

# EDUCATION OUTREACH PROGRAMS OF OREGON BALLET THEATRE

WHERE DANCE AND ACADEMICS MEET

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE SERIES STUDY GUIDE: IMPACT: RASSEMBLEMENT

April 22 & 23, 2015 / Newmark Theatre  
Noon - 1:00 pm / Doors open at 11:30am

Dear Educators,

We at Oregon Ballet Theatre look forward to providing you with a **jam packed hour of dance** this spring when we offer you two ballets – *Accidental Signals* and *Rassemblement*. This Student Performance Series Study Guide will provide:



Photo by Joni Kabana

- information about the makers of the works
- a look at some of the elements of the choreography
- links to downloading the music so students can become familiar with it
- links to related anchor standards from Oregon's *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)*
- links to a customized PreK -12 handbook for "Responding" and "Connecting" from the voluntary *National Standards for the Arts in Education*
- things to know for the day of the field trip to the theater including transportation and seating information

To assist teachers' efforts to deepen student engagement of the performance we created a new resource – a short powerpoint presentation to share with students both before and then after the performance. Please let me know if this is helpful!

When I said **jam packed** I meant it – every seat is due to be filled at the Newmark Theatre for both the April 22nd and April 23rd Student Performance Series shows. Please

### KEY TO USING THE STUDY GUIDE



= Academic connections or discussion points



= hyperlink to more information

## OREGON BALLET THEATRE IMPACT



Jordan Kindell. Photo by Tatiana Wills.

allow time to get comfy in your seats, and enjoy the beautiful theatre, including the ceiling! We'll open the doors around 11:30 and start the performance at 12:00 noon.

See you soon!  
Kasandra Gruener, MA  
Director of Education Outreach



Newmark Theatre

KASANDRA GRUENER, MA / DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION OUTREACH

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

OBT'S EDUCATION OUTREACH PROGRAMMING IS SUPPORTED BY



OBT is supported in part by grants from the Oregon Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts



Regional Arts & Culture Council

Regional Art & Culture Council, including support from the City of Portland, Multnomah County and the Arts Education & Access Fund.



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**ACCIDENTAL SIGNALS /** **Nicolo Fonte**

choreography: Nicolo Fonte  
 music: Benjamin Britten; *Prologue from Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, Op. 31 & Simple Symphony, Op. 4*  
 stage design: Nicolo Fonte and Nicolas Fischtel  
 costume design: Nicolo Fonte and Catherine Garnier  
 lighting design: Nicolas Fischtel  
 premiere: January 19, 2000, Conservatoire de Paris, Paris, France

**Nicolo Fonte wrote:**

“*Accidental Signals* is primarily a dance inspired by both the lush and playful qualities of Britten’s *Simple Symphony*. However, during the creation process there seemed to be developing, amongst the dancers and myself, a real sense of wanting to communicate with each other through the gestural quality of the movement. These “signals” seemed to occur almost “accidentally”. *Accidental Signals* is dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Sawyer for her guidance and support and for the mutual love of Britten’s music.”



Choreographer Nicolo Fonte in rehearsal with Oregon Ballet Theatre.  
 Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

Mr. Fonte created *Accidental Signals* on advanced students studying at the Conservatoire de Paris in 2000. It showcased the high degree of skill possible in young dancers. To that same end, Mr. Fonte taught *Accidental Signals* to advanced dancers from the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre as well as dancers from OBT’s Apprentice program.

Learn more about the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre’s Pre-professional and Apprentice program:



<http://www.obt.org/school/apprentices.html>

**Gesture**

What did Mr. Fonte mean when he spoke about gestural quality? Dance is composed of many elements combined together: the **body** moving or still; the use of **space** as seen in floor patterns or groupings of dancers; movement **qualities** where our feelings are expressed; and a play with **time** as experienced through rhythm and beat patterns, to name but a few.

