

EDUCATION OUTREACH PROGRAMS OF OREGON BALLET THEATRE

WHERE DANCE AND ACADEMICS MEET

STUDENT PERFORMANCE SERIES STUDY GUIDE: SILENCE TO BIG SOUND

February 27, 2014 / Keller Auditorium
Noon - 1:00 pm / Doors open at 11:30am

Dear Educators,

This year Oregon Ballet Theatre's Student Performance Series presents dance work that gives the student audience an opportunity to explore **contrast**, an essential learning element found in Common Core State Standards, and a natural way to dig deeper into learning about dance.

The next show is entitled "**Silence to Big Sound**" and will present work from **Reveal**, OBT's February performances for the public. The audience will be treated to an hour of dance performed to silence and music that is both soft and full volume—a perfect opportunity to figure out whether what we experience with our ears helps or hinders our understanding and enjoyment of a dance performance!

The following Study Guide describes the work to be seen: an excerpt from Christopher Stowell's world premiere, *A Second Front*; an excerpt from James Kudelka's 2006 work, *Almost Mozart*; and Nicolo Fonte's 2008 work, *Bolero*, done in its entirety. The Study Guide poses



Photo by Joni Kabana

questions for you to explore with your students about the effects of music on their understanding and preference of the dances they see. It also explores how sound, music and movement impact their daily lives.

It is our intention that the SPS and its Study Guide will get the audience thinking about the usual (and maybe unusual) partnership of music and dance, and also serve as a whisper that turns ears to think about sound in other aspects of our lives—the environment, public policy, or even medical diagnosis. We encourage students to listen, think, and then talk about the soundscape of the world that we live in and consider how sound, or the lack of sound, inspires us to create.

Kasandra Gruener, MA
Director of Education Outreach

KEY TO USING THE STUDY GUIDE



= Academic connections or discussion points



= Activities designed to get students up and moving



= hyperlink to more information

A SECOND FRONT (Excerpt)

Choreography: Christopher Stowell

Assistant to the Choreographer: Jeffrey Stanton

Music: *Ballet Suite No. 1* (1949) I - *Lyric Waltz*, III - *Romance*, VI - *Galop*;

Composer: Dmitri Shostakovich

Costume Design: Mark Zappone

Costumes Constructed By: OBT Costume Shop

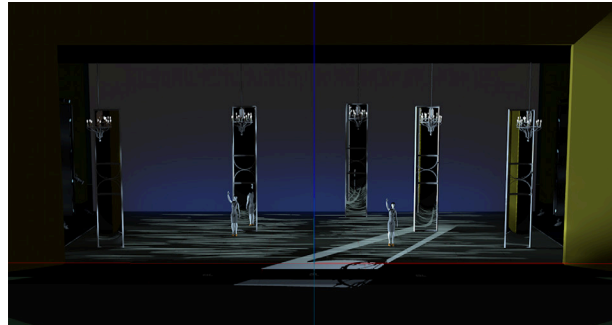
Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

World and OBT Premiere: February 22, 2014, Keller Auditorium, Portland, Oregon

The show will start with the opening sections of Christopher Stowell's world premiere work, *A Second Front*. The stage will be set with curved mirrors and chandeliers similar to the artistic rendering pictured here. This computer generated rendering was created by lighting designer Michael Mazzola as a means to assist in imagining the lighting plan. It also helps the choreographer see his idea in 3 dimensions.



Many times the choreographer and lighting designer change their minds about the placement of sets on the stage—they rework the plan. This is like rewriting in language arts. After the show, ask students if the



Stage Rendering of *A Second Front* by Michael Mazzola

placement of the mirrors actually looked the same as this rendering.

