



**For Immediate Release:**  
**“Young Stars Shine” in  
Oregon International Ballet Academy’s  
Charming Nutcracker**



*“engaged my jaded attention from the first excited jumps in the party scene to the elaborate wrapup of the action that concludes the ballet”*  
- Oregon ArtsWatch, 2018

PORTLAND, OR (September 23, 2019): Following last year’s rave reviews and sold-out show, the Oregon International Ballet Academy, expands to offer an additional performance of its seasonal favorite, *The Nutcracker*. Driven by a unique and brilliant concept, OIBA’s *Nutcracker* melds the charm and childhood joy of student dancers with stunning appearances from the school’s top performers and from surprise guest artists, local celebrities of the ballet world. The result is a high-quality, cohesive and exhilarating experience for audiences and participants alike. Martha Ullman West of Oregon ArtsWatch wrote of last year’s performance:

*“Young stars shine at Oregon International Ballet Academy... (in) a fully produced Nutcracker, with charming sets and costumes... Clearly the party children – all 22 of them, not counting Clara and her friends, and naughty brother Fritz – were having a tremendously good time, from the smallest to the tallest, and that, too, made the party livelier than it often is.”*

Especially impressive is that this production uses live music, provided by the Metropolitan Youth Symphony. This unique and strategic partnership has been ongoing for three years, serving to enrich the student experience at both organizations.

**WHAT:** *The Nutcracker*, with music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
Choreography by Xuan Cheng / Ye Li after Marius Petipa / Lev Ivanov

**WHO:** Oregon International Ballet Academy  
Xuan Cheng, Artistic Director; Ye Li, Executive Director  
Metropolitan Youth Symphony (students from Symphony & Concert Orchestras)  
Rául Gómez, Music Director

**WHEN:** Saturday, Nov. 23, 2019, 7:30pm & Sunday, Nov. 24, 2019, 2pm  
(runtime: 150 minutes which includes one intermission)

**WHERE:** PSU’s Lincoln Performance Hall

**TICKETS:** \$29 at [oiballet.org](http://oiballet.org)

OIBA's Artistic Director and Executive Director husband and wife team, Xuan Cheng and Ye Li, uncompromising in their teaching standards, insist on providing their students with a full professional performance experience each year. Cheng notes, "We are not interested in simply presenting a recital; instead we hope to give our students the REAL experience of this magical art form, the one that comes alive in full production." For *The Nutcracker*, this means live orchestral music, full sets, and one-of-a-kind costumes. With original choreography co-created by Cheng and Li specifically for OIBA students, these young dancers experience not only the joy of performing onstage in front of paying audiences, but also the enrichment of the creation journey firsthand. Many students perform multiple roles in the show with most performing different roles in each performance, and students and parents also participate in constructing soft sets, leading to a more holistic understanding of event production.

In her review for *Oregon ArtsWatch* last year, West also commented on the "interestingly modified choreography:"

*Tea, for example, is danced by 15 young students in Chinese costume who come pouring delightedly onstage. There is no Mother Ginger, but her music is played, and Clara leads an adorable group of little ones clad as baby rabbits in something resembling a classical bunny hop. The choreography for Coffee (aka Arabian) is traditional, but rather than a solo, five girls dance it, with a gratifying absence of hootchy-kootchiness. As for the Grand Pas de Deux, it was beautifully performed...*

OIBA Artistic Director Xuan Cheng, currently Oregon Ballet Theatre's prima ballerina, notes:

*"With our star teachers guiding these students in top-notch training, and choreography uniquely adapted to our student body, our young dancers blossom in these beloved holiday roles. Strong and secure training allows an ease of technique so that their personalities really come through onstage... which puts a fresh and fun twist on classic characters! The OIBA Nutcracker is our season highlight and we are thrilled that we are able to share it with even more people this year."*



Featured performer Lauren Grover will dance this year's star role of the Sugar Plum Fairy. Lauren is a junior at Arts and Communication Magnet Academy. She has been dancing for 13 years and has participated in summer dance programs at Pittsburgh Ballet Theater School, City Ballet of San Diego, Miami City Ballet School, and Oregon International Ballet Academy.



## **Oregon International Ballet Academy**

Through excellence in ballet instruction and uniquely nurturing mentorship, OIBA teachers instill beauty, confidence, health, love and responsibility, inspiring students to fulfill their dreams. At once a world class institution and a warm international family, OIBA has produced original, professional performances with live music every year since its founding, including classical ballet and contemporary work. The experiences and connections of Directors Xuan Cheng and Ye Li provide students with a platform to perform on stages around the world, allowing each dancer an opportunity to explore a similar journey of their own happiness onstage. Since the school founded in 2015, OIBA trained students have won positions in The School of American Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Ballet West Academy, Kirov Academy of Ballet, and The School of Pacific Northwest Ballet School. Learn more at [oiballet.org](http://oiballet.org).



### **Xuan Cheng - Artistic Director, Oregon International Ballet Academy**

Xuan Cheng is from Chenzhou, China. She attended Guangzhou Ballet School, joined the corps de ballet for Guangzhou Ballet of China (under prima ballerina Dan Dan Zhang), and rose to principal. In 2004, she was a silver medalist in the 3rd Shanghai International Ballet Competition; in 2005, a finalist in the 8th New York International Ballet Competition; and in 2006, a gold medalist in China's Tao Li Bei World Dance Competition. Upon Édouard Lock's invitation, she joined La La La Human Steps, and performed in 20 countries across three continents: Europe, Asia, and North America. She joined Les Grands Ballet Canadiens, became an OBT principal (2011), and continued to lead as: Cinderella, Juliet, Giselle, and Odette/Odile in both Christopher Stowell's and Kevin Irving's *Swan Lake* in addition to as Teresina in August Bournonville's *Napoli*.

### **Ye Li - Executive Director, Oregon International Ballet Academy**

Known for his astonishing technique and sensitive musicality, choreographer and dancer Ye Li presents dynamic performance with exquisite detail. Born in An Shan, Liaoning Province of China, Ye is a multi-award winning performer and previous company member of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Li served as solo dancer for Oregon Ballet Theatre, dancing in leading roles in *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* in addition to works choreographed by Forsythe, Duato, Stowell, and Fonte. His choreography "You Will Return" has been selected as a finalist for the Palm Desert Choreography Festival, 2019.



## **Metropolitan Youth Symphony**

With a foundational commitment to access, the **Metropolitan Youth Symphony** educates, develops and promotes over 500 young musicians of all ages and levels of experience each year in one of the nation's largest youth orchestra programs. Learn more at [playmys.org](http://playmys.org).

Photos below from the OIBA's 2018 *Nutcracker*.



**For additional information, media materials and interview inquiries, please contact:  
Amelia Lukas, Principal, Aligned Artistry  
415-516-4851; [amelia@alignedartistry.com](mailto:amelia@alignedartistry.com)**

###