



 Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre
Teacher's Handbook

A Midsummer Night's Dream

**A Teacher's Handbook for
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's Production**

of

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Scenic and Costume Design by **Martin Pakledinaz**
Music by **Felix Mendelssohn**

and

Serenade

Music by **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

Choreography by George Balanchine

Student Matinee Sponsor



Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's Arts Education programs are supported by major grants from the following:

*Allegheny Regional Asset District
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts*

The Hearst Foundation Sponsoring the William Randolph Hearst Endowed Fund for Arts Education

Additional support is provided by: Alcoa Foundation, Allegheny County, Bayer Foundation, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Duquesne Light Company, Frick Fund of the Buhl Foundation, Grable Foundation, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, The Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation, Milton G. Hulme Charitable Foundation, Lazarus-Macy's Fund of the Federated Foundation, Matthews Educational and Charitable Foundation, McFeely-Rogers Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, William V. and Catherine A. McKinney Charitable Foundation, Howard and Nell E. Miller Foundation, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, The Rockwell Foundation, and the James M. and Lucy K. Schoonmaker Foundation.

Edited by: Carol Meeder – Director of Arts Education
April 2004

INTRODUCTION

Dear Educator,

We all learn from the world in which we live. As a professional ballet company Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre has an obligation to present both the traditions and innovations of our art that nurture love and appreciation for it as well as an understanding that dance is a living art that grows and changes as people do.

No one person in dance history has accomplished this goal as completely as George Balanchine. During this 100th anniversary year of his birth we join in celebrating his talent and the revolutionary innovations that influenced not only ballet, but also American musical theater and Hollywood films. The several generations of dancers he personally trained continue to pass on the techniques and high standards of his legacy.

By carefully crafting his programs, Balanchine also educated the sensibilities of his audience to appreciate dance for its own sake, not only as part of a story. This spring program presents a ballet to illustrate each of these forms: Act I of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the first story ballet with Balanchine's original choreography and *Serenade*, one of his most revered masterpieces of pure dance. Since Act I of *Midsummer* presents the complete Shakespeare story, we took this opportunity to include *Serenade*. These ballets are a perfect opportunity for your students to compare and contrast the two dance forms.

By combining the masterpieces of Balanchine, Shakespeare, Mendelssohn, and Tchaikovsky on this program, we hope that you will use the information in this Teacher's Handbook as a starting point to encourage your students' exploration of men and women whose genius has created works of art that have given us not only enjoyment, but also a way in which people of many cultures can find common ground for understanding.

Happy Birthday, Mr. B!

Terrence S. Orr
Artistic Director

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is designed for teachers whose students will be attending Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's special school performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The activities and exercises included in this handbook are designed to prepare your students for the performance and to encourage critical thinking on the aesthetics of ballet. The discussion questions do not have right or wrong answers. Rather, they engage thinking in a new direction and illustrate that dance is a form of language.

The activities have been carefully created to be integrated into classroom discussion. Several of the activities have been adapted from those designed by teachers who have participated in previous seasons' programs. In their evaluations, these teachers observed that those students who had received some preparation for the performance demonstrated a higher level of interest and response.

The activities in this handbook are grouped according to narrative, technical and choreographic elements. There is also a section that suggests ideas for follow-up activities. Each activity is designed to meet one or more of the stated objectives. *We know that you will not be limited by the suggestions in this book and that you will need to adapt these activities to meet your individual and instructional needs.*

There are many opportunities in the suggested classroom activities for interdisciplinary studies. Physical Education classes can participate by teaching basic ballet positions and introducing general fitness and nutrition to understand the strength and stamina that a dancer must develop in order to perform. While art classes may create beautiful scenery and costume sketches, Tech Ed and Family and Consumer Sciences departments may work to translate those sketches into three-dimensional scenery and costumes.

How to Use This Handbook, cont'.

Below is information related to the grouping of activities in this Handbook. The "Activity" pages are designed to be copied and may be used alone as an activity or in support of another activity.

PLOT, THEME AND CHARACTER

Dramatic structure in its strictest definition does not exist in ballet, though a story ballet does share the elements of plot, theme, and character. The exercises relating to these elements focus on familiarizing students with the story and characters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*..

The Synopsis is the basis for our activities in this section. Act I including the Epilogue incorporates all of the story elements from Shakespeare's play into the ballet.

MUSIC, MOVEMENT AND MIME

Music and movement are the essence of dance and in classical ballet there is the added dimension of pantomime, gestures which can be literal or symbolic. In this section you will find activities designed to acquaint your students with the ballet's music and to introduce them to the choreographic process.

The CD accompanying this handbook has excerpts from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture and Incidental Music and the Overture to *Athalie*.

COSTUMES, SCENERY AND LIGHTING

In his book "Perceiving the Arts" Dennis Spore suggests that dance is essentially a visual and theatrical experience and part of our response is to those theatrical elements of dance that are manifested in the performance.

In dance as in theater, technical elements come together to create the spectacle of a production; therefore, we should look at costumes, scenery and lighting as an important part of dance. The activities in this section should encourage students to consider these technical elements of producing a dance performance.

Academic Standards

The *Pennsylvania Assessment Through Themes, PATT* Project, includes proposed academic standards for the Arts and Humanities, informing the teacher what students should know and be able to do in both the performing and visual arts, in addition to understanding the arts in relation to the humanities. Below we have included the Dance Content Standards developed by the National Dance Association and used in the *PATT* Project, in addition to the components that yield an overall knowledge of the Arts and Humanities.

DANCE CONTENT STANDARDS:

1. Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance
2. Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures
3. Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning
4. Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance
5. Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods
6. Making connections between dance and healthful living
7. Making connections between dance and other disciplines

Knowledge of the Arts and Humanities incorporates carefully developed and integrated components such as:

- Application of problem solving skills
- Extensive practice in the comprehension of abstract concepts
- Application of technical skills in practical production and performance situations
- Comprehension and application of the creative process
- Development and practice of creative thinking skills

<http://www.pde.psu.edu/pasa/artsassess.pdf>

This handbook is designed to aid you in your task of enabling your students to experience the arts while at the same time having a useful, educational experience. The content and activities within this book focus on at least one of the above content standards and can be used as components to achieve knowledge in the Arts and Humanities as a whole.

Objectives

The experience of attending a ballet performance will help your students develop an appreciation of their cultural environment. Through the activities outlined in this handbook, the student should be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate how a story can be translated into a ballet.
- 2) Demonstrate how a choreographer uses music, movement and mime to help create a ballet.
- 3) Demonstrate how costumes, scenery and lighting help support plot, theme and character in a ballet.
- 4) Write a thoughtful, informed critique of a performance.

What to Expect at the Benedum Center

It is a special privilege to attend a live performance at the Benedum Center. Polite behavior allows everyone, including the dancers, to fully enjoy and concentrate on the performance. Discuss with your students the following aspects of audience etiquette:

1. Once inside the Benedum Center you will not be permitted to leave and re-enter the building.
2. Before being seated, you will be given a program. It includes a synopsis, historic information on the ballet, the cast and biographies of the dancers and other PBT personnel.
3. Be sure to sit in the section assigned to your school. An usher will be happy to help you find where your school's seats are located.
4. Talking to your neighbor in a normal speaking voice is fine prior to the performance and during intermissions. During the performance, however, even the softest whisper can be distracting to those nearby. **DO NOT TALK DURING THE PERFORMANCE.**
5. There will be one intermission. This allows the dancers time to rest or make elaborate costume changes, the production staff time to make major set changes and students time to stretch their legs and use the rest rooms.
6. The taking of pictures is prohibited during a performance, so it is best to leave your cameras at home.
7. Applause is the best way to communicate with the dancers. It tells them that you are enjoying the performance. If you see something you like, feel free to applaud!
8. Remain with your class. The Benedum Center is very large, and it is easy to get lost.
9. Chewing gum, food and drink are not acceptable in the theater.
10. The Benedum Center is considered an Historic Landmark. There are a lot of different things that the students can look for when they arrive. In the next section, there are different items listed with some interesting facts about each.

