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.

San Francisco Ballet in Jerome Robbins’ Glass Pieces
(© Erik Tomasson)
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This guide is meant to inform, spark conversation, and inspire engagement with San Francisco Ballet’s production of Jerome Robbins’ Glass Pieces. 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. Dance 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 spoken words, people around the world understand and respond to it. This is why dance is sometimes called a universal language.

Movement 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.
Glass Pieces
Composed by: Philip Glass
Choreographer: Jerome Robbins
Staged by: Jean-Pierre Frolich
Production Design: Jerome Robbins and Ronald Bates
Costume Design: Ben Benson
Lighting Design: Ronald Bates
Music: excerpts from Glassworks and Akhnaten

Glass Pieces is an exciting abstract ballet with a thrilling, urban pulse, danced by a cast of 42 dancers to rhythmic compositions by Philip Glass.

This ballet was considered a bold experiment when it was introduced almost 20 years ago. Although minimalist composers like Glass were familiar to audiences who attended modern dance concerts, a mainstream ballet choreographer had not yet used their music. Robbins sought to find the choreographic equivalent to the composer’s blocks of music and developed a sleek modern vocabulary, which is hypnotic, haunting, and invigorating. In spite of the lack of plot or narrative, each of the ballet's three sections suggests an aspect of life in the big city.

The music for the first two sections of the ballet—“Rubric” and “Facades”—come from the album “Glassworks,” which Glass himself said was intended to introduce his Minimalist style of music to audiences who weren't familiar with it.

Robbins seemed genuinely surprised that Glass Pieces was instantly perceived by many to depict textures of metropolitan life. “I didn't set out to do a portrait of the big city,” Jerome Robbins told the New York Times shortly after New York City Ballet presented the world premiere of Glass Pieces in 1983. Yet it is virtually impossible to view the ballet as anything else. Sometimes I start something and I don’t know where it is going to finish. I'll analyze it after the premiere, and then realize what the piece is. It’s subconscious.” Mr. Robbins once stated, “I couldn’t get involved in a piece of music unless there was something in it that affected me, that touched me, I am very affected by the tribal sense in the third piece.”

Although the final movement is danced to funeral music from the opera Akhnaten, it bursts with energy and vitality. So does Robbins’ ritualistic choreography, first for a group of men, then for a group of women. This is a city pulsating with life. “The men move in blocks. Like a flock of birds or a school of fish,” says Jean-Pierre Frolich, the ballet master who staged the work for San Francisco Ballet.

Questions to discuss
- What kind of image does the first man running give you? Is he running a race, or running from something, or running just for fun with his friends?
- Does this music make you feel like dancing? Is this music not what you expected at the ballet?
- Why do you think the choreographer has the dancers wearing what they would wear in class or practice?
- How does the choreography change for the women? Do they seem to dance more in circles than the men?
- Just for fun, try to dance some of the steps you saw today, and enjoy!

San Francisco Ballet in Robbins’ Glass Pieces.
(C) Erik Tomasson)
Jerome Robbins
Choreographer

A world-renowned choreographer, Jerome Robbins has received acclaim for a wide range of works created for ballet companies such as New York City Ballet, Ballet USA, and American Ballet Theatre, as well as for his extensive work on Broadway, in musical theater, and on film.

His career as a gifted ballet dancer developed with American Ballet Theatre, where he was especially noted for his dancing in the role of Petrouchka, and character roles in the works of Mikhail Fokine, Antony Tudor, Leonide Massine, David Lichine, and Agnes de Mille, as well as his own Fancy Free (1944), his first choreographic effort.

In all, Robbins produced 54 ballets in a prolific career that included Dances at a Gathering (1969); The Goldberg Variations (1971); Watermill (1972); Requiem Canticles (1972); The Dybbuk Variations (1974); In G Major (1975); Mother Goose (1975); The Four Seasons (1979); Opus 19: The Dreamer (1979); Piano Pieces (1981); Gershwin Concerto (1982); Glass Pieces (1983); I'm Old-Fashioned (1983); Antique Epigraphs (1984); Brahms/Handel (with Twyla Tharp in 1984); In Memory Of... (1985); Quiet City (1986); Piccolo Balletto (1986); Ives, Songs (1988); 2 & 3 Part Inventions (1994), and West Side Story Suite (1995).

