



OREGON BALLET THEATRE'S STUDENT PERFORMANCE SERIES 2019-2020

ROAR(S) Celebrating 30 Years

October 10, 2019

Show starts at 12:00

Doors open at 11:30

Keller Auditorium

222 SW Clay St.

Portland, OR 97201

OREGON **BALLET** THEATRE
OUTREACH



Photo by Yi Yin

Peter Franc and Xuan Cheng in William Forsythe's *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*.



Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert

Oregon Ballet Theatre dancers in the 2013 production of *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*.

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THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDATION AND GOVERNMENT PARTNERS!



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Dear Educators,

Thank you for enriching your students' education by sharing dance with them—we appreciate partnering with you!

THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY



OREGON
BALLET
THEATRE

KEVIN IRVING | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Oregon Ballet Theatre has titled our 2019-20 season opening performances, **ROAR(S) Celebrating 30 Years**. It's our company's 30 year Anniversary! For me, the logo of the lion symbolizes the focused perseverance, careful use of resources, and roaring passion that it has taken to grow and thrive as an arts organization. Thank you for joining us!

The work of OBT is guided by three interdependent words—**Share, Inspire, and Connect**. The Student Performance Series is just one of the ways that OBT sets these goals in action. By sharing great ballet with school groups, we hope to inspire further interest in dance, aesthetic thinking, and cultural community. We strive to provide access for students to make new connections, whether it is imagining themselves as dancers or seeing that an artist's way of problem solving can be the same as theirs.

We will be presenting two works in their entirety: *In the Middle Somewhat Elevated*, choreographed by William Forsythe to music by Thom Willems; and



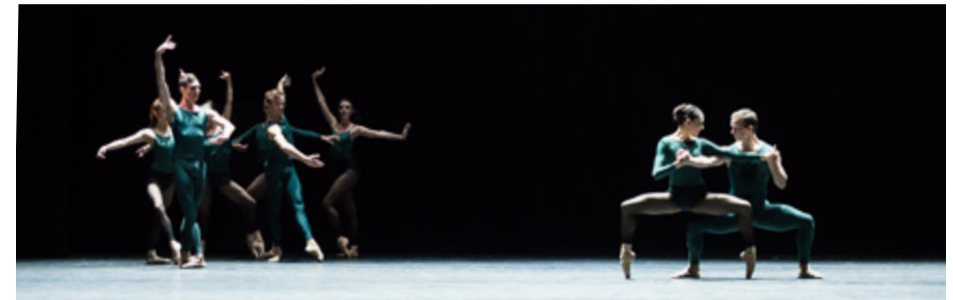
Stravinsky Violin Concerto, choreographed by George Balanchine to music by Igor Stravinsky. We will also be briefly joined by Nelly Kovalev, concertmaster of the Oregon Ballet Theatre Orchestra. For a rare treat, she will bring her violin and share her experience playing Stravinsky's extremely difficult score.

This Study Guide will give information about the performance, touching on three essential elements that show up in the two ballets — **pushing boundaries, competition, and virtuosity**. For example, both choreographers pushed choreography out of the mold of their time by creating movements that were similar, but not the same as the steps they were used to doing. Open questions throughout the Study Guide will hark to these big ideas. You will also find a section in the Study Guide for vocabulary words, links to the music (be sure to listen!) and "what to know the day of the show". Have fun with the information here.

Special thanks to OBT's Dance Historian Brook Manning who provided vast amounts of resource material for the ROAR(S) Study Guide.

See you soon in the theater!

Kasandra Gruener



OBT in William Forsythe's *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*.

Photo by Jingzi Zhao



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.

IN THE MIDDLE, SOMEWHAT ELEVATED

Choreography, Stage, Light, & Costume

Designs: William Forsythe

Stager: Agnès Noltenius

Music: Thom Willems

In Collaboration With: Lesley Stuck

Ballet Master: Jeffrey Stanton

World Premiere: May 30, 1987; Paris
Opera Ballet; Palais Garnier; Paris, France

OBT Premiere: October 8, 2016; Keller
Auditorium; Portland, Oregon

The performances of the musical composition *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* are given by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited.