Things to Look for at the Benedum Center

1. The Marquees - When you arrive at the theater, note the marquees on the front and the Penn Avenue sides of the theater. They were designed in 1928 to showcase the "new" electric lights. By the terms of the Historic Landmark agreement there is only limited reference to the new name of the theater – Benedum Center. See if your students can find all of the references to the Benedum Center and to the original name, the Stanley Theatre.

2. Grand Lobby - All but one of the murals on the ceiling of the Grand Lobby were destroyed over the years. Celeste Parrendo, the painter who recreated them, worked from photographs of the designs and from one well-preserved mural for the colors. Much of her work was done with Q-Tips. She tried to lie on her back and paint as Michelangelo did with the Sistine Chapel; however, the blood ran out of her hand, and she couldn't paint. She quickly found ways to kneel or stand on the scaffolding in order to finish her painting.

3. Orchestra Pit - It is divided into two sections, each of which can be raised or lowered by the built-in hydraulic lift. When we have a smaller orchestra, half of the pit is raised and additional seating is installed. If an orchestra is not required, the entire pit is raised for seating.

4. Proscenium Arch - The opening around the stage is the proscenium. In accordance with the guidelines of the Historic Landmark restoration, the original elaborately painted plaster arch has been restored. (You can see the top of the arch from the balcony.) An exception to the restoration guidelines was made for the wooden acoustical arch that your students will see. The panels in the arch can be adjusted to change the acoustics of the theater, or they can be opened to accommodate vocalists, actors or musicians.

5. Chandelier - Believe it or not this beautiful centerpiece to the theater's elaborate dome weighs 2 tons or 4,000 pounds and has over 500,000 pieces. When it is cleaned, the chandelier is lowered to a certain point and then scaffolding is built around it. Each crystal is washed in soapy water and replaced. Enough to make you put off the spring cleaning!

6. The Stage - This is the third largest stage in the country. The first is the Metropolitan Opera in New York City and the second is the Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington. The full stage measures 144 feet wide by 78 feet deep. The performance space that you will see is 56 feet by 56 feet. The wooden floor is covered with marley, a black rubber-like, non-skid surface.

History of the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre performs in the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts. Built in 1928, the theater was originally called the Stanley Theater and was constructed in conjunction with the Clark Office Building. Over the years, entertainers such as Orson Welles, Frank Sinatra and a host of big bands and rock-and-roll groups have performed at the Stanley.

When the theater opened, there was a Wurlitzer organ in the orchestra pit that had been purchased for \$125,000. It was used for sing-a-longs and silent movies until 1936. That year, the St. Patrick's Day flood destroyed the organ. The water rose to the edge of the balcony before leveling off. Three men were trapped in the theater for three days before being rescued in pontoon boats by the police.

Two other companies owned the Stanley prior to the Benedum Foundation. In 1976, the Cinemette Corporation bought it. Then, DiCesare Engler Productions purchased the building in 1977 and used it for rock concerts until 1982.

In 1984, The Benedum Foundation bought the run-down theater and decided to restore it to its 1928 grandeur. The budget for the project was \$42 million. This figure includes both the restoration and the purchase of the property behind the theater.

Because the building is considered an Historic Landmark, special rules had to be followed in the restoration. They could not make any major structural changes to the building unless given special permission. The colors, fabrics and the materials used had to be as close to the original as possible. The painters scraped down through the layers of paint to find the original colors. The colors of the carpeting were discovered when a workman found a small piece in a heating duct. The murals on the ceiling of the Grand Lobby were restored using photographs.

Every effort was made to have as many of the materials as possible made in Pittsburgh or Pennsylvania. The carpet was woven in England, but the drapery fabric was made in York, Pennsylvania on one of the two remaining jacquard looms in the United States. It took seven weeks to make the 400 yards needed.

The architects were given permission to add the wooden acoustical arch that is directly in front of the original proscenium. It has special panels that can be moved to change the acoustics of the hall to accommodate vocalists, instrumentalists or actors.

History of the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts (*continued*)

The size of the Stanley stage and the dressing rooms were deemed woefully inadequate; therefore, the architects requested special permission to add a support building. Permission was given and the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust purchased the block of land adjacent to the theater for the addition. The additional space also allowed the construction of one of the largest stages in the country. The first is the Metropolitan Opera House stage in Lincoln Center, New York City. The second is the stage at the Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington, Indiana.

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera and the Pittsburgh Dance Council are all constituents of the Benedum Center and perform there regularly.

What is Ballet?

Ballet is a way of telling a story using music and dance instead of words. Ballet consists of movements that have been developed over the centuries. Classical ballet is found all around the world: Europe, the United States, China, Japan, Russia and South America.

Early classical ballets such as *Giselle* and *La Sylphide* were created during the Romantic Movement in the first half of the 19th century. This movement influenced art, music and ballet. It was concerned with the supernatural world of spirits and magic. It often showed women as passive and fragile. These themes are reflected in the ballets of the time and are called "romantic ballets."

Ballets created during the latter half of the 19th century such as *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker* and *The Sleeping Beauty* represent "classical ballet" in its grandest form. Their main purpose was to display the classical techniques to the fullest. Complicated sequences that show off demanding steps, leaps and turns are choreographed into the story.

Ballets created during the 20th century are called "contemporary ballets." They do not always have a definite story line. George Balanchine referred to this type of ballet as "plotless." They often have a theme and concentrate on emotions and atmosphere, attempting to arouse feelings in the audience. Emotions and reactions differ from person to person when viewing this style of ballet.

There are also new ballets which are being created that are patterned after traditional ballets in their structure and form. These ballets incorporate contemporary choreographic innovations while using classical forms and traditional stories and fairy tales such as Ben Stevenson's *Cinderella*, *Alice In Wonderland* and *Cleopatra*. PBT's production of *The Nutcracker* choreographed in 2002 is Terrence Orr's first full-length ballet.

What Are Pointe Shoes?

Founder of New York City Ballet and famous choreographer George Balanchine once said that if no pointe existed, he would not be a choreographer. Pointe shoes allow a ballerina to create the illusion of lightness and to project an increased sense of daring. Without pointe shoes, much of the magical quality of ballet would be lost.

Ballerinas began dancing on pointe between 1815 and 1830 using soft shoes reinforced by stuffed toes and starch. Since then, pointe dancing and the toe shoe have evolved considerably. Today pointe shoes provide comfort and support for a dancer, whether she is on pointe or in a flat position.

The contemporary pointe shoe is handmade by American and European manufacturers. The tip is made of a hardened box or block made of densely packed layers of fabric and paper hardened by glue. This box of glue and fabric encases, protects and supports the toes and gives them a small platform on which to perch. The rest of the shoe is made of a leather outer sole, a sturdy insole and a supple shank. The side and top of the shoe are covered with a cotton lining and an outer layer of satin, canvas or leather.

Dancers don't just put on pointe shoes and begin dancing. Selecting and preparing shoes is a very involved process. Dancers usually have a favorite cobbler who makes their shoes to very exacting specifications, including measurements, materials and finishing elements. Dancers know their cobbler by the mark put on the bottom of the shoe. But because of the handmade nature of each pair of shoes, no two pairs are ever identical. To ensure a proper fit, a dancer must have a fitting for each new pair of shoes.