The dance excerpt will include three different selections of music from a 1949 composition by Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich entitled *Ballet Suite No. 1*. Mr. Stowell has chosen to incorporate the music sections in a different order than the composer intended and has inserted recordings of "whispering" between the sections of music. An iTunes search will provide the full version of the music, but here is a youtube version of the music you will hear. Listen to sections I, III, and VI:



<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL96D808C375DE66EC>

KASANDRA GRUENER, MA / DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION OUTREACH

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

OBT'S EDUCATION OUTREACH
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A SECOND FRONT Continued

In this ballet the **choreography is done at the same time as music is playing and also during sections of whispering**. This is similar to when people are dancing to music at a party—when the music is on, people dance, when the music is off, people talk and move about. Things to look for or think about:

- 👏 Do the dancers move **with the rhythm** of the music or **in a contrary way** to the music? Students can figure this out by listening to the music in advance and maybe even freely dancing with the music. At the theatre students can watch the dance and feel the music inside their body, imagining if this would be the way they might move, too. Students might consider if the dancers are doing something that makes sense—movements that seem to go together well.
- 👏 Is anything surprising about the music, dance movements, and sections of whispering?
- 👏 In between the musical sections we hear whispers. What does the whispering make us think about?
- 👏 What do you think is going on? Is there a story or not?
- 👏 Describe the **contrast** between the music and the whisper sections—what happened?
- 👏 Do the costumes go with the music and the dancing or would you choose something else to cloth the dancers in? Why?
- 👏 Think of one or two words to describe this ballet.



Haiyan Wu and Chauncey Parsons in rehearsal for Christopher Stowell's *A Second Front*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

CHOREOGRAPHER: CHRISTOPHER STOWELL

Christopher Stowell had a distinguished 16 year career with San Francisco Ballet before becoming Oregon Ballet Theatre's second Artistic Director, serving from 2003-2012. Mr. Stowell brought to OBT his extensive training and experience, deep knowledge of ballet repertoire, and dedication to its exacting classical and contemporary vocabulary. He returns to OBT to choreograph his first new work on the company since his departure.



Christopher Stowell

Joni Kabana

COMPOSER: DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Here is a brief biography:

🔗 http://www.kennedy-center.org/explorer/artists/?entity_id=3497&source_type=C

Dmitri Shostakovich was immortalized on a 1976 Russian stamp.

**SILENCING THE MUSIC: WHEN POLITICS AND ART MEET**

On February 14, 1948, (the year before composing *The Ballet Suite No.1*) a ban of Shostakovich's music was imposed in the Soviet Union, only to be lifted a year later on March 16 in time for Shostakovich to bend to Stalin's request to attend the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City later that month.

- 👏 How would it feel if your government declared that your art or work was banned and then asked you to represent your country in an international event?

To learn more about the Peace conference, read this:

🔗 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mp/9460447.0006.201?view=text;rgn=main>

Listen to a talk by NPR's *All Things Considered* about Russian composers, including Shostakovich, who composed for cartoons during a time when their work was being criticized by their government. See and listen to Shostakovich's 1939 merry cartoon score with Russian dialogue: *The Silly Little Mouse*

🔗 <http://www.npr.org/blogs/deceptivecadence/2011/11/03/141981053/hey-kids-its-vinny-pookh-time-cartoon-music-from-the-ussr>

ALMOST MOZART (Excerpt)



Alison Roper, Ilir Shtylla and Damian Drake in James Kudelka's *Almost Mozart*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

Choreography: James Kudelka
 Staged by: Lisa Kipp
 Music: *Maurerische Trauermusik* (Masonic Funeral Music) for orchestra in C minor, K. 477; Fragments of *Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488: Adagio*
 Composer: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
 Costume Design: Mark Zappone
 Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola
 World and OBT Premiere: April 22, 2006, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Keller Auditorium, Portland, Oregon

Choreographer James Kudelka, stated that the ballet *Almost Mozart* is “completely experimental,” weaving fragments of Mozart’s musical compositions around periods of silence. *Almost Mozart* uses sound in an opposite way to *A Second Front*—the dancers will dance in silence and the music will occur in the sections between the dances. Mr. Kudelka found that, “making choreography to silence lets you in on where a composer must come from. What you make has to have

it’s own integrity.” Mr. Kudelka revealed more of his creative process when he stated that “creativity means restrictions. You set restrictions for yourself and then see what new ground you uncover because of the restrictions.”



