



OREGON BALLET THEATRE'S STUDENT PERFORMANCE SERIES 2017-2018

RHAPSODY IN BLUE

October 12, 2017

Show starts at 12:00

Doors open at 11:30

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Director of Education Outreach

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE
OUTREACH



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THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDATION AND GOVERNMENT PARTNERS!



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Welcome to Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2017-18 Student Performance Series! The season begins with two distinct works of ballet.

The opening piece, *Bournonville Dances*, choreographed by August Bournonville over 170 years ago, is a perfect example of classical ballet of mid 1800s Europe, complete with a romantic storyline of village folk, bedecked in period costumes, coming together to celebrate life with genteel and airy pleasure. The ballet includes a series of short yet technically challenging dance segments. This work will be performed by the dancers of OBT2, Oregon Ballet Theatre's junior company.

The second work, *Rhapsody in Blue*, is a world premiere, choreographed by Oregon Ballet Theatre's Resident Choreographer Nicolo Fonte, in collaboration with composer and musician Thomas Lauderdale, of Pink Martini fame and acclaimed pianist Hunter Noack. The work reveals ballet in its newest expressive envisioning with dancing that is emotive, expansive, and energized. There are thematic elements of play, relationships, sexual orientation, acceptance, and community bond woven throughout the ballet. In this ballet the dancers wear costumes that depict real people of our time and place, such as men in dress

suits or flannel shirts and pants, women in dresses or t-shirts and jeans, while the two pianists and their pianos, sitting in full view, play a rich and dreamy extended version of George Gershwin's iconic American masterpiece.

This Study Guide is intended as a resource for educators and is designed with **Oregon Department of Education's** Standards for the Art of Dance in mind. Oregon's Dance Standards, adopted in 2015, are derived from the National Coalition for Core Art Standards. OBT's education outreach work with schools has been informed by these standards as they have grown since the late 1990's and we are excited to assist educators as they dig deeper into this rich resource that guides students toward growth in arts literacy. We agree with the Oregon Department of Education who state on their website, "The arts are where learning starts, from a child's first exploration of meaning on a page by finger painting to an adult's use of the arts to develop, understand and communicate new ideas."

Artistic Director Kevin Irving and I look forward to bringing these works of art to you and your students!

Kasandra Gruener



Photo by Joni Kabana



The arts are where learning starts, from a child's first exploration of meaning on a page by finger painting to an adult's use of the arts to develop, understand and communicate new ideas."

~ Oregon Department of Education

Would you like to further expand your students' experience with dance? OBT teaching artists go out to local schools and dance with students, linking dance with other academic topics -- like science, math, language arts, or life skills! We bring the "A" to "STEM!" YAY STEAM! We have several types of Dance Residency programs that explore ballet along with other genres of dance -- even hip-hop! Dance is something everyone can do.

WORDS TO KNOW



The following vocabulary words are excerpted from the Glossary for National Core Arts: Dance Standards found in the Oregon Department of Education's Educator Resource page for Academic Content Standards. They will be underlined as they come up in the Study Guide.

Artistic statement: An artist's verbal or written introduction of their work from their own perspective to convey the deeper meaning or purpose

Dance work: A complete dance that has a beginning, middle (development), and end

Energy: The dynamic quality, force attack, weight, and flow of movement

Genre: A category of dance characterized by similarities in form, style, purpose, or subject matter (for example, ballet, hip hop, modern, ballroom, cultural practices)

Movement vocabulary: Codified or personal movement characteristics that define a movement style

Polyrhythmic: In music, several rhythms layered on top of one another and played simultaneously; in dance, embodying several rhythms simultaneously in different body parts

Production elements: Aspects of performance that produce theatrical effects (for example, costumes, make up, sound, lighting, props)

See. Think. Wonder: An inquiry-based Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) used for critical analysis from Harvard Project Zero, in which children respond to simple questions (What do you see? What do you think? What do you wonder?) which enable a child to begin to make meaning from an observed (dance) work of art. For more information on Project Zero, go here: <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/visible-thinking>

Here are two links to Oregon Department of Education resources for the arts:

<http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/arts/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/arts/Documents/nccasconceptualframework4.pdf>