Costumes Courtesy of Pacific Northwest Ballet, Peter Boal,
Artistic Director



Peter Franc

Photo by Yi Yin

THE CHOREOGRAPHER: WILLIAM FORSYTHE

William Forsythe is an American-born choreographer. He danced briefly with Joffrey Ballet in Chicago, but spent the majority of his career in ballet companies in Germany. Most recently he has become a professor of dance practice at the University of Southern California. But during the 1980's the Paris Opera Ballet commissioned Mr. Forsythe to come and create a new work for the company. [Mr. Forsythe's profile at USC.](#)



Photo by Kayana Szymczak for the New York Times

hierarchies and deeply rooted competitiveness of the company's culture. The Paris Opera Ballet is an institution established by King Louis XIV, and one that maintains some of the old standards. At the school, students are ranked from top to bottom every year and if they are accepted into the company, promotion can only be achieved through an annual competition with their peers. *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* is a ballet

that looks at the complicated relationships that develop in such a competitive world—a world where dancers strive to be the best they can be, to gain physical and artistic virtuosity.

So in the work, the dancers prowl the stage exploring space, at times sizing each other up with a kind of wary surveillance... because what is at stake for them is center stage. There can be nothing tentative about any of them. The women dig their toes into the ground to stake their claim, and the tension between the dancers translates into their bodies with these quick flashes of hyper-extended lines.

- **Ask students:** What would it be like if your class was ranked, meaning the top student was titled #1, the next successful student was #2 and so forth down to #32 in the class? How would that make you feel? Would it make you try harder or would it make you feel like giving up? Does this feel like a good way to learn?
- Watch [a video from 2016](#) of Oregon Ballet Theatre dancers speaking about and rehearsing *In The Middle, Somewhat Elevated*

Forsythe took Balanchine's neoclassical style of ballet and then he pushed it in a new direction. So you will see the classical positions, but their balance and spaciousness are gone. Instead of movement coming from the center of the body, Forsythe experimented with what would happen if that movement started from the hip or shoulder— even if the results weren't what the dancers were used to describing as pretty. Not only that, ballet's rules of balance or symmetry

Continued on the next page.

Competition and Virtuosity

When he arrived in Paris to make the ballet, Forsythe was really struck by the formal



The title for the ballet grew out of a change of vision for the stage design. Originally the set was envisioned to be a room of golden objects that referenced the *Palais Garnier* (at left), home of the Paris Opera Ballet where the work was being conceived. But when Mr. Forsythe saw the elaborate design for the set he realized it would take too long for the production to be built and that it would interfere with his time to rehearse the dancers... so he decided on two golden cherries to serve as a token representation of what he had originally imagined. They aren't very large. He asked for them to be placed "in the middle, somewhat elevated". And there's the title. Be sure to look for the cherries!

seem to have gone out the window. Because not only does the choreography ask how far the dancers can go before falling, it also wants us to see the fall, see the work, see the difference in line.

An important thing to notice is that the dancers sometimes just walk—they don't do a dance step to get to another part of the stage—they walk. This

injection of pedestrian movement amongst classical ballet steps is a modern convention.

- **Ask students:** Observe the two photos below. Describe the shapes the male dancers are doing. There are similarities and differences. What do the dancers facial expressions tell you? What movement might come next?

- **Ask students:** Try to create the shapes in the two pictures. Is one easier to accomplish? Why? Try doing the shapes and then walking to somewhere else and do the other shape with an emotional intention like pride, as if showing off how great you can do it. Try it fast and slow. When you watch the performance, consider

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Christopher Stowell's Zais performed by Oregon Ballet Theatre in 2008.