Once a dancer has selected new pointe shoes, she must prepare them for dancing. It takes an hour or longer to "ready" a shoe for dancing. Each dancer has her own personal way of preparing her shoes. Dancers will darn the shoes to provide traction and to prevent the satin from fraying. Some pound the point with a hammer or squeeze the box in a door to soften it. Some cut the satin off the tips and use a carpenter's file to rough up the sole. To mold the shoes and prolong wear, dancers line the inside with floor wax or shellac. Finally, the ballerina attaches elastic and ribbons to hold the shoe in place.

Dancers break in shoes by wearing them to class and rehearsal. Once they are broken in, a dancer sets the pair aside for a performance and uses another pair. Dancers may change their pointe shoes several times during a performance depending on the range and difficulty of the ballet. Each female dancer goes through 100-120 pairs of pointe shoes each season at the Pittsburgh Ballet. It's no wonder the Ballet spends \$80,000 on pointe shoes each year!

Getting to Know Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre Apprentice Kalle Paavola



Dancer **Kalle Paavola** began dancing with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre in this current 2003-2004 season.

I grew up in a wonderful home where my parents were always along side me to help guide me and teach me how to work hard and be responsible. They always told me to do whatever would make me happy. When I was young I always looked up to them both as such amazing role models. I remember telling my mother that I wanted to be a ballerina just like her. I grew up in a great atmosphere where I was seeing ballet all the time and probably learning it unconsciously.

I participated in summer programs, beginning at the age of ten; and to further pursue my dream of becoming a professional dancer, I moved to Pittsburgh.

Dance is hard work and can be discouraging at times. I have had my share of frustrations but despite all of that, when I am on stage I remember why I love to dance.

Hometown: Flint, Michigan

Training: I was born and raised in a ballet home, training from my mother, a former professional dancer. After I graduated from high school I came to Pittsburgh to do one year in the grad program with PBT. At the end of that experience I was offered the opportunity to be an Apprentice for this year. Next year I will be a professional member of the Corps de Ballet.

Favorite role: So far I'd say "The Other Woman" from Derek Dean's work *Hungry Heart* to Bruce Springsteen's music.

Favorite Choreographer: George Balanchine

Favorite music: Classic rock, oldies, alternative, basically anything...even rap...except country.

Hobbies: Painting, scrapbooking, and singing

Favorite food: My family's homemade Italian spaghetti.

Any pets? Willow, at home with my parents. She is a Persian cat – beautiful!

Other interests besides ballet: I love working with children and have a passion to help them. I also take college classes on the side to keep myself learning new things all the time.

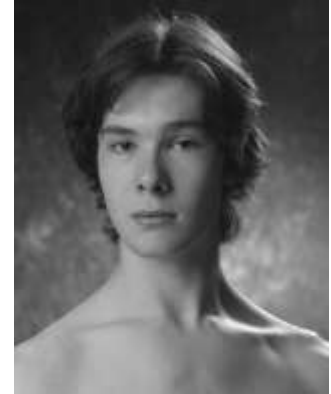
Future plans: I eventually would like to go to college to major in elementary education, possibly child psychology. I would also like to have a family as well, but that's in the distant future.

Finish this statement, "People may be surprised to know that..." My mother, Denise Mitchell Paavola, was a dancer with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.

Getting to Know Pittsburgh Ballet Apprentice Ross Clarke

Ross Clarke has been dancing with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre since the 2002-2003 season.

I started dancing when I was four years old. My older brother had just started school and I had nothing to do at home, so I started taking ballet and karate. I got my black belt in karate but had to stop those classes when I went to the Dance School of Scotland. My brothers also are dancers and my Mum has a black belt in karate. I'm glad I stuck with ballet, though.



I then went on to train for three years at The Royal Ballet School in London. During this time I got to dance with both the Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet, even on tour. We toured to Stuttgart, Germany and Salt Lake City, Utah for the Winter Olympics. That was my first time in America.

Hometown: Airdrie, Scotland

Training: The Dance School of Scotland and The Royal Ballet School

First Professional job: Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. I have been an Apprentice for the last two years and next year, will be a member of the Corps de Ballet.

Greatest influence: Carlos Acosta. He was a principal dancer at the Royal Ballet while I was studying there. He inspired me to take ballet seriously. In my opinion he is the best dancer there is right now.

Family: Mum, Dad, and four brothers – three of them are dancers.

Favorite vacation: Returning home to Scotland and London last year with my girlfriend Elizabeth.

Favorite role: Pas de deux in Sir Kenneth MacMillain's *Concerto*

Favorite music: Shostakovich, REM, Manic Street Preachers, Tenacious D

Any pets? A cat named Lee.

What three things can always be found in your refrigerator? Chocolate milk, vegetables, and always something mouldy!

Other interests besides ballet: Playing the guitar

Finish this statement, "People may be surprised to know that..." I have a black belt in Karate.

Serenade

The woven complexities of the captivatingly beautiful *Serenade* disguise the fresh and delightful story of its origins, a beginning that played a significant role in the seeds from which the renowned New York City Ballet grew. This testimony to the road a dancer must travel from student novice to ballerina was choreographed by the unequalled George Balanchine. In his own words from *Balanchine's New Complete Stories of the Great Ballets*, he expresses his feelings of the relationship between music and dance, particularly this piece:

“Named after its music – Tchaikovsky’s ‘Serenade in C major for String Orchestra [Opus 48]’ – ‘Serenade’ tells its story musically and choreographically, without any extraneous narrative. Because Tchaikovsky’s score, though it was not composed for the ballet, has in its danceable four movements different qualities suggestive of different emotions and human situations, parts of the ballet seem to have a story: the apparently ‘pure’ dance takes on a kind of plot. But this plot, inherent in the score, contains many stories – it is many things to many listeners to the music, and many things to many people who see the ballet.

To tell a story about something is simply a very human way of saying that we understand it. Making a ballet is a choreographer’s way of showing how he understands a piece of music, not in words, not in narrative form (unless he has in mind a particular story), but in dancing.”

Balanchine always made it clear that his plotless ballets were created for the beauty of the movement and its relationship to the music.

This *Serenade* is a sumptuous piece for string orchestra. Tchaikovsky told his benefactor Mme von Meck that he was writing a piece that was "entirely heartfelt." The four movements express a wide range of emotions with an amazing breadth of tonal colors and nuances. *Sonatina*, *Waltz*, *Temo Russo (Russian Dance)* and *Elegy* are performed without interruption. The last two movements are actually in reverse order from the musical score. Balanchine choreographed the first three movements for his students in 1934, but in 1940 he set the fourth movement, *Russian Dance*, for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Since he wanted the ballet to end on a somber, quiet note as originally choreographed, he inserted this vigorous movement before the *Elegy*.

Before its evolution to a sophisticated ballet for highly trained dancers, it had innocent beginnings as an instructional piece for young dancers to learn how to perform on a stage. In 1933 a young and bold Lincoln Kirstein invited choreographer George Balanchine to come to America and start an American ballet company. Balanchine responded, "But

first, a school." In *American Dancer* (later *Dance Magazine*), the School of American Ballet (SAB, the official school of the New York City Ballet), was advertised as giving "A complete education in the art of dance, toward the creation of an American Ballet Company." A mere ten weeks after the school opened its doors Balanchine began work in his advanced class on a piece called *Serenade*, his first American ballet. To give these students some idea of how dancing on stage differs from classwork, he used the steps they were learning, but "*Serenade* had little to do with 'steps' and everything to do with dancing." The dramatic moments came by happenstance: a girl arrives late to class and hurries to take her place; another girl falls as she leaves the stage and is reduced to tears. The choreographer never knew exactly how many students would be in class on any given night, so the ballet begins with a group of seventeen girls. In the second class it continued with nine, and in the third, six. A young male dancer shows up, then another. Each is incorporated into the whole, magnificently and yet quietly. According to critic, Edwin Denby –

"He had to find a way for Americans to look grand and noble, yet not be embarrassed about it. The Russian way is for each dancer to 'feel' what he is expressing. The Americans weren't ready to do that. By concentrating on form and the whole ensemble, Balanchine was able to bypass the uncertainties of the individual dancer. The thrill of 'Serenade' depends on the sweetness of the bond between all the young dancers. The dancing and the behavior are as exact as in a strict ballet class. The bond is made by the music, by the hereditary classic steps, and by a collective look the dancers in action have unconsciously – their American young look. That local look had never before been used as a dramatic effect in classic ballet."

