



OREGON BALLET THEATRE'S STUDENT PERFORMANCE SERIES 2018-2019

THE AMERICANS

June 7, 2019
Show starts at 12:00
Doors open at 11:30

Newmark Theater
1111 SW Broadway
Portland, OR 97205

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE
OUTREACH



Photo by Chris Peddecord

Katherine Monogue
and Teddy Watler in
Night Creature.



Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert

Michael Linsmeier and Xuan Cheng in *Robust American Love*.

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THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDATION AND GOVERNMENT PARTNERS!



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Thank you for joining us at Oregon Ballet Theatre's 2018-19 Student Performance Series: A Year to Read and Dance!

We close the season at the Newmark Theatre this June 7th with "The Americans," showcasing two works by American artists: *Night Creature* (1974) by Alvin Ailey, set to the symphonic jazz score of the same name by Duke Ellington; and *Robust American Love* (2013) by Trey McIntyre, set to the music of Pacific Northwest indie band, Fleet Foxes. We will be presenting these two works in their entirety. This study guide will provide information about:

- the choreographers and their inspiration for creating the work,
- the composers and their music,
- a special look at the job of a Stager, and
- explore the idea of this art as being "American."

The Study Guide also gives important information to know the day of the show. As always, there are no tickets—one tells the lobby usher the group's name for admittance. You will also find information about parking and seating. Don't hesitate to contact me if there are any questions. If you have changes in registered attendance, please contact me, we want everyone to have a seat! Thanks to all who have made their payments!

See you soon in the theater!

— Kasandra Gruener

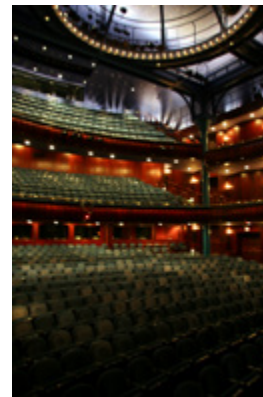


WHAT TO KNOW ON THE DAY OF THE SHOW

The Newmark Theater is located at:

1111 SW Broadway, Portland, OR 97205

The doors to the Newmark Theater will open 30 minutes 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. Please tell the usher your group's school name so that you can hear which level 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.



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.



NIGHT CREATURE

Choreographer: Alvin Ailey

Music: Duke Ellington, "Night Creature"

I Movement - Blind Bug

II Movement - Stalking Monster

III Movement - Dazzling Creature

Costume Design: Jane Greenwood

Lighting Design: Chenault Spence

Stager: Ronni Favors

World Premiere: 1974 television special:
Ailey Celebrates Ellington

OBT Premiere: June 7, 2019; Newmark
Theatre; Portland, Oregon

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Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater photo by Paul Kolnik

NIGHT CREATURE: THE CHOREOGRAPHER



Photo by Jack Mitchell

Alvin Ailey was born in 1931 in Rogers, Texas. His experiences in the rural South inspired some of his most memorable works. Lester Horton, founder of one of the first racially integrated dance companies in the United States, became a mentor for Ailey. After Horton's death in 1953, Ailey became director of the Lester Horton Dance Theater and began to choreograph his own works. In 1958 he founded Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to carry out his vision of a company dedicated to enriching the American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience. Ailey was a pioneer of programs promoting arts in education, particularly those benefiting underserved communities. Throughout his lifetime, he was awarded numerous distinctions, including the Kennedy Center Honor in 1988. In 2014, he posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor. When Ailey died in 1989, *The New York Times* said, "you didn't need to have known [him] personally to have been touched by his humanity, enthusiasm, and exuberance and his courageous stand for multi-racial brotherhood."

