

“The Bell”

An Adaptation of the Polar Express

A Contemporary Ballet



Dance Theater of Florida presents “The Bell – An Adaptation of The Polar Express”. This production is a modern ballet interpretation of the classic children’s story The Polar Express. The inspiring tale of one child’s struggle to believe is told through dance with beautiful costumes, creative staging and stunning choreography. Join us for this magical, moving journey to the North Pole and discover the integration of dance and literature with your school.

Performance Synopsis

As children are preparing for their Holiday celebrations, a young boy questions the meaning of Christmas and the truth of Santa. While listening hard for the bells of Santa’s sleigh, which he has been told by a friend do not exist, he tears up his Christmas list. Later that night, he hears not bells, but a very different sound. He looks out his window and is astounded to see a steam engine parked in front of his house! The conductor invites him to board the Polar Express, a train filled with children on their way to the North Pole. The boy meets a lively young girl who believes whole heartedly in the spirit of Christmas. Along the way they stop to pick up a child from “The wrong side of the tracks” where Christmas is not such a joyous time of year. They have many adventures on the train such as dancing waiters, abandoned puppets and tickets disappearing into the wilderness. As they approach the North Pole they experience the beauty of The Northern Lights where the girl is reunited with her ticket.

The train takes the children to the center of the North Pole. The children and elves are all so excited to hear the bells of Christmas, except for the boy who cannot hear any bells. The children sneak off to the wrapping station where the toys destined for Santa’s sleigh are being prepared. Back in the center of town, the children and the elves gather to watch the arrival of Santa and the giving of the first gift of Christmas. The boy is chosen to receive this first gift. Knowing that he can choose anything in the world, he decides on a simple gift: one gold bell from Santa’s sleigh. Santa cuts a bell from a reindeer’s harness and the delighted boy slips it into his bathrobe pocket as the clock strikes midnight and the reindeer pull the sleigh into the sky. When the children return to the train, the conductor gives each of them a very special ticket symbolizing the lesson they have learned during their journey. The boy bids farewell to his new friends and walks to his house realizing the bell has fallen through a hole in his pocket. Heartbroken, he returns to his home, but on his window sill he finds one small box with his name on it. Inside is the silver bell! The boy is enchanted by its beautiful sound, which he can finally hear. The boy continues to believe in the spirit of Christmas and is able to hear the sweet ringing of the bell even as an adult. “At one time, most of my friends could hear the bell, but as years passed, it fell silent for all of them. Though I’ve grown old, the bell still rings for me, as it does for all who truly believe.”

Making Connections Through Literature

The Polar Express is a 1985 children's book (ISBN 0-86264-143-8) written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg, a former professor at the Rhode Island School of Design. It was adapted as an Oscar-nominated motion-capture film in 2004.

The book is now widely considered to be a classic Christmas story for young children. It was praised for its detailed illustrations and calm, relaxing storyline. In 1986, it was awarded the Caldecott Medal for children's literature. The book is set partially in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the author's home town. It is published in both soft and hard-copies.



The steam locomotive that pulls the Polar Express is modeled after an actual locomotive that is on display at the Steam Railroading Institute in Owosso, Michigan. The Pere Marquette 1225 Berkshire-type (2-8-4), built in 1941 at the Lima Locomotive Works in Lima, OH, was part of the Pere Marquette Railway system before being decommissioned in 1951. Slated for scrapping, it was acquired by Michigan State University (MSU) in 1957 and exhibited on campus.

In the film, artistic liberty is taken with the appearance of the locomotive and its tender, both being made to seem even more massive than the 794,500 pound (361,136 kilogram) original. Many of the train's sound effects, such as the whistle blowing and steam exhausting, were created from live sampling of number 1225 while in operation.

The buildings at the North Pole reference a number of buildings related to American railroading history. The buildings in the square at the center of the city are loosely based on the Pullman Factory located in the Pullman neighborhood of Chicago, and the Control Center is based on old Penn Station in New York City.

Making Connections

Below are activities that connect literature, the performance and hands on learning.

1. To the North Pole!

Simulate a train ride to the North Pole.

- Set up pairs of small chairs in two parallel rows with a center aisle for the imaginary train ride. In each child's chair place a warm cup of hot cocoa and softly play winter music as the group boards the train. When everyone has had his or her ticket checked, read the book aloud as you ride along. Encourage the students to tell you of the sights they see as they ride along. Ring your bell to add an extra dose of magic to the part of the book that talks of the bell.



2. Describe it!

Make a File Folder Game

- Students match adjectives from the story with the nouns they describe: hissing steam, squeaking metal, hot cocoa, dark Forrest, lean wolves, quiet wilderness, barren desert, small box, little sister, loud blast, magical sound, silver bell, huge city, frozen sea.

3. Imagine it!

Relative Writing

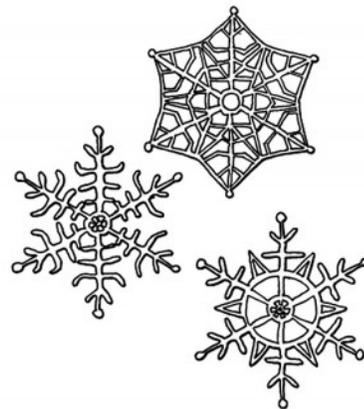
- Write a fantasy story about a time you were aboard a magical train.
- Write a story about one thing you lost.

The Polar Express Text Information is as follows

The Polar Express

ISBN: 0-395-38949-6

1986 Caldecott Medal Winner, 7 million copies sold worldwide, A New York Times Best Illustrated Book, A New York Times Bestseller



Dance Theater of Florida
Presents
The Bell
An Adaptation of *The Polar Express*

Friday, December 20th 2013
10:15 AM
The Eissey Theatre (Palm Beach State College)
11051 Campus Dr.
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

Tickets \$5

*Free Admission for teachers and assistants. Free Admissions for two chaperones per 30 students. Each additional chaperone \$5.

_____ students @ \$5 per ticket = _____

_____ Teachers/Assistants and up to 2 chaperones @ \$0 per a ticket = _____

_____ Additional Chaperones @ \$5 per ticket = _____

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Please make check or money order payable to **Dance Theater of Florida**. Please reference *The Bell* on the memo line.

Check # _____

Please send all tickets orders to:
Dance Theater of Florida
4100 PGA BLVD
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

***Please have all orders remitted by December 2nd 2013**

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