

Photo by Joni Kabana



Dear Educators

Thank you for joining us at our springtime Student Performance Series: **Pride in Being New**, showing at noon on April 24th and 25th — featuring excerpts from Oregon Ballet Theatre's American Music Festival performances running April 18-27 and from the School Of Oregon Ballet

Theatre's Annual School Performance running April 25 and 27.

Advanced level students from the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre will open the show performing excerpts from two works choreographed by George Balanchine: the first work will be the opening segment of **Serenade** to music by Tchaikovsky, followed by two excerpts from **Who Cares?** to music by George Gershwin. We will close the performance with a world premiere choreographed by Trey McIntyre for OBT company dancers, titled **Robust American Love** to music by the Fleet Foxes. **Robust American Love** will be performed in full.

Field trips are special events in the school day and we thank you for choosing to include OBT in your educational plan. This Study Guide will give background information about the dances and provide links to resources on the internet. You are especially encouraged to check out the music, for it is quite varied!

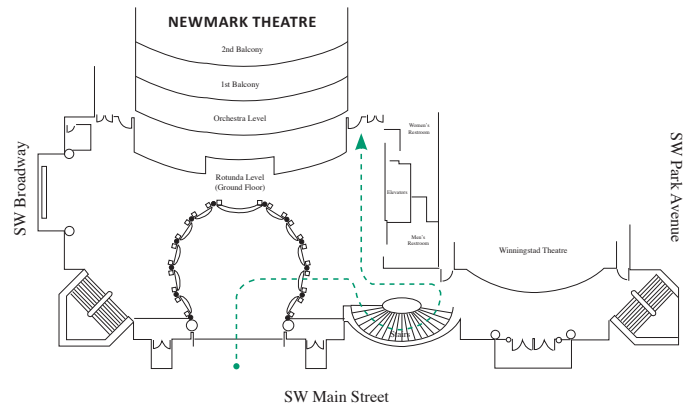
Pride is a powerful motivator, especially the positive kind of pride that drives people to do their best. Students in schools are asked to take pride in their work and for some students this practice takes time to figure out. Dancers too are guided by their teachers to develop an inner sense of pride, whether it is a first year student learning to stand tall, a teenager dancing for the first time in an 80 year old ballet or a seasoned professional creating a brand new ballet, each dancer must bring a fresh approach that includes a willingness to work hard and wholeheartedly to make the work live. With that in mind the performance and Study Guide poses questions and activities that teachers may choose to explore with students, offering an opportunity to flex those "critical thinking muscles" while bouncing around the idea of what it means to take **pride in being new**.

I happily report that the Newmark Theatre will be very full, so be sure to allow enough time for your group to get seated. Doors open around 11:30 for a noon curtain time. I will send an email out the week of the shows that tells you which floor of the Newmark to go to.

See you in the theater!

Kasandra Gruener, MA, Director of Education and Outreach

PRIDE IN BEING NEW



The labeling of the floors at the Newmark can be confusing, check out the graph: Main and Broadway Street entrances are on the Rotunda level. The next floor up is Newmark Theatre's Orchestra level. The next floor up is the First Balcony. The next floor up is the Second Balcony!

KEY TO USING THE STUDY GUIDE



= Academic connections or discussion points



= Concepts for older students



= Activities designed to get students up and moving



= Internet Resource



= Listen to the music

SERENADE

Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky/George Balanchine

"Dance can be enjoyed and understood without any verbal introduction or explanation. The important thing in ballet is the movement itself, as it is sound which is important in a symphony. A ballet may contain a story, but the visual spectacle, not the story, is the essential element."¹



School of Oregon Ballet Theatre students in George Balanchine's *Serenade*. Photo by Ashby Baldock

SERENADE, CONTINUED

ABOUT GEORGE BALANCHINE

In the 1930s, Balanchine was invited by Lincoln Kirstein to come to the United States and start a school with the grand goal of building great American dancers. Kirstein stated that the School of American Ballet had been founded for one purpose only: "To provide dancers as well trained as any other technician, whether it be surgeon, architect, or musician."²

As ballet is a performance art, very soon Balanchine set to work making choreography for his students. He wrote, "*Serenade* was my first ballet in the United States. As part of the school curriculum, I started an evening ballet class in stage technique, to give the students some idea of how dancing on stage differs from class work. *Serenade* evolved from the lessons I gave. It seemed to me that the best way to make students aware of stage technique was to give them something new to dance, something they had never seen before. I chose Tchaikovsky's *Serenade* to work with. The class contained the first night, seventeen girls and no boys. The problem was, how to arrange this odd number of girls so that they would look interesting. I placed them on diagonal lines and decided that the hands should move first to give the girls practice."¹

So it can be seen that *Serenade* is not a ballet that tells a story, but instead shows how ballet movement evokes feelings through the way the dancers perform patterns and execute steps. The first performance of *Serenade* was by students of the School of American Ballet on an outdoor stage on June 9, 1934. It was rained out partway through and was performed the next day in full. Since that time it has remained in the repertoire of New York City Ballet and comes now to the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre. To prepare this ballet, SOBT advanced dancers met with OBT Ballet Master Lisa Kipp who studied under Francia Russell, former ballerina with NYCB under the direction of Balanchine. These young dancers have learned the work in a way that links them directly to the choreographer and many great dancers who have danced it before them.