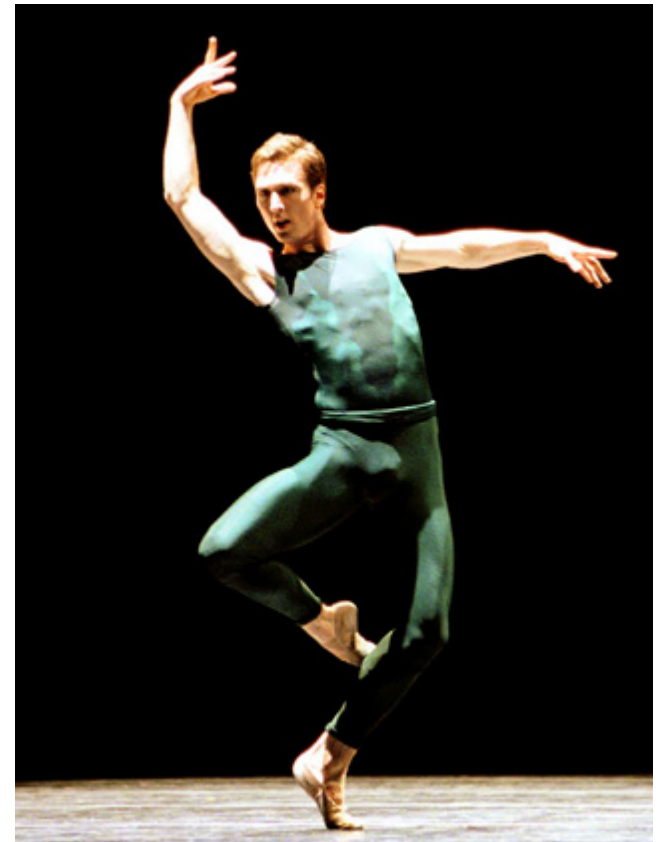


Photo by Angela Sterling

Jeffrey Stanton in Stravinsky Violin Concerto.

Continued from previous page.

whether the way they walk is the same as how we usually walk down the street.

Pushing boundaries

There is a daily public radio program called "Composers Datebook." At the end of each 2 minute presentation about some aspect of music that is significant to this day in classical music, the announcer always says, "Reminding you that all music was once new."[®] Often a new work of art (music, painting, dance, etc.) is challenging for the audience, they don't get it or it can be jarring. Just as often, it can be mind-blowingly amazing and immediately applauded. We can think about this when we see this ballet. Mr. Forsythe once said in a 2007 interview with Diane Solway, "If dance only does what we assume it can do, it will expire. I keep trying to test the limits of what the word choreography means." (New York Times). In a 2018 interview with Sarah Crompton for The Guardian he said, "You have to remember when the big ballets were being made in the 19th century, they were contemporary art. I think you must speak to the future, to the next generation."

- **Ask students** to think about trends, perhaps in the arts, fashion, music, or technology. Consider ideas or trends that were once radical and then became accepted and the new norm. For instance, electronically created music was once its own separate type of music, and now it is part of many genres of music, and even mixed in with acoustic music.

THE MUSIC



Photo by Yi Yin

Brian Simcoe and Kelsie Nobriga.

Dancers learn their parts following different structures. A common thing to do is to count with the beat of the music. The choreographer builds the dance based on a certain number of counts for each movement idea. For the dancers, the score for *In The Middle Somewhat Elevated* is a counting nightmare. One of the OBT dancers was recently talking about how she counts for this ballet and it went something like this: two 9s, then 15, then 8, then three 3's. She said she's constantly counting in this ballet! The composer Thom Willems created a crashing electronic score, which will make you sit up and

take notice. Forsythe wanted it this way and its written into the technical rider that the volume be placed at a certain decibel level, intended not only to catch your attention, but so that you can feel the music. The dancers also have speakers pointed at them onstage, so that they feel the full force of the music too. The Forsythe Company is very exacting in their requirements regarding how the

music is played during the ballet. When they sent their Sound Designer to Portland the first time we did this ballet, they were so impressed with OBT's sound design that our version of *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* is now the benchmark by which all other productions are measured.

- Listen to a [clip of the music](#).
- Watch this [3 min film clip of a pas de deux](#) with dancers Sylvie Guillem and Laurent Hilaire (from the original cast).

STRAVINSKY VIOLIN CONCERTO

Choreography: George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust

Stager: Bart Cook

Music: Igor Stravinsky, Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra

Solo Violinist: Nelly Kovalev

Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Ballet Master: Lisa Kipp

World Premiere: June 18, 1972; New York City Ballet; Stravinsky Festival; New York State Theater; New York, New York

OBT Premiere: April 19, 2012; Newmark Theatre; Portland, Oregon

The performance of *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, a Balanchine® Ballet, is presented by arrangement with The George Balanchine Trust® and has been produced in accordance with the Balanchine Style® and Balanchine Technique® service standards established and provided by the Trust.