"One of Mr. Ailey's happiest works. It has a joyful pulse, a sophisticated entente with its sophisticated music that carries on the best of the Ellington tradition." *The New York Times*

"...delectably sassy..." *The New York Times*

"This remains one of Ailey's best curtain raisers, and the company throw themselves into its elf-like spirit with only rhythmic measure containing their dance abandon." *New York Post*

Lester Horton was among the first choreographers in the U.S. to insist upon racial integration in his company. Alvin Ailey wrote in his 1995 autobiography, "What it came down to was that, for Lester, his art was much more important than the color of a dancer's skin."

Mr. Ailey carried this same attitude forth in his own company. While striving to provide an expressive forum for African American dancers he welcomed non-African American dancers to study his work in his New York City studios. In fact, as a young man, Oregon Ballet Theatre's Artistic Director Kevin Irving studied at the Ailey school and danced in its training ensemble. He speaks passionately of the deep impact Mr. Ailey had on his own trajectory as a both a mover and a thinker about dance. And now Mr. Irving brings some of that experience to OBT's dancers and to Portland audiences.

ON TV

Night Creature, an effervescent ballet, first premiered on a 1974 CBS television special, "Ailey Celebrates Ellington." The stage premier occurred in May 1975. It is this version of the work that OBT will perform.

Check out [this groovy 70's flashback video](#) and hear Mr. Ailey speak about the ballet. (Of special note—the stage costumes have changed since this television version.)



Watch [3 minute video](#) of the ballet in its present version.

NIGHT CREATURE: THE COMPOSER

*Profile of Duke Ellington by
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater*

Duke Ellington called his music “American Music” rather than jazz, and liked to describe those who impressed him as “beyond category.” He remains one of the most influential figures in jazz, if not in all American music and is widely considered as one of the twentieth century’s best known African American personalities. As both a composer and a band leader, Ellington’s reputation has increased since his death, with thematic repackaging of his signature music often becoming best-sellers. Posthumous recognition of his work includes a special award citation from the Pulitzer Prize Board. Duke Ellington influenced millions of people both around the world and at home. He gave American music its own sound for the first time. In his 50-year

career, he played over 20,000 performances in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East as well as Asia.

Simply put, Ellington transcends boundaries and fills the world with a treasure trove of music that renews itself through every generation of fans and music-lovers. His legacy continues to live on and will endure for generations to come. Winton Marsalis said it best when he said, “His music sounds like America.” Because of the unmatched artistic heights to which he soared, no one

deserved the phrase “beyond category” more than Ellington, for it aptly describes his life as well. He was most certainly one of a kind that maintained a lifestyle with universal appeal which transcended countless boundaries. Duke Ellington is best remembered for the over 3,000 songs that he composed during his lifetime. His best-known titles include “It Don’t Mean a Thing if It Ain’t Got That Swing,” “Sophisticated Lady,” “Mood Indigo,” “Solitude,” “In a Mellotone,” and “Satin Doll.” The most amazing part about Ellington was his creativity while he was on the road. It was



Duke Ellington

JazzTimes

Watch [a 4 minute biography](#) of Duke Ellington.

ArtsEdge has a “This Week in the Arts” page—check out [the one for Duke Ellington!](#)

Night Creature can be found on Spotify in the album “Prelude to a Kiss,” or you can listen to [a recording of the 1955 Carnegie Hall premiere](#) of *Night Creature*.

[Learn how](#) the music of *Night Creature* inspired the movement concept for Mr. Ailey’s choreography.

[Read about Mr. Ellington’s goal](#) to make “music swing” in *Night Creature*.

during this time when he wrote his renowned piece “Mood Indigo,” which brought him worldwide fame. When asked what inspired him to write, Ellington replied, “My men and my race are the inspiration of my work. I try to catch the character and mood and feeling of my people.” Duke Ellington’s popular compositions set the bar for generations of brilliant jazz, pop, theatre, and soundtrack composers to come. While these compositions guarantee his