Mr. Kudelka chose to create a dance in silence—not to music’s beat or phrasing. This means that the dancers have to stay together by other means than counting to the music or singing along with it in their mind. Before seeing the dance, consider how the dancers know how to work together. After you see the dance, offer ideas as to how they stay together.



How does Mr. Kudelka’s creative process of “restriction” relate to the work of students? When a teacher says, “Write a poem based on an animal or a novel,” the student is faced with the same challenge which is to create something based on a specific idea. This process makes the artist and the student really push the range of available outcomes.



Alison Roper, Damian Drake and Paul DeStrooper in James Kudelka's *Almost Mozart*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

THINKING ABOUT SILENCE IN NATURE

Mr. Kudelka developed a score that isolated bits of music from Mozart’s larger score, even silencing certain instruments. This allows the listener to hear instruments that might otherwise have blended in with the full orchestra. This is similar to karaoke, where the voice track is eliminated from the recording. It is also similar to something that occurs in nature’s soundscape. It has been discovered that sound producing creatures—animals, insects, etc.—produce sounds at different wave lengths creating a type of orchestration. When these creatures go missing due to environmental change, their sounds obviously do too. Bernie Krause has been recording nature’s soundscape since the 1960’s. He has found that our rich sound environment is changing. As animal numbers decrease, the volume of their sounds does too. As we humans make more sounds with our machines and technology, we overpower the sounds of the creatures that live around us.



Students might discuss this phenomena and determine its impact on their lives.

Here is a youtube TED talk by Bernie Krause about the soundscape that informs us of our environment:



http://www.ted.com/talks/bernie_krause_the_voice_of_the_natural_world.html

Here is an article entitled *Niche Hypothesis*—a look at nature’s special soundscape:



<http://fall2010compositions.pbworks.com/f/kraus+niche+hypothesis.pdf>

CHOREOGRAPHER: JAMES KUDELKA



James Kudelka

James Kudelka is widely acknowledged as one of North America's most innovative choreographers. His mastery of both classical ballet and modern/contemporary dance has earned him commissions from companies—some 25 in all—as stylistically diverse as American Ballet Theatre, Chicago's Hubbard Street Dance and Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal.

Even as a student at Canada's National Ballet School Kudelka demonstrated a choreographic interest in exploring innovative approaches. While adept in the classical ballet vocabulary he infuses it with a contemporary sensibility acquired from his intense interest in modern movement idioms.

After nine distinguished years as Artistic Director of the National Ballet of Canada (1996-2005) Mr. Kudelka continues to undertake collaborative projects that engage and challenge him as a choreographer. *Almost Mozart* is the first work Mr. Kudelka choreographed on OBT dancers.

COMPOSER: WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Watch this 3 minute youtube video about the life and musical contributions of Mozart:

 <http://www.biography.com/people/wolfgang-mozart-9417115>

BOLERO

Choreography: Nicolo Fonte

Staged by: Lisa Kipp

Music: *Boléro*

Composer: Maurice Ravel

By arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Sole Agent in the U.S., Canada and Mexico for Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, a Universal Music Publishing Group company publisher and copyright owner.


Costume Design: Mark Zappone

Costumes Constructed By: OBT Costume Shop

Lighting and Scenic Design: Michael Mazzola

World and OBT Premiere: February 23, 2008, Oregon Ballet Theatre

In 2008, when former Artistic Director Christopher Stowell first asked Nicolo Fonte to choreograph *Bolero* for Oregon Ballet Theatre, Nicolo said, "I'm not interested." He was put off by the many associations the public has with Ravel's greatest hit—the 1979 movie *10*, the 1984 Olympics ice dance by Torvil and Dean, Frank Zappa's jazzy rendition—here is his 1988 concert performed in Barcelona, Spain:

 http://www.last.fm/music/Frank+Zappa/_/Bolero

— or Blue Man Group's crowd pleasing avant garde theatrical version, to name but a few—and he wondered how he could make *Bolero* relevant to ballet. Then he listened to the music. Christopher called back and asked again, and Nicolo said, "Well, it's great music. I'll do it."

