Out of the Wings

A Study Guide Series for Classroom Teachers

Don Quixote

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET
HELGI TOMASSON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Center for Dance Education

sfballet.org
Mission Statement

The mission of San Francisco Ballet is to share our joy of dance with the widest possible audience in our community and around the globe, and to provide the highest caliber of dance training in our School. We seek to enhance our position as one of the world’s finest dance companies through our vitality, innovation, and diversity and through our uncompromising commitment to artistic excellence based in the classical ballet tradition.
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This guide is meant to inform, spark conversation, and inspire engagement with San Francisco Ballet’s production of Helgi Tomasson and Yuri Possokhov’s Don Quixote.

The guide is divided into a number of sections that include information about theater etiquette, essential ballet vocabulary, ballet history, and answers to common questions about ballet. It also includes information about SF Ballet, the San Francisco Ballet School, and the San Francisco Ballet Center for Dance Education, which produces this guide.

This guide also offers questions to consider and activities to experience, before or after viewing these ballets. The content of the guide is designed to enhance and support your ballet-going experience. You might consider copying portions of it for your class and/or bringing it to the theater. There is even room in the margins to take notes.
What Is Dance?

Bending, stretching, jumping, and turning are all activities dancers do. They work hard to transform these everyday movements into the language of dance, using each step as a word to compose first a phrase, then a sentence, a paragraph, and finally a story. Dance can also be a medium for expressing a feeling such as joy, sadness, anger, or love. This is one of the greatest forms of communication we have available to us.

Through movement and facial expressions dancers learn to convey emotions, and sometimes even entire stories, without needing to speak. Because dance uses no words, people around the world understand and respond to it. This is why dance is sometimes called a universal language.

Moving to music is a natural response to our enjoyment of sounds. Even an infant begins bobbing its head to music it enjoys. There are many different types and variations of dancing: from tribal dances to swing dancing, and from hip hop at a party to a classical ballet on an opera house stage. Dance is a wonderful way of expressing our joy of life.

You might explore how to communicate an emotion through movement yourself. Notice how different music inspires unique motion, especially in children. All dance is a valid form of expression.
In the prologue, we meet the elderly Don Quixote in his study. While he is reading a book about knights and how they defend the honor of the ladies, he falls asleep. He dreams he is a knight defending his love, Dulcinea. Awakened when his friend Sancho Panza bursts into the room, the Don decides to make Sancho his squire. Together they set out to defend virtue everywhere and punish those who do not follow this ideal.

In the first act, which you will see today, Kitri, the innkeeper’s daughter, professes her love for the town’s barber, Basilio, with whom she dances. Lorenzo, Kitri’s father, sees this and forbids her to see Basilio; his plan is to marry her to the silly nobleman Gamache. She discovers her father’s plan and is horrified. In the midst of this, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza enter, and the Don mistakes Kitri for his beloved Dulcinea. In the commotion Kitri sneaks off with Basilio, followed by Don Quixote, Sancho Panza, Lorenzo, and Gamache.

In Act II, Kitri and Basilio arrive at a Gypsy camp and the Gypsies invite Don Quixote to watch a puppet show. Watching the performance, he mistakes the heroine for Dulcinea, draws his sword to defend her, and attacks the stage. Confused, he mistakes a nearby windmill for a giant and attacks it too. Caught by one of its sails, he is thrown to the ground and falls into a deep sleep. The Don dreams he is a knight surrounded by beautiful maidens, and Kitri is Dulcinea.

In the meantime, Lorenzo catches up with Kitri and forces her to accept Gamache’s proposal. Basilio responds by faking his suicide. Kitri begs Don Quixote to convince her father to consent to marry her to Basilio, as his final wish. When Lorenzo consents, Basilio instantly returns to life! He is now, of course, Kitri’s husband.

In the final act, the entire village celebrates the marriage of Kitri and Basilio. Don Quixote is their guest of honor and in appreciation for all his assistance, the grateful couple dances for him.
Helgi Tomasson has held the position of artistic director of San Francisco Ballet since July 1985. Since then, the Company has evolved from a respected regional troupe to an international company praised for its broad repertory, dancers of uncommon range and skill, and a vision that continually sets the standard for the international dance world.

SF Ballet is dancing better than it has at any point in its history. As a choreographer, teacher, and coach, Tomasson has fostered an uncompromising classicism that has become the bedrock of the Company’s training. The dancers are energized and inspired by this rigorous training and continue to rise to new heights with each passing year.

Born in Reykjavik, Iceland, Tomasson began his early ballet training there with an Icelandic teacher and then joined the National Theatre’s affiliated school, which was led by Danish instructors Erik and Lisa Bidsted. At 15, the emerging dancer began his professional career with the celebrated Pantomime Theatre in Copenhagen’s Tivoli Gardens. Two years later, Jerome Robbins met Tomasson and, impressed by his dancing, arranged a scholarship for him to study at the School of American Ballet in New York City. Soon after, Tomasson began his professional career with The Joffrey Ballet and two years later joined Harkness Ballet. Over the next six years, he became one of the company’s most celebrated principal dancers.

In 1969, Tomasson entered the First International Ballet Competition in Moscow as a United States representative and returned with the silver medal (the gold medal was awarded to Mikhail Baryshnikov). The following year, Tomasson joined New York City Ballet as a principal dancer and over the course of his career became one of the finest classical dancers of his era. He was one of the foremost interpreters of George Balanchine’s and Jerome Robbins’ ballets, and both men created several roles expressly for him. In 1982, Tomasson choreographed his first ballet for the School of American Ballet Workshop, which elicited encouragement from Balanchine to continue choreographing.

Tomasson accepted the invitation from SF Ballet to become artistic director of America’s oldest professional ballet company in 1985, drawing to a close a glorious performing career. Since assuming this role with the Company, Tomasson has choreographed more than 40 ballets, including stunning full-length productions of Don Quixote (co-staged by Yuri Possokhov), Giselle, Romeo & Juliet, The Sleeping Beauty, and two productions of Swan Lake (1988 and 2009). His intricate and varied works, such as 7 for Eight, Chi-Lin, Concerto Grosso, The Fifth Season, Handel—A Celebration, Meistens Mozart, Nanna’s Lied, and Sonata, showcase the unique qualities of individual dancers. Tomasson’s Prism, which debuted in 2000 at New York City Ballet, received rave reviews and was deemed a “triumph” by the...
Helgi Tomasson

New York Times. In 2004, his new production of Nutcracker, created in collaboration with an internationally recognized design team, debuted to enthusiastic critic and audience response. The New York Times proclaimed, “This is a Nutcracker on a grand scale... striking, elegant and beautiful.” On December 17, 2008, Tomasson’s Nutcracker was broadcast nationally on Great Performances on PBS, in partnership with KQED Public Television in San Francisco.

The strong classical base instilled by Tomasson enables the dancers to navigate a myriad of styles by a range of internationally distinguished choreographers. Those invited by Tomasson to create works on the Company include David Bintley, Val Caniparoli, William Forsythe, James Kudelka, Lar Lubovitch, Mark Morris, Paul Taylor, Stanton Welch, Christopher Wheeldon, Alexei Ratmansky, Liam Scarlett, and Myles Thatcher. Tomasson has also continued to expand SF Ballet’s repertory through acquiring works by renowned choreographers such as Sir Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, August Bournonville, Hans van Manen, Wayne McGregor, Agnes de Mille, Nacho Duato, Flemming Flindt, Roland Petit, Jerome Robbins, and Antony Tudor. Tomasson’s own works have been performed by New York City Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Houston Ballet, Alberta Ballet, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, Ballet Estable del Teatro Colón, and Asami Maki Ballet.