ACTIVITY: *Serenade* elevates ballet's basic steps to a performance level. Performers stand in a neutral position before they snap into the first position of ballet. The dancers have a strong feeling inside them. Students might think about the basic positions or movement patterns of something they know about—soccer, tai kwan do, or standing for the pledge of allegiance. How do we make those movements significant? Do we execute them slowly or precisely? Ask students to notice the movements that they do in their various activities, like picking up a pencil and beginning to write, and then do that activity in a very proud or purposeful way.

TIMELINE

- Franklin D. Roosevelt was the U.S. President when *Serenade* debuted.
- Balanchine became an American citizen in 1939.
- The music for *Serenade*, Tchaikovsky's *Serenade* for Strings in C Major Op.48 can be purchased on iTunes for \$9.99



SOBT students in George Balanchine's *Serenade*.
Photo by Ashby Baldock



Balanchine rehearsing *Serenade*, 1934. (Photo 2)



New York City Ballet in the opening pose from *Serenade*. *Serenade* costumes have changed since 1934, moving away from out-dated dance class attire to costumes that reflect romantic ballets such as *Les Sylphides*. The present costumes were designed by Barbara Karinska in 1952. (Photo 3)

Internet:

New York City Ballet principle dancer Ashley Boudier speaks about what it means to dance in *Serenade*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBtzyRzkOUM>

Peter Martins, Artistic Director of New York City Ballet speaks about George Balanchine, including a quick look at *Serenade* and *Who Cares?*

<http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/264402/george-balanchine/>

Listen to the music on youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNxwVOZwu10>

Text Resources:

- <http://www.balletmet.org/Notes/SERENADE.HTM>
- <http://www.sab.org/school/history/1934.php>

Photo Notes in Order:

Photo 1: OBT archive

Photo 2: Taper, Bernard. *Balanchine a Biography*. (1960). Macmillan Publishing. New York

Photo 3: http://www.nycb.org/uploadedimages/Company/Repertory/Rep_Notes/serenade.jpg

WHO CARES?

George Gershwin/George Balanchine

We will see two high spirited segments from George Balanchine's *Who Cares?*, a ballet that celebrates the energy and music of New York City in the 1930's. The first segment, a dance for an ensemble of women, is infused with jazzy kicks and shifts of weight done to the song *Somebody Loves Me*. The second dance includes a series of duets for men and women that remind us of movie musicals with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dancing cheek to cheek done to a medley of songs: *S'Wonderful*, *That Certain Feeling*, *Do Do Do*, and *Lady Be Good*.

👍 **ACTIVITY:** During the performance there will be an interview of a student dancer. We will find out what it is like for a young dancer to perform in famous works of choreography asking questions like. "What does it mean to you to dance in a work that has been performed by famous dancers, maybe even your idols?" and "What do you do to ready yourself to do this show?"

🖥 Internet:

Edward Vilella, former dancer with NYC Ballet and former director of Miami City Ballet, speaking in a short, fun clip about *Who Cares?*:

🖥 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3v6UuAOE0U>

🖥 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3v6UuAOE0U&feature=player_detailpage

Information about *Who Cares?* from The George Balanchine Trust

🖥 <http://balanchine.com/who-cares/>

🕒 Here is a link to the music for *Who Cares?*:

<http://www.classicalarchives.com/work/584817.html>



Yuka Iino in George Balanchine's *Who Cares?*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.



Mia Leimkuhler and Brian Simcoe in George Balanchine's *Who Cares?*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

ROBUST AMERICAN LOVE

Fleet Foxes/Trey McIntyre

In a March 28, 2013 interview of Trey McIntyre, Linda Besant asked, “The Fleet Foxes are real favorites here in the Northwest. How did you choose their music for this “American Music Festival” commission?”

Trey replied, “Christopher Stowell asked me to use somebody from this area. Andrea Lauer, a designer I was working with, mentioned that she knew someone who was the sound engineer for the Fleet Foxes. They had been in the back of my mind, to me their first album is so great, so special, that it was an easy choice.



OBT Dance Historian,
Linda Besant

The reason I respond to them is the Americana part, so suggestive of wide-open spaces and canyons, and obviously, folk music references, and kind of old-style lyrics and poetry. These are themes I'm very interested in. Coming from the heartland, coming from Wichita, Kansas, it has never until now, with this piece, been a conscious thing, but my perspective is American. It's funny, I'm at an age right now that there's a certain kind of patriotism that I'm really warming up to—how great it is to live in this place. Both in our way of governing and treating each other, but also the terrain, and all the things that make up being in this country.

Other people have recognized it in the work I've made, especially later in life. Dance writers—I've started being referred to really frequently as a very American choreographer. In this piece, I'm actually for the first time really looking at that, thinking about the experience of country. I really approached the piece with those feelings.