National Coalition for **CORE ARTS** Standards

BOURNONVILLE DANCES

Artistic statement: August Bournonville



*It is the mission of art in general, and the theatre in particular,
to intensify thought, to elevate the mind, and to refresh the senses."*

(The Choreographic Credo)

Bournonville Dances consists of twelve short dance segments pieced together from two works of ballet—**Napoli** (1842) and **Flower Festival in Genzano** (1858) by Danish born August Bournonville to the music of Edvard Helsted and Holger Simon Paulli. These dance pieces have been performed around the world, often performed by ballet companies at festivals and galas and by contestants at international ballet competitions, to demonstrate the very buoyant and lively Bournonville movement style. OBT2 will be presenting *Bournonville Dances* on an unadorned stage, just as would be done at an international ballet competition, where



Amy Watson and Candace Bouchard in Napoli. Photo James McGrew.

there would be no time to decorate the stage to look like a quaint Italian village. The most obvious production element that suggests the setting for the ballet will be the costumes, designed to look like traditional folk costumes from Italy.

August Bournonville developed a movement vocabulary in which the dancers move with lightness and seemingly easy grace. The dancers are tasked with very difficult ballet steps, but must execute them as if the steps are effortless. An audience member might even think that the dancing is painlessly easy—but far from it. Every movement, including the direction a dancer tips her head or the twist and tilt of the shoulders (Ballet's French term—*épaulement*) is intentional. Both men and women have choreography that highlights their skills and employs both slow and quick steps with articulated feet. The shape of the arms, even the placement of the palms of the hands, is highly detailed. The upper torso is lifted, often upright with a soft profile. The energy that the dancers express is intended to inspire uplifted joy and a zest for life in the viewer.

Bournonville said, "The height of artistic skill is to know how to conceal the mechanical effort and strain beneath harmonious calm." Think of something that you do that is physically challenging. Have you ever tried to do it and keep your effort hidden?



OBT2



Learn more about **OBT2**. View a 2 minute video: "Interview with OBT2's Elizabeth Kanning," in which she shares her experience as an aspiring professional dancer.

Bournonville Dances will be performed by OBT2, Oregon Ballet Theatre's junior company, a capstone experience for the Oregon Ballet Theatre School. The dancers in OBT2 are the highest level at the School. Their day mirrors that of a professional dancer—they take a morning ballet technique class from 9:30-11:00. Their day with the company ends at 5:30. Then they will often take an additional ballet class in the evening after their day of rehearsals. Their goal is to become the best dancer that they possibly can. They are extremely dedicated.

RHAPSODY IN BLUE

Choreography: Nicolo Fonte

Pianists: Thomas Lauderdale & Hunter Noack

Music: George Gershwin, Rhapsody in Blue

Costume Design: Christine Joly de Lotbiniere

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Rehearsal Assistant: Jeffrey Stanton

World Premiere: October 7, 2017 Oregon Ballet Theatre, Keller Auditorium, Portland, Oregon



Martina Chavez in *Presto* (Fonte). Photo by Yi Yin

The musical composition *Rhapsody in Blue* is a 1924 work by American composer George Gershwin for solo piano and jazz band, which combines elements of classical music with jazz-influenced effects. The piece received its premiere in the concert, *An Experiment in Modern Music*, which was held on February 12, 1924, in Aeolian Hall, New York, by Paul Whiteman and his band with Gershwin

playing the piano. *Rhapsody in Blue* established Gershwin's reputation as a serious composer and has since become one of the most popular of all American concert works. The arrangement created and performed

THE MUSIC

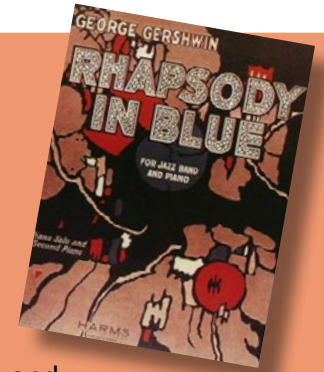
Artistic Statement: George Gershwin

"It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang, that is so often so stimulating to a composer – I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise.... And there I suddenly heard, and even saw on paper – the complete construction of the *Rhapsody*, from beginning to end. No new themes came to me, but I worked

on the thematic material already in my mind and tried to conceive the composition as a whole. I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America,



of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness. By the time I reached Boston I had a definite plot of the piece, as distinguished from its actual substance." (1931)



Continued from previous page

by Thomas Lauderdale and Hunter Noack, performed on two pianos, adds nearly 10 minutes to the original, and includes a dreamy, melodic element to the polyrhythmic score.