He also founded the Jerome Robbins Chamber Dance Company, which completed an acclaimed tour of the People's Republic of China, sponsored in 1981 by the U.S. Communications Agency.

During this extraordinary career, Robbins served on the National Council on the Arts from 1974 to 1980, and the New York State Council on the Arts/Dance Panel from 1973 to 1988. He established and partially endowed the Jerome Robbins Film Archive of the Dance Collection of the New York City Public Library at Lincoln Center. His numerous awards and academic honors include the Handel Medallion of the City of New York (1976), the Kennedy Center Honors (1981), three Honorary Doctorates, an honorary membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1985), and, in 1988, he was awarded the National Medal of the Arts.

Robbins was also the recipient of five Tony Awards for his work on Broadway (for High Button Shoes, West Side Story, and Fiddler on the Roof) as well as two Oscars, one with Robert Wise for direction of the film version of West Side Story, and one for choreographic achievement in film.

Robbins died on July 29, 1998, a few months after staging his Les Noces for New York City Ballet. In his memory, the lights on Broadway were dimmed for several minutes.
Philip Glass
Composer

Through his operas, his symphonies, his compositions for his own ensemble, and his wide-ranging collaborations with artists ranging from Twyla Tharp to Allen Ginsberg, Woody Allen to David Bowie, Philip Glass has had an extraordinary and unprecedented impact upon the musical and intellectual life of his times.

The operas – *Einstein on the Beach*, *Satyagraha*, *Akhnaten*, and *The Voyage*, among many others – play throughout the world’s leading houses, and rarely to an empty seat. Glass has written music for experimental theater and for Academy Award-winning motion pictures such as *The Hours* and Martin Scorsese’s *Kundun*, while *Koyaanisqatsi*, his initial filmic landscape with Godfrey Reggio and the Philip Glass Ensemble, may be the most radical and influential mating of sound and vision since *Fantasia*. His associations, personal and professional, with leading rock, pop and world music artists date back to the 1960s, including the beginning of his collaborative relationship with artist Robert Wilson. Indeed, Glass is the first composer to win a wide, multi-generational audience in the opera house, the concert hall, the dance world, in film and in popular music—simultaneously.

He was born in 1937 and grew up in Baltimore. He studied at the University of Chicago, the Juilliard School and in Aspen with Darius Milhaud. Finding himself dissatisfied with much of what then passed for modern music, he moved to Europe, where he studied with the legendary pedagogue Nadia Boulanger (who also taught Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson and Quincy Jones) and worked closely with the sitar virtuoso and composer Ravi Shankar. He returned to New York in 1967 and formed the Philip Glass Ensemble – seven musicians playing keyboards and a variety of woodwinds, amplified and fed through a mixer.

The new musical style that Glass was evolving was eventually dubbed “minimalism.” Glass himself never liked the term and preferred to speak of himself as a composer of “music with repetitive structures.” Much of his early work was based on the extended reiteration of brief, elegant melodic fragments that wove in and out of an aural tapestry. Or, to put it another way, it immersed a listener in a sort of sonic weather that twists, turns, surrounds, develops.

There has been nothing “minimalist” about his output. In the past 25 years, Glass has composed more than twenty operas, large and small; eight symphonies (with others already on the way); two piano concertos and concertos for violin, piano, timpani, and saxophone quartet and orchestra; soundtracks to films ranging from new scores for the stylized classics of Jean Cocteau to Errol Morris’s documentary about former defense secretary Robert McNamara; string quartets; a growing body of work for solo piano and organ. He has collaborated with Paul Simon, Linda Ronstadt, Yo-Yo Ma, and Doris Lessing, among many others. He presents lectures, workshops, and solo keyboard performances around the world, and continues to appear regularly with the Philip Glass Ensemble.