*Gesture* in dance refers to movements that often occur in the upper part of the body with the arms and hands that carry a common meaning. Well known gestures, like raising your hand to ask a question or resting your cheek in your hand when tired, are forms of physical communication that we often “read” without words. Choreographers sometimes play with these gestures and put them in choreography without necessarily intending for the gestures to say anything – the gestures are then simple movements of the body.



Before viewing the ballet, ask students to: Watch for gestures or movements that make you think the dancer is telling you something. Or notice movements that just catch your attention. Try to remember the movements and discuss what you were thinking after the performance. Groups of students could share their “movement” from the ballet in a frozen sculpture called a tableau\*.

\*If you are a participating *Right Brain Initiative* school, log into the RBI website for a refresher on ways to create a tableau.



Apprentices Emily Parker and Alexander Negron in rehearsal for Nicolo Fonte’s *Accidental Signals*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.



*L'Écoute* by Henri Miller, Paris France





Benjamin Britten in 1923 (10 years old)

## Discover *Simple Symphony*

*Accidental Signals* employs two of Benjamin Britten's compositions. It starts with the Prologue from *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, Op. 31* and then continues with the entire *Simple Symphony, Op. 4*. In 1933, at the young age of 20, Mr. Britten began composing *Simple Symphony* by mining compositions that he created as a youth between the ages of 9 and 12.



Go to the iTunes Store and download *Simple Symphony for String Orchestra, Op. 4* by Benjamin Britten or listen to one minute clips from this site:



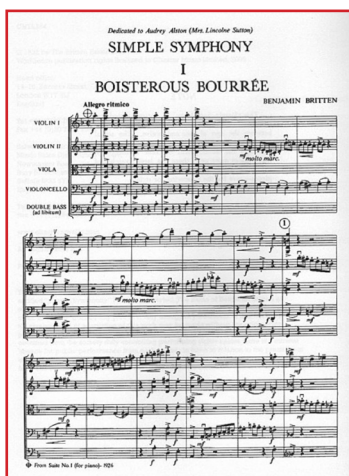
<https://goodmorningbritten.wordpress.com/2013/06/10/listening-to-britten-simple-symphony-op-4/>



Many students who attend the performance will be between or near the ages of 9 to 12. Ask students if they create and keep recordings of their own music. Do they keep a journal of poetry they have written? Do they draw in a sketch book? Do they make up new recipes to cook for their family? Ask older students to think about anything that they have created in the past that they could revisit and expand upon. Inspire all students to explore creative activities.



After listening to Britten's *Simple Symphony* ask students to imagine how they might move to each of the four sections of music and then wonder about what they might see at the theater. Discuss the words lush and playful from Mr. Fonte's quote and imagine what movements might occur. Push the chairs back or go to the gym and improvise with the different sections of music!

Apprentices Paige Wilkey and Henry Cotton in rehearsal for Nicolò Fonte's *Accidental Signals*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

Learn more about *Simple Symphony* by reading the writing of Michael Steinberg, one of the nation's pre-eminent writers on music and the San Francisco Symphony's Program Annotator from 1979 to 1999 and a contributing writer to their program book until his death in 2009.



<http://www.sfsymphony.org/Watch-Listen-Learn/Read-Program-Notes/Program-Notes/BRITTEN-%C2%A0Simple-Symphony-for-String-Orchestra,-Opu.aspx>

Mr. Britten dedicated *Simple Symphony* to Audrey Alston (Mrs. Lincoln Stone). Mr. Fonte also dedicated his ballet to a person that gave him guidance and support and because the two shared a love of Britten's music.



Ask students to think about people in their lives that support and guide them or who share their love of something. Maybe it is someone who pays for club dues or music lessons, shares their love of baseball or who shows them how to cook spaghetti. Consider dedicating their next creative work to that person as a way to say, "Thank you."