Serenade premiered for the first time on July 9, 1934 on an outdoor stage in White Plains, New York. The first performance was rained out after the first moments, but the next day they tried again. The audience was at least as large and more notable. The performance was a huge success.

Serenade remained one of Balanchine's favorite ballets, which he performed and transformed and gave to many companies. It became the signature piece of his New York City Ballet and continued to be part of the repertoire even when many of his other ballets were forgotten. Dance writer Walter Terry captured *Serenade* perfectly in this review:

"[Serenade] presents that beauty which is the province of dance alone, the beauty of highly trained bodies moving rhythmically through space, experiencing adventures in design, exploring the air in leaps, exploiting the endless possibilities of movement sequence. There is beauty also in the almost intangible theme of 'Serenade,' in the communication of romantic searching, of waiting, of longing, of finding."

CHARACTERS:

Puck	– Imp, Oberon's assistant
Titania	– Queen of the Fairies
Oberon	– King of the Fairies
Hermia	– in love with Lysander
Lysander	– in love with Hermia
Demetrius	– in love with Hermia
Helena	– in love with Demetrius
Bottom	– weaver, leader of the tradesmen
Hippolyta	– Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus
Theseus	– Duke of Athens

A forest near Athens, one Midsummer Eve

In a forest near the duke's palace Oberon, King of the Fairies, and Titania, his queen, quarrel over the Indian child they both want. Oberon orders Puck to bring the flower pierced by Cupid's arrow (which causes anyone coming under its influence to fall in love with the first person the eyes behold), and while Titania is asleep and unknowing, he casts the flower's spell over her.

Meanwhile, Helena, wandering in the woods, meets Demetrius, whom she loves but who does not love her. Demetrius rejects her and goes his way. Oberon watches and tells Puck to use the flower on Demetrius that he may return Helena's affection.

Another couple, Hermia and Lysander, very much in love, are also wandering in the forest. They become separated. Puck, eager to carry out Oberon's orders, mistakenly anoints Lysander. Helena appears, and Lysander, under the flower's spell, at once and to her amazement tells her how much he loves her.

Hermia now returns. She is astonished and then dismayed to see Lysander paying attention only to Helena. Puck manages to bring Demetrius, too, under the flower's spell, much to the delight of Helena, who doesn't care for Lysander at all.

Demetrius and Lysander, now both in love with Helena begin to quarrel over her. Puck, at Oberon's order, has separated Bottom, a weaver, from his companions and transformed his head into that of an ass and placed him at the sleeping Titania's feet. Awakening, Titania sees Bottom, thinks him fair, and pays him close and loving attention. At last Oberon, his anger over, has Bottom sent away and releases Titania from her spell.

Hermia now gets no attention, Helena too much. The men, completely at odds, quarrel seriously and begin to fight. Puck, by his magic, causes them to separate, lose one another and wander apart in the forest until exhausted, they fall asleep, with Puck arranging for Helena to fall asleep beside Demetrius and Lysander (his spell removed) by Hermia.

The Duke and Hippolyta discover the lovers asleep in the forest, awaken them, find their differences resolved and proclaim a triple wedding for themselves and the two couples.

We return to the demesne of Oberon and Titania, who are now reunited and at peace. And at last Puck, having put order into disorder, sweeps away the remnants of the night's doings. The fireflies twinkle in the night and reclaim the forest.

-Adapted from *101 Stories of the Great Ballets* by George Balanchine and Francis Mason.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born into the Elizabethan Age in England. Queen Elizabeth I reigned during most of his life and later, King James I. When he began writing, it was an optimistic time for England with wartime triumphs and economic success. It soon turned to pessimism due to serious social and economic problems and the constant threat of illness and death from the plague. Writings of the time reflect good and bad characteristics of the social climate, but what distinguishes William Shakespeare from other writers is the keen understanding of human nature which enabled him to transcend the time and place of a play, revealing in his dramatic situations qualities that relate to all human beings. As a playwright, he wrote comedies, histories, and tragedies. His poetry took the forms of narrative poems and sonnets. His works have influenced language and vocabulary for our culture as well as his own. He changed words, invented them, and borrowed some from other languages. Some familiar phrases he originated are *fair play*, *foregone conclusion*, and *catch cold*. He created words that are common now such as *lonely*, *eventful*, *bump* and *assassination*, but were new to Elizabethans.

Born in the town of Stratford on the Avon River, about seventy-five miles northwest of London England, William Shakespeare was the third of eight children. His two older siblings died of the plague. His father's family had been farmers, and his mother's family owned the land that the Shakespeares farmed. His father John left the farm, moved to Stratford, and became a glove maker. Developing an interest in politics, he rose to bailiff (mayor) of Stratford. John and Mary Shakespeare provided a good life and well-rounded education for their children. As an adult, William had wide knowledge of many subjects, demonstrated in his plays with accuracy and depth of understanding in the variety of scenarios he created.

At eighteen years of age he married Anne Hathaway, a neighbor's daughter. They had three children and not long after, he went off to London in search of a career as an actor. His career flourished as he wrote plays, acted, and became a stockholder for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a professional theater company. In 1599, he and six associates became owners of the new Globe Theater in a London suburb. When Queen Elizabeth I died and her cousin James I ascended the throne, this king actively supported the theater. He issued a royal license to the Lord Chamberlain's Men allowing them to call themselves the King's Men. In return for this license they performed regularly for the King at his court. During the last eight years of his life he spent most of his time with his family in Stratford and less in London.

A Midsummer Night's Dream was written in 1594 when Shakespeare was living in London, but it reflects much of the bucolic life he knew as a boy growing up in Stratford.

Stratford was a busy market town where holidays were celebrated with pageants and shows. Large fairs that were held each year attracted visitors from other counties and traveling troupes of professional actors. One special celebration was Midsummer Night, the eve of June 24th. "Frequently the characters in these pageants were fairies, goblins, witches and devils who could cast spells, change people into birds and animals and do all kinds of other extraordinary things." In addition, "midsummer madness", a malady that was blamed on the long hot days of summer, caused one to imagine strange things and behave in peculiar ways often related to these folk stories and superstitions.

When Shakespeare and his fellow actors first performed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1595 the audience knew to expect a dreamlike fantasy and fairytale. The impish Puck acknowledges this expectation in the final lines of the play spoken to the audience:

*If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream, ...* Act V Scene 1

Shakespeare was well educated in Greek and Roman history, mythology and language, which may explain the setting in an enchanted forest on the outskirts of Athens. However the character of the play, including the types of plants and animals depicted, was more in keeping with the English countryside. Two examples are Oberon's description of the beautiful bower where Titania sleeps, and the fairies' song:

*I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet muskroses and with eglantine.
There sleeps Titania sometimes of the night
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight; ...* Act II Scene 1

*You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong,
Come not near our Fairy Queen. ...* Act II Scene 2

About the Composer

Felix Mendelssohn

Jacob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847) was born in Hamburg, Germany. The family moved to Berlin when Felix was two. Both his mother and father came from prominent, wealthy, and well-educated families. His grandfather, Moses Mendelssohn, was an important philosopher who had championed religious tolerance in German culture. His father and uncle founded a banking firm, J. & A. Mendelssohn, which existed until the Nazis dissolved it in 1938.