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greatness, what makes Ellington an iconoclastic genius, unparalleled visionary, and what has granted him immortality are his extended suites. From 1943's "Black, Brown and Beige" to 1972's "The Uwis Suite," Ellington used the suite format to give his jazz songs a far more empowering meaning, resonance, and purpose: to exalt, mythologize, and re-contextualize the African American experience on a grand scale. Duke Ellington was partial to giving brief verbal accounts of the moods his songs captured. Reading those accounts is like



"Night creatures, unlike stars, do not come OUT at night – they come ON, each thinking that before the night is out he or she will be the star."
– Duke Ellington

looking deep into the background of an old photo of New York and noticing the lost and almost unaccountable details that gave the city its character during Ellington's heyday, which began in 1927 when his band made the Cotton Club its home. Ellington once said, "The memory of things gone is important to a jazz musician," and the stories he sometimes told about his songs are the record of those things gone. But what

is gone returns, its pulse kicking, when Ellington's music plays, and never mind what past it is, for the music itself still carries us forward today. Duke Ellington was awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1966. He was later awarded several other prizes, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969, and the Legion of Honor by France in 1973, the highest civilian honors in each country. He died of lung cancer and pneumonia on May 24, 1974, a month after his 75th birthday, and is buried in the Bronx in New York City. At his funeral attended by over 12,000 people at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Ella Fitzgerald summed up the occasion, "It's a very sad day... A genius has passed."

NIGHT CREATURE: THE STAGER



The Stager **Ronni Favors** from Iowa City, Iowa, was a member of Ailey II, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company. She became Assistant Rehearsal Director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1997, and Rehearsal Director from 1999-2010. Ms. Favors engaged and rehearsed dance students who performed Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* in Johannesburg, South Africa, Seattle, Copenhagen, Los Angeles, Chicago, Kansas City, and New York.

The job of a Stager is to teach the steps and intent of a ballet to dancers and oversee the production of the ballet when it goes on stage. Earlier this season, Ms. Favors came to OBT to teach *Night Creature* to our dancers. She worked on the specific movement style found in Mr. Ailey's work which includes ways of moving not often seen in classical ballet—swinging hips, low jazz style walks, syncopated rhythms and facial expressions that really express the mood of the music.

Ms. Favors sets ballets on many companies across the country, and recently set *Night Creature* in the mid-west. In a video interview in St. Paul Minnesota with TU Dance's co-artistic director Toni Pierce-Sands, Ms. Favors stated, "The whole point is to be able to find yourself." She went on to explain that the audience should be able to see themselves in the dancers' movements, that it should be relatable and accessible. She further stated that, "Dance came from the people and should be delivered back to them," something that Mr. Ailey had believed in. Mr. Irving has given OBT dancers an opportunity to learn from the inside out about the mind of an important American choreographer by engaging a Stager such as Ms. Favors. She has been able to draw the dancers into the legacy of Alvin Ailey, because she worked closely with Mr. Ailey, and now strives to carry that work into the future. Portland is very lucky to experience this ballet as well!

Alvin Ailey's dictum was that "dance came from the people and should always be given back to the people."

— Ronni Favors

TRY OUT SOME MOVES

The **ARTSEEDGE** description (at right) points out three movements often seen in Ailey's work:

- *slow jazz walk*, a low, sunken walk with feet and hips turned outward (an influence of modern dance)



- *boogie-woogie*, a social dance with swing-style footwork and body lifts; usually danced to an upbeat style of blues music from the 1920s [[click](#) to see a version of the Boogie Woogie]

- *arabesque*, a ballet position on one leg in which the dancer extends a raised leg backward while stretching one or both arms forward

