

piv•ot \ˈpi-vət\
noun

- 1 : a shaft or pin on which something turns*
- 2 a : a person, thing, or factor having a major or central role, function, or effect b : a key player or position*
- 3 : a space dedicated to the physical, personal, and social health of all men into men.

*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary



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Fall Dance In Full Swing

OBT's *Petrouchka/Carmen* offers new perspective on two classics

BY REBECCA RAGAIN

Love and destiny are concepts that run through narratives of all kinds, from movies to music, but they're especially prevalent in story ballets. The two classics that Oregon Ballet Theatre is tackling this fall are no exceptions.

On October 8, OBT kicks off its 22nd season by premiering two new narrative dance works, both set to famous scores but choreographed with 21st century audiences in mind.

The original *Petrouchka* debuted in 1911, performed by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. A Russian tale of a puppet that comes to life and falls in love, it was set to a score by composer Igor Stravinsky—his first commission after the premiere of *The Firebird*, which made him a superstar of the era.

Though Stravinsky's score is timeless, OBT's artistic director Christopher Stowell says that the original production of *Petrouchka* "does not speak to us today... It looks like a museum piece now."

So Stowell invited Nicolo Fonte, one of the country's hottest choreographers, to create a new take on *Petrouchka* to mark the 100th anniversary of the original ballet. Fonte previously choreographed *Left Unsaid* (2008) and *Bolero* (2009) for OBT, both of which were well received by Portland audiences.

Stowell says of Fonte, "He loves working with OBT [dancers] and they enjoy working with him equally. His work has resonated



Brian Simcoe, Yuka Iino, Lucas Threefoot and choreographer Nicolo Fonte in rehearsal for *Petrouchka*

with [our] audiences. It's a relationship I'm happy to continue to build, for sure."

Fonte was intrigued by the idea of refreshing a classic by taking just the score and the bare bones of the story—a love triangle—and reimagining the work from there. "The point was to take this magnificent score and modernize it choreographically," said Fonte, in an interview published in the *Petrouchka/Carmen* performance notes.

Fonte added, "I like that this program, where we're expected to make something contemporary, something relevant today... It uses real music—it has some real value. [There is] some relationship to tradition, but [it is] somehow new. And that, to me, is actually quite innovative."

For his own choreographic contribution, Stowell chose to reinvent *Carmen*, the opera that has been adapted as a ballet myriad times since its premiere in 1875. Audiences

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