Felix was the second of four children born to Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn. He and his sister Fanny, who was four years older, were very close. Fanny was also a very talented musician and composer but in nineteenth century high society it was not acceptable for a woman to have a career so her musical ambitions were discouraged after childhood. All of their lives, however, Felix relied on Fanny for her inspiration and opinions. They performed together; and Fanny continued to compose but not professionally.

The Mendelssohn's privileged status afforded the children the best musical training and general education available. Felix Mendelssohn was a child prodigy who composed and performed on the piano even as a young child. In his first public performance at age nine, he accompanied two professional adult horn players in a trio. His childhood composition notebook still exists, containing sets of variations and sonata form movements both for piano and for piano and violin. His earliest datable composition was performed in Berlin when he was ten years old. The next year he was given a libretto for a *Singspiel*, a musical production similar to a musical comedy. As an example of the unusual advantages he had because of his family's position, history records that, "After a private reading, the *Singspiel* was performed fully staged with orchestra on 3 February 1821, the composer's 12th birthday. For this event a special theatre was constructed in a hall of the Mendelssohn's home and the orchestra was recruited from the royal Kapelle [the King's chapel]." From then on, elaborate musicales were held at the Mendelssohn home on Sundays. The cultural elite of Berlin including musicians, artists, poets, writers, and university professors attended these events, many coming to marvel at the abilities of this child composer. He was also a talented artist who created meticulous drawings of scenic landscapes by the time he was thirteen.

In his short life of thirty-eight years Felix Mendelssohn wrote over two hundred compositions. He traveled extensively through Europe and Britain, meeting and working with many of the most famous musicians, composers, writers, and painters of the time. He married at age twenty-six, having already become an internationally famous composer. His was a non-stop life of composing, performing, conducting and teaching. One of the foremost orchestra conductors of the 1830s and 40s, he contributed to a renewed interest in the works of J. S. Bach and worked to improve the status of orchestra musicians.

A Midsummer Night's Dream Felix was an avid classicist, studying Greek and Roman language, culture, and literature. At the age of eleven, he wrote his own epic poem about the activities of his younger brother Paul. He also read Shakespeare voraciously, since it had recently been translated into German. Even as children the Mendelssohns were fond of Shakespeare, giving family performances of his plays. Felix and Fanny particularly liked *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 1826 he wrote to his sister that he would soon begin to "dream the Midsummer Night's Dream." That was in July, and by August he had completed the concert overture. He was only seventeen. The premiere of the work was at the Mendelssohn home where Felix and Fanny performed it as a piano duet for the famous pianist Moscheles. The public orchestral debut came in 1827. This brilliant composition established Felix Mendelssohn as a leading composer in his day.

He was more conservative in his composition than many of his contemporaries, preferring to model himself after Bach, Handel, Haydn, and Mozart. One writer states that his "romantic imagination found its fullest expression in his exploration of the fanciful." This light, capricious, scherzando writing became the signature of his style. He used unfamiliar colorful nuances in the orchestration and catchy melodies that were able to tell the story without other explanation. "He refused to elaborate a detailed programmatic interpretation of his music, preferring to leave that task to the listener, a stance that set him apart from other 19th Century composers of programmatic music such as Berlioz and Liszt."

This concert overture was complete, but seventeen years later the Prussian monarch Friedrich Wilhelm IV extended a royal commission for Mendelssohn to write incidental music for three plays, one of which was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He composed twelve pieces and a finale. Instead of composing all new music, he used his brilliant concert overture as a source of colorful motifs that identified many of the characters from the story. This new production by Ludwig Tieck, who had translated many Shakespearean works into German, was premiered at the royal court at Potsdam in October 1843 with public performances the following week. Later, after the English premiere, a critic wrote that Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was "sparkling with genius and rich in effect...the whole indicating that the musician has studied the poet, entered into his thoughts and even caught some of his imagination."

About the Music

When New York City Ballet was looking for a springtime production that produced the same benefits for the company as the winter production of *The Nutcracker* such as family appeal, many roles for children from the ballet school, and financial sustenance, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seemed to be a good choice. George Balanchine was well acquainted with Shakespeare's works from the Russian translations that were widely read and performed as he was growing up. As a child of eight, Balanchine had a minor role as an elf in the play. When creating the ballet, however, he was quick to say that his inspiration was Mendelssohn's music and not the play itself.

He wrote the libretto, not in a literary sense, but by arranging the order of the musical selections. Mendelssohn's concert Overture and Incidental Music were not long enough for a full evening ballet, so Balanchine searched through other Mendelssohn works for pieces that would be complementary and fulfill his vision for the choreography. Balanchine's musicianship was unparalleled for a choreographer. He attended the Petrograd Conservatory of Music for three years while continuing his dancing and was so talented and accomplished that he could have opted for a career as a musician and concert pianist. His ability to arrange the music for many of his ballets, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is very unusual for a choreographer.

The music that Mendelssohn wrote for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* consists of the concert Overture (Opus 21) written in 1826 and twelve pieces of Incidental Music (Opus 61) written in 1843 for the play. Balanchine also chose to include:

Act I

Overture to Athalie Opus 74 (1845)
The Fair Melusine Opus 31 (1833)
The First Walpurgis Night Opus 60 (1832 and 1843)

Act II

Symphony No. 9 for Strings (1823)
Overture to Son and Stranger Opus 89 (1829)

One of the most famous pieces of Mendelssohn's is his *Wedding March* from Act II. It will not be heard in this performance but is included on the enclosed CD to familiarize your students with the music of Felix Mendelssohn.

David Briskin, Music Director and Principal Conductor for Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, gives us some insight into the ballet music and conducting for dance:

Concert Overture and Incidental Music

The concert “Overture”, written when Mendelssohn was seventeen, tells the whole story in musical motifs. It sets the mood, creates the atmosphere, and identifies the characters. The four chords that are heard at the beginning, middle, and end of the overture, create a mysterious peacefulness as would be expected in a forest inhabited by fairies. You will also hear them at the end of the ballet.

The light and capricious scherzo theme associated with Puck, the mischievous elf servant of the fairy king, is heard each time Puck appears on the stage. The light, quick thematic music continues for the fairies, butterflies and bugs.

When Bottom the tradesman is transformed into a donkey, the characteristic “Hee-Haw” bray is heard in the music.

Mendelssohn’s “Incidental Music” for the play, composed seventeen years later, uses all of these themes in various forms throughout. Some critics at the time thought that he had relied too heavily on that “Overture” for thematic material. Why would he not expand on that ideal piece which was already associated with Shakespeare’s play?

The other overtures and choral pieces are not as light and carefree as the “Midsummer” music. They are more dramatic and earthbound, perhaps portraying more human qualities and worldly cares.

Also included are choral pieces set with Shakespeare’s original text. The original score calls for two women’s voices, soprano and mezzo, and a chorus. Over the years the chorus has been a women’s chorus, a boys chorus, or a children’s chorus depending on the preference of the conductor and the availability of the singers. When this music is played and sung, the dancers appearing on stage are two soloists and a chorus of fairies.

Conducting for the Ballet

Coordinating dancers and musicians can be complex, especially if the choreography takes liberties with the tempi or note values of the music. Conducting for Balanchine ballets is enjoyable because Mr. B always respected the composer’s timing and expressive markings. He was extremely attentive to musical values. His philosophy was, “whatever happens on stage has already happened first in the music, and that is why its visual interpretation takes that special shape.” This has been described as “hearing dancing and seeing music.”

Balanchine’s choreography is inspired by great music. Musicians play, and the dancers dance to it, allowing all of the artists to feel equal in presenting a great work.

