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Diablo Ballet marks 15th anniversary with one of its most ambitious seasons yet



2008-09 line-up includes world premiere of *The Little Prince* and first-ever presentation of selections of Broadway's *Swing* by a ballet company

Programs:

November 21-22, 2008: "An Evening on Broadway," with excerpts from Christopher Stowell's *Eyes on You*, Lynn Taylor Corbett's *Swing*, George Balanchine's *Who Cares*

March 20-21, 2009: Julia Adams' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

May 8-9, 2009: world premiere of *The Little Prince*, commissioned by Diablo Ballet

Diablo Ballet has not only rebounded from a funding crisis that threatened to close its doors a year ago, the critically-acclaimed company will mount one of its most ambitious seasons yet to mark a major milestone – its 15th anniversary. Among the highlights, Diablo Ballet has been granted permission by the estate of author Antoine de Saint Exupéry to create a new ballet based on his children's classic, *The Little Prince*, and the honor of becoming the first ballet company to present selections from the Tony-nominated *Swing*. As well, the Walnut Creek-based company will stage the Bay Area premiere of the critically-acclaimed *Eyes on You* by former San Francisco Ballet principal dancer Christopher Stowell, who is now the Artistic Director of Oregon Ballet Theatre.

The 2008-2009 season, presented by the Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation, will begin on **November 21-22 with “An Evening on Broadway,”** featuring Stowell’s tribute to Cole Porter, duets from Lynn Taylor Corbett’s Broadway hit, and a celebration of the music of George Gershwin through George Balanchine’s *Who Cares*. On **March 20-21**, Diablo will present acclaimed choreographer **Julia Adams’ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream***, followed by the world premiere of ***The Little Prince* on May 8-9.**

Also, for the first time, Diablo Ballet will also offer a Saturday matinee series for families, consisting of three 45-minute programs, followed by a reception in which young ticketholders can meet and have their photo taken with the dancers directly afterwards.

“I can’t begin to convey our gratitude to our loyal supporters who have made it possible for Diablo Ballet to reach this milestone. I’m pleased to say the company has never been stronger creatively, thanks in particular to our remarkable corps of world-class dancers. So it is with great pride that we can provide patrons with another season – this one featuring an exciting range of work from such accomplished choreographers,” says Artistic Director Lauren Jonas, who co-founded the Walnut Creek-based company in 1993.

2008-09 Subscription Packages are available for \$108 for all three performances and the Saturday matinee series is being offered for \$42 for all three events. To purchase either, please contact the Diablo Ballet office: (925) 943-1775 or diablo@diabloballet.org. All performances take place at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek. For more information, visit www.diabloballet.org.

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ABOUT EACH PROGRAM:

Inspired by the musical complexity and urbane wit of Cole Porter’s songs, as well as the madcap and slightly surreal spirit of 1930s and 1940s film musicals, Christopher Stowell’s *Eyes on You* was an immediate hit upon its premiere by Oregon Ballet Theatre in October 2005. Upon its return to OBT’s stage in 2007, *Oregonian* dance critic Bob Hicks noted: “Set to a selection of Cole Porter tunes, Stowell’s choreography blends the sweeping grace of classical ballet with the flirty-frothy feel of an escapist pop romance. It’s a dream of sexy sophistication and high-life ease...” After receiving his training from the American Ballet Theatre, Stowell joined the San Francisco Ballet in 1986, serving as a principal dancer from 1990 to 2001. Stowell has created new works for San Francisco Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Diablo Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet. He has served as the Artistic Director of Oregon Ballet Theatre since 2003.

Nominated for five Tony Awards (including Best Musical and Best Choreography), *Swing* features swing standards ranging from the comic to the nostalgic and romantic. Choreographer Lynn Taylor-Corbett's remarkable career has included commissions from the American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Ohio Ballet, Atlanta Ballet and the Pacific Northwest Ballet. Her *Chiaroscuro*, filmed at New York City Ballet for "Live from Lincoln Center," was broadcast in May 2002, and that December, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre premiered her *Prayers from the Edge* at City Center. Among numerous other projects, she wrote, directed and choreographed *The Ballad of You and Me*, a multi-media tribute to the legendary folk singer, Pete Seeger, and was responsible for the dance steps in the films *Footloose* and *My Blue Heaven*, Disney's stage show *Aladdin*, and the Broadway shows, *Chess* and *Titanic*.

Diablo Ballet will present the concert version of George Balanchine's Broadway hit, *Who Cares?*, which it previously staged in 2006. The lighthearted pops ballet featured both solos and duets with jazzy and even "soft shoe" inspired movements that are a tribute to the years (the 1930s and 1940s) Balanchine spent in Hollywood and on the Broadway stage. He met George Gershwin in 1937, when Samuel Goldwyn hired both to work on *The Goldwyn Follies*, and became fast friends. Sadly, Gershwin was diagnosed with a brain tumor and died only two months later, before he finished the dance music for the film. But he had given Balanchine a large number of his songs, and 33 years later, the great choreographer combined them into *Who Cares?*

Julia Adam's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was commissioned by Marin Ballet in 2003. The renowned choreographer, a former principal dancer with San Francisco Ballet, trained at the National Ballet School in Toronto. She began her professional career as a dancer with The National Ballet of Canada. In 1988, Adam joined San Francisco Ballet and was promoted to principal dancer in 1996. She began her choreographic career in 1991 with the creation of *The Medium is the Message* for a workshop at San Francisco Ballet. The humorous piece earned an Isadora Duncan (Izzy) Award nomination, was recorded by the Bravo network and airs regularly on Canadian television. For her second choreographic workshop at San Francisco Ballet in 1994, Adam created *Once is Enough*, which was performed at the opening of the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. In 1996, she won an Izzy Award for *Thirteen Lullabies*, a work created for the Bay Area Dance Series. Adam's other works include *Seven Ages in ¾* for Robert Moses' Kin and *Night* – which the San Francisco Ballet has performed at London's Royal Opera House, at the Opera Garnier in Paris and at New York's City Center. A new work, *A Rose by any other Name*, will be presented by the San Francisco Ballet at its 2008 "New Works Festival."

Diablo Ballet is an ensemble of world-class dance artists that commissions bold, original ballets, as well as produces classical works by great choreographers. Founded in August 1993, the company is comprised of ten principal dancers who have performed with such esteemed companies as the Ballet De Cali in Columbia, Ballet de Caracas in Venezuela, and the Miami City, San Francisco, the Houston and Colorado

Ballets. Diablo Ballet achieved international recognition in October 2005, when it was the only American company invited to perform at Bangkok's 7th International Music and Dance Festival, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Thailand. Among its unique contributions to the Contra Costa community, where the company is based, are its Dance-in-the-Schools, Theatre Encounter and Adopt-a-Class programs for children, as well as its Apprentice and Professional Intermediate Programs to provide professional training to talented young dancers ages 11 to 19. Dancers from both have consistently placed in the top tiers at national and international competitions.

For more information, visit www.DiabloBallet.org.

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