Igor Stravinsky CONCERTO IN D for Violin and Orchestra, Used by arrangement with European American Music Distributors Company, sole U.S. and Canadian agent for Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany, publisher and copyright owner.



New York City Ballet in *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*

A COLLABORATION: GEORGE BALANCHINE & IGOR STRAVINSKY



Photo by Martha Swope

Balanchine and Stravinsky in the studio of New York City Ballet.

The second ballet on the program is created by two of the most famous and fruitful of master collaborators—George Balanchine and Igor Stravinsky. Of the over 400 ballets that Mr. Balanchine created in his career, nearly 40 were set to Stravinsky's music.

They were introduced to one another in 1926 by Serge Diaghilev when Balanchine was 20 and Stravinsky was 42 and they had so much in

common. Both were Russian emigres who resettled and found artistic freedom in America. They were both raised in the Eastern Orthodox tradition and they shared a strong work ethic. They saw themselves really more as craftspeople, who put things together out of necessity. Balanchine said, "God creates, I assemble."

CHOREOGRAPHER

Mr. Balanchine's choreography for *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* was the

second time he had used the same music. He had originally created a ballet called *Balustrade*, in 1941 for the *Ballets Russes*, but when he returned to the score 3 decades later, he couldn't remember his original choreography. But that didn't seem to bother him. He said, "What I did then was for then, and what I wanted to do to this music for our Stravinsky Festival... represented more than 30 years' difference."

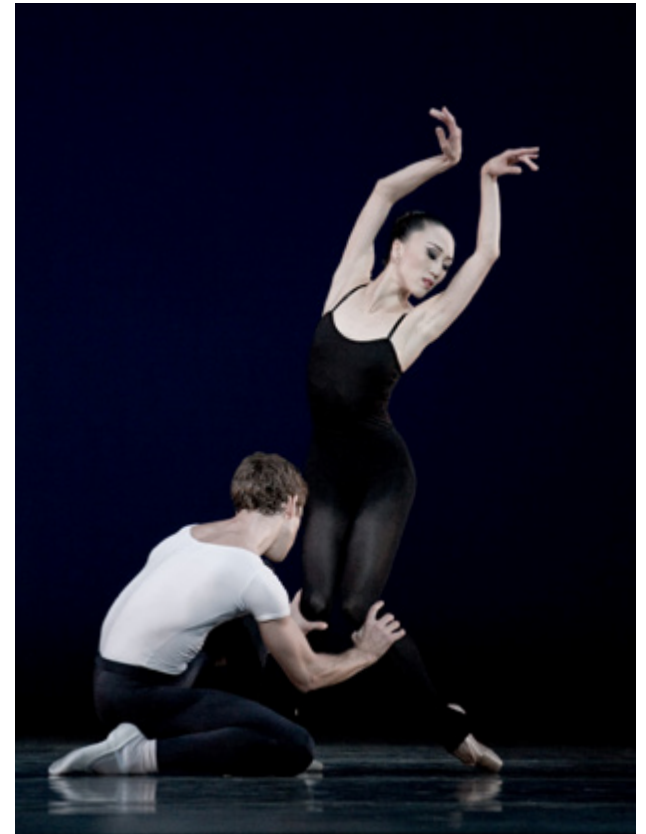


Photo by James McGrew

Haiyan Wu and Brian Simcoe.

It was 1972 when Balanchine put together the Stravinsky Festival to honor the memory and contributions of his friend and mentor, who had died the previous year. Over the course of one magical week, there were 31 ballets performed to *Continued on the next page.*

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Stravinsky's music. Twenty-two of them were world premieres, and ten of those were by Balanchine himself, including the ballet on our program, which was then titled *Violin Concerto*.

Competition and Virtuosity

The ballet's choreography follows the score directly and is crafted like a well-planned meal. The first section is like an appetizer, where you get a taste of each principal dancer, of which there are four, served up with a sort of playful, sporty, competitive flavor. Then there are two *pas de deux* in the middle that are very different from one another: The first is more acrobatic and angular; the second is more lyrical and you'll notice the man's hands almost never leave his partner. Both the *pas de deux* look at different aspects of male-female relationships, and it's said that Balanchine created both the *pas de deux* within 48 hours. Then the finale is like a bacchanal with everyone dancing together with a really joyous sense of community. It should be remembered that the movements take great skill and the music phrases are challenging to count. This is a type of virtuosity that tricks the viewer into thinking the dancing is effortless.

