

BALLET PALM BEACH

Study Guide

The List



Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 11:00 AM

Kravis Center for the Performing Arts

701 Okeechobee Blvd, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Show lasts approximately 45 minutes

Recommended for Grades 8 – 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:

The List

Choreographer: Christopher L. Huggins

Music: John Williams, Henryk Gorecki, Arvo Part

Christopher Huggins' *The List* is an enlightening, emotive work that shines a light on the horrific realities of the Holocaust through the story of one fictional family in Krakow, Poland circa 1941. Four dancers are seated around the dinner table, when a knock at an imaginary door, followed by the delivery of a letter, sends the father of the family into a tortured frenzy. As if fighting with an imaginary foe, the father reels with pain. Resignation overtakes each family member as news of their deportation sinks in. The story then traces the family's journey to a concentration camp, where Huggins paints a picture of impending peril, followed by a final heartrending scene within the gas chambers.

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:

- How can a ballet articulate such a serious subject? Were the dancers successful?
- Have you seen a play or other artistic presentation based on the Holocaust?
- What has happened in your life that you might want to share in an artistic way? How would you convey the experience?

4. This ballet is a contemporary ballet and doesn't use a lot of the traditional ballet steps. Introduce your class to a sample of contemporary ballets. Familiarity with the type of dance they will experience will provide reference points to help students enjoy the performance. Contemporary Ballet, though it shares many qualities with Neoclassical, involves more floorwork, more inversions (turning in of the legs, contractions), and the inclusion of acting, of moving, in the context of a plot. The plots, unlike a fairytale, are reimagined or entirely deconstructed.

Check out this link for definitions of commonly used contemporary terms.

<https://www.clistudios.com/dance-blog/dance-basics/contemporary-dance-terminology/>

Check out these links for an explanation and comparison of contemporary ballet vs. classical ballet.

<https://www.zarely.co/blogs/dancers-blog/classical-ballet-vs-contemporary-ballet>

<https://londondance.photography/blog/a-comparison-of-classical-and-contemporary-ballet>



How do you define Contemporary Dance

Contemporary is an important genre of dance performed in societies around the world, celebrated by people both young and old. Developed during the 20th century, contemporary dance involves incorporating aspects of movement from several other genres such as jazz, modern and ballet.

What are the characteristics of Contemporary Dance

Contemporary dance combines the strong but controlled legwork of Ballet, with elements of Modern Dance, focusing on the contract and release of the body, and the unpredictable changes in rhythm, speed, and direction. It also employs floor work, fall and recovery, and improvisation characteristics of Modern dance.

Five characteristics of Contemporary Dance

The five elements that all forms of dance and creative movement have in common: body, action, space, time and energy.

What are 3 examples of Contemporary Dance

Contemporary dance embodies ballet, modern, jazz and lyrical. It uses a technique such as ballet as its fundamentals and creates many more movements that do not adhere to the strict rules of ballet and modern. There are different categories of contemporary dance such as Contemporary Ballet and Contemporary Jazz.

Contemporary Dance is derived from these modern techniques

Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Gaga, Laban and Limon.

What are the basic Contemporary Dance Moves

- Curl Down and Up. ...
- Leg Swings. ...
- Flat Back. ...
- Tendu. ...
- Chasse. ...
- No Boundaries.

Is there a difference between modern and contemporary dance

Modern dance is a style deprived of the restrictions of classical ballet that focuses on free interpretations derived from inner emotions. Contemporary dance is a specific genre of concert dance that concerns non-choreographic movements influenced by compositional philosophy.

Why is it called Contemporary Dance

Around 1980s, the world "contemporary dance" referred to the movement of new dancers who did not want to follow strict classical ballet and lyrical dance forms, but instead wanted to explore the area of revolutionary unconventional movements that were gathered from all dance styles of the world.

7 Principles of Contemporary Dance

Principles of contemporary dance. Centering. ...

Breath. Breathing is an expressive tool. ...

Alignment. Placement of all the parts of the body in relationship to one another.

Gravity. Gravity is the force that holds you down on the earth.

Centering. -Dancers need to find their center (solar plexus). ...

Spiral. ...

Opposition.

POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS:

1. Write a response to *The List* 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 like other ballets or shows you have seen?
 - How did the choreographer use dance to show emotions or tell the story?
2. This ballet depicted a fictional family in Poland in 1941. Discuss setting a ballet in another period in history. How would you portray a family dealing with the Great Depression, the World Trade Center bombing, the Covid Pandemic, etc.

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. Although this ballet does not directly reference Anne Frank, many people kept diaries documenting a horrific time in history. Have each student make a journal entry about *The List* and how its subject matter and message affected them.
3. After watching Ballet Palm Beach and their performance of *The List*, write a letter to Ballet Palm Beach. The letter can be to the dancers or the choreographer, giving your impressions of the ballet and how it affected you.

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

LINKS:

Ballet Palm Beach

www.balletpalmbeach.org

An interview with choreographer Christopher Huggins. It's about a different ballet, but students can get an idea of who the choreographer is.

<https://youtu.be/uEJZO5UCuEg>

Resources for teachers teaching about the Holocaust.

<https://www.fau.edu/artsandletters/pjhr/chhre/us-and-holocaust-documentary-ken-burns/>

<https://www.fau.edu/artsandletters/pjhr/chhre/united-states-holocaust-memorial-museum-resources/>

FLORIDA STANDARDS:

GRADES 6-8

DANCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	MUSIC
DA68 C.1.1	SS68HE.1.1	MU68 C.1.1
DA68 C.3.1		MU68 C.1.2
DA68 C.2.2		MU68 C.1.3

GRADES 9-12

DANCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	MUSIC
DA912 C.1.1	SS912 W.6.4	MU912 C.1.1
DA912 H.1.1	SS912 W.6.5	MU912 C.1.2
DA912 H.1.2	SS912 W.6.6	MU 912 C.1.3