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**OAKLAND BALLET COMPANY PRESENTS
*LUNA MEXICANA***

**a Family-Friendly Celebration of the Day of the Dead
plus the world premiere of *VIVA LA VIDA*, a tribute to Frida Kahlo co-created with
Ballet Folklorico Mexico Danza
Friday–Saturday, November 2–3 at the Paramount Theatre**

Special student and community performances are also planned on October 18 at San Leandro High School Performing Arts Center; October 26 at Amador Valley High School; October 30 at Castro Valley Center for the Arts; and November 2 in the Paramount Theatre.

Video: [Luna Mexicana](#)

Oakland, CA, September 30, 2018 – Oakland Ballet Company announces the return of *Luna Mexicana*, a family-friendly celebration of the Mexican Day of the Dead, at the Paramount Theatre on Friday November 2 at 7:30pm, and Saturday November 3 at 4pm. This year’s program features the world premiere of *Viva la Vida*, a new work co-choreographed by Oakland Ballet Company Artistic Director, Graham Lustig and Martín Romero of Ballet Folklorico Mexico Danza. The dance will celebrate the life and artistry of iconic Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo, using her self-portraits as a springboard to explore the many facets of her personality.

“I wanted to create a work about Frida Kahlo because I am so inspired by her spirit, as an artist of incredible resilience and passion,” said Oakland Ballet Company Artistic Director, Graham Lustig. “Her journey as a woman of enormous physical challenges, who refused to be limited or defined by those challenges, is something I was eager to explore through dance.”

In addition to *Viva la Vida*, the program includes Lustig’s work, *Luna Mexicana*, which features a cast of

five female and five male dancers, with festive choreography, vivid costumes, striking makeup and a mix of folkloric and modern Mexican music. Based on traditional Mexican Día de los Muertos celebrations, where the living honor the spirits of the dead with offerings of food, music and dance, *Luna Mexicana* tells the story of a young woman whose departed loved ones dance back to life in the form of teetering skeletons, skirt-swishing ladies, a high flying “deer dancer,” and a bride and groom duet.

The program will be presented in two acts with an intermission. The first half of the evening will feature a selection of Mexican contemporary and folkloric dance and music curated by Lustig, including performances by the Aztec ensemble, **Nahui-Ehekatl and Co.** and **Ballet Folklórico Mexico Danza**. Festivities begin in the lobby of the Paramount at 6:30pm, with *ofrendas* on display created by local Latina artists and vendors selling Day of the Dead refreshments such as the sweet *pan de muerto*, tamales and *horchata*. Audience members of all ages are encouraged to attend in Day of the Dead costume.

Educational Programs

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. Special student performances of *Luna Mexicana* will take place on October 18 at San Leandro High School Performing Arts Center; October 26 at Amador Valley High School; October 30 at Castro Valley Center for the Arts; and November 2 in the Paramount Theatre. The Paramount Theatre student matinee performance of *Luna Mexicana* is offered free of charge to students in Emeryville and Oakland Unified Title 1 schools thanks to generous underwriting by various benefactors; \$10 for all other students. The City of San Leandro is also hosting a free performance of *Luna Mexicana* for all San Leandro residents on Thursday, October 18 at 6pm at San Leandro High School Performing Arts Center.

Ticket Information

Tickets for *Luna Mexicana* on Friday, November 2 at 7:30pm and Saturday, November 3 at 4pm in the Paramount Theatre are \$22-55, with discounts available for seniors, college students, and children under age 18. For the November 3 performance, Silver Sponsor tickets, priced at \$100, include VIP seating and a post-performance Meet the Artists reception at the Paramount Theatre; Gold Sponsor tickets, priced at \$200, include Silver Sponsor benefits, plus dinner at Agave Uptown restaurant. Tickets are on sale now, available at ticketmaster.com (service fees apply) 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 *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 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.

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 more than 54 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 2018/19 season sponsors include: Chevron, US Bank, the Walther and Elise Haas Fund, California Arts Council, the City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program, the City of Emeryville, Clorox Company Foundation, the David and Lynn Kravis Family Foundation, Snider and Associates, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, the Bernard Osher Foundation, Matson, Douglas Parking, and TMG Partners.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

- What:** Oakland Ballet Presents *Luna Mexicana: A Day of the Dead Celebration*
When: Friday, November 2 at 7:30pm and Saturday, November 3 at 4pm
Where: Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway, Oakland, CA
Tickets: Tickets are \$22-55, with discounts available for seniors, college students, and children under age 18. Tickets are available online at www.ticketmaster.com or in person at the Paramount Theatre box office.
Description: Oakland Ballet presents *Luna Mexicana*, a family-friendly celebration of the Mexican Day of the Dead, with dancing, costumes, live music and holiday treats. For more information, visit www.oaklandballet.org.

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