

BALLET PALM BEACH

Study Guide

Romeo and Juliet (ACT 1)



Friday, February 23, 2024 at 11:00 AM

Kravis Center for the Performing Arts

701 Okeechobee Blvd, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Show lasts approximately 60 minutes

Recommended for Grades 6 – 12

THE COMPANY:

BALLET PALM BEACH

Ballet Palm Beach began in 2001 as a small civic company, under the name Florida Classical Ballet Theatre. The aim was to give dance students in Palm Beach County the opportunity to perform in full-scale classical ballets through this new organization.

From 2001 to 2012 the company underwent incredible change in becoming a professional ballet company. Professional dancers and trainees were hired and lead the ranks of students as audience support continued to grow. Invaluable staff members were added one by one, first as volunteers and then as paid employees. These changes behind the scenes gave way to thrilling development on our stage, as our productions continued to see a rise in technique, expression, and popularity.

In 2013, Florida Classical Ballet Theatre became Ballet Palm Beach, a company of fifteen dancers: six student trainees and nine professionals. The name change symbolized a new era of productivity and twelve years of finding our footing in a wonderfully supportive community.

Currently, Ballet Palm Beach performs three main stage performances each season. The company has welcomed guest choreographers including Christopher Huggins, Roger Van Fleteren, Gina Patterson, Dennis Nahat, Donna Murray, and repetiteurs from the Balanchine Trust. Artistic Director Colleen Smith has led the company in creative directions, choreographing numerous ballets throughout the years.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Romeo and Juliet (Act 1)

Artistic Direction: Colleen Smith

Staging: Colleen Smith, Claudia Cravey, Marshall Levin and the Company of Ballet Palm Beach

Music: Sergei Prokofiev

Scene 1: The Verona Market Place

Romeo, son of Montague, vainly declares his love for Rosaline and is consoled by his friends, Mercutio and Benvolio. As day breaks and the townspeople meet in the market, a quarrel develops between Tybalt, nephew of Capulet, and Romeo and his friends. The Capulets and Montagues are sworn enemies and a fight soon begins. The Lords Montague and Capulet join the fray, which is finally stopped by the Prince of Verona who commands the families to end the feud.

Scene 2: Juliet's Room

Juliet, playing with her nurse, is interrupted by her parents, Lord and Lady Capulet. They present her to Paris, a wealthy nobleman who has asked for hand in marriage.

Scene 3: Outside the Capulet House

Guests arrive for a ball at the Capulet house. Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio disguised in masks, sneak into the party with the intent of wooing Rosaline.

Scene 4: The Ballroom

Romeo and his friends arrive at the height of the festivities. The guests watch Juliet dance; Mercutio, seeing Romeo is entranced by her, decides to distract the guests. Tybalt recognizes Romeo and orders him to leave, but Capulet intervenes and welcomes him. As the guests leave the ball, Capulet restrains Tybalt from pursuing Romeo.

Scene 5: The Balcony

Unable to sleep, Juliet paces her balcony, thinking of Romeo. Romeo appears in the garden, and they confess their love for each other.

PRE-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS:

1. Prior to attending the performance, students should discuss audience etiquette.

Common etiquette rules include:

- a) Turning off cellphones or electronic devices
- b) No video or other recordings are allowed inside the theatre
- c) No food or drink is allowed in the theatre
- d) Audience members should remain seated and should not leave or enter the auditorium during the performance
- e) There is no talking during the performance
- f) Clapping should be polite and appropriate

Discuss why these rules exist. Consider a short role-playing exercise during which students can experience what it is like if an audience is disruptive during class time.

2. Through discussion or written response, reflect on the following:

- What are some plays or live theatre productions you have seen?
- Have you seen ballet performed before?
- How is a story told through dance?
- What is a ballet? What makes it different from other dancing?
- Compare and contrast: How is telling a story through ballet the same/different from a live theatre play? A movie in a theatre? A television show at home? A book? Which do you prefer? Why?
- Who decides how the dancers tell the story?
- How do the dancers learn their parts?

3. Through discussion or written response, reflect on the following:
This ballet is based on the play, *Romeo and Juliet*, written by William Shakespeare.

