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OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY PRESENTS

SPRING REPERTORY SEASON 2018

SCENE & HEARD

FEATURING THE WORLD PREMIERES OF FIVE NEWLY COMMISSIONED STORY
BALLET BY BAT ABBIT, ANTOINE HUNTER,
MICHAEL LOWE, DANIELLE ROWE AND GRAHAM LUSTIG

Thursday–Saturday, May 31–June 2

Community dance celebration East Bay DANCES returns in its fourth year,
Sunday June 3

Oakland, CA, March 20, 2018 – Oakland Ballet Company announces its 2018 spring repertory season, *Scene and Heard*, featuring five newly-commissioned works by choreographers **Bat Abbit, Antoine Hunter, Michael Lowe, Danielle Rowe** and company Artistic Director, **Graham Lustig**. The new commissions add to the company's rich history of narrative ballets, from founding director Ronn Guidi's presentations of repertoire associated with the Ballets Russes as well as his own works, through to current director Lustig's creations *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Luna Mexicana*, and *Jangala*. Each choreographer will create a new 10- to 15-minute narrative dance, set on a subset of the company's 10 dancers. The performances are Thursday–Saturday, May 31–June 2, at 7:30pm, plus a matinee on Saturday June 2 at 2:30pm, in Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center. In addition, the company presents the fourth year of its popular community dance celebration, *East Bay DANCES*, on Sunday June 3 at 4pm, also at Laney College.

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“Oakland Ballet Company has a celebrated history of creating and presenting story ballets,” explained Artistic Director, Graham Lustig. “This spring repertory program connects to that tradition, and also extends it. I have asked these extraordinary choreographers, each with their own style and aesthetic, to imagine how they might tell contemporary stories through dance—stories that explore and reflect our current moment in time.”

Participants for East Bay DANCES '18, Oakland Ballet Company's fourth annual community dance celebration, include **AXIS Dance Company, Ballet Folklórico México Danza, d'Naga, Jubilee American Dance Theatre, Linda Steele II, Marika Brussel, Savage Jazz Dance Company, Shabnam Dance Company** and **Urban Jazz Dance Company**. 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 '18* is a catalyst to connect 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 54th 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. A matinee performance of *Scene and Heard* will be offered for K-12 schoolchildren from Oakland Unified School District on May 30 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 spring repertory production, *Scene and Heard*, from Thursday–Saturday, May 31–June 2, at 7:30pm, plus a matinee on Saturday June 2 at 2:30pm, in Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center range from \$30-50 with discounts available for seniors and children, and are available now at www.OaklandBallet.org, online at Brown Paper Tickets, and are also available at the door. [more]

Tickets for *East Bay DANCES '17* on Sunday, June 3 at 4pm in Laney College's Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center are \$25 general admission, \$20 for seniors, \$15 for children and students. Tickets are on sale now at www.OaklandBallet.org and online Brown Paper Tickets, and are also available at the door.

Guest Choreographers

Bat Abbit's professional career as a dancer began with the Nashville Ballet, continued with North Carolina Dance Theatre where he was a soloist, and finished with American Repertory Ballet. He has performed roles such as Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and created the roles of Fritz and the Nutcracker in Graham Lustig's *The Nutcracker*. Since becoming a Ballet Master, he has staged Lustig's *Evening* and *Cinderella* for Singapore Dance Theatre, and countless other ballets for American Repertory Ballet. Abbit own works as choreographer include *Jump, Frog, Jump!* for young audiences and a full-length *Coppelia* for Carolina Ballet. He has served on the faculty at the School of the Nashville Ballet, the school of the North Carolina Dance Theatre, the Princeton Ballet School, and Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University. In 2011 he became Oakland Ballet's Education Coordinator and Ballet Master.