In Denmark, Tomasson’s 1993 staging of The Sleeping Beauty was the most lavish production ever produced in the Royal Danish Ballet’s history and was filmed for Danish public television in April 1995.


Tomasson’s vision, commitment, and dedication to the art of classical dance were demonstrated when he conceived UNited We Dance: An International Festival, produced in San Francisco in May 1995. Created to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter, it included 12 international companies of the highest caliber, which Tomasson had invited to present new works created by native choreographers. Never before had a dance event brought together more than 150 artists for an unprecedented two weeks of creative exchange and inspiration. In spring 2008, as part of its yearlong 75th anniversary celebration, SF Ballet presented a New Works Festival of 10 world premieres by 10 of the dance world’s most diverse and acclaimed choreographers. The festival was called “ambitious and unprecedented” by the Washington Post and the San Francisco Chronicle hailed it as a “daring onslaught of fresh work... this is what the ballet world needs now.”

Tomasson’s achievements have garnered him numerous awards and honors, and he has participated as a judge for ballet competitions in Italy, Russia, France, Finland, and Japan. During the 1970s in his homeland of Iceland, he was named a Knight of the Order of the Falcon for his achievements as a dancer. In June 1990, Tomasson was named Commander of the Order of the Falcon by Ólafur Ragnar Grimsson, the president of Iceland, for his continuous achievements in the arts. In 1989, he received Dance Bay Area’s Isadora Duncan Award for his outstanding choreography for Swan Lake. In recognition of his artistic excellence,
Tomasson received the Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement in 1992. That same year, he received the Dance Magazine Award in recognition of his contributions to the dance world. In 1995, Tomasson joined the Artistic Advisory Board of The Ballet Theatre in Prague, directed by Jana Kurová. Also in 1995, Tomasson was honored with the Cultural Award of The American-Scandinavian Foundation. In 1996, he was presented with a Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, from Dominican College of San Rafael, in recognition of his value as a role model, his extraordinary career, and his community-service accomplishments. That same year, he was awarded the Isadora Duncan Special Award for UNited We Dance: An International Festival.

Currently, Tomasson serves on the Board of Directors of the School of American Ballet and the Artistic Committee for the New York Choreographic Institute, and has served as a member of the National Endowment for the Arts Dance Advisory Panel. In May 2001, Tomasson was granted the rank of Officier in the French Order of Arts and Letters, established in 1957 to recognize those who have contributed significantly to furthering the arts in France and throughout the world. Hugues Gall, then director of the Opéra National de Paris, presented the award in a ceremony attended by Grimsson, following SF Ballet’s triumphant opening at the Palais Garnier. In spring 2002, the Board of Trustees of New York’s Juilliard School unanimously voted to bestow an honorary doctoral degree upon Tomasson, as one of five doctorates given annually in different artistic disciplines. Other recipients include playwright Edward Albee and actor and comedian Bill Cosby.

In addition to his role as artistic director and principal choreographer of the Company, Tomasson is the director of the San Francisco Ballet School. For Tomasson, the School is central to the life and development of the Company. Just as he expects the finest dancing and most meticulous attention to detail from his dancers, he demands the highest standards for training the students in the School.

Tomasson lives in San Francisco with his wife, Marlene, who was dancing with The Joffrey Ballet when they met. They have two sons, Erik and Kris.
Yuri Possokhov
Choreographer in Residence
Co-Choreographer of Don Quixote

After receiving his dance training at the Moscow Ballet School, Yuri Possokhov danced with the Bolshoi Ballet for 10 years, working primarily with Ballet Master Yuri Grigorovich. During this decade he was promoted through the ranks to principal dancer. In 1992, he joined the Royal Danish Ballet as a principal dancer, at the invitation of Ballet Master Frank Andersen. The following December, Possokhov was cast as Prince Desiré in Helgi Tomasson’s The Sleeping Beauty. After being invited to perform in San Francisco Ballet’s Opening Night Gala, he moved west. In 1994, he joined SF Ballet as a principal dancer.

As a choreographer, Possokhov’s credits include Songs of Spain, choreographed in 1997 for former SF Ballet Principal Dancer Muriel Maffre; A Duet for Two, created the same year for former SF Ballet Principal Dancer Joanna Berman; and Impromptu Scriabin, for former San Francisco Ballet Soloist Felipe Diaz. In 2000 he completed a new work for a dancer at the Mariinsky Ballet, as well as 5 Mazurkas for Marin Dance Theatre.

Possokhov’s Magrittomania, inspired by the paintings of René Magritte, was commissioned for SF Ballet’s Discovery Program in 2000, and in April 2001, Possokhov received an Isadora Duncan Dance Award for outstanding choreography for the work. For the 2002 Repertory Season, Possokhov created Domned, based on Euripides’ play Medea, which the Company also took on tour to New York City Center in fall 2002. In 2003, Possokhov collaborated with Tomasson on a new staging of the full-length Don Quixote, which was also performed on subsequent seasons and on tour to Los Angeles and Paris.

Possokhov’s Study in Motion, set to the music of Alexander Scriabin, premiered during the Company’s 2004 Repertory Season, and was also performed on tour to London that same year and during the following season. Also in 2004, Possokhov’s Firebird premiered at Oregon Ballet Theatre to critical acclaim, and re-staged at SF Ballet in 2007. The following year, he created another work for Oregon Ballet Theatre, La Valse. For SF Ballet’s 2005 Repertory Season, Possokhov created Reflections, set to the music of Felix Mendelssohn. In February 2006, the Bolshoi Ballet premiered Possokhov’s Cinderella, which was subsequently performed by the company in London and Washington, D.C. In spring 2006, Possokhov created Ballet Mori, which marked San Francisco’s 1906 earthquake centennial, in collaboration with Maffre. Following his retirement as a principal dancer from the Company, Possokhov was named choreographer in residence in May 2006.

Léon Minkus was born Alois Ludwig Minkus on March 23, 1826 in Vienna; it is believed he was of Polish or Czech origin. In 1846, 19-year old Minkus arrived in Paris with his violin and some of his compositions. Due to his personal charm and strong recommendations, he soon received an offer to compose a complete ballet score. Because of his youth the offer was reduced to one act; the rest of the ballet, *Paquita*, was entrusted to an experienced ballet composer, Edouard Deldevez.

By 1853 Minkus was in Russia, where he became an orchestral conductor/violin soloist in the private serf orchestra of Prince Nikolai Yusupov. He also taught violin. It was in Russia that Minkus took the first names of Léon Fedorovich. In 1861 he began his association with the Bolshoi Theater, first as violin soloist and a year later as conductor with the title of “Inspector of the Orchestras.”

In 1863 he composed the music for Saint-Léon’s *Fiamenta*; a shortened version was given in Paris as *Némea* in 1864. Minkus maintained his ties with Paris where in 1866, 20 years after his debut there, he himself was the older, more experienced musician who wrote the larger part of a ballet, *La Source*; one act only was entrusted to the younger Delibes.

On returning to Russia, Minkus began writing ballet music for Petipa’s creations. In 1868 Petipa planned his *Don Quixote* for the Bolshoi Theater, with music composed by Minkus. It had enormous success when first performed in 1869, earning Minkus the post of official composer to the Imperial Russian Ballet, a position held previously by Italian Cesare Pugni, who composed music for more than 300 ballets. Minkus held the position until it was discontinued in 1886. These were fertile years for Minkus, and his many compositions included *La Bayadère* in 1877.