New York City Ballet will also be performing *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* in New York City in January of 2020. They have produced [a wonderful set of short videos clips of the ballet](#), that include dancers speaking about the ballet. They describe what they are thinking while they are dancing. This will be wonderful to view before the ballet so that students can have an insiders' understanding!

ON INSPIRATION

Ask Students: See if they can spot one of Balanchine's signature touches occurring where Stravinsky has woven Russian melodies into the score. Balanchine choreographed stylized Russian folk movement in these moments.

Notice: folded arms, hands on hips, heel-toe steps, winding patterns for pathways, and in and out braiding while holding hands. These movements all echo Russian folk dances. It's like a scavenger hunt!



Igor Moiseyev Folk Dance Ensemble



Pacific Northwest Ballet.

Photo by Angela Sterling

Kathi Martuza in
The Four Temperaments.



"BLACK & WHITE"

Violin Concerto is one of Balanchine's so-called "Black and white ballets", which are performed without sets and in simple leotards and tights, in order to create a neutral environment and make space for the choreography's conversation with the music. On this page are three of those ballets performed by Oregon Ballet Theatre.



Julia Rowe (foreground) and Olga Krochik in *Square Dance*.



Candace Bouchard, Jordan Kindell, and Adam Hartley in *Agon*.

Photos by Blaine Truitt Covert

THE MUSIC

Pushing Boundaries

Polish-American virtuoso violinist Samuel Dushkin describes the genesis of the chord that opens the *Violin Concerto*. He said that during the winter he saw Mr. Stravinsky in Paris quite often. One day when lunching in a restaurant, Stravinsky took out a piece of paper and wrote down a chord and asked



The "passport chord" is heard at the beginning of every movement, each time in a different configuration.

if it could be played. Dushkin replied, "I had never seen a chord with such an enormous stretch, from the E to the top A, and I said 'No.' Stravinsky said sadly 'Quel dommage' (what a pity). After I got home, I tried it, and, to my astonishment, I found that in that register, the stretch of the eleventh was relatively easy to play, and the sound fascinated me. I telephoned Stravinsky at once to tell him that it could be done. When the concerto was finished, more than six months later, I understood his disappointment when I first said 'No.' This chord, in a different dress, begins each of the four movements. Stravinsky himself calls it his 'passport' to that concerto." (Houston Symphony)

- Listen to [a recording of Samuel Dushkin playing Stravinsky's Violin Concerto](#) embedded within the article.
- Those familiar with reading music can listen while following along with [the score](#).



Samuel Dushkin and Igor Stravinsky, c.1930 Sketch by Hilda Weiner



Nelly Kovalev is the newly appointed concertmaster of the Eugene Symphony, concertmaster of the Oregon Ballet Theater Orchestra, member of the Portland Opera and a regular substitute with the Oregon Symphony since 2005. She served as a full-time member of the Oregon Symphony during the 2017-2018 season.

Competition and virtuosity

During the student performance, Ms. Kovalev (above) will share her experience with Stravinsky's music. She will help us explore what part competition has to do with virtuosity in her work as a violinist. Ms. Kovalev said, "I had to compete in a lot of competitions and auditions from a very young age to get to this spot in my career, where I have the opportunity to perform this concerto with an orchestra professionally."

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

Bacchanal: A wildly spirited dance

Choreographer: The artist who composes dances

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

Competition: The act of trying to outdo another. It can also be an event where people compete, resulting in level placement or winners and losers

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.

Pas de deux: A dance for two people

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.

