

The following information is designed to help teachers prepare students for Oregon Ballet Theatre's in school performance *Ballet Stage By Stage*. This Guide is comprised of:

- Brief introduction to ballet
- What students will see at the performance
- A Guide to Grade Level Participation: details for student participation during the performance as explored during the teacher workshop
- A vocabulary list
- A closer look at the dancers' experience
- Educational resources: books, internet sources

INTRODUCTION TO BALLET

Ballet is a dance form originating from European folk and court dance that has evolved for more than 500 years to its present place as a performance art. During this time certain key events occurred to make ballet what it is today: its support by European courts, especially in France, resulting in the verbal description of ballet movements, body positions, and choreographic elements to forever be in the French language; its early connection to court etiquette resulting in dance that is regal, built on a vertical axis, and with the legs turned out for greater range of motion; and its evolution from a social dance form into dancing that showed up briefly in opera productions, ultimately to become a stand-alone performance art.

WHAT STUDENTS WILL SEE DURING THE PERFORMANCE

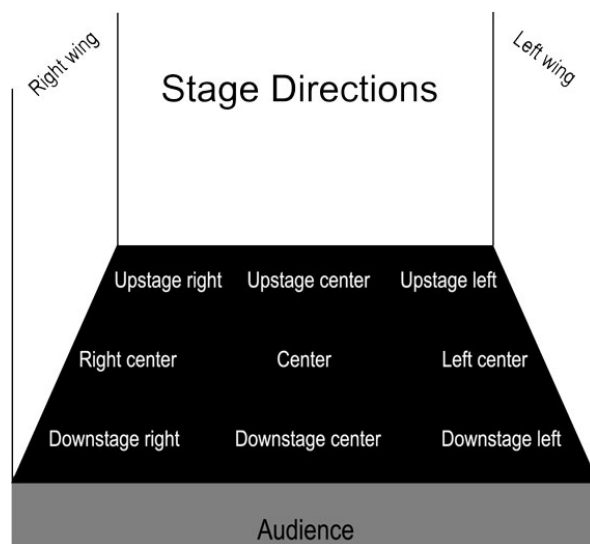
Ballet Stage By Stage is designed to reveal the training that goes into becoming a professional dancer as well as show some pieces of choreography. We will lay out a special floor and bring music to accompany the dancing. The dancers will wear costumes as well as practice clothes. The dancers will demonstrate various stages of ballet training, pointing out the development of skill and complexity of key movements. We will highlight movements from beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of ballet and invite students from the audience to come up on the stage and try some steps out, too! (Go to the next section entitled, **Guide to Grade Level Participation** for details.) After that, the dancers will perform several dances and students will also have a chance to ask questions.

GUIDE TO GRADE LEVEL PARTICIPATION

Each school that invites OBT to perform *Ballet Stage By Stage* is offered a training for teachers that unpacks some ballet basics and gives information to take back to the classroom. While teachers are encouraged to share **all** of this information with their students in the classroom, each grade level will be assigned a specific ballet movement or concept to learn about and try in their classroom. This will then be what selected students do as audience participation during the *Ballet Stage By Stage* performance. A booklet filled with pictures about ballet is also available to share with students.

How does the audience participation work during the performance?

Each teacher may choose 3 students from their class to be the “dancer participants” representing their class and who will briefly dance on stage **with** OBT when their turn comes up. The exact number of students will be determined at the teacher training based on the school's class sizes. The participation on stage is brief, but we feel it is extremely educational for students to see professional and student dancers together—and it is lots of fun for everyone too. Students will be following the lead of one of the apprentices, so there is no need to memorize anything—but trying these steps out in class beforehand is helpful. Other participation includes stage crew help, and speaking parts for older students. Participation is voluntary—we can be flexible should some classes not join in.



GUIDE TO GRADE LEVEL PARTICIPATION, CONTINUED

THERE ARE 7 GROUPS: Stage Crew, Narrators, Plié, Tendu, Grand Battement, Port de bras, Chassé

STAGE CREW

Students from this group will experience the work of the stage crew. Their job will be to move the barres into different configurations on the stage during the first part of the performance. They will receive their directions from an OBT stage manager.

Words to know:

- Barre: [bar] A barre is both a thing and something dancers do. When dancers “take their barre” they are warming up their bodies at the start of class with stretches and strengthening exercises while holding onto a bar that is either attached to the wall or is made of metal and portable.
- Stage Directions: All stage directions are opposite of the audience’s view of right and left. Stage directions are taken from the point of view of the performer as they look at the audience—Stage Right (SR) is to the right as they face the audience. The directions remain constant, though, regardless of the performers’ movements—they are still the same even if the dancer is facing away from the audience. Down stage (DS) is toward the audience and upstage (US) is toward the back of the stage, away from the audience. (See picture on page 1)

NARRATORS

Students from this group will be able to read short descriptions to the audience that introduce each dance. Paragraphs attached.