Minkus was also responsible for composing additional music for ballet standards such as *Giselle*. At the request of Petipa he composed additional variations for *Giselle* in both acts one and two.

Dissatisfied with his pension from the Russian government, Minkus retired to his native Vienna, where he resided until his death.

Minkus was unfortunate—from a musical point of view—to be a contemporary of Tchaikovsky. It must be noted, however, that he was a specialist ballet composer and should not be compared to the likes of Tchaikovsky or Stravinsky, who come from a different genre. His ballet music may be summarized as full of melody and rhythmic verve, much of which is charming and has immediate appeal. Although his orchestrations were not elaborate, and as John Lanchbery observed, “…it can occasionally lapse into trite note-spinning,” Minkus had the ability to give an emotional feel or mood to a piece without dominating it, allowing the dancers to be seen to full advantage. He possessed the gift of making even the clumsiest listener want to get up and dance. A waltz time aficionado, he had Gypsies, rajahs, Spanish bullfighters, and Indian temple maidens, alive and dead, all dance to a waltz rhythm.
Ballet Music by Minkus

Love’s Flame or The Salamander, 1863
La Source, 1866 (with Delibes)
Don Quixote, 1869
La Camargo, 1872
Le Papillon, 1874
Les Brigands (The Bandits), 1875
La Bayadère, 1877
Roxana or The Beauty from Montenegro, 1878
The Daughter of the Snows, 1879
Paquita, 1881 (additional music)
Night and Day, 1883
The Offerings to Love, 1886
The Magic Pill, 1886
Kalkabrino, 1891
Martin Pakledinaz was an American designer of both costumes and sets. He designed for plays and musicals, both on and off Broadway, as well as for operas, modern dance, and ballet.

Pakledinaz’s work in dance is vast. It includes five works for choreographer Mark Morris and Mark Morris Dance Group, two ballets by Morris for San Francisco Ballet including his full-length Sylvia. Pakledinaz’s work with other choreographers includes Nutcracker, Silver Ladders, The Tuning Game and Prism by Helgi Tomasson and San Francisco Ballet.

Other works include two ballets for Kent Stowell and Pacific Northwest Ballet; Whizz for Deborah Hay and White Oak Dance Project, two pieces for Daniel Pelzig and Boston Ballet, and El Grito for Lila York and San Francisco Ballet.

His designs can be seen on television in Morris’ The Hard Nut, which aired on WNET/Great Performances: Dance in America and Francia Russell’s staging of Balanchine’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream for Pacific Northwest Ballet, which aired on the BBC and BRAVO.

Pakledinaz has received Tony Awards for his designs for Thoroughly Modern Millie and Kiss Me, Kate on Broadway and Tony nominations for his work on Wonderful Town, The Life, and Golden Child as well as the 2011 production of Anything Goes.

Other New York productions include the musicals A Year with Frog and Toad, The Look of Love, and The Boys from Syracuse. The original plays he has designed include Kimberly Akimbo, Juvenilia, Impossible Marriage, and Give Me Your Answer, Do. Other works include The Diary of Anne Frank, The Misanthrope, and the Lincoln Center production of Twelve Dreams.

Pakledinaz’s work in opera is seen worldwide. Highlights include a new production of Rodelinda for the Metropolitan Opera in December 2004, recent productions of Alcina and Xerxes, costumes for Kaija Saariaho’s L’Amour de loin for the Salzburg Festival (also performed at Santa Fe Opera and Finnish National Opera), Seattle Opera’s Ring Cycle, and Regina for the Chicago Lyric Opera.

Pakledinaz died on July 8, 2012, and shortly after his passing, he was inducted posthumously into the American Theater Hall of Fame.
In the 19th century, elegant women carried beautiful fans whenever they attended balls and other public events. At around that time, an enterprising manufacturer of fans, Jean-Pierre Duvelleroy, of Paris-based Maison Duvelleroy, invented a “Language of the Fan” that would allow a lady to flirt with her suitors across a crowded room by using coded signals and eye contact.

Below are some of the signals Duvelleroy devised in a list published and given away with each fan the company sold:

- Carrying in right hand in front of face: “Follow me.”
- Carrying in left hand in front of face: “I am desirous of your acquaintance.”
- Placing it on left ear: “I wish to get rid of you.”
- Drawing across the forehead: “You have changed.”
- Twirling in left hand: “We are being watched.”
- Carrying in right hand: “You are too willing.”
- Drawing through the hand: “I hate you.”
- Twirling in right hand: “I love another.”
- Drawing across the cheek: “I love you.”
- Presented shut: “Do you love me?”
- Threaten with the shut fan: “Do not be so imprudent.”
- Gazing pensively at the shut fan: “Why do you misunderstand me?”
- Pressing the half-open fan to the lips: “You may kiss me.”
Writing a Dance Review

Grades: 5-12
Length: 45 minutes

Goals
- Students will observe a dance performance, then process and respond to what they see.
- Students will apply their own individual movement vocabulary to what they see.

Summary
Part of a dance critic’s or reviewer’s job is to give someone who was not at the performance an idea of what it was like, whether the reviewer liked it, and whether someone else should see it. On a personal level, writing about dance also helps us to focus our own thoughts about what we’ve seen. This exercise can be used as a follow-up to a live performance, or it can be used in the classroom in conjunction with viewing a dance film or video.

Before viewing a performance, give the students the following list, “Three Levels of Responsive Writing,” and ask them to use these points as guidelines for writing a one-page review of the performance.

Three Levels of Responsive Writing

What is going on? (Observation, Reporting, Description)
- What did you see? What was the visual environment (sets, costumes, lighting, theater space)? What were the sounds (music, spoken word, audience reaction)?
- How are you going to communicate what you saw? (Be specific in your language.)

What does it make me think of? (Simile, Metaphor, Comparison)
- What was the dance like? Can you compare it to anything else? (sports, animals, experiences?)
- What adjectives come to mind when you watch the performance? How would you describe how a movement looks?

What do I think or feel about it? (Reaction, Opinion, Evaluation, Analysis, Assessment)
- Did you like it or not? Why?
- Would you send a friend to see it? Would you tell them it’s worth paying $40 to see?
- What things besides the dance might affect the way you look at the performance? Were you tired or hungry, or did you have a bad day? In a completely different mood from the work?
- Describe your strongest impression of this event. What would you remember about it a month from now?
Don Quixote Word Find

Can you find the following list of words in the puzzle below?

DON QUIXOTE  SANCHO PANZA
WINDMILL     SPAIN
KITRI        TOMASSON
POSSOKHOV    BASILIO
PETIPA       GYPSY
CERVANTES    MINKUS
TILTING      CASTANETS
PAS DE DEUX  GUITAR
BULLFIGHTER  TAVERN

See page 32 for answers.
People have danced since the beginning of civilization. Dance can be a form of celebration, or part of religious ritual, and it can be performed as entertainment. Ballet is a particular kind of dancing that requires a very special technique that has developed over 400 years.

Ballet began in the form of lavish entertainment spectacles during the Renaissance in the courts of Italy and France. In fact, the term ballet and the word ball are both derived from the Italian verb ballare, which means “to dance.” Early ballets were performed in ballrooms and contained speaking and singing as well as dancing, and the performers were mostly the nobility or members of the courts. These court ballets reached their height of popularity under King Louis XIV, who was an accomplished dancer himself.