Read Nicolò Fonte's biography:



<http://www.nicolofonte.com/index.php?m=bi>

Get a glimpse of Nicolò Fonte's creative process during OBT Exposed at Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square last August, 2014:



<https://oregonballettheatre.wordpress.com/2014/08/28/exposing-the-choreographic-process/>



Oregon Ballet Theatre in class at OBT Exposed in 2013. Photo courtesy M Realty.

**RASSEMBLEMENT / Nacho Duato**

choreography: Nacho Duato  
 music: Toto Bissainthe: various, from the recording *Chante*, 1977  
 staging: Kevin Irving  
 scenic Design: Walter Nobbe  
 costume Design: Nacho Duato  
 lighting Design: Nicolas Fischtel  
 premiere: February 27, 1990; Cullberg Ballet (Örebro, Sweden)

*Rassemblement* is being staged (taught to the dancers) by Kevin Irving, Oregon Ballet Theatre's Artistic Director. He brings an insider's understanding of this ballet because he learned the ballet from the choreographer, Nacho Duato, and performed it as well. It is always exciting for a dancer to be a part of the original making of a ballet, but clearly that is not always possible. The next best thing is learning the ballet from the choreographer after it has been created or to learn it from a person who has learned it from the choreographer. Along with the movements, Mr. Irving is able to explain Mr. Duato's intention or point of view. This would be similar to learning how to play a tune from the guitarist of your favorite band.



Artistic Director Kevin Irving with Candace Bouchard in rehearsal for Nacho Duato's *Rassemblement*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

Spanish choreographer Nacho Duato created *Rassemblement* (which means "gathering") in 1990 for the Cullberg Ballet in Sweden. The work is inspired by and set to the songs of Haitian artist Toto Bissainthe. The songs are sung in Creole. The audience should have little concern about not understanding the meaning of the lyrics, but instead pay attention to the dancing and the way in which the movements carry the rhythm and emotion of the music with undulating torsos, deeply bent knees, flexed and pointed bare feet and arms that punch toward the earth and flick to the sky. After weeks of teaching the ballet, Mr. Irving finally shared a translation of the lyrics with the dancers. But in so doing he cautioned that Nacho Duato did not choreograph to the words of the songs, but was inspired by his deep connection to the music and his empathy for the Haitian experience.

Nacho Duato is presently the Artistic Director of Staatsballet Berlin. Read his most recent biography:

 <http://www.staatsballett-berlin.de/en/ensemble/nacho-duato/1>



Candace Bouchard and Jordan Kindell. Photo by Tatiana Wills.



Commenting on the songs and the ballet, musician Toto Bissainthe said:

“These songs are mostly slaves’ songs from the Voodoo cult. They express the daily life of the slaves, their longing for Africa, not as a geographical reality, but as a mythical land of freedom. They express their resistance and their refusal: resistance against the colonial, refusal of his politics, his religion, his culture and his language.”

“During the history of Haiti, the face of the master has often changed. Capitalism, developing in Haiti, has transformed the sense of Voodoo. The ethnographer came first, and then the tourist for whom folklore was produced with revived exotic excitement. Voodoo, which for the poor and exploited peasants had been a celebration of the African roots of their daily more unbearable way of life, became a ‘religion,’ one of the tools of power.

“The birth of Voodoo in a land of exile, the first common language among slaves of different ethnic backgrounds, was a vital creative moment, a cultural unification which was to transform the world: an opening for the confined. That is the moment we sing about. Using the traditional music of Haiti, we meet with other musical forms to open a way towards a contemporary music that knows no frontiers.”

“...*Rassemblement* is a creation which gradually, through the liberating powers of music and dance, proves to be an impressive, thrilling, and audience-affecting human rights appeal.”

To read more about Toto Bissainthe (in French)



<http://www.totobissainthe.com/>



Students might pick up or understand a few words because they are similar to English. Listen for *liberte* (pronounced lee-bear-tay). Like the word “liberty,” it means **freedom!** Listen for “dey-o” (pronounced day-oh). This means **mourning**, sung for the plight of Haiti.