I chose pre-civil war era America in terms of very early stages of inhabiting a brand new place and pioneering, and the kind of toughness and optimism that it took for people to make that leap. We're talking about being from hardy stock—my family is heavy with Dutch and German and Native American, really connected to doing an honest day's work, and connected with the land. I wanted to explore those ideas within the piece.”

🎧 Trey used seven tracks from the 2008 Fleet Foxes album “Fleet Foxes”. The music can be previewed and purchased from iTunes. Here is a performance order listing of the musical tracks:

Your Protector	Meadowlarks
Heard Them Stirring	Tiger Mountain Peasant Song
White Winter Hymnal	Oliver James
He Doesn't Know Why	



Trey McIntyre in rehearsal with Principal Dancer Alison Roper and Soloist Javier Ubell for the world premiere of *Robust American Love*.

Choreographer Trey McIntyre in rehearsal with Soloists Lucas Threefoot and Javier Ubell for the world premiere of *Robust American Love* for OBT's American Music Festival program. Photos by Ashby Baldock.



Principal Dancer Xuan Cheng and Company Artist Michael Linsmeier in rehearsal for the world premiere of Trey McIntyre's *Robust American Love*.

In an 1998 interview Linda asked Trey, “Once you’ve chosen the music and have a core idea, how does the movement vocabulary for a new ballet take shape in the mind of a person like you, whose gift is to think in moving images?”

Trey replied, “I make sure I completely understand the music count for count, listening a jillion times, imagining movement, improvising with it to get it into my body.” (Trey begins to fill in the blanks, knowing a solo will go here, a group of dancers there.) “Then I try to work improvisationally in the studio. The best stuff comes out that way” (Each day he films his choreography. At night, he studies how the work is progressing.) “There's an essence that I feel about each ballet, an organic connection, and I recognize it when I see it. The first rule of choreography for me is that I follow my own heart”

Linda asked, “What if it doesn't feel right?” to which Trey replied, “Sometimes I'll listen to music that's completely opposite of the score for the ballet, and suddenly an answer will come in. Or I'll think of a ballet that has a similar problem and study how the choreographer solved it. Or I'll go to a movie, and I always get something out of it. I think in cinematic terms when I structure ballets.” (When he's formulating an image-idea,) “Everything around me has an influence.”

Trey took inspiration from the Civil War era as did his costume designer Melissa Schlachtmeyer. The outer jackets are designed to hang on the dancers. Trey stated, "The costumes dance on their own, almost separately. There is a lot of creative thinking and doing that goes into the creation of a new ballet. Along with the choreography, there is lighting and costume design.



Costume Rendering

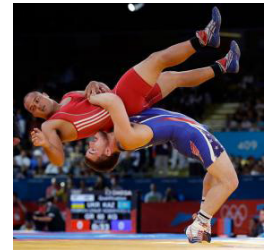


Principal Dancer Xuan Cheng and Company Artist Michael Linsmeier in the world premiere of Trey McIntyre's *Robust American Love*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.



Principal Dancer Alison Roper with Soloist Lucas Threefoot in the world premiere of Trey McIntyre's *Robust American Love*. Phot by Blaine Truitt Covert.

Dancers, like other athletics, wear garments to match the work they are doing, whether it be in practice or in performance. These garments are designed to reduce movement restrictions, to highlight the physique, and to further the communication of the activity. In *Robust American Love* the blue and tan costumes are designed to remind us of the pre-civil war era, encouraging us to think of the tough break-from-the-mold American spirit, while still being easy to move in. At the Olympics, the color of the athletes' garments reflects US A's red, white, and blue theme, telling the world that these are American stars. The garments are also designed to give the athlete full range of motion. Check out these pictures of Olympic athletic "costumes."



Trey described himself as "a music theater baby. I wanted to be an actor from day one," he said. "I was a heavy, clumsy kid. My mom enrolled me in ballet, she thought that might help, and I was a star right away because I was a boy." Trey was 11, and skipping ballet class, when he put his first combination of steps together. His teacher found him outside, making up steps for other kids. She brought him in to teach his creation to the class. "From then on," Trey said, "I was always crafting something. It was never a conscious thing, just the way I thought."

ACTIVITY: Before the performance of *Robust American Love*, there will be an interview with one of the company dancers asking what it is like to prepare for working with a choreographer on new work. After the performance students might discuss the connections between what a dancer does and how students embark on new school projects.

CONTENT STANDARDS

This *Student Performance Series* and Study Guide provide opportunity for engaging in Oregon Content Standards for the Arts, especially:

Create, Present and Perform: Apply ideas, techniques and processes in the arts.

Historical and Cultural Perspective: Understand relationships of works of art to their social, historical, and cultural context, and the influence of arts on individuals, communities and cultures.

Aesthetics and Criticism: Respond to and analyze works of art, based on essential elements, organizational principles and aesthetic criteria.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BALLET

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 *The Nutcracker*, 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 34, but most are in their early-to-mid-20s. A few of the apprentices, however, are still in high school. 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, Moldova, and different areas within the United States. There are dancers from California, Texas, Massachusetts, South Carolina, New York, China, and several who grew up right here in Portland.

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 bring electronic devices into the theater. The noise and clicking can be distracting to your neighbors, and camera flashes can be dangerous to the dancers.