Louis XIV formed the first official ballet school, L’Académie Royale de Musique et de Danse, known today as the Paris Opera Ballet. To this day, all ballet vocabulary is in French. From this time, ballet evolved away from court ballrooms into a more structured theater environment. The performers began to be trained professionals rather than amateurs dancing for their own enjoyment.

At first, all of the dancers were men. The first women appeared professionally in 1681. In the early 1700s, one ballerina shortened her skirts so that her brilliant footwork was visible and removed the heels from her shoes to make the movements easier. Another, concerned with dramatic expression, removed her heavy hoop skirts and fashionable wigs to make her characters more believable.

Women became the most popular dancers when they began to dance en pointe (on the tips of their toes, wearing special shoes). This period, the Romantic era, was a time when most ballets were about supernatural creatures and the contrast between reality and imagination. Advances in theater technology, such as gas lighting and more realistic sets, helped create an atmosphere of fantasy.

After 1850, the center of the ballet world shifted from Paris to St. Petersburg, Russia. There, a great ballet master and choreographer, Marius Petipa, produced the famous ballets Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, and Nutcracker in collaboration with composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

By 1900, the very best dancers were being trained at the Imperial Russian Ballet School. In 1909, a group of these dancers, including Vaslav Nijinsky and Anna Pavlova, went to Paris to perform, where they made a tremendous impression and revived interest in classical ballet.

The Ballets Russes toured Europe and the United States, presenting a varied repertoire and showcasing outstanding dancers for the next 20 years. Anna Pavlova formed her own company and traveled to every corner of the world, introducing ballet to people who had never seen it before.

Americans became enthusiastic about ballet in the 1930s when many of those dancers settled in America. One of these, George Balanchine, began a major ballet school and eventually directed New York City Ballet. Another, Adolph Bolm, was the first director of San Francisco Ballet, the first professional ballet company in the United States, founded in 1933.

Today, every major American city has a professional ballet company and good training schools. Thanks to the influence of superstars like Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov, male dancers are again as prominent as the ballerinas.

Contemporary ballets contain movements that are influenced by modern dance, and many performance pieces tell no story but are abstract. And so, the art of ballet continues to evolve.

1. Marie Taglioni
2. Marie Salle
3. Tamara Karsavina & Vaslav Nijinsky
4. SFB in Balanchine's The Four Temperaments, (Choreography by George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust; photo © Erik Tomasson)
## Ballet Timeline

- **1653** Louis XIV dances the Sun God in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*. His teacher, Pierre Beauchamps, formalizes the terms we use as vocabulary in ballet today.

- **1789** Jean Dauberval produces *La fille mal gardée*, making it the oldest ballet still extant in modern-day repertoire.

- **1841** *Giselle* is choreographed by Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot, starring Carlotta Grisi.

- **1909** Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes holds its first Paris season at the Théâtre du Châtelet.


- **1915** Anna Pavlova premieres *California Poppy* in San Francisco.

- **1940** Ballet Theatre (later American Ballet Theatre) presents its first season.

- **1948** George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein found New York City Ballet.


- **2008** San Francisco Ballet celebrates its 75th anniversary.

- **1910** Louis XIV (Sun King) founds the L’Académie Royale de la Musique, later the Paris Opera Ballet.

- **1726-1727** Marie Camargo and her rival, Marie Salle, make debuts in London. Camargo shortens her skirt to show her feet, paving the way for the modern tutu.

- **1828** Marie Taglioni makes her debut at the Paris Opera, dancing for the first time on pointe.

- **1890s** Marius Petipa (1818-1910) choreographs the great classics of ballet, including *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *Swan Lake* (1895, with Lev Ivanov), and *Raymonda* (1898).

- **1938** Eugene Loring choreographs and stars in *Billy the Kid* for Lincoln Kirstein’s Ballet Caravan. It is the first work created by an American choreographer to represent an American theme.

- **1933** Adolph Bolm, former partner of Anna Pavlova, forms the San Francisco Opera Ballet. Willam Christensen joins the Company as ballet master in 1938 and produces the first U.S. versions of *Coppélia*, *Nutcracker*, and *Swan Lake*. Brothers Lew and Harold later join him to direct, respectively, the Company and its school.

- **1940-1962** Denham’s Ballets Russes and Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo tour the United States and create a national audience for dance.

- **1960s-1970s** Defections of Kirov Ballet stars such as Rudolf Nureyev (1938-95), in 1961; Natalia Makarova, in 1971; and Mikhail Baryshnikov, in 1974, bring new excitement to classical ballet in Europe and the United States.

- **2015** San Francisco Ballet celebrates Helgi Tomasson’s 30th anniversary as artistic director.

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1. Louis XIV as Apollo  
2. Marius Petipa  
3. Carlotta Grisi as Giselle  
4. Lew Christensen in *Filling Station*  
5. Rudolf Nureyev  
6. © Estate of George Platt Lynes
accen*t To call attention to a particular movement or note in a phrase of dance or music
adage [ah-DAYZH] Slow, sustained movements in ballet
**audience** Spectators at a performance
**audition** To try out for a role; a trial performance where dancers are judged on their ability to dance
**balance** Maintaining the stability and equilibrium of the body
ballet [BA-lay] A classical dance form originating in European courts during the 17th and 18th centuries that is characterized by grace and movement with intricate gestures and codified footwork
ballerina A female ballet dancer of highest ranking
**ballet master/mistress** An individual (usually a retired dancer) with varying responsibilities including teaching, coaching, and rehearsing ballets.
**barre** The place where a dancer goes to begin his/her class work; the barre is a long pole securely attached to a wall, to give the dancer support. After the dancer has done barre work to warm up, he/she will move to the center of the classroom or studio to practice increasingly complex steps.
**beat** The underlying pulse that measures time; beat is part of rhythm.
**choreographer** The visionary of the dancing in a ballet, he/she is responsible for creating the ballet for the stage and integrating the dancing, music, decor, story, costumes, and lighting.
**choreography** The art of creating and arranging steps to create a dance
**composer** A person who creates music
**concert** A public dance or music performance
**continuous** Movement that is uninterrupted in time
**conductor** The leader of the orchestra
**corps de ballet** A group of dancers who work together as an ensemble, they form the background for the ballerina and her partner and are the backbone of any ballet company.
**costumes** The clothing performers wear to help set the mood a choreographer wishes to create, allowing for freedom of movement for dancers and actors alike
**dancer** One who translates the choreographer's vision to the audience through technique and interpretation
demi [duh-MEE] Half
divertissements A variety of short dances inserted in certain ballets as entertainment
dress rehearsal Final practice before a performance
dynamics The force, energy, and intensity with which motions are executed; ranging from soft, slow, and fluid to hard, fast, and sharp
**emotions** Feelings expressed in dance such as joy, sorrow, hate, love, etc.
**energy** A unit of force in movement
**ensemble** A group of dancers working together on a performance
**focus** To concentrate on one thing at a time
**freeze** A halt in movement at any given time
grand [grahn] Big
interpretation Deciding the meaning or concept of a dance or movement
isolate To focus on one body part at a time
jeté [zuh-TAY] To leap
**leap** To jump from one foot to the other
level A position or movement in space that occurs on the horizontal plane, such as high, medium, or low
lighting design Is used to enhance scenery and costumes, as well as give a sense of time
narrative A dance that tells a story
parallel A primary position in dance where the feet are flat on the ground with toes pointing forward
pas de deux A dance for two people, traditionally a ballerina and a premier danseur
pattern An ordered arrangement which repeats itself
pantomime The art of telling a story, expressing a mood or an emotion, or describing an action without words
performance The presentation of a dance, play, or theater piece for others
phrase A series of dance movements forming a unit in a choreographic pattern
plié [plee-AY] To bend the knees
pointe shoes Shoes worn only by female dancers that enable them to dance on the tips of their toes; the area covering the toes is made of layers of fabric glued together in the shape of a “box,” covered in satin, and hardened. The sole of the shoe is made of hard leather to prevent the shoe from breaking when bent and to help support the foot. To keep the shoe on tightly, the dancers sew satin ribbons and elastic to the sides and tie the ribbons securely around their ankles. A pair of pointe shoes costs $50 to $80 wholesale and lasts from one hour to eight hours of work.
port de bras [pawr deh brah] Movement of the arms
premier danseur A male ballet dancer of the highest ranking
principal dancer A male or female dancer of the highest ranking
proscenium The part of a modern stage directly in front and framing the curtain