### Papadanmbalah

There is a *pas de deux* (duet) for a man and a woman that occurs in the middle of the ballet. It is danced to the tune *Papadanmbalah*, the fourth track of the CD. Here is an excerpt of the beginning of that *pas de deux* (click the URL link below). Notice if the dance reflects any of the words translated below.



 <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10153189948251100&set=vb.34067106099&type=2&theater>

Here is the translation:

Early before sunrise, we are working  
After sunset  
We are working  
All men are equal  
The same master made us  
Why can we not know freedom  
Freedom...freedom  
Oy Papa Damballah (x 2)  
Papa Damballah, Damballah  
You know we are your children  
Papa Damballah, Damballah  
Open your eyes and see us (x2)  
Damballah, I am asking you  
To see where you abandoned your children  
Damballah, Oy, you must come and see  
The poverty your children are in.

### Observing and writing about dance!

Today's students, at all age and skill levels, are being challenged to read and deeply comprehend literature and informational text as well as non-print and digital source material. Students show their understanding by writing opinion, informative or explanatory pieces. Special journalists called art critics view works of art and then write articles for print newspapers, magazines and online media. They interpret, analyze and determine judgements about the art. Art critics often specialize in a certain type of art – like dance or music, but sometimes an art critic is called upon to write on forms of art that they are less knowledgeable in. Students can practice forming their own opinions about dance as well. Being able to “read” what is happening in a dance performance takes focus and practice, but at minimum, students should be able to determine what does and does not interest them, what they may be curious about. Students with more experience will be able to describe the work using language tied to the art form.

After viewing the performance, students could hone their skills with Oregon's Common Core State Standards while reflecting on their experience. Here is the web address for Oregon's CCSS followed by an excerpt of the College and Career Anchor Standards #7-#9 that can be applied to thinking about the performance:



[http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/newspaper/newspaper\\_section.aspx?subjectcd=CCSSE](http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/newspaper/newspaper_section.aspx?subjectcd=CCSSE)

Excerpt of College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading that relate to OBT's Student Performance Series:

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

## After the show, read the work of Dance Critics



Read aloud or have students break into groups of 4 and take turns reading the following four excerpts of critical reviews of *Rassemblement*. Students can compare and contrast their opinions with those of the writers.

### #1 From berkshireonstage.com:

*Rassemblement*, a term that denotes the act of gathering in, was created by Nacho Duato to the music of Haitian artist Toto Bissainthe... This poignant contemporary work depicts yearning for freedom through solo, duet, and ensemble movement performed barefoot. Sid Smith of The Chicago Tribune praises Duato's *Rassemblement* for its "entrancing gestures of refinement and lightning speed silkily swirl into the mix as well—you could watch this one repeatedly and always discover new details, new images."

– Larry Murray, August 5, 2014

### #2 From ballet-dance.com:

With sweeping backdrops by Walter Nobbe, Duato's softer, more introspective *Rassemblement* explores slavery and resistance through Toto Bissainthe's Haitian music and song... Slavery is a touchy subject, and to have mainly white dancers performing it is, well, ironic and hard to swallow. However these dancers' portrayal of slaves, their feelings of resistance and their attempts to reject the ways of their captors, spinning what is given to them into something of their very own, held its own unique power unto itself. Nacho Duato choreographs in big, bold gestures and it's not something that can be ignored. His fervent success has been heard around the globe, and I hope it echoes here for many years to come.

– Becca Hirschman, February 20, 2008

### #3 From SFGate.com

The best of Program A was 1990's *Rassemblement*, set to voodoo songs recorded by Toto Bissainthe. The spirit of the islands this was not: As did everything on this program, *Rassemblement* proceeded with a stiff formality, spatially and in phrasing. Yet Ana María López projected a hardy spirituality as she shook through bewitched solos. Lionlike Francisco Lorenzo snapped through the air in sudden wild leaps, then tenderly partnered with Africa Guzmán. Only once, when two colonialist-type figures came on to tame Lorenzo like a caged animal, did the weight of Duato's "aboutness" come clamping down on us. And often, *Rassemblement* opened itself to the possibility of being about something more: humans who fear, and love, and dance.