– from PhilipGlass.com
Music by Philip Glass

Einstein On The Beach, 1976
Glassworks, 1982
Koyannisqatsi, Film Soundtrack, 1981
Satyagraha (Sanskrit for ‘life force) an opera based on the life of Gandhi, 1985
Powaqqatsi Film Soundtrack, 1987
Passages with Ravi Shankar, 1990
Low Symphony with David Bowie and Brian Eno, 1997
Dracula film score for the 1931 Bela Lugosi film, performed by the Kronos Quartet, 1999
What is “Minimalism”? 

The music of Philip Glass is often called “Minimalist,” although the composer himself has said that he simply creates music with “repetitive structures.” Minimalism was a kind of experimental music that first appeared in New York in the 1960s and was originally called the “New York Hypnotic School” because of the trance-like effect of the music.

Some of the common attributes of Minimalist music are:

- Simple brief melodies that are repeated in loops, with small barely noticeable changes that happen over time
- Strong pulsing rhythms that feel like an engine driving the music along
- Unusual combinations of instruments—in Glass Pieces, the composer might put together a flute with a saxophone, two horns and an organ
- A hypnotic trance-like quality

Singing Rounds

Although people have been singing rounds for centuries before Minimalism, there are some similarities between simple rounds like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” and the ideas of Minimalist music.

A round is a musical composition in which two or more people sing the same melody, but with each person starting at different times. Often the overlapping voices will seem to come together in a harmonious way, even though different parts of the song are being sung at the same time. You can repeat the verses of the song endlessly for hypnotic effect. Try it for yourself with a few friends. Here are some common rounds that most of us have heard before:

- “Three Blind Mice”
- “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”
- “Frere Jacques”
Glass Pieces Word Search

N P A C B C K S L G G S
E L I H I R B A L L E T
T P S O C S B M A C L T
A A W R M O N S E C U T
N T S E L A S I N R G A
E T M O P W P L B S I P
H E M G O S N A N B L A
K R I R S N N M S M O O
A N K A K L S I N S R R
E S L P H Y P N O T I C
Y G Y H A I C I A P E C
A I S Y M E B M W E R Y

AKHENATEN
BALLET
CHOREOGRAPHY
GLASS
GLASSWORKS
HYPNOTIC

MINIMALISM
PATTERNS
PIECES
ROBBINS
URBAN
Writing a Dance Review

Often when a company gives a performance, a dance critic will attend the performance and write about it afterwards for a newspaper, magazine, or blog. While a review will usually describe the works performed, part of a dance critic or reviewer’s job is to give someone who was not at the performance an idea of what it was like and whether or not they should go see it.

Write a review of the performance of Glass Pieces. Try to include the following elements in your review (to help you out, some of the facts that should be in your review are included below, and others can be be found elsewhere in this guide):

- The who, what, and where of the performance:
  
  Who performed? (San Francisco Ballet)
  
  What was the name of the ballet? (Glass Pieces)
  
  Where was it performed? (The War Memorial Opera House)

- Who choreographed the dance?

- Who composed the music and how it was used?

- What you think the choreographer set out to accomplish and whether he/she was successful?

- What was visually interesting in the dance?

- Describe the quality of the dancers’ performance.
  
  Was it quiet? Athletic? Energetic?
  
  What words would you use to describe their dancing?

- Would you recommend that a friend go see this ballet?

When you have written your review, try having someone read it who wasn't at the performance, like a parent or a friend, and see if they get a clear picture of what the show was like just by reading your review.
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 which 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.

He 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 I. Tchaikovsky.

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

The Ballets Russes toured Europe and America, 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.
Ballet Timeline

1661 Louis XIV (Sun King) founds the Academic Royale de la Musique, later the Paris Opera Ballet.

1789 Jean Dauberval produces La Fille Mal Gordee, making it the oldest ballet still extant in modern-day repertoire.

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 Sleeping Beauty (1890), Swan Lake (1895, with Lev Ivanov), and Raymonda (1898).