rehearsal The practice of a dance before performing
relevé [rehl-le-VAY] To rise to the balls of the feet
repertoire [rep’er-twär] The collection of dances performed by a ballet company
rhythm The pattern of music or movement through time
sauté [soh-TAY] To jump
set designer A person who creates the scenic design
scenic design Like costumes and makeup, scenic design helps to tell the story or set the mood of the ballet. The set must be designed so that the dancers can enter and exit the stage according to the choreographer’s wishes.
shape A specific design of the body at rest or in motion
solo A dance performed by one person
space Area occupied by the dance or dancer
stretch To elongate or extend one’s muscles
studio The place where artists study dance, practice, and rehearse
technique The method and procedures of classical ballet training used to achieve desired results; a dancer’s ability to perform all steps and movements correctly
tempo The speed at which a rhythm moves
tendu [tahn-DEW] To point or stretch the foot
theater A place for the presentation of performances—an essential in ballet
turnout The ability of the dancer to turn the legs outward from the hip joints to a 90-degree angle.
tutu Ballet skirt, usually made of net; tutus may be of varying lengths. While the style and mood of the ballet help to determine the preferred tutu length, the dancer’s technique is most clearly visible when she wears a short tutu. Tutus are very expensive; the cost of a jeweled tutu ranges from $5,000 to $7,500.
1. What is a ballet?
It is dancing to music on stage using the classical ballet vocabulary in front of an audience.

2. How do ballet dancers make up the steps they do?
They don’t make up the steps. Dancers learn the basic ballet steps in ballet class. Ballet steps are like words. Just as you combine words to form a sentence and then a paragraph, choreographers combine hundreds of steps to express a feeling or idea or to tell a story.

3. What do dancers do when they aren’t on stage?
They practice exercises in daily ballet class to stay in shape and improve their skills, and they spend a lot of time learning and practicing dances taught by a choreographer. A ballet dancer’s day is similar to a professional athlete’s. Can you imagine what would happen if the 49ers or the Warriors did not have training camp or daily practices?

4. How long does it take to become a ballet dancer?
It takes 8 to 10 years of training to become a professional ballet dancer. Training ideally begins when a student is between the ages of 8 and 10. Beginners go to ballet class once or twice a week; by the time a student is 15 years of age, he or she will be taking 10 to 15 lessons a week. While ballet classes can provide exercise, discipline, and enjoyment for all, the hope of a professional career is limited to very few people. Those who enter professional ballet companies have worked long and hard to develop their superior skills and are dedicated to their art.

5. Why does it take so long to become a ballet dancer?
Part of a ballet dancer’s job is to make the difficult look easy. Ballet dancers must spin around many times without getting dizzy, lift their legs above their ears, and jump high in the air. It takes a lot of training to do things like that.

6. Can children dance on stage?
Children who take ballet classes are sometimes invited to dance with professional ballet companies. There are 74 children’s roles in San Francisco Ballet’s production of Nutcracker. All parts are double cast so there are at least 148 ballet students involved. Some ballet schools also give a performance each year at which all the children perform and show what they have learned.

7. Is ballet just for girls?
No. Every year more and more boys are taking ballet lessons. Ballet is hard work and requires great coordination, strength, and athletic ability. Boys have to learn to jump high, turn very fast without getting dizzy, lift girls, and make it all look easy.
8. When do girls learn to dance on their toes?
Girls usually begin to wear pointe shoes when they are 11 or 12 years old. They have to wait until their bones are hard enough and their muscles in their feet and legs are strong enough to support their full weight en pointe.

9. Don’t dancers get dizzy when they turn?
No, they don’t get dizzy because they are taught a trick called “spotting.” Before they begin turning, they pick something to look at—a clock, a door, a light. Then they try to keep looking at it as they go around and around. Go ahead and try it.

10. Do dancers sometimes fall and hurt themselves?
Just as athletes are vulnerable to certain injuries, so are dancers. Ballet is very demanding on a dancer’s body; it has even been said that ballet is a contact sport. Dancers hurt their backs and shoulders, necks and knees. They pull muscles, sprain ankles, twist joints, and break bones in their feet and legs. Ballet dancers take many steps to prevent injuries, including taking class every day to keep their muscles strong, loose, and warm, performing warm-up exercises before they dance, and putting a special powder on their shoes, called rosin, to prevent them from slipping. Even so, there is always the chance that a dancer will get hurt.

11. Do dancers get nervous before a performance?
Even though professional dancers perform before thousands of people, every time they perform they still get a little nervous. But when they begin to dance, the nerves subside and they just perform the best they can.

12. When do dancers have to stop dancing?
Dancing is a very hard life. Dancers work from almost the moment they get up in the morning until the time they go to bed at night. As a result, most dancers stop dancing when they are between 35 to 40 years old—about the time many professional athletes have to retire.

13. Do professional ballet dancers get paid a lot of money?
A very few famous ballet dancers make a lot of money. Most professional ballet dancers, however, are not rich at all.

14. If dancers have to train so long, and work so hard, and make so little money, and are prone to injury, why do they do it?
Ballet dancers dance because they love it and because it brings them great joy.
The performance will begin promptly at 11:30am and lasts approximately one hour and 15 minutes, without an intermission.

Let your students know in advance what behavior is expected of them. This is a LIVE performance. Unlike television or the movies, the people on stage are there at that moment and are dancing for the audience’s pleasure. Any noise distracts them. The performance will be exciting, but let your students know that they will be required to sit quietly in their seats for a fairly long period of time.

School clothes are appropriate dress; however, some students may choose to dress up.

Please plan to arrive at the Opera House at least 30 minutes prior to the performance as latecomers cannot be seated once the performance has begun.

By now you should have received your tickets and a seating chart. Please show the tickets to the usher, and he or she will help you locate your seats.

No food, drink, chewing gum, skateboards, cameras, or recording equipment are allowed inside the theater. If you plan to bring any of these items, please have your students leave them on the bus until after the performance has ended. We do not have provisions for storing these items at the Opera House.

Cell phones, iPods, electronic games, and other devices should all be turned off or set to “silent” mode.

Please, no photos or videos during the performance. You’ll want to pay full attention to the dancers on stage.

It is important to have your students visit the restrooms before the performance begins. It is inappropriate to visit the restrooms during a live performance. At all times, children must be accompanied to the restroom by an adult. Ushers will direct you to the restrooms.

Bus parking is limited. For more information on bus parking, please call 415.865.2000.
We recommend that you provide your students with some guidelines about what to look and listen for during the performance. You may also want to encourage your students to add to this list.

**Students should be encouraged to:**

A. Watch the dancers.

B. Listen to the music.

C. Look at the costumes and set designs.

D. Laugh when they see the dancers do something funny.

E. Clap to show the dancers and musicians that they are enjoying the performance when the dancing has finished. It is customary to applaud when the dancers take a bow.