When Ravel composed *Bolero* he was impacted by the sounds of the increasing rise of industry around him—the hammer and bang of factories. Mr. Fonte captured that idea in the stage sets. Corrugated metal panels, like those we can buy



Alison Roper and Artur Sultanov in Nicolo Fonte's *Bolero*.
Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

at Home Depot for roofing or siding, hang throughout the stage space. They change their position on stage by traveling up and down. "The panels are metaphorical for me," Nicolo says, "like having our guards up. As the music gets richer and stronger, we become more open. The panels fly up, the dancing becomes freer, and we reveal more of who we are as people. How interesting that I'm using a very mechanical piece of music to explore something basic about what it is to be human: Can we let our guards down? And what might happen if we do?"



Students might ask themselves, "What else could those panels be symbolizing? (buildings, assembly lines, and hiding places could be some thoughts)

CHOREOGRAPHER: NICOLO FONTE

Nicolo Fonte is an American choreographer, born and trained in New York, who had most of his career as a dancer in Europe. He has since made acclaimed ballets for many companies throughout Europe and the United States—he has created two ballets for OBT! He is presently the Resident Choreographer at Ballet West. (Ballet West is the dance company featured in television's *Breaking Pointe*.) His choreographic ideas require dancers who are trained in classical ballet, but who can also leap outside the bounds of ballet's movement vocabulary in every imaginable direction.



Nicolo Fonte

Alison Roper and Artur Sultanov in Nicolo Fonte's *Bolero*. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

CONTRAST IN CHOREOGRAPHY

In a recently published interview OBT Artistic Director Kevin Irving described the ballet highlighting Mr. Fonte's use of contrast: "Nicolo starts with a world that seems very hard cold and mechanical, but as the piece evolves, you find that there's more warmth, there's more heat, and by the end, it is blazingly hot. The work requires from the dancers on the one hand, a lot

Alison Roper and Artur Sultanov in Nicolo Fonte's *Bolero*. Photo by Angela Sterling.

of restraint because technically it is extremely challenging, but what he is looking for is this sense of abandon, so there is this interplay between control and abandon."

Notice the contrast imbedded in the choreography.



What makes the dance feel cold and mechanical? Think about the way that the movements are executed. For example, are they fluid like a wheel turning, choppy like the piston of a machine, sharp edged, or angular? What words can you find to describe the beginning of the ballet?



What makes the dance feel blazingly hot? How does the volume of the music add to the experience?

COMPOSER: MAURICE RAVEL

Ravel (1875-1937) composed *Bolero* for the Ida Rubenstein Ballet in Paris in 1928. In the book *Ravel: Man and Musician*, Arbie Orenstein* reported that just before Ravel went swimming with a friend while on vacation "he went to the piano and played a melody with one finger. "Don't you think this theme has an insistent quality?", he asked. "I'm going to try and repeat it a number of times without any development, gradually increasing the orchestra as best I can." The original ballet was set as if in a Spanish tavern. This unimaginative interpretation disappointed Ravel, who had in mind a stage set as if outside a factory, with the rhythmic ostinato representing the noise of machinery.

Though *Bolero* has come down through history as French composer Maurice Ravel's most admired composition, its popularity caused Ravel great irritation. He called it "orchestra tissue without music." The more popular it grew, the more he disliked it, but *Bolero* is indeed masterful because of its orchestration. The piece is built using a rhythmic ostinato, or phrase that is repeated over and over, with a plaintive melody repeated above it. *Bolero* achieves its exciting climax entirely by adding instruments step by step, in very unusual and colorful combinations such as introducing the piccolo and the celesta together to sound like a calliope.