- Are you familiar with the literature that this ballet is based upon?
- Have you seen a play or other artistic presentation based on this play?
- What is your favorite book / play and how would you present it as a dance?

4. Introduce the class to a small sample of commonly seen ballet steps. Familiarity with basic ballet technique will provide students reference points to help students enjoy the performance.

Plie: 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 plie in the dancer's body is like the function of the springs in an automobile, and is necessary for the development of flexibility.

Releve: From the French *relever*, to raise. To raise the body on one or two feet, either on pointe (on the tips of her toes) or demi-pointe (on the ball of the foot). There are two styles of releve : a dancer rises with a smooth articulation of the foot, or the dancer can a little jump or spring to get on pointe or demi-pointe.

Sauté: A jump from two feet to two feet. When a turn is added to the jump the step is called a *Tour en l'air*. The dancer can make 1, 2 or 3 revolutions in the air before landing.

Pas de deux: A dance for two dancers, usually one female and one male

Bourrées: Tiny rapid steps performed by female dancers while on pointe, giving the illusion of floating above the ground

Arabesque: One leg is stretched behind the body either on the ground or in the air at a 90-degree angle or higher.



POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS:

1. *But ballet is just for girls...*

Ballet can be enjoyed by boys, girls, men, and women. It is very hard work and requires great athletic ability, coordination, and strength. Many dancers perform a 2 ½ hour ballet with only a few short breaks.

Are you able to lift a person above your head and have it appear effortless? Are you able to perform several gravity-defying leaps?

Compare and contrast the qualities of professional dancers to those of professional athletes. Make a list of qualities that are similar between a ballet dancer and any of the following types of athletes: football player, hockey player, basketball player, figure skater.

2. Write a response to *Romeo and Juliet* commenting on various elements in the ballet (e.g. the dancers, music, costumes, special effects)

- What did you like and dislike about the performance?
- How does the ballet compare to what you had pictured before the performance?
- How was it different or similar to other ballets or shows you have seen?
- How did the choreographer use dance to show emotions or tell the story?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

1. Ballets tell stories using music and movement. Create original movements to correspond with emotions and themes that you might find in a piece of literature (ie. love, friendship, loyalty, jealousy, anger, playfulness)

Divide students into groups of two or more. Using gestures, students can create their own stories using mime and perform them for the rest of the class. Can the audience follow the story?

2. After watching Ballet Palm Beach and their performance of *Romeo and Juliet* (Act 1), write a letter to Ballet Palm Beach. The letter can be to your favorite dancer or character, or to all of the dancers.

Letters can be mailed to: Ballet Palm Beach
10357 Ironwood Road,
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

3. Looking for more activities? Check out this website for more great ideas!
<https://www.thedaringenglishteacher.com/2022/09/10-activities-for-teaching-romeo-and.html>

LINKS:

Ballet Palm Beach
www.balletpalmbeach.org

Ballet terms defined.
<http://www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html>

The ballet performed by the Ballet de l'opéra de Paris with Choreography & Staging by Rudolf Nureyev with the Orchestre de l'opéra de Paris, Conducted by Vello Pähn
<https://youtu.be/-hMOB70F1YM>

The play of *Romeo and Juliet* that your class can explore.
<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/romeo-and-juliet/read/>

Anaheim Ballet shows you how to stretch!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8D7R8QxJL4&feature=share&list=PL22EC1314013611CC&index=4>

FLORIDA STANDARDS:

GRADES 6-8	DANCE	LANGUAGE ARTS	MUSIC
	DA68 C.1.1	ELA68 R.1.1	MU68 C.1.1
DA68 C.1.2	ELA68 R.1.2	MU68 C.1.2	
DA68 C.1.3	ELA68 R.1.3	MU68 C.1.3	
GRADES 9-12	DA912 C.1.1	ELA912 R.1.1	MU912 C.1.1
	DA912 H.1.1	ELA912 R.1.2	MU912 C.1.2
	DA912 H.1.2	ELA912 R.1.3	MU912 C.1.3

BOOKS BASED ON ROMEO AND JULIET:

<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/romeo-and-juliet>