**Students should be encouraged NOT to:**

A. Talk or make noise because they might miss something important.

B. Chew gum or eat because it is disruptive to others and makes a mess in the theater.

C. Leave their seats before the lights go on because this is very disruptive to their neighbors.

D. Use their iPods, cell phones, or CD players in the theater because this is disruptive to the dancers and other members of the audience.

E. Take photos or videos.
San Francisco Ballet, the oldest professional ballet company in America, has emerged as a world-class arts organization since it was founded as the San Francisco Opera Ballet in 1933. Initially, its primary purpose was to train dancers to appear in lavish, full-length opera productions.

Willam Christensen arrived in 1938 and choreographed the Company's first full-length production, Coppélia, the following year. In 1940, he staged the first American full-length production of Swan Lake. On Christmas Eve 1944, Christensen launched a national holiday tradition with the American premiere of Nutcracker, the first complete version of the ballet ever staged in the United States.

In 1942, the Company became a totally separate entity from the opera and was renamed San Francisco Ballet. Willam Christensen was artistic director, and his brother Harold was appointed director of the San Francisco Ballet School, a position he retained for 33 years. A third brother, Lew Christensen, America's first premier danseur, joined Willam as co-director in 1951, and took over the Company the following year. Under Lew's direction, the Company made its East Coast debut at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival in 1956 and toured 11 Asian nations the following year, marking the first performances of an American ballet company in the Far East.

In 1972, after performing in various San Francisco theaters, the Company settled permanently in the War Memorial Opera House for its annual residency. The following year, Michael Smuin was appointed associate artistic director and celebrated his new partnership with Lew Christensen by collaborating on a full-length production of Cinderella. In 1976, Smuin’s Romeo and Juliet became the first full-length ballet and the first performance by a West Coast company to be shown on the PBS television series Dance in America. In 1981, Smuin’s The Tempest—the first ballet ever broadcast live from the War Memorial Opera House—was nominated for three Emmy Awards (Willa Kim received the award for Outstanding Costume Design). Three years later, Smuin received an Emmy Award for Choreography for the Dance in America national broadcast of A Song for Dead Warriors.

In 1974, San Francisco Ballet faced bankruptcy, but its supporters and the community responded with an extraordinary grassroots effort called “Save Our Ballet,” which successfully brought the Company back from the brink. That same year, Dr. Richard E. LeBlond, Jr. was appointed president and general manager of the San Francisco Ballet Association. He developed the first long-range plan for an American dance company, and in 18 months San Francisco Ballet was in the black financially.

Helgi Tomasson’s arrival as artistic director in July 1985 marked the beginning of a new era for San Francisco Ballet. Like Lew Christensen, Tomasson was, for many years, a leading dancer for the most important ballet choreographer of the 20th century, George Balanchine.

Less than two years after Tomasson’s arrival, San Francisco Ballet unveiled its fourth production of Nutcracker in December 1986. Tomasson has since staged acclaimed full-length productions of many classics, including Swan Lake (1988, 2009); The Sleeping Beauty (1990); Romeo & Juliet (1994); Giselle (1999); Don Quixote, co-staged with former Principal Dancer and current Choreographer in Residence Yuri Possokhov (2003); and Nutcracker (2004).

In 1991, San Francisco Ballet performed in New York City for the first time in 26 years, returning in 1993, 1995, 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2008. Following the initial tour, the New York Times proclaimed, “Mr. Tomasson has accomplished the unprecedented: He has pulled a so-called regional company into the national ranks, and he has done so by honing the dancers into a classical style of astonishing verve and purity. San Francisco Ballet
under Helgi Tomasson’s leadership is one of the spectacular success stories of the arts in America.”

In May 1995, San Francisco Ballet hosted 12 ballet companies from around the world for UNited We Dance: An International Festival, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter, which took place in the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center in San Francisco. Never before had a dance event brought together more than 150 international artists for two weeks of creative exchange and inspiration.

San Francisco Ballet continues to enrich and expand its repertory and presents approximately 100 performances annually. The Company’s vast repertory includes works by Sir Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, August Bournonville, Christopher Bruce, Val Caniparoli, Lew Christensen, Nacho Duato, Flemming Flindt, William Forsythe, James Kudelka, Jirí Kylián, Lar Lubovitch, Wayne McGregor, Agnès de Mille, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, Hans van Manen, Peter Martins, Mark Morris, Rudolf Nureyev, Marius Petipa, Roland Petit, Jerome Robbins, Paul Taylor, Antony Tudor, and Christopher Wheeldon.

In recent years, the Company’s touring program has become increasingly ambitious. In fall 2008, as part of its year long 75th-anniversary celebration, San Francisco Ballet embarked on a critically acclaimed four-city American Tour with engagements at Chicago’s Harris Theater for Music and Dance, New York City Center, Southern California’s Orange County Performing Arts Center, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

San Francisco Ballet has also enjoyed frequent overseas tours, including engagements at prestigious venues such as the famed Opéra de Paris-Palais Garnier in Paris (2001); London’s Sadler’s Wells Theatre (1999, 2004) and the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden (2002); Athens’ Megaron Theatre (2002), and Herod Atticus Amphitheatre (2004); Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen (1998, 2010), and the Edinburgh International Festival at the Edinburgh Playhouse (2003).

Notably, on the second day of the Company’s London engagement in 2004, Sadler’s Wells’ box office experienced the second-highest single sales day in its history. Of the engagement, David Dougill of the Sunday Times wrote, “Helgi Tomasson’s outstanding artistic direction... has transformed a regional American troupe into one of the world’s top ballet companies.”

In 2005, the Company returned to Paris, participating in a three-week inaugural engagement at Les Étés de la Danse de Paris, a new outdoor dance festival. In fall 2009, San Francisco Ballet made its first trip to the People’s Republic of China, performing Tomasson’s 1988 production of Swan Lake, as well as a mixed-repertoire program, in Shanghai and Beijing.

In 2004, San Francisco Ballet was the first American ballet company to present the evening-length Sylvia, with all-new choreography by Mark Morris. The Company also performed a two-week Centennial Celebration to honor the 100th anniversary of the birth of master choreographer George Balanchine. In December 2004, San Francisco Ballet debuted Tomasson’s critically acclaimed new production of Nutcracker, hailed by the New York Times as “…striking, elegant and beautiful!” In 2005, Tomasson was awarded the prestigious Lew Christensen Medal in honor of his 20th anniversary as artistic director of San Francisco Ballet, and that same year, the Company won its first Laurence Olivier Award, for its 2004 fall season at Sadler’s Wells Theatre. In 2006, in a readers’ poll conducted by Dance Europe magazine, San Francisco Ballet was the first non-European company to be voted “Company of the Year” by the publication. In 2008, San Francisco Ballet was one of the recipients of the Jerome Robbins Award for excellence in dance.