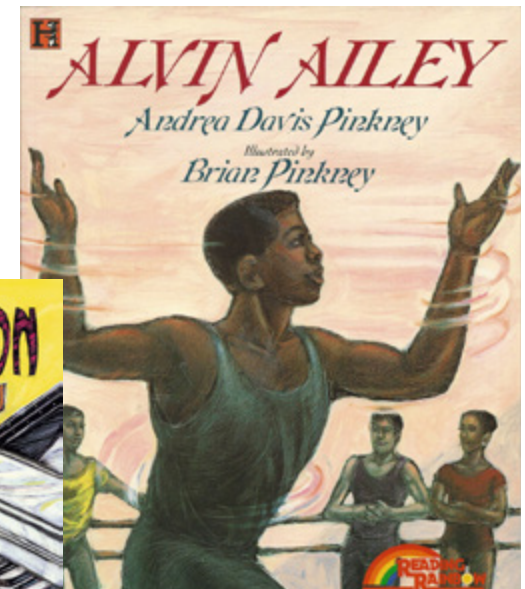
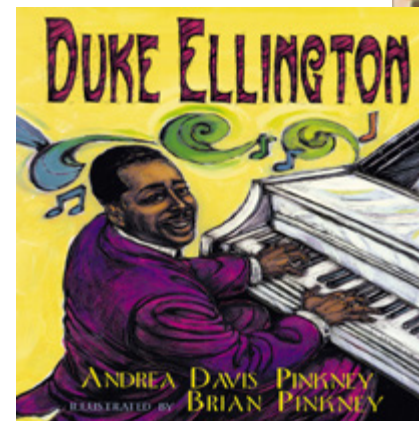


Photo by Rosalie O'Connor

Linda Celeste Sims in Alvin Ailey's 'Night Creature.'

LEARN MORE

ARTSEEDGE is the Kennedy Center's free digital learning platform for arts education. It serves as a resource for educators, providing media and lesson plans to support learning about the arts and its makers. In it are several great resources about Alvin Ailey and *Night Creature*. [Read the description of Night Creature.](#)



Are these books in
your library?

ROBUST AMERICAN LOVE

Choreography: Trey McIntyre

Composer: Robin Pecknold

Music: Fleet Foxes, "Your Protector," "Heard Them Stirring," "White Winter Hymnal," "He Doesn't Know Why," "Meadowlarks," "Tiger Mountain Peasant Song," "Oliver James"

Costume Design: Melissa Schlachtmeyer

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Stager: Lisa Kipp

World Premiere: April 18, 2013; Oregon Ballet Theatre; Newmark Theatre; Portland, Oregon

Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert

ROBUST AMERICAN LOVE: THE CHOREOGRAPHER



Photo by Michael Slobodian

Trey McIntyre is a renowned choreographer and photographer whose choreographic works have been performed by Stuttgart Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, New York City Ballet, The Washington Ballet, Queensland Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and more. McIntyre trained at North Carolina School of the Arts and Houston Ballet Academy. He started as choreographic apprentice for Houston Ballet in 1989 and later became the company's choreographic associate. As a freelance artist for nearly 30 years, he has produced over 100 works. McIntyre is a United States Artists Fellow and the recipient of

numerous awards: Choo San Goh Award for Choreography, Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Society of Arts and Letters and grants for choreography from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2005, he founded his celebrated dance company Trey McIntyre Project which hailed from Boise Idaho for many years. In recent years, he has delved deeply into photography and created a documentary, *Gravity Hero*, which is currently traveling to film festivals internationally.

Read [🔗 reviews of Robust American Love](#).

Mr. McIntyre was originally asked to create a ballet for OBT that would be set to music created by an American composer. He chose to work with music composed and performed by Seattle based indie band, Fleet Foxes. This music choice became an element of Mr. McIntyre's inspiration. Of the Fleet Foxes, he said, "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." He imagined the experience of the pioneer families—strong and resilient mothers, fathers, sons and daughters—of America in the early 1800's, as they inhabited a brand new place. He spoke of capturing in dance, "the kind of toughness and optimism that it took for people to make that leap." The costumes reflect the era. The dancers wear light colored leotards and tights that remind some people of long underwear and blue-hued jackets of varying lengths that flap as the dancers move, suggesting of people galloping through the wind.