The dancing is polyrhythmic as well, with arms and heads that move in sharp, multi-focused patterns, while feet slide in circular tracings on the floor and legs stand in stretched yet angular poses. Just as Gershwin infused

THE CHOREOGRAPHER

Artistic Statement: Nicolo Fonte



Photo by Jana Cruder

“Thomas Lauderdale and Hunter Noack have created an expanded arrangement of Gershwin’s iconic score that brings out nuances in the work that I find really inspired, and inspiring. The creation of a more lyrical and “dreamy” 4 handed piano version led us to a narrative that captures a magical time of day ripe with the potential of discovery – the blue hour. “*L’heure bleue*” – when day becomes night, life becomes less linear, boundaries become more fluid – people’s plot lines become connected, and then disconnected. (2017)

classical European symphonic music with American Jazz styling, Mr. Fonte has infused classical ballet, also of European origins, with a movement style that has his personal stamp on it, such as arms that start out in a balletic curve, but carry through to stretched and twisted extensions, fingers fully expanded as seen in the picture on the previous page of Martina Chavez in *Presto*, another of Mr. Fonte’s ballets.

Ballet is a genre of dance known to have partnering that

LEARN MORE ABOUT

Nicolo Fonte <http://www.nicolofonte.com/>

Thomas Lauderdale <http://pinkmartini.com/member/thomas-m-lauderdale/>

Hunter Noack <http://www.hunternoack.com/about/>

traditionally has men supporting, lifting, or balancing the weight of women. But resonating with American sensibilities of equality amongst men and women, Mr. Fonte includes choreography that has men balanced by the supporting arms of women, women lifting women, and men holding men upside down or balancing them with one foot and one hand as seen in the photo below of Chauncey Parsons and his brother Colby in Mr. Fonte’s *Never Stop Falling (In Love)*.

Along with shapes and steps that are basic to ballet, Mr. Fonte includes movement vocabulary from other genres of dance in this work—partners do tango dips, a trio does a short dance-off of soft shoe shuffles, and the whole ensemble flips out jazz hands and hip hop body waves.



Chauncey Parsons (top) and Colby Parsons in *Never Stop Falling (In Love)*.
Photo by James McGrew.

Before the Student Performance Series:

SEE. THINK. WONDER.

What do you see?

What does it make you think about or ask questions about?

What does it cause you to wonder about?

See, Think, and Wonder are word cues from a visual thinking strategy designed to inspire an observer to draw greater understanding about the thing seen, such as the two dances in the upcoming Student Performance Series.

To practice this way of thinking we have provided a photo from Oregon Ballet Theatre's photo archive on the next page. (For more photos see [OBT's Gallery](#).) Show the photo for 30 seconds to one minute. Either as a group or on their own, allow students time to respond to what they just saw. List it on a white board. This is not a time to guess what is going on, but to simply look at the work of art and describe it. Using the example on the following page, students might respond:

I see...

One man
One woman
They are crouching low
He is looking behind him
She is touching his elbow
It is dark

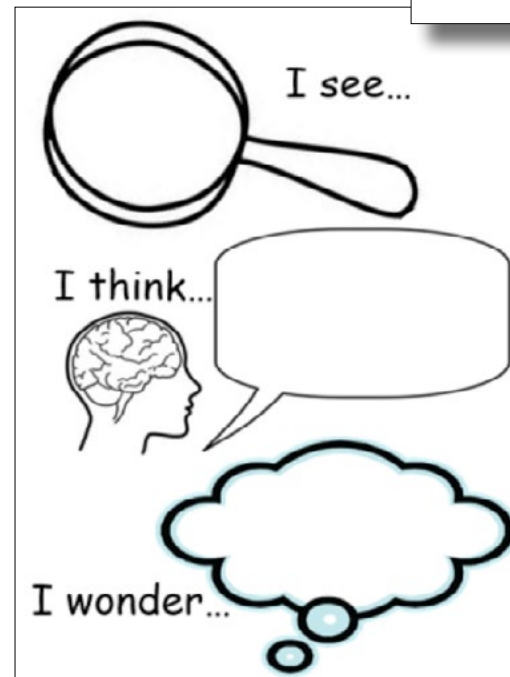
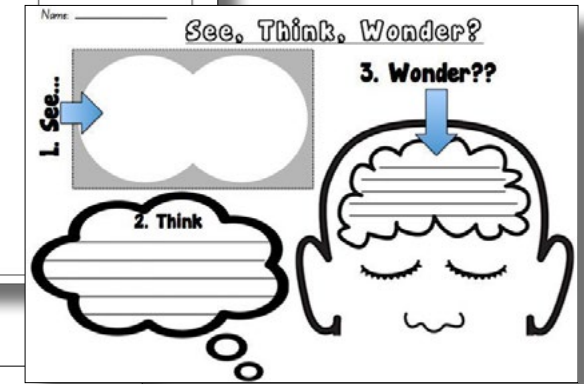
I think...