In 2008, the Company’s 75th Anniversary Season included the revival of former San Francisco Ballet Director Lew Christensen’s Filling Station, one of the oldest American folk ballets; an all-Robbins program, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the master choreographer’s death; the San Francisco Ballet premiere of West Side Story Suite; a tribute to San Francisco Ballet by three international companies (Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, National Ballet of Canada, and New York City Ballet); and a New Works Festival of 10 world premieres by 10 of the dance world’s most diverse and acclaimed choreographers: Julia Adam, Val Caniparoli, Jorma Elo, Margaret Jenkins, James Kudelka, Mark Morris, Yuri Possokhov, Paul Taylor, Stanton Welch, and Christopher Wheeldon. Other anniversary initiatives included a commemorative book, San Francisco Ballet at Seventy-Five; special exhibitions; an alumni reunion weekend; and the broadcast of Tomasson’s Nutcracker in December 2008 on Great Performances: Dance in America series on PBS, produced in partnership with KQED Public Television in San Francisco. In January 2010, the Ballet’s Opening Night Gala, Silver Celebration, honored Tomasson’s 25 years as artistic director of San Francisco Ballet.

The San Francisco Ballet School, overseen by Tomasson, attracts students from around the world, training approximately 600 annually. In addition to filling the ranks of San Francisco Ballet, graduates have gone on to join distinguished ballet companies throughout the world.
San Francisco Ballet, the oldest professional ballet company in America, was also one of the first dance companies to have its own permanent body of musicians. In October 1975, the San Francisco Performing Arts Orchestra was founded to serve as the Ballet’s official orchestra, and in 1983, the group’s name was changed to San Francisco Ballet Orchestra.

In the preceding years, a pickup orchestra made up largely of San Francisco Symphony members had served San Francisco Ballet. Later, the Oakland Symphony served in this capacity, but an expanded schedule and additional concert dates made commitment to San Francisco Ballet increasingly difficult. Today, the ensemble enjoys the distinction of being one of three major orchestras in one city, along with the San Francisco Symphony and the San Francisco Opera—a rarity in this country.

In the 1970s, an ever-expanding repertory of new works required the dedication and talent of a permanent ensemble. Ballet management, including Co-Directors Lew Christensen and Michael Smuin, along with then-Music Conductor Denis de Coteau and Alex Horvath (violinist and eventual Orchestra personnel manager), made this a top priority. The first step was to retain Jean-Louis LeRoux as associate conductor, and the process of negotiating with the musicians’ union began immediately. Auditions were held, with more than 200 musicians trying out. By 1975, the Orchestra, made up of 38 musicians, was officially formed. The Performing Arts Orchestra had its premiere during San Francisco Ballet’s Nutcracker in December. Following the first Nutcracker rehearsal with the Orchestra, the dancers came downstage and applauded both the musicians and de Coteau. During ensuing repertory seasons, the Orchestra, under the leadership of newly appointed Music Director Denis de Coteau, was met with both audience and critical acclaim.

In 1978, the Company returned to New York for the first time since its 1965 engagement at Lincoln Center. The Company’s 12-performance series, which included accompaniment by the Performing Arts Orchestra at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, was an unqualified success. During the engagement, the late critic Byron Belt hailed the Orchestra as “one of the best in the business.” The Orchestra continued to accompany the Ballet on tour until 1984, when it ceased touring for two reasons: the cost was increasingly prohibitive, and as the Company gained stature, it performed in larger, more prominent venues that often had their own orchestras. Staying local, however, had rewards. Over the years, the Orchestra has accompanied a number of prestigious international ballet companies who have toured to the Bay Area, performing in venues such as San Francisco’s War Memorial Opera House and Berkeley Community Theatre. Some of these companies included The Royal Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet (1979), Stuttgart Ballet (late 1980s), Bolshoi Ballet (1987), Paul Taylor Dance Company (1990), American Ballet Theatre (1991, 1992), and Paris Opéra Ballet (2001).

The ensemble’s early objectives included a strong commitment to educating students and aspiring musicians in local schools, as well as offering music concerts that helped establish it as a professional orchestra of the highest caliber. In May 1979 the Orchestra had its debut concert, performing works by composers such as Haydn, Ives, and Vivaldi, about San Francisco Ballet Orchestra

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The San Francisco Ballet Center for Dance Education

San Francisco Ballet Orchestra

at Herbst Theatre in the War Memorial Veterans Building. The Orchestra also had the distinction of accompanying the Company in an evening performance for the Solemn Opening Ceremony for the 1984 Olympic Games, at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles.

With a highly capable Orchestra, the Ballet was now able to perform new and commissioned works without concern that the new music scores would be too difficult. These new ballets included Smuin’s *The Tempest* (music by Paul Chihara), *Medea* (music by Samuel Barber), and *Romeo & Juliet* (music by Sergei Prokofiev), among others. Some of these works proved so musically successful that the Orchestra eventually recorded them. Of the 1981 recording of *The Tempest*, a Classical Records review read, “This inordinately handsome set brings us a sample of San Francisco Ballet’s wonderful orchestra. The sound…is first rate. Highly recommended!”

With the appointment of Helgi Tomasson to the position of artistic director of San Francisco Ballet in 1985, the Company’s reputation began to evolve from that of a regional troupe to a world-class dance company. As the Company’s acclaim grew, so did the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra’s, and by the 1990s it was generally regarded as one of the finest ballet orchestras in the world. Notably, in 1995, the Orchestra accompanied 12 international dance companies, as well as San Francisco Ballet, during the ambitious, weeklong UNited We Dance Festival, which promoted international communication and understanding.

In 1998, due to failing health, Music Director Denis de Coteau stepped down reluctantly, after more than 20 years in this capacity. Conductor Emil de Cou, who had been with the Orchestra as conductor since 1993, assumed the title of acting music director and conductor in de Coteau’s place. For the next three years, until 2001, de Cou led the Orchestra, before joining Washington D.C.’s National Symphony Orchestra. After he departed, Jean-Louis LeRoux returned to the Ballet as interim music director for two years. In May 2003, Andrew Mogrelia was named music director and principal conductor; he left in 2005 to focus on his music director duties at San Francisco Conservatory of Music as well as international conducting and recording engagements. That same year, Martin West, who had guested frequently as a conductor with the Orchestra, assumed the position.

Today, the Orchestra accompanies the Ballet for the entire run of the annual Nutcracker production and throughout each repertory season. The existing Orchestra can be expanded for ballets requiring fuller orchestration, such as the full-length *Romeo & Juliet*. In addition, the ensemble’s vast repertory includes hundreds of works, spanning four centuries of music history, from Monteverdi and Mozart to film scores. Notably, the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra has made critically acclaimed recordings of composers from Handel to Goldenthal, as well as four televised recordings for the PBS series *Dance in America* (Lubovitch’s *Othello*; Smuin’s *The Tempest*, *Cinderella*, and *Romeo & Juliet*). Of the 1999 recording by San Francisco Ballet Orchestra titled *Debussy Rediscovered*, ClassicsToday.com and Amazon.com music critic Robert Levine wrote, “The playing throughout is exemplary and the performances leave nothing to be desired. Very highly recommended!” The year 2005 marked the 30th anniversary of San Francisco Ballet Orchestra’s founding. In late 2007, the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra released a self-produced recording of the full score of Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker*.

Other recordings include a CD of Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky cello music, an album of suites from Delibes’ *Sylvia* and *Coppélia*, Bizet’s Symphony in C, and the score for Yuri Possokhov’s *RAkU*.
San Francisco Ballet and the San Francisco Ballet School were both established in 1933 as a single institution by Gaetano Merola, founding director of San Francisco Opera. Merola recognized the need for a thriving academy that would train dancers to appear in opera productions.

San Francisco became the only city in the country, other than New York, to claim a ballet school as an auxiliary to an established opera company. Adolph Bolm was appointed director and ballet master for the Company, which occasionally presented all-dance programs. But San Francisco Ballet truly began to take shape as an independent entity when William Christensen became Company ballet master. Two years later he appointed his brother, Harold, director of the School.