About the Choreographer

George Balanchine

Georgi Melitonovitch Balanchivadze (1904-1983) was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, the second child of three siblings. His father Meliton Balanchivadze was a musician and composer. As a child Georgi's interests centered around music, reading, and his love for the church. His only acquaintance with ballet was attending his sister's dance recitals. When she auditioned for the Imperial Ballet School a friend suggested that nine year old Georgi should also, since it was a state-supported school and would help with the family's unstable financial situation. He was accepted, and this meant that he would be living away from home. He hated the ballet school so much that he ran away to his aunt's home, but she took him back. He existed in a state of unhappiness until at the age of ten he had an opportunity to perform in *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Maryinsky Theater. Since the Russian ballet was supported by the Tsar's wealth, it was elaborate and extravagant, employing large numbers of people. He then realized the purpose of his class instruction and was inspired with a love of ballet that never diminished.

Shortly after Georgi entered the Imperial Ballet School his father received an appointment as cultural minister of Georgia, requiring the family to move to a distant part of Russia. Georgi never saw his mother or sister again. His father and younger brother Andrei attended his wedding when he was eighteen, but after that he did not see his brother until forty years later when New York City Ballet toured the USSR.

Since his family was gone from his life, the musicians and dancers he worked with became his family. He found solace in his love for the church which inspired duty and obligation that he directed toward music and ballet, the things that gave purpose to his life. By age sixteen he was an accomplished dancer and a budding choreographer. He and his friends formed the Young Ballet with Georgi as their main choreographer.

The Bolshevik Revolution changed Russian life politically, but there was still artistic freedom in ballet. The Young Ballet, some of whom became legendary dancers, found work where they could. Sometimes they hardly had enough money for food. Good fortune arrived in the form of an invitation to join Ballet Russes de Serge Diaghilev. Diaghilev was a ballet impresario whose love of the arts and shrewd business sense introduced Russian Ballet to the world at a time when Western Europe was fascinated by the exotic and mysterious cultures of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Georgi Balanchivadze was appointed soloist dancer and resident choreographer. Even at the Imperial Ballet School, "George" used this French version of his first name instead of a Russian form, but it was with Diaghilev in Paris that "Balanchivadze" became "Balanchine".

He remained with Diaghilev until 1929. With Diaghilev's death the Ballet Russes dissolved, and he went on to choreograph for the theater in London and Paris before being offered the position of resident choreographer with the new Ballet Russes de Monte

Carlo. A year later he formed a new company, Les Ballets 1933, with himself as chief choreographer. He did not think he was creating for posterity. He worked for the here and now, referring to his ballets as butterflies and observing that no one wanted to look at last year's butterflies. During the London performing season of Les Ballets 1933 an American fledgling impresario named Lincoln Kirstein, from New York City, met Balanchine with the specific intention of inviting him to the United States to found a ballet school and company.

In 1934 the revolution of ballet in America began when Balanchine and Kirstein formed the School of American Ballet and staged "Serenade", Balanchine's first ballet created in the United States. The dance company, American Ballet, was comprised of students from the school. After only two years, it became the resident company at the Metropolitan Opera House. Conflicts between the two organizations dissolved that relationship, and "Mr. B" went on to choreograph for the Broadway stage and Hollywood films until in 1946, after WW II, Lincoln Kirstein formed Ballet Society making George Balanchine its Artistic Director. Two years later, Ballet Society became the resident company at the New York City Center for Music and Drama. The name was changed to New York City Ballet, and the ballet revolution in America continued.

Mr. B died in 1983 from heart problems. During his choreographic career, beginning at age sixteen, he created over four hundred ballets, opera ballets, dance sequences for musicals, revues, dramatic productions, movies, cabaret specialties, television productions and a circus parade for elephants and their riders, which he worked on with Igor Stravinsky, his longtime friend, associate and collaborator. It was for Ringling Brothers and the phone conversation is remembered like this:

"I wonder if you'd like to do a little ballet with me," Balanchine said, after Stravinsky answered the phone, "a polka, perhaps."

"For whom?"

"For some elephants," Balanchine said.

"How old?" asked Stravinsky cautiously.

"Very young," Balanchine assured him.

There was a pause. Then Stravinsky said gravely, "All right. If they are very young elephants, I will do it."

The score is *Circus Polka* by Igor Stravinsky and the dedication is "For a Young Elephant."

About the Choreography

A Midsummer Night's Dream was first performed at New York City's City Center in January of 1962. It was the second full-length story ballet that George Balanchine choreographed and the first that was his original choreography. He specialized in ballets that did not tell a story – plotless ballets – , but there were several reasons he chose to present *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His first full-length ballet, *The Nutcracker*, was patterned after the original Petipa and Levanov choreography as many productions are. *Nutcracker* performances during the holidays earn a lot of money that supports activities of the company during other times of the year. It also gives many children an opportunity to perform. New York City Ballet thought that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* might fulfill those same purposes in the springtime.

By quoting authors and biographers who followed and studied Balanchine's career, Francis Mason, Robert Garis, Donald McDonagh, and Bernard Taper, an overview of his choreography is revealed.

“It was Balanchine who kept the classic tradition of ballet alive in the twentieth century...not through idolatry or archeology but through constant innovation, experiment and discovery. Always Balanchine thought of ballet as a living art, not as a relic of the past...he restaged them [traditional works] to suit his company's personnel and his own preferences. Balanchine's classicism is a contemporary classicism – designed to be seen by twentieth century eyes and make its effects on twentieth-century nerves.”
“Balanchine was the first to make the choreography, in effect, the star of the show evolving what has been called perhaps the purest kind of ballet, in which all of the drama is in the dance itself – in the pattern of the movement unfolding in intimate relationship with the music.”
The classic vocabulary of steps is employed in a different way from Petipa: extensions are higher, movements may be faster and more staccato, combinations more complicated and intense...

As Lincoln Kirstein said [about Balanchine], “He has no interest in any effect that is not danced.” When he chose to do a ballet with a plot he could tell a story with masterly clarity and economy. “The curtain should just go up, and if the spectators understand what's going on, it's good – if not, not.” Balanchine said.

*“When, in 1962 he choreographed *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he was able to make clear, with no apparent strain, that the whole complex tangle of relationships, with all the humor, fantasy, romanticisms, and suspense one could wish – and to do it all through dance conceptions not through mime.*

When Balanchine created his libretto for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by arranging the pieces of Mendelssohn, he chose to condense the entire story into Act I, choosing to put formal dancing, or divertissements, in Act II. Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre will perform only Act I in this 2004 performance. The entire story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be told. This arrangement will also permit *Serenade*, a beautiful and very significant ballet in Balanchine history, to be added to the program.

The ballet is a succession of duets between members of the fairy world, various human couples, and even one between a transformed human and a fairy queen.

"Hermia's spacious solo of bewildered abandonment, danced to the 'Intermezzo', Mendelssohn's supreme blend of passion and fantasy."

"Narrative and dramatic complexity were the tradition of the Russian ballet...He rebelled against it and found a secure base for his own choreography in the balance and structure of the music."

He "took a gamble in using so old-fashioned a vocabulary [pantomime] ... His solution...was to give these large mime gestures an edge of parody..."

"Balanchine to me had Shakespeare's power: both recognized nobility and grandeur, the high and the mighty, romance, courtliness, and passion, and both also had a comic touch."

About the Production

The logistics of getting a production onto the stage and into the theater is an exciting and daunting task. The many parts that have been working independently must now come together: sets, lighting, costumes, choreography, music, and in the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – children.