Ranked: A grading system that places people in an order of skill, highest to lowest

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)

Virtuosity: Great skill

Words to know from the GLOSSARY for National Core Arts:

Dance STANDARDS

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

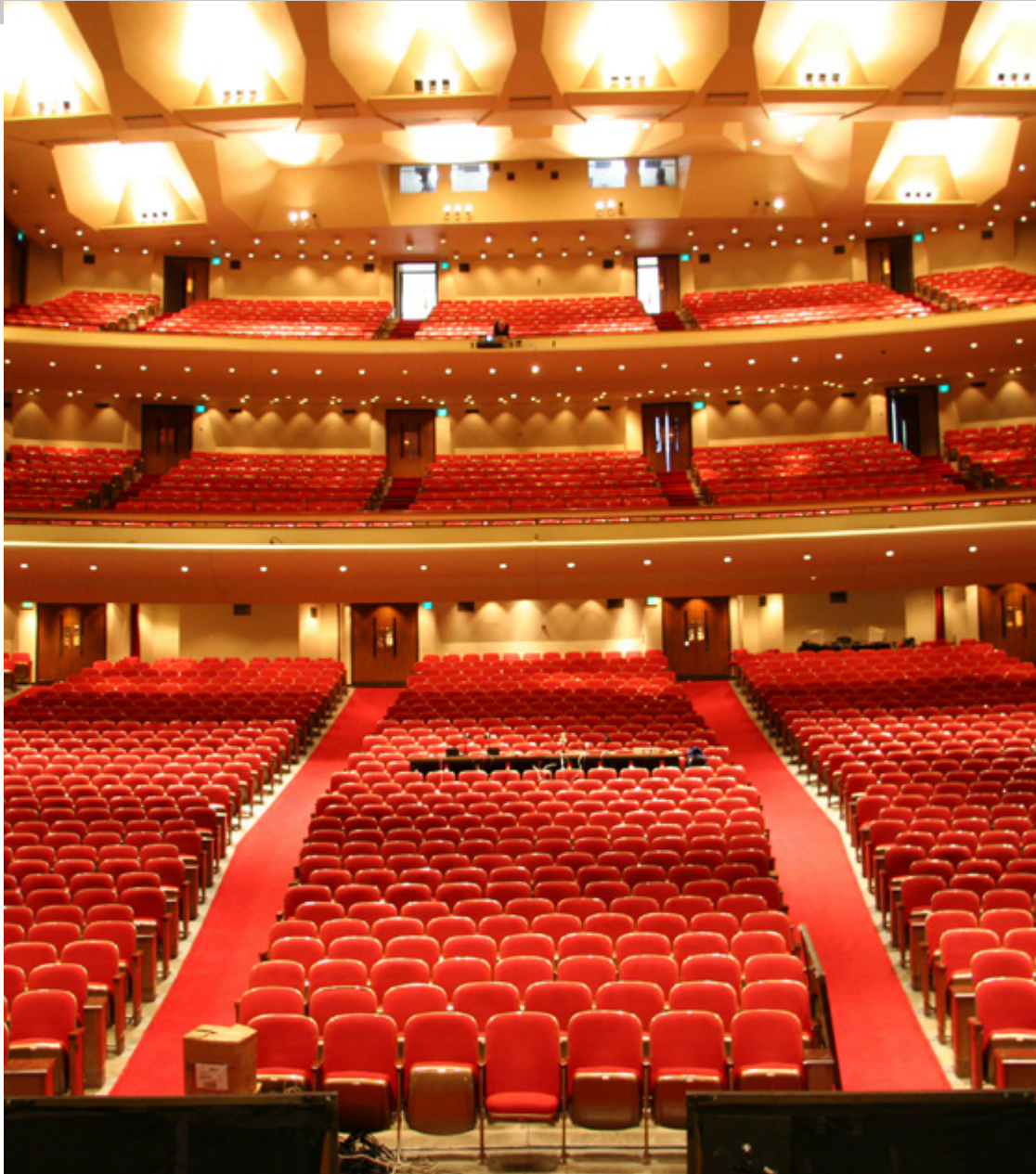
DO dress neatly as a sign of respect to the artists and the theater.

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.



WHAT TO KNOW ON THE DAY OF THE SHOW

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

The doors to the Keller Auditorium will open 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 printed tickets for this show—the usher has your registration information. You will be directed, in an email a few days before the show, to enter through door A or B. Please tell the door usher your group's school name so that you can hear which aisle you will be seated in. Homeschools should also know the organizer's name as well. An usher will direct you to your seat. Please leave backpacks behind—if you must bring them, the ushers will ask that they be left in the lobby of your seating level. You will be asked to secure your seat before visiting restrooms.