They are still
They might be afraid
He looks strong

I wonder...

Why he is holding her ear?
Is it nighttime?
What is he looking at?

See-Think-Wonder		
See	Think	Wonder



A quick search on the internet will give educators many graphic organizers to assist in gathering student reflections.



Chauncey Parsons and Katherine Monogue in BRINGING OUTSIDE IN (Barbuto). Photo by Yi Yin.

After the Student Performance Series:

SEE. THINK. WONDER.

What did you see at the performance?

What does it make you think about or ask questions about?

What does it cause you to wonder about?

After the performance, students might compare the two works they saw and note similarities and differences, decide which dance they prefer and why, and even try to do one or two poses or movements that they remember.



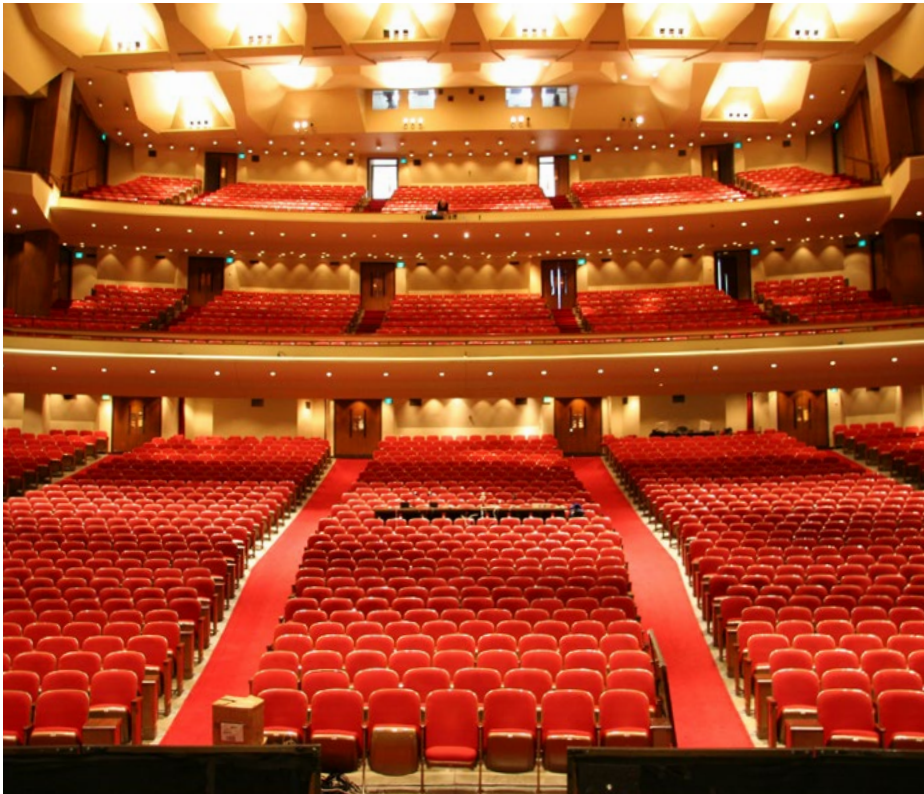
Makino Hildestad in *Amore Italiano*
Photo by James McGrew



Brian Simcoe and Xuan Cheng | Photo by Christopher Peddecord

WHAT TO KNOW ON THE DAY OF THE SHOW

The Keller Auditorium is located at:
222 SW Clay St, Portland, OR 97201



The doors to the Keller Auditorium will open one half hour before the show begins. Please plan to arrive early so that you can settle in. The dancers may still be warming up onstage—a real treat to see.