George Balanchine was inspired into a career of dance by his first experience in the theater at age ten. He was in a ballet production of *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia. He never forgot the enchantment he felt while participating in ballet theater productions during his childhood. In his years as Artistic Director of New York City Ballet he provided many roles for children from the School of American Ballet. He considered the children part of the life of the whole company. On a practical level, children in the production brought family and friends to buy tickets to performances.

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, following the Balanchine version of choreography for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and using sets and costumes from Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB), will have roles for twenty-five children – twenty-four bugs and one Indian Child.

Casting the Children

Casting choices are guided by physical size and level of accomplishment in dance.

The Indian Child is a key role in the story because he is the focus of the disagreement between Oberon and Titania, King and Queen of the Fairies. The bugs are woodland creatures that delight the audience and add atmosphere to the enchanted forest. Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School (PBTS) Director **Marjorie Thompson** tells us how the children are chosen and trained:

Children are chosen from Levels II, III, IV, and V in PBTS. They range from ages 8 – 14. The levels indicate how long they have been studying and how advanced their dancing skills are. The bugs have some “real” dancing to do. They are not just cute little creatures that run across the stage. For that reason, we choose as many as possible from Level III and above.

Size has a huge influence on the casting decisions. For one thing, the children must fit into the available costumes with as few alterations as possible. The sizes also were chosen to present a particular design concept and visual picture on the stage. It is never random. There are 13 small bugs, 7 medium size, and 4 that are a bit taller.

Setting the Ballet and Rehearsing the Children

*After casting is decided, the choreography must be set on (taught to) the children and then rehearsed extensively. When a ballet company performs a George Balanchine ballet, they must obtain permission from the George Balanchine Trust and then a ballet master/mistress who is an expert in the Balanchine technique and approved by the Trust is sent to begin setting the ballet. **Otto Neubert**, Ballet Master with PNB came and spent about twenty hours during the course of a week to teach the "bugs" how to sit, do the steps, create the choreographic patterns, and follow the musical cues. It is a complicated show. After he departed, PBTS Ballet Mistress and School Principal **Dana Arey** continued the rehearsals, as she had been participating in all the work with Mr. Neubert and had learned the ballet.*

*Several weeks before the show opens, **Francia Russell**, Artistic Director from PNB, will come to set the rest of the ballet on the professional company. At that time the children's roles will be incorporated into the whole ballet.*

Production Week

Backstage, during the week PBT performs at the Benedum Center, the "bugs" must be ready to go no later than one half hour before each performance. Parent volunteers are responsible for getting them to the stage for their entrances, while Dana Arey and I will be there to make sure it all runs smoothly.

You may be interested to know that as children, **Marianna Tcherkassky**, PBT Ballet Mistress was a "bug" with New York City Ballet and **Julia Erikson**, PBT Dancer, was a "bug" with Pacific Northwest Ballet.

CLASSIC BALLET WORKSHEET

Story ballets often adhere to a specific framework that allows for the talents and abilities of the dancers to be prominently displayed. Among the requirements in this framework are the following:

Ballerina: A ballerina is the leading classical or principal dancer of a ballet company. The ballerina will dance using classical steps and technique. Dances would be created for her as the main or major character of the story.

Coda: The conclusion or ending of a Pas de Deux.

Corps de Ballet: The chorus of the ballet, dancers who appear in large groups. These dancers provide a background for the principal dancers and help to fill out story lines. Their dances also provide time for the principal dancers to change costumes.

Divertissement: A section of a ballet consisting of dances that have no direct connection with the plot. These dances provide an opportunity for soloists to display their technique and skills.

Pas d'Action: Portions of the ballet that can help to develop the plot or depict an activity, they are a combination of dancing and pantomime.

Pas de Caractère: A dance that is nonclassical, a character dance, national or folk dance.

Pas de Deux: A dance for two, in classical ballet this is performed by a ballerina and a danseur.

Premier Danseur: Classical male dancer, the first male dancer of a company or Principal Dancer. His dances will be challenging displays of classical technique.

Prima Ballerina: When there is more than one principal dancer in a company the prima ballerina is the first female dancer of a company.

Plot, Theme and Character

The exercises in this section focus on the elements of plot, theme, and character. Though dramatic structure in its strictest definition does not exist in ballet, a story ballet does share the elements of plot, theme and character.

These activities make references to Shakespeare's text, as well as the adaptations of the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and help to point out the differences between Shakespeare's play and the ballet. These activities are an excellent introduction to the ballet, and the ideas discussed in this section will support activities in other sections of this Handbook.

Plot, Theme and Character: Activity 1

Some obvious differences between this ballet production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Shakespeare's play are the diminished presence of Theseus and Hippolyta and the absence of Egeus, Hermia's father.

- Were students able to perceive other differences between the ballet and the text? Ask students to consider whether these changes are significant. Why or why not?
- Ask students why the choreographer might have chosen to set the ballet this way, particularly when these differences have much to do with the play's dominant themes.

Plot, Theme and Character: Activity 2

Enclosed with this Teacher's Handbook are two articles written on the subject of Literature and Dance:

1. "Shakespeare Dances" by Clive Barnes
written for *Dance Magazine*, November 1994.
2. "When a Dance Delves Into Literature" by Jack Anderson
written for *The New York Times*, August 26, 1990.

After your students read these articles, have them consider the following statement:

"Perhaps choreographers brushing up their Shakespeare should follow Shakespeare's narratives less slavishly and echo his spirit more poetically..."

Divide your students into small groups. Have each group choose a scene from a play or short story they have studied in class this year, then write a libretto for a choreographed version of the story that "echoes the spirit" of the above statement from Clive Barnes' article.

Music, Movement and Mime

Music and movement are the essence of dance, and in classical ballet there is the added dimension of pantomime, gestures which can be literal or symbolic. In this section, you will find activities designed to acquaint your students with Mendelssohn's music and introduce them to the choreographic process.

Music, Movement and Mime: Activity 1

In the absence of dialogue, a story ballet relies primarily on pantomime for exposition. Pantomime helps convey character, and every gesture is important in the telling of the story. Using only pantomime, have students do an exposition of the following passages of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

*“What say you Hermia? Be advised fair maid
To you your father should be as God...”
(Theseus, I, i, 46-47)*

*“How happy some o'er other some can be
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she,
But what of that?”
(Helena I, i, 226-228)*

*“Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.”
(Oberon, II, i, 146-147)*

*“That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow...
Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before mild white, now purple with love's wound.
And the maidens call it “love-in-idleness”.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed you once.”
(Oberon II, i, 155-169)*

*Hermia:
Be it so Lysander. Find you out a bed
For I upon this bank will rest my head.*

*Lysander:
One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.*

*Hermia:
Nay, good Lysander, for my sake dear,
Lie further off yet; do not lie so near.
(Hermia and Lysander, II, ii, 46-50)*

*“Night and silence. Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear.
This is he my master said...
Churl upon the eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.”*
(Puck, II, ii, 74-85)

“I love thee not; therefore pursue me not.”
(Demetrius, II, ii, 188)

*“I’ll put a girdle round about the earth
in forty minutes.”*
(Puck, II, I, 175)

*“Hast thou the flower there? Welcome wanderer.
I pray thee, give it me.”*
(Oberon, II, I, 246-247)

“Come, wait upon him lead him to my bower.”
(Titania, III, I, 191)

*“What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite
And laid the love juice on some true love’s sight.”*
(Oberon, III, ii, 88-89)

*“My Oberon! What visions have I seen!
Me thought I was enamored as an ass.”*
(Titania, IV, i, 75-76)

*“Sound music! Come my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground wherein these sleepers be.”*
(Oberon, IV, i, 83-84)

Music, Movement and Mime: Activity 2

Musical expression, like expression in language, can be achieved through how quickly we speak, how loudly or softly we speak, and how well we articulate meaning. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* music expresses the text or the story, and this is both an exercise in listening to music to increase aural perception, and in thinking about how music can be an expression of Shakespeare's verse.