In 1942, William and Harold Christensen bought the School from San Francisco Opera, which could no longer provide financial support to the ballet operation. As a result, the San Francisco Ballet Guild was formed in order to maintain the Company as an independent performing unit. William Christensen was named artistic director of San Francisco Ballet, and Harold continued on as director of the School.

Harold, like his brothers William and Lew, the three men most responsible for guiding the Company and the School for some 45 years, was American trained. He was the preeminent educator among the brothers, who directed the development of ballet in the Western United States for an entire generation. Under Harold’s guidance, the School evolved into one of the country’s finest classical academies. Scholarship programs were initiated and the faculty grew to include numerous prominent classical ballet teachers. Harold directed the School for 35 years, developing many dancers who went on to careers with San Francisco Ballet and other prestigious companies.

When Harold retired in 1975, Richard Cammack became the new director of the School. Cammack oversaw the School’s move into its current state-of-the-art facility in 1983. Helgi Tomasson assumed leadership of the School after becoming artistic director of San Francisco Ballet in 1985. In 1986, Tomasson invited former San Francisco Ballet ballerina Nancy Johnson to head the School, a role she held until 1993, when he appointed Lola De Avila to the School’s newly established position of associate director. De Avila left the position in 1999, at which time Gloria Govrin was appointed the School’s associate director. In July 2006, de Avila returned to the position of associate director. De Avila stepped down in 2012 and Patrick Armand now serves as associate director of the School.

Today, the School boasts a distinguished international staff, a Trainee Program for advanced-level students, a dedicated student residence, and an extensive scholarship program. Of the current Company, over 50 percent of the dancers received all or part of their training at the School, and many San Francisco Ballet School students have gone on to dance with professional companies nationally and internationally.

Now, more than 80 years after its founding, San Francisco Ballet has, indeed, achieved Gaetano Merola’s original goal of elevating San Francisco to a “high position in the realm of dance.”
The San Francisco Ballet
Center for Dance Education

As a vital cultural contributor to our community, the San Francisco Ballet Center for Dance Education (CDE) provides programs that reach wide audiences from diverse populations throughout the Bay Area; approximately 35,000 people benefit from these programs each year.

A highly popular pre-performance discussion program, Meet the Artist Interviews (MTAs) spotlight the specific San Francisco Ballet repertory program to be performed that afternoon/evening. These informative talks feature Company dancers, guest artists, choreographers, and conductors in conversation with a moderator. Meet the Artist Interviews last 30 minutes and take place on the Orchestra Level of the War Memorial Opera House one hour before performance time on selected evenings and Sunday matinees. MTAs are open to ticket holders of that afternoon/evening’s performance.

San Francisco Ballet’s Pointes of View (POV) Lecture Series features a variety of SF Ballet dancers, guest artists, choreographers, musicians, designers, and visiting scholars. POVs are 45-minute educational, in-depth discussions about that evening’s performance held in the War Memorial Opera House, Orchestra Level. The lectures are free and open to the public.

Ballet 101 is a class for adults who are curious about the art of ballet and the world of dance. This adult education course is designed to give participants a hands-on, interactive learning experience. The program harnesses the talent and experience of SF Ballet employees and faculty who staff this program. The course consists of a series of lectures and experiential activities that build on the course’s previous teachings.

Seeing Ballet—a new workshop series during the 2015 Repertory Season—is designed to provide tools to observe, analyze, and interpret ballet more fully. Workshop participants learn to recognize key elements of choreography, staging, and design in a short segment from a ballet that will be in performance that day. Through a facilitated process, participants develop individual readings of ballet choreography.

Talk about Ballet! (formerly Visiting Scholar Program) programming brings nationally known scholars to SF Ballet to lecture and present on a variety of topics that are meant to educate and inspire balletomanes of all levels and ages.

Visiting Scholars:

Stephanie Jordan, 2014
Tim Scholl, 2013
Beth Genné, 2012
Doug Fullington, 2011
Richard Taruskin, 2010
Janice Ross, 2009
Lynn Garafola, 2007
Deborah Jowitt, 2006
San Francisco Ballet is also proud to offer programs that serve children, youth, and families throughout the Bay Area, providing important avenues of access, education, and opportunities in dance.

SF Ballet offers two Community Matinee performances of selections from the current repertory season. All Community Matinee performances are held at the War Memorial Opera House. Discount tickets are offered to approximately 6,000 school-aged children, teachers, and seniors annually.

The Dance in Schools and Communities (DISC) program is SF Ballet’s most long-standing outreach program. This celebrated program reaches nearly 3,700 elementary school children each year, with 6- to 10-week dance residencies in 35 elementary schools in the San Francisco Unified School District. DISC is a multicultural dance and music program celebrating the historical, traditional, and folkloric dance traditions of diverse cultures. DISC provides all participants with complimentary tickets to SF Ballet Community Matinees. Annually, DISC awards approximately 50 students with full one-year scholarships to the prestigious SF Ballet School.

Family Connections is a program that brings dance workshops and lectures to venues such as the DeYoung Museum, San Francisco Public Library Main Branch, and the Asian Art Museum. This program gives children and their parents a shared experience of dance and, when available, free tickets to see the SF Ballet in performance at the War Memorial Opera House.

Dance Camp is a week-long summer day camp that provides instruction in dance, music, and art for children from all over San Francisco. Targeted toward inner-city youth, the camp is offered free of charge for children of low-income families. A wide variety of classes are offered to students, ranging from hip hop and salsa, to circus arts and visual arts, providing children with a well-rounded experience in arts education.

Online Educational Resources are designed to educate and excite users about SF Ballet and dance in general. Downloadable study guides enhance the theater-going experience for students attending Community Matinees, with tailored information, specific to the ballets being performed. Study Guides include articles, stories, music clips, and links to online resources. Visit sfballet.org to access these resources.
San Francisco Ballet wishes to share a love of dance with the broadest possible audience. Each year the organization offers students and seniors the opportunity to obtain group tickets for performances at discounted prices. We offer two spring Community Matinees during the repertory season. Performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House.

Community Matinees offer a behind-the-scenes look at San Francisco Ballet, including open set changes, a music education component, and special demonstrations featuring students from the San Francisco Ballet School.

To add your school to our mailing list to receive information about Community Matinees, please call San Francisco Ballet Ticket Services at 415.865.2000.


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Further Resources


San Francisco Ballet Books & Recordings


Broadcast (TV/Video/DVD)—John Neumeier’s The Little Mermaid, Martin West, conductor. Produced by KQED (San Francisco) for the PBS series Great Performances, aired on December 15, 2011.

Broadcast (TV/Video/DVD)—Helgi Tomasson’s Nutcracker, Martin West, conductor. Produced by KQED (San Francisco) for the PBS series Great Performances, aired on December 17, 2008.

Broadcast (TV/Video/DVD)—Lar Lubovitch’s Othello, music by Elliot Goldenthal; Emil de Cou, conductor. Co-produced by KQED (San Francisco) and WNET (New York) for the PBS series Dance in America, recorded June 18, 2003.


CD—Suite from the ballet Othello, music by Elliot Goldenthal; Emil de Cou, conductor; Varese Sarabande recording, VSD-5942, 1998.

CD—Nutcracker, music by P.I. Tchaikovsky; Martin West, conductor; self-produced recording by O’Brien Enterprises, B0015QV2HI, 2008.

Websites about Ballet

Check out these websites to learn more about SFB, see videos of ballet steps, and read about ballet performances.

sfballet.org
abt.org/education/dictionary
criticaldance.org