$15 for children and students. Tickets go on sale on April 1 at www.OaklandBallet.org and on Brown Paper Tickets, and are also available at the door.

About Artistic Director Graham Lustig

This season, Oakland Ballet Company celebrates the full-time appointment of Graham Lustig as Artistic Director. Since he joined the company as Artistic Director in 2010, a position which was seasonal until fall of 2016, 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 *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 family-friendly dance celebration of the Day of the Dead, made its highly successful Oakland premiere in 2016 and promises to become a fall tradition. In collaboration with several East Bay school districts including Oakland, Castro Valley, Hayward, and Pleasanton Unified School Districts, under Lustig's watch 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.

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.

About Oakland Ballet Company

For more than 50 years, Oakland Ballet Company has inspired the East Bay community and beyond by keeping the art of ballet accessible, relevant, and exciting for our diverse audiences, 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 company training programs.

Oakland Ballet's 2016-2017 season sponsors include Chevron, Bridge Bank, Clorox, the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program, US Bank, the California Arts Council, Wells Fargo, Bank of America and Matson.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE

What: Oakland Ballet Company presents *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
When: Thursday–Saturday, June 1–3, at 7:30pm, and Saturday June 3 at 2:30pm
Where: Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center at Laney College
900 Fallon Street, Oakland
Tickets: Tickets, priced from \$20–\$60, go on sale April 1 at www.OaklandBallet.org and Brown Paper Tickets, and will be available at the door on the day of the performances.
Description: Oakland Ballet Company's 2017 spring season, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, features two works by company Artistic Director, Graham Lustig, including the West Coast premiere of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the world premiere of *Consort*, inspired by Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.

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What: Oakland Ballet Company presents *East Bay DANCES '17*
When: Sunday, June 4 at 4pm
Where: Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center at Laney College
900 Fallon Street, Oakland
Tickets: Tickets, priced at \$25 general admission (\$20 seniors/\$15 ages 17 and under and students), go on sale April 1 at www.OaklandBallet.org and Brown Paper Tickets, and will be available at the door the day of the performance.
Description: *East Bay DANCES '17*, presented by Oakland Ballet Company, showcases the best and brightest in East Bay dance, featuring an array of local companies working in classical, folk, popular and contemporary dance styles.

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