If traveling on a school bus, please follow directions for parking from the parking attendants. If driving a personal vehicle, give time to find parking. There is a lot going on downtown at this time. Public transportation is close by.

There are no tickets to this show—the usher has your registration information. You will be directed, in an email a few days before the show, to enter through door A or B. Please tell the door usher your group's school name so that you can hear which aisle you will be seated in. Homeschools should also know the organizer's name as well. An usher will direct you to your seat. Please leave backpacks behind—if you must bring them, the ushers will ask that they be left in the lobby of your seating level. You will be asked to secure your seat before visiting restrooms.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, KELLER AUDITORIUM!



Please join the Portland's Centers for the Arts Foundation to celebrate Keller Auditorium's 100th year anniversary. This celebration – happening Saturday, Oct. 21st from 1:00-4:00 p.m. - is free and open to the public. OBT2 will be performing!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY DO THE GUYS WEAR TIGHTS?

Almost every activity requires a special uniform of some kind. Just as football players, wrestlers, and baseball players wear stretchy material to help them move with flexibility and speed, ballet dancers often wear stretchy tights so they are able to leap, kick, and stretch as they dance. Another reason tights are worn is so the audience can see the incredible leg muscles that allow them to jump so high.

HOW DO THE BALLET DANCERS STAND ON THEIR TOES?

Female ballet dancers wear special shoes called "pointe shoes" to help them achieve dancing on the tips of their toes. Pointe shoes are hard at the ends, and are handmade with layers of satin, glue and leather. Dancers must take several years of ballet lessons before they are allowed to wear pointe shoes. With hard work and good training to develop strong ankles and feet, most young ballet students begin working en pointe at age 11 or 12.

THIS BALLET HAS NO PLOT! OR DOES IT?

Some do, and some don't. Ballets with plots like Romeo & Juliet, The Nutcracker, or Swan Lake are called story ballets. There are also abstract ballets, with a focus on movement instead of a specific story. Abstract ballets are meant to evoke ideas or emotions, and the audience can interpret them many different ways.

HOW OLD ARE THE DANCERS?

Oregon Ballet Theatre's professional company members range in age from 18 to 39, but most are in their early-to-mid-20s. All of the dancers began studying ballet when they were children, as it takes many years of dedication to become a professional ballet dancer.

HOW OFTEN DO THEY PRACTICE?

Ballet dancers take class every morning for 1.5 hours, and then they rehearse all day. They have Sundays and sometimes Saturdays off, and they have a lunch break. Dancing is their full-time job.

WHERE ARE THE DANCERS FROM?

Oregon Ballet Theatre dancers come from all around the world: Japan, China, and different areas within the United States. There are dancers from California, Washington, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, New York, and several who grew up right here in Oregon.

APPLAUSE

DO clap after a really spectacular movement. Laugh if the situation onstage is funny. Applaud and say "Bravo!" at the end.

DON'T boo, whistle, hiss or make noise during the performance. It is distracting and disrespectful of the performers and to your neighbors in the audience.

FOOD

DO eat before you get to the theater if you think you might get hungry before the performance is over.

DON'T bring food or gum into the seating area. It makes noise, trash, and distractions.

TALKING

DO wait. Make a note on your program or a piece of paper if you want to remember something. Tell your friend after the ballet is over.

DON'T whisper or discuss things with other people during the performance. Your friends may want to listen to the music or pay attention to the dancers' movement or the story.

DRESS & BACKPACKS

DO dress neatly as a sign of respect to the artists and the theater.

DON'T wear over-powering perfume, big hats, or jingly bracelets. Leave backpacks at school. If you must bring one, you'll be asked to leave it in the lobby.

CELL PHONES, CAMERAS, IPODS, MP3 PLAYERS, ETC.

DO relax when the lights in the house (seating area) get dark. Sit back and enjoy the live performance with your eyes, ears, and imagination.

DON'T use cell phones and other electronic devices in the theater. The noise and clicking can be distracting to your neighbors, and camera flashes can be dangerous to the dancers.