– Rachel Howard, February 22, 2008

### #4 From bostonglobe.com:

With this, my first viewing of *Rassemblement*, I'm once again on the fence. Duato's never one to shy away from heavy subjects, and here the dancers are meant to depict a group of Haitian peasants; hints of slavery and voodoo ritualism snake through the piece. There are passages of the earthy, flat-footed runs spiked with angled, prehistoric bird-like positions that I love, but there are also moments that verge on melodrama. I believe Duato is authentic in his choices, too. Like most art, however, whether the results resonate with viewers can be a matter of taste or a matter of time. I'm waiting on this one.

– Janine Parker, August 8, 2014



Following the performance, students could write opinion pieces that compare and contrast *Accidental Signals* to *Rassemblement*.



Jordan Kindell. Photo by Tatiana Wills.

National Coalition for **CORE ARTS** Standards**SPEAKING OF STANDARDS...**


The National Core Arts Standards are designed to guide the delivery of arts education in the classroom with new ways of thinking, learning, and creating. See more at:

 <http://nationalartsstandards.org/>

Here is a customized handbook for Dance for Pre-K-12 grade bands that looks at two of the four Anchor Standards: Responding and Connecting:

 <http://shar.es/1gdUSn>


Here is a pdf of a glossary of terms for Dance:

 <http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/NCCAS%20GLOSSARY%20for%20Dance%20Standards%20-%20new%20copyright%20info.pdf>
**BUS INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEWMARK THEATRE**

Newmark Theatre is located inside Portland's 5 at the corner of SW Broadway & Main St. (next to Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall)

**\*\*Please enter on the Main Street side of the building.\*\***

Look for traffic officers who will help direct the bus to a parking spot, likely on the Park Avenue side of the theatre. Please unload students after the bus is parked. Attendees can then enter the building from the doors on Main Street or Broadway.

**DO NOT PARK AND/OR UNLOAD STUDENTS WITHOUT SUPERVISION.**

Parking is provided for authorized buses and vans only, not private vehicles. The school/organization name should be clearly marked on the bus or van. Driver should stay with the bus for the entire duration of the performance.

The doors of the Newmark Theatre open at 11:30 a.m.

**PARKING FOR DISABLED STUDENTS AND ADULTS:**

Please notify us if you will need assistance with handicapped accessibility. Buses and vans for handicapped audience members may unload on Broadway. Handicapped accessible entrances are located on Main Street. After you unload passengers, traffic officers can help direct you to an appropriate parking location.

**SEATING AT THE NEWMARK THEATRE**

Upon entering the street level lobby, students groups will be directed to climb the stairs to their correct floor and aisle door of the Newmark Theatre. The doors to the theatre will be opened at 11:30. At the aisle door, students will be asked to enter the theater silently in single file. Sometimes the dancers will still be practicing on stage, so students are asked to remain silent so that they can see the dancers and not disturb them. Ushers will direct that all backpacks be left in the lobby at the level they are seated in. No food,

gum, or electronic devices in the theatre, please. Students needing to use the restroom will be asked to take their seat first and then use the restroom. The theater will be very full and groups will be assigned a floor level to go to – seating inside the theater is first come first served as directed by the ushers. Seats cannot be saved for people who enter separately from their group. The show begins at 12:00 noon and will last for one hour.

## CONTENT STANDARDS

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

**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.

**Common Core State Standards:** Attending the SPS gives students practice in building literacy across subject matter as suggested in the CCSS. Students notice key ideas central to the work, elements of the craft and structure of the work observed, and make connections or integrate this work (dance) with other curriculum.

## 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* 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 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. Please do not use cell phones to record video. The light of the screen is distracting and the taking of videos is not allowed.