Have students listen to the excerpts and consider the following questions:

1. In what ways could music depict dramatic or comic moments?
2. How could the themes of "strife and harmony", "order and conflict" and "reality and dreaming" be expressed musically?
3. How might the music of the forest differ from the music of the court?
4. How would the music of the fairies differ from the music of the four mortal lovers or the tradesmen known as the "rude mechanicals"?
5. Listen for specific musical instruments – violins, trumpets, piano, and flutes – then try to determine what "ceremonial" trumpets, "romantic" violins or "clownish" bassoons suggest about plot, theme, and character.
6. Have students talk about how a particular section of music makes them feel and imagine what action might be occurring with the music.
7. How do contrasting textures in the music correspond to the contrasting textures of the different groups of characters?

Music, Movement and Mime: Activity 3

Positions of the Feet and Arms in Dance

Positions of the Feet: In ballet there are five basic positions of the feet, numbered one through five. Refer to the pictures below and match your feet to each of them.



First Position



Second Position



Third Position



Fourth Position

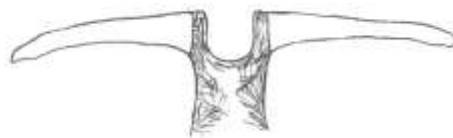


Fifth Position

Positions of the Arms: There are also various positions of the arms. Match your arms to the pictures shown below.



First Position



Second Position



Third Position



Fourth Position



Fifth Position

Costumes, Scenery and Lighting

In his book “Perceiving the Arts,” Dennis Spore suggests that dance is essentially a visual and theatrical experience, and part of our response is to those theatrical elements of dance that are manifested in the performance.

Costume, scenic and lighting designers glean their ideas for designs by familiarizing themselves with the plot, theme, and characters, and by listening to the music and observing the choreography. A designer then takes the creative process one step further and conceptualizes his ideas in the form of color, shape, line, and texture.

In dance, as in theater, the technical elements come together to create the spectacle of production, and we should look at costumes, scenery and lighting as an important part of dance. The activities in this section should encourage students to consider the technical elements of dance.

Costumes, Scenery and Lighting: Activity 1

Designing Costumes for a Ballet

Costume, scenic and lighting designers glean their ideas for designs by familiarizing themselves with the plot, theme and characters of the story, and by listening to the music and observing the choreography. A designer then takes the creative step one step further and conceptualizes his ideas in the form of color, shape, line and texture. The art form for which the costumier is designing is also an important consideration. In ballet, the costume must allow the dancer to have freedom of movement.

- 1. Choose a story from a literature book that your class is reading.**
- 2. Encourage students to think as a costume designer.**
 - ❖ Have each student choose a character from the story.
 - ❖ Is your character a human being, a fairy or elf, a domestic animal, a woodland creature, or something else?
 - ❖ What kind of clothing would the character wear? If not human, what physical attributes does your character have?
 - ❖ What kind of work or activity does your character do on a daily basis?
- 3. Decide what kind of fabric would be appropriate for your character's costume.**
 - ❖ Should it be light and gauzy or more formal and opulent?
 - ❖ What colors would be appropriate?
 - ❖ What is the time period of the story?
 - ❖ Is your character a lead character that should stand out from the rest or part of a larger group?
- 4. Draw a "costume rendering" – a picture of what the costume should look like on the character?**

Costumes, Scenery and Lighting: Activity 2

In a theater production, the costumes, scenery, and lighting work to enhance and accentuate the plot, theme, character, music, and choreography. Set and lighting designers also must familiarize themselves with the other components to create appropriate and believable settings for the work. That does not mean that they must be realistic or traditional, but they must mesh with the other components, maintaining the artistic integrity of the work.

After attending *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Serenade*, have students exercise their artistic sensibilities by answering the following questions:

- Were the costumes helpful in identifying and conveying each character? Do students feel these costumes worked well for dance? Which costumes were most successful? Least successful?
- Was the scenery integrated into the production or did it get in the way or otherwise detract from the production? How did students feel about the special effects?
- Were students aware of the lighting? Do they feel that the lighting design was effective in helping to convey plot, theme, or character?

Follow-up Activities

The follow-up activities may be the most important part of the field trip experience. They provide the teacher with a method of evaluation, and the student with a way to extend his or her experience.

Follow-up Activity 1

The most revealing follow-up to a performance is to have students write a review of the performance. A review provides the teacher with an opportunity to evaluate a student's involvement. It gives students an opportunity to apply their newly acquired knowledge.

This activity has two parts:

1. The Opening Night Performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is Thursday, April 15th, and your students will attend the matinee on Friday, April 16th. The performance is reviewed in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette and Pittsburgh Tribune Review on Friday or Saturday. Bring the reviews to class and share them with your students so they can get a feeling for how a review is written and what a critic observes.
2. Have students write their own review of the performance applying what they have learned about music, choreography, and the technical elements of a performance. Some points to consider when reviewing a performance:
 - ✓ How did the ballet compare with the student's expectations, or to another ballet they may have seen?
 - ✓ How would the student evaluate the costumes, scenery and lighting?
 - ✓ Did all the elements come together to create an exciting production?
 - ✓ How was the orchestra?
 - ✓ Did any dancer stand out because of his/her characterization or technique?
 - ✓ Did the casting choices fit the students' interpretation of the characters?
 - ✓ How did the audience respond?

Glossary

ballerina (bah-luh-ree'-nah) A leading female dancer of a ballet company. A dancer earns the title ballerina through years of hard work and great dancing.

balancé (ba-lahn-say') A rocking step much like a pas de valse; an alternation of balance, shifting weight from one foot to another.

ballet (bah-lay') From the Italian *ballare*, to dance.

Chainé (sheh-nay'), or déboulé (day-boo-lay') A series of turns on pointe or demi-pointe executed in a line or in a circle, in which the feet remain close to the floor and the weight is transferred rapidly and almost imperceptibly from one foot to the other as the body revolves.

choreographer (cor-ee-og'-ra-fer) Someone who makes dances. Originally the word meant someone who records dances, but has come to mean the person responsible for the design of movement in ballet.

classic (klas'ik) When applied to ballet, the word classic is not the contrary of Romantic. Classic applies to a rigorous basic vocabulary of steps and movements capable of infinite variations and a system of instruction that makes such variation possible for individual dancers.

corps de ballet (core, di, bah-lay') Dancers who appear only in large groups. The corps de ballet is the backbone of every ballet company.

divertissement (di-ver-tis-mah') A section of a ballet consisting of dances that have no connection with the plot.

entrechat (an-tray-sha') Probably from the Italian *intrecciare*, to weave to braid. A beating step of elevation in which the dancer jumps straight in the air from a plié and crosses his feet a number of times, making a weaving motion in the air.

jeté (zhe-tay') From the French *jeter*, to throw. This is a jump in which the weight of the body is thrown from one foot to the other.

pas de deux (pah, duh, duh') A dance for two people.

piqué (pee-kay') Executed by stepping directly on the point or demi-pointe of the working foot in any desired direction or position with the other foot raised in the air.

pirouette (peer-oo-wet') A complete turn of the body on one foot.

plié (plee-ay') From the French *plier*, to bend. In the classic dance, this is a bending of the knees, with the knees wide open and the feet turned outward. The function of the plié in the dancer's body is like the function of the springs in an automobile, and is necessary for the development of flexibility.

port de bras (port, duh, brah') In ballet, the movement or carriage of the arms.

sauté (soh-tay') Jumped or jumping.

tutu (too'too) Slang term for the very short petticoat worn by a dancer in the interest of modesty.

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