* http://books.google.com/books?id=1b_JIAZLiZAC&pg=PA98&vq=iberia&dq=ravel:+man+and+musician&as_brr=3&sig=0XXCoAuitkS_AyLw4Zk622GBJQI#v=onepage&q=iberia&f=false

What else was happening around the time Ravel composed *Bolero*?

- *Metropolis*, a landmark silent film created by Austrian director Fritz Lang in 1927, the year before *Bolero*, explores the theme of man and machine—in a future world of 2026!
- In the era between the two world wars the United States experienced extreme optimism and devastation—check out this web site: <http://www.1920-30.com>
- Factories begin production of polystyrene products.

BOLERO AND BRAIN FUNCTION

Radiolab, a show that airs on more than 450 public radio stations across the country, defines itself as a, “show about curiosity. Where sound illuminates ideas, and the boundaries blur between science, philosophy, and human experience.” Here’s a link to a really interesting segment about *Bolero*, Maurice Ravel, Anne Adams (a biologist turned visual artist), and a neurological condition the two people may have shared:

 <http://www.radiolab.org/story/217340-unraveling-bolero/>




What does the SPS and the Olympics have in common? Ravel and Shostakovich!

In 1954, Shostakovich wrote the *Festive Overture*, opus 96. It was used as the theme music for the 1980 Summer Olympics. In addition his “Theme from the film *Pirogov*, Opus 76a: Finale” was played as the cauldron was lit at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece.

 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dmitri_Shostakovich

At the 1984 Winter Olympics, Jayne Torvil and Christopher Dean, performed their Gold Medal winning ice dance to Ravel’s *Bolero*. Olympic fans should see this:

 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2zbbN4OL98>

NOISE AND LEARNING!


Environmental psychologist Arline Bronzaft pioneered studies that show noise can impede children’s learning. A *Discover Magazine* article entitled, “What Do Urban Sounds Do to Your Brain?” (July August 2009) reported that in New York City Bronzaft compared the performance of students in a school building where one side of the building was near a noisy train track. She found that “sixth-graders in the noisy classrooms were about one grade behind their peers in the quieter section on reading scores. The year after the Metropolitan Transit Authority installed rubber pads under the rails to lessen the noise, reading scores at the school evened out. Bronzaft says that more than 30 studies have subsequently documented the impact of noise on learning.” For the full article go to:

 <http://discovermagazine.com/2009/jul-aug/24-what-do-urban-sounds-do-your-brain#.UvbSpPuTzDV>

The Noise Control Act of 1972

The United States was an early leader in recognizing the health dangers related to noise. **The Noise Pollution and Abatement Act of 1972** stated “it is the policy of the United States to promote an environment for all Americans free from noise that jeopardizes their health or welfare.” Although the act remains on the books, the Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Noise Abatement and Control was closed in 1981 making it the responsibility of individual states.

Read all 21 pages of the law!

 http://www.epa.gov/air/noise/noise_control_act_of_1972.pdf




Is the Noise Control Act being enforced today? Do you come across noise pollution during your day? Is there any place you wish was quieter?

OTHER RESOURCES

The innovative composer John Cage remarked, “The sound experience which I preferred to all others is the experience of silence.”


 <http://www.hermitary.com/solitude/cage.html>

“There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot.”

 http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/47403.John_Cage?page=3

Teacher, poet and artist Chögyam Trungpa wrote “As in music, when we hear the crescendo building, suddenly if the music stops, we begin to hear the silence as part of the music.”
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*

The Library of Congress offers a 2-year cycle of lectures on the theme *Music and the Brain*. Here are 8 videos:

 <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6596D02DC1E30055>

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.

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 DIRECT ANY QUESTIONS TO:

Kasandra Gruener, MA, Director of Education Outreach
phone: 503.227.0977 x212 / email: outreach@obt.org / www.obt.org/outreach_youth.html