1909 Diaghilev's Ballets Russes holds its first Paris season at the Theatre du Chatelet.

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 Coppelia, Nutcracker, and Swan Lake. Brothers Lew and Harold later join him to direct, respectively, the Company and its school.

1940 Ballet Theatre (American Ballet Theatre) presents its first season.

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


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.

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.

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


1915 Anna Pavlova premieres California Poppy in San Francisco.

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.

1938-1962 Denham’s Ballets Russes and Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, tour America and create a national audience for dance.

1960s-1970s Defections of former 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 America.

2008 San Francisco Ballet celebrates its 75th anniversary.

1. Louis XIV as Apollo
2. Marius Petipa
3. Carlotta Grisi as Giselle
4. Lew Christensen in Filling Station © Estate of George Platt Lynes
5. Rudolf Nureyev
Just as sports, math, construction, and many other activities have their own vocabulary, so too does ballet. Because much of ballet’s early development occurred in France, many of the words are French and have been handed down since the 16th century. Here are some common terms and their applications.

**accent** To call attention to a particular movement or note in a phrase of dance or music

**adage** [ah-DAHZH] Slow sustained movements in ballet

**audience** Spectators at a performance

**audition** To try out for a role; a trial performance where a dancer is 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 which 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 to 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

**freeze** To concentrate on one thing at a time

**focus** To concentrate on one thing at a 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** [zhuh-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-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 $3,200 - $4,200.
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 about eight to ten years of training to become a professional ballet dancer. Training ideally begins when a student is between the ages of eight 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 10-15 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 will 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 and 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 35-40 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 dancing and because it brings them great joy.
The performance will begin promptly at 11:30 am and lasts approximately one hour and fifteen 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.

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 of 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.
Helgi Tomasson has held the position of artistic director for 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 The 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 and Jerome Robbins, 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 over 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 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 effortlessly navigate a myriad of styles by a range of internationally distinguished choreographers. Those invited by Tomasson to create works on the Company have included David Bintley, Val Caniparoli, William Forsythe, James Kudelka, Lar Lubovitch, Mark Morris, Paul Taylor, Stanton Welch, and Christopher Wheeldon. 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, among others. 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 that Tomasson had invited to present new works created by native choreographers. Never before had a dance event brought together over 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 of Swan Lake. In recognition of his artistic excellence,
Helgi Tomasson

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 2005, Tomasson was awarded the prestigious Lew Christensen Medal in honor of his 20th anniversary as artistic director of SF Ballet. In spring 2007, Tomasson won a sustained achievement award from the Isadora Duncan Dance Awards, also in recognition of his 20 years as artistic director. In May of the same year, during a tour to Iceland's Reykjavik Arts Festival, Grimsson awarded Tomasson the Grand Cross Star of the Order of the Falcon, the country's most prestigious honor. In 2008, he was awarded the Commonwealth Club of California's Distinguished Citizen Award. In January 2010, the Company's Opening Night Gala, Silver Celebration, honored Tomasson's remarkable achievements to date.

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.
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.

William 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. William 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 William 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 over 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, Agnes 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); Herod Atticus Amphitheatre (2004); Tivoli 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 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.

2008 marked the Company's 75th Anniversary Season and highlights 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 from three international companies (Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, The 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 including Julia Adam, Val Caniparoli, Jorma Elo, Margaret Jenkins, James Kudelka, Mark Morris, Yuri Posokhov, 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 350 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 over two hundred 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 the Berkeley Community Theatre. Some of these companies included The Royal Ballet, the Royal Danish Ballet (1979), Stuttgart Ballet (late 1980s), the Bolshoi Ballet (1987), Paul Taylor Dance Company (1990), American Ballet Theatre (1991, 1992), and the 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,
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 evolved 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 over twenty 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 entitled *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*.