A Bay Area native, **Antoine Hunter** is an award-winning African-American deaf producer, choreographer, actor, dancer, instructor, model, poet, speaker, mentor and deaf advocate. He received his training in dance and acting at Skyline High School Oakland, California Institute of the Arts, and Paul Taylor Dance School. The founder and artistic director of Urban Jazz Dance, Hunter has performed with Savage Jazz Dance Company, Nuba Dance Theater, Alayo Dance Company, Robert Moses' KIN, Man Dance, Amara Tabor-Smith, Kim Epifano, Joanna Haigood and the Lorraine Hansberry Theater. Hunter is on faculty at East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, Shawl-Anderson, Youth in Arts and Dance-A-Vision. He is Director-at-Large for the Northern California chapter of the California Association of the Deaf, and teaches dance and ASL in both Hearing and Deaf communities. He has produced the Bay Area International Deaf Dance Festival since 2013.

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Born in Oakland and raised in Alameda, **Michael Lowe** was encouraged at an early age to explore the joy and discipline of classical ballet to augment his aptitude in athletics. He joined Oakland Ballet in 1974 and was promoted to Principal Dancer in 1976 with his debut as Alias in *Billy the Kid*. A scholarship student at Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, Lowe also performed with Pacific Ballet Company, Gilbert Reed Ballet Company, Los Angeles Chamber Ballet, Sacramento Ballet, North Dakota Ballet and the Old Souls New Shoes Dance Company under Mark Morris. In 1989, he recreated the role of Beau Gosse for Oakland Ballet's historical reconstruction of Bronislava Nijinska's *Le Train Bleu*. Lowe has created a number of ballets for Oakland Ballet including *Table for Two*, *Witness*, *The Emperor and the Nightingale*, *Dim Sum*, *Double Happiness* and *Bamboo*, for which he received an Isadora Duncan Award for Best Choreography. Lowe is the founding and Artistic Director of Menlowe Ballet, where he has created the ballets *Plague*, *Chuntian*, *Cirque*, *Serei*, *Surfside*, *Tribute*, *Transcendence*, *Legend of the Seven Suns*, *Playing Love* and *It's a Wonderful Nutcracker*.

Born in Adelaide, Australia, **Danielle Rowe** trained at the Australian Ballet School before joining the Australian Ballet in 2001, where she danced for ten years as a Principal. In 2011, Danielle left Australia to join the Houston Ballet and in 2012 moved again to join the prestigious Nederlands Dans Theater. Rowe has performed in a large variety of works and worked intimately with many acclaimed choreographers, notably Jiri Kylian, Medhi Walerski, Crystal Pite, Wayne McGregor, Paul Lightfoot, Sol Leon and Alexander Eckman. Since moving to San Francisco in 2015, she has worked with the San Francisco Dance Film Festival dancing in a short film titled *Mad Scene 2.0*, danced and choreographed for DanceFAR and choreographed for Berkeley Ballet Theater.

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

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contemporary works, including *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 of the Day of the Dead, made its highly successful Oakland premiere in 2016 and has become a fall tradition. *Jangala*, inspired by Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, had its West Coast premiere in March 2018.

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, 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.

About Oakland Ballet Company

For more than 53 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 53-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 2017-2018 season sponsors include Chevron, California Arts Council, the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program, Clorox, The Lynn and David Kravis Family Foundation, Snider and Associates, U.S. Bank, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Matson, TMG Partners, Alameda County Arts Commission, Bridge Bank, Union Bank, the Oakland A's Community Foundation, and Douglas Parking. [more]

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE

What:

Oakland Ballet Company presents *Scene and Heard*

When:

Thursday–Saturday, May 31–June 2, at 7:30pm, and Saturday June 2 at 2:30pm

Where:

Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center at Laney College
900 Fallon Street, Oakland

Tickets:

Tickets, priced from \$35-50 with discounts for seniors and children, on sale now 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 2018 spring season, *Scene and Heard*, features the world premieres of five new story ballets by choreographers Bat Abbit, Antoine Hunter, Michael Lowe, Graham Lustig and Danielle Rowe.

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What:

Oakland Ballet Company presents *East Bay DANCES '18*

When:

Sunday, June 3 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), on sale now at www.OaklandBallet.org and Brown Paper Tickets, and will be available at the door the day of the performance.

Description:

East Bay DANCES '18, 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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