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ROBUST AMERICAN LOVE: THE CASTS



Often there are two or three casts of a ballet. This means that more than one person learns any given part. There are several reasons for this. A practical reason is that if a dancer becomes injured, someone else can do the role. Multiple casts allow more dancers a chance to perform and subsequently give a rest to the other dancers. Each dancer, while doing the same steps and timing with the music, will have their own signature way to do a part. It is really fun to see a ballet done by different people and see whose interpretation you most appreciate! A picture captures a brief moment in a ballet. Here we see nearly the same moment captured on two different casts. Look for this moment in the performance!

Continued from previous page.

In order to create a new ballet, a choreographer must have some form of inspiration to get started, such as Mr. McIntyre did. Upon completing the work it is sometimes important to the choreographer that the audience pick out or identify the inspiration. But often that is not important to the choreographer—they are simply hopeful that the audience will appreciate the work because it moves or satisfies them in some way. When a choreographer doesn't tell the audience, "This is a story about..." or "This is a dance about these ideas..." the audience is then free to interpret the ballet based on their own experience of it. Their opinion and understanding of the work is based on what they see, hear and feel emotionally. Often audience members will discuss a ballet and have very different understandings about what they just saw and some might even say, "I didn't get that. Was that about something, and I missed it?" The best thing to do when watching something new is to just settle in and watch with an open mind—and see what happens. After that reflect on how it made you feel. Try that with *Robust American Love*.

ROBUST AMERICAN LOVE: THE MUSIC OR POETRY?



The music for *Robust American Love* is built on the music of the Fleet Foxes. Each song has vocals, either as song lyrics or humming. The lyrics can be found online by searching the titles, found in the ballet notes at the beginning of this article. We have included the lyrics for Meadowlarks here. It can be read as poetry and discussed. What images come to mind? When it comes up in the ballet, students might see if knowing the words has any significance to the dance. Listen to it on Spotify or [youtube](#).

MEADOWLARKS

Fleet Foxes

Meadowlark, fly away down
I hold a cornucopia and a golden crown
For you to wear upon your fleeced down

My meadowlark sing to me

Hummingbird, just let me die
Inside the broken ovals of your olive eyes
I do believe you gave it your best try

My hummingbird sing to me,
My hummingbird sing to me

Don't believe a word that I haven't heard
Little children laughing at the boys and girl
The meadowlark singing to you each and everyday
The arc light on the hill side and the market in the hay

WORDS TO KNOW

Build vocabulary by learning more words or phrases related to dance.

Aesthetic: A set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty

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

Choreographer: The artist who composes dances

Choreography: The steps and patterns that make up a dance composition

Dance literacy: The total experience of dance learning that includes the doing and knowing about dance: dance skills and techniques, dance making, knowledge and understanding of dance vocabulary, dance history, dance from different cultures, dance genres, repertory, performers and choreographers, dance companies, and dance notation and preservation.

Embody: To physicalize a movement, concept, or idea throughout the body

Ensemble: A group that works together

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

Marley flooring: A portable, reversable sheet vinyl that provides a safe, non-slip surface for dance studios and theaters.

Performance etiquette: Performance values and expected behaviours when rehearsing or performing, for instance, no talking while the dance is in progress; no chewing gum; dancers do not call out to audience members who are friends.

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

Style: Dance that has specific movement characteristics, qualities, or principles that give it distinctive identity (for example, Horton technique is a



Alison Roper in *Robust American Love*.

Photo by James McGrew

style of Modern Dance; rhythm tap is a style of Percussive Dance; Macedonian folk dance is a style of International Folk dance; Congolese dance is a style of African Dance)

Technical dance skills: Is the degree of physical proficiency a dancer achieves within a dance style or technique (for example, coordination, form, strength, speed and range)

Educators may be interested to read the [Arts Standards Documents](#) and [a document outlining a framework for arts learning](#) the Oregon Department of Education resources for the arts website.



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.