What Did You Learn?

1. How many musicians were in the first official SFB Orchestra?
2. When was the San Francisco Performing Arts Orchestra founded?
3. Name two ballets that the Orchestra has recorded.
4. Who is the current music director?
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 forty-five 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.”
As a vital cultural contributor to our community, the San Francisco Ballet Center for Dance Education (CDE) has programs that reach wide audiences from diverse populations throughout the Bay Area; approximately 35,000 people benefit from these programs each year. Though the Center for Dance Education is fairly new, there is a long history of free programs administered by SF Ballet.

The highly popular pre-performance discussion program, known as Meet the Artist interviews, spotlights the specific SF 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 in the War Memorial Opera House one hour before the performance on select evenings and Sunday matinees, as well as opening nights of all repertory programs. They are free to all ticket holders.

Dance scholar and educator Mary Wood, along with other guests, hosts the Pointes of View lecture series: salon-style interviews with SF Ballet dancers, guest artists, choreographers, musicians, and designers. These hour-long informative discussions give attendees an in-depth look into the SF Ballet repertory program to be performed that evening. These programs are free and open to the public. Beginning in 2014, Pointes of View events will be held on the orchestra level at the War Memorial Opera House.

SF Ballet offers two Community Matinee performances of selections from the current repertory season. These matinees feature educational behind-the-scenes lecture demonstrations. 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.

Family Connections is a program that brings dance workshops and lectures to venues such as the 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.

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 10-week dance residencies in 37 elementary schools in the San Francisco Unified School District. DISC is a multicultural dance and music program celebrating the historical, traditional, and
The San Francisco Ballet Center for Dance Education

about

The Center for Dance Education

folkloric dance traditions of diverse cultures. DISC provides all participants complimentary tickets to SF Ballet Community Matinees. Annually, DISC awards approximately 50 students with full one-year scholarships to the prestigious SF Ballet School.

Select DISC students are also given the opportunity to participate in the annual Performance Project. During this multi-week program, children experience the process of creating and performing a dance/musical presentation. Performances take place at various venues throughout San Francisco.

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.

The Community Circle 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 based in the Tenderloin neighborhood and 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 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.

The Visiting Scholar Program brings nationally known scholars to SF Ballet to lecture on a variety of topics that are meant to educate and inspire balletomanes of all levels and ages.

Visiting Scholars:
- 2014 Professor Stephanie Jordan
- 2013 Professor Tim Scholl
- 2012 Professor Beth Genné
- 2011 Doug Fullington, Dance Historian
- 2010 Professor Richard Tarushkin
- 2009 Professor Janice Ross
- 2008 Professor Jennifer Fisher
- 2007 Professor Lynn Garafola
- 2006 Professor Deborah Jowitt
Answer Key

Glass Pieces Word Search (p. 11)

San Francisco Ballet Orchestra (p. 32)
1. 38
2. 1975
3. The Tempest, Nutcracker, Othello
4. Martin West
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 on Community Matinees, please call San Francisco Ballet Ticket Services at 415.865.2000.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company is the Lead Sponsor of the 2014 Community Matinees.

Chevron and JPMorgan Chase are the Co-Lead Sponsors of the San Francisco Ballet Center for Dance Education.

Major support for the Center for Dance Education is provided by the Flora Family Foundation and the Wells Fargo Foundation. Generous support is provided by the Gap Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

The Community Matinee Series is supported by the Gaia Fund of the San Francisco Ballet Endowment Foundation.

Lead support for Dance in Schools and Communities is provided by the Charles Henry Leach II Foundation. Major support for Dance in Schools and Communities is provided by the Chapin Foundation. Generous support is provided by the Kimball Foundation and The San Francisco Foundation.

Further Resources


San Francisco Ballet Books & Recordings


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 Eliot 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.


Websites about Ballet

Check out these websites to learn more about SF Ballet, see video of ballet steps, and read about ballet performances.

sfballet.org
abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html
criticaldance.com

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