PLIE GROUP

At the barre:

- Turn out: The rotation of the legs, from the hips downward to the feet, allowing greatest range of motion.

GROUP ASSIGNMENTS:

STAGE CREW GROUP

School/Grade:

Participants:

PLIÉ GROUP

School/Grade:

Participants:

TENDU GROUP

School/Grade:

Participants:

PLIE GROUP, CONTINUED

- First Position: A standing position with heels together and toes turned out and pointing away from the midline of the body
- Second Position: A standing position with feet apart and turned out
- Plié: [plee-AY] “to bend” as when dancers bend their knees out over toes

TENDU GROUP

At the barre

- Tendu: [tahn-DEW] “to stretch”—pointing the toe in various directions with an extended leg

GRAND BATTEMENT GROUP

At the barre

- Grand Battement: [grahn bat-MAHN] “big beats”—high kicks of the legs

PORT DE BRAS GROUP

Centre floor

- Port de bras: [pawr duh brah] “carriage of the arms”—positions and movements of the arms and upper torso

CHASSÉ GROUP

Traveling across the floor

- Chassé: [sha-SAY] “to chase”—a traveling movement similar to a sideways gallop, as if one leg is chasing the other leg

GRAND BATTEMENT GROUP School/Grade:

Participants:

PORT DE BRAS GROUP

School/Grade:

Participants:

CHASSÉ GROUP

School/Grade:

Participants:

NARRATOR GROUP

School/Grade:

Participants:

THE PERFORMER'S DAY

Many people work to put performances on stage. When Oregon Ballet Theatre performs in a theater, the dancers, who have studied ballet for more than a decade, are responsible for warming up their bodies and putting on their make-up. They may receive help from make-up artists to create special effects. Their costumes are sewn, cleaned and repaired by people in the wardrobe department and during the show people called “dressers” may help them with quick changes of their costume. Maintenance of the stage floor, scenery, and props and execution of lighting and sound are all done by people in the production department. Musicians may rehearse and play in the orchestra pit. **But when OBT's apprentices come to do *Ballet Stage By Stage* at a school, they do it all!** It is great way to learn all about the theatre.

A lot happens on the day of an in-school performance. Here is a timeline of a typical dancer's schedule for a 12:00 pm performance at a school like yours:

Get up and eat breakfast in time to follow this schedule...

- 7:45 Technique class—1.5 hr warm up at OBT studios
- 9:15 Make-up—each dancer applies their own
- 9:30 Load Out—dancers, along with staff and a volunteer put everything into 2 vans
- 10:00 Drive to school
- 10:30 Load In—everyone hauls everything into the school gym
- 11:00 Build—lay Marley floor, set up barres, put together the sound system, each dancer has a job
- 11:30 Final check—make-up, costumes, last stretches, each dancer takes time to prepare on their own
- 11:45 School students begin to enter the gym, taking their seats while the dancers finalize preparations
- 11:55 Five minute warning
- Noon **Show time—the performance begins!**

After one hour of dancing for an audience of students...

- 1:15 Break Down and Load Out to vans—each dancer has a job, including responsibility for their costumes and props
- 1:45 Drive back to OBT
- 2:15 Arrive and unload at OBT—everyone hauls everything into OBT

Dancers may eat and rest until they...

- 5:30 Take a 1.5 hr class as part of their training at School of Oregon Ballet Theatre and possibly do an additional hour of rehearsal as well.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Clearly students will see that a dancer's training develops physical skills, but that is not all. Dancers develop inner discipline, responsibility, and cooperation skills—they are team players. Ask students to think about similarities and differences between ballet and other athletic endeavors, such as basketball and track, or to other artistic endeavors such as musical recitals or plays. This may be easier to do after the performance.

THE SCHOOL OF OREGON BALLET THEATRE

The performers in *Ballet Stage by Stage* are apprentices, the first step in becoming a professional ballet dancer. This means that they auditioned and were accepted to dance (for very little pay) with OBT, with hopes of being hired someday. Along with dancing with the company they are given their classes in the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre (SOBT.)

SOBT has grade levels similar to public schools. After Pre-ballet, ballet students enter Level 1, progressing onward to Level 6. Our apprentices take their class in Level 6 as well as being able to take class with the OBT company dancers. Regardless of age, students only progress to a higher level if they have mastered the skills of the lower level. Ballet training is physically and intellectually challenging and not all students who begin in Level 1 will advance to level 6 or to ultimately become a professional dancer.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Compare the training of a dancer to that of a soccer player. Both start training at a young age, enjoying the pleasure of ballet/soccer. But at a certain point, a dancer/player must make a decision to work at ballet/soccer seriously. This dedication requires the trainee to give their choice a lot of their time in order to excel. Sometimes, after many years of soccer games or ballet classes, even though a student becomes very skilled and wants to be a soccer player or a ballet dancer, they still don't get chosen for the team or the dance company.

Discuss with students the life skills that are learned in this case? Should students train for something even if they do not become a professional at it? What are the benefits?



WORDS YOU WILL HEAR:

Tendu “to stretch” (this is when a dancer stretches his/her foot to make a pointe)
Plié “to bend” (this is when a dancer bends his/her knees)
Battement “beating” movements of the leg
Développé “developing” movement

Relévé “to rise” (this is when a dancer rises up to his/her toes)
Jeté “to throw”
Rond de jambe “circle of the leg”
Frappé “to strike”
Fondu “to melt”

VOCABULARY LIST

Apprentice: An advanced level dancer in training to become a professional dancer.

Barre: Doing a barre strengthens and warms the dancer’s bodies with different exercises, or combinations. They hold on the barre, so they can concentrate on their feet, legs, and body alignment.

Center: This allows the dancers to practice what they did at the barre, and also work on their balance. These center combinations move from slow adagios to fast petit allegros (small, quick jumping combinations). Then, the dances move across the floor, practicing big jumps, leaps, and turns.

Marly floor: This special floor is taped down over wood. Its vinyl surface helps absorb shock when the dancers land from their jumps. It also provides traction and prevents the dancers from sliding and falling.

Révérence: This is a bow or curtsy. It takes place at the end of ballet class. Dancers pay respect to the ballet teacher, piano accompanist, and the art of ballet.

Leotards and tights: Just like wrestlers and swimmers, dancers need to wear clothing in which they can move and bend in any way. Wearing leotards and tights also shows off their strong and beautiful muscles.

Pointe shoes: These shoes have a hard toe. This allows female dancers to rise onto the tips of their toes.

Rosin: This resin is extracted from pines, and adds friction to a surface. Dancers put some on their shoes, to prevent them from slipping. They can put rosin inside their pointe shoes too, to keep the shoes from moving around while they dance.

Pas de Deux/duet: This is when two dancers perform together

Solo: This is when one dancer performs alone

Composer: A person who writes music

Choreographer: A person who creates dances

GOOD INTRODUCTORY BOOKS ABOUT BALLET:

AGES 4-8

Hooray for Ballet (Smart About the Arts), Margaret Frith, Grosset & Dunlap

The Best Book of Ballet, Angela Wilkes, Kingfisher

AGES 9-12

On Wings of Joy: The Story of Ballet from the 16th Century to Today, Trudy Garfunkel, Little Brown & Co

Ballet, By Kate Castle, Kingfisher

ALL AGES

Ballet: An Illustrated History, Mary Clarke and Clement Crisp, Homish Hamilton, Limited

The Magic of Dance, Margot Fonteyn, Knopf

INTERNET SITES

Oregon Ballet Theatre Education Resource page
www.obt.org/outreach_resources.html

Download 2 articles about dance history in Portland from:
Dancin’ in the Rain: A Bit of Portland Dance History - 1900 to 1954, By Carol Shults and Martha Ullman West ©2000
A Century of Dance in Portland, (OBT playbill articles from the 1996/97 season), By Carol Shults, OBT Historian

The Kennedy Center ARTSEdge

www.artsedge.org
 ARTSEdge — the National Arts and Education Network — supports the placement of the arts at the center of the curriculum and advocates creative use of technology to enhance the K-12 educational experience. ARTSEdge empowers educators to teach in, through, and about the arts by providing the tools to develop interdisciplinary curricula that fully integrate the arts with other academic subjects. ARTSEdge offers free, standards-based teaching materials for use in and out of the classroom, as well as professional development resources, student materials, and guidelines for arts-based instruction and assessment.

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Stage Areas

UR	URC	UC	ULC	UL
RS	RC	CS	LC	LS
DR	DRC	DC	DLC	DL

Test your knowledge. Indicate Stage areas in the spaces below.

Stage Areas

