

Dear Educators,

We look forward to seeing you at *Left Unsaid*, the next of Oregon Ballet Theatre's *Student Performance Series* to be held at the Newmark Theatre at 11:00 on April 23rd and 24th. The following Study Guide is designed to provide information for you to explore with your students. It includes information about the three works that will be seen at the show. The first piece will be *Tarantella*, followed by *Left Unsaid*, and the final piece will be *Il Distratto*.

The Study Guide includes information about each of the ballets, each composer and each choreographer. Interspersed throughout the Study Guide you will see sections entitled "Think about it..." and "Dance about it..." These sections offer a series of questions for students to broaden their thinking, or movement activities that allow students to physically explore elements that will be seen at the performance. Since the Study Guide is designed for a broad range of students, teachers are encouraged to use the guide as a starting point and are encouraged to play with the suggestions. If you find that you have had a particularly interesting teaching moment as a result of the ideas here, please send me a note. I am developing a way for teachers to share ideas about including dance in schools.

Please check the Student Performance Series page at OBT's website (www.obt.org) for important downloads for SPS attendees.



Kathi Martuza and Adrian Fry in Nicolo Fonte's *Left Unsaid*
Photo by Andy Batt

On behalf of all of Oregon Ballet Theatre I thank you for bringing your students to the theater and for taking time to enhance their experience by talking about the performance before and after the show.

See you at the Newmark,

Kassandra Gruener, MA
Director of Education and Outreach

CONTENTS:

- *Tarantella* - Overview, Composer, Choreographer
- *Left Unsaid* - Overview, Composer, Choreographer
- *Il Distratto* - Overview, Composer, Choreographer

TARANTELLA

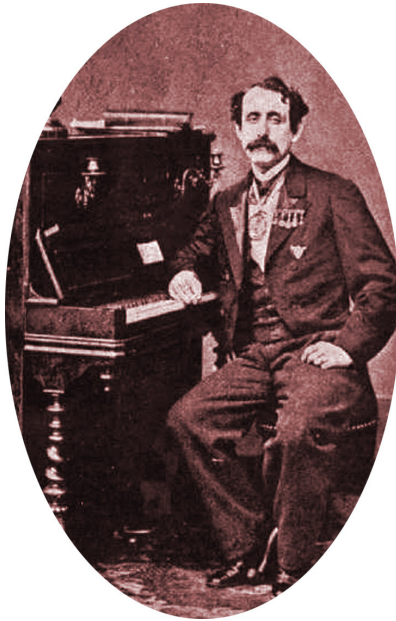
OBT will open the Student Performance Series at the Newmark Theatre with a short ballet called *Tarantella*. The ballet was choreographed by George Balanchine to music entitled *Grand Tarantelle for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 67* (ca. 1866) by Louis Moreau Gottschalk. The music was reconstructed and orchestrated for New York City Ballet by Hershy Kay.

Tarantella is an effervescent dance for two people—a *pas de deux*. It is a virtuosic showcase of nimbly danced steps by a man and woman including a profusion of jumps, spins, and quick changes of direction. They both joyfully share the striking of a tambourine and are dressed in costumes that make one think of traditional Italian festivals. Although

brief, this explosive *pas de deux* typifies the ways in which George Balanchine expanded the traditional vocabulary of classical ballet. A classical *pas de deux* has a certain form—first the dancers do a slower dance together, then they both have solos that showcase their specific talents, culminating in a dance together that seems almost competitive in its difficulty. Balanchine infuses this *pas de deux* with fast paced movements at all times and includes folk dance steps, such as the man moving forward in a difficult knee walking step while striking his tambourine at the foot of the ballerina who is traveling forward doing a challenging series of turns. Many audiences applaud at the sight of this part of the dance—you can too!

COMPOSER: LOUIS MOREAU GOTTSCHALK (1829 – 1869)

Though Louis Moreau Gottschalk is considered among the first American composers to attain a high standard in the world of classical music, he spent much of his short life studying and performing outside the United States. Gottschalk was born to a Jewish businessman from London and a white Haitian Creole in New Orleans, and was partly raised by his Grandmother Buslé and his nurse Sally, who had both been born in Saint-Domingue (later known as Haiti). With this background, as a child he was exposed to a wide variety of musical traditions. Gottschalk was recognized as a *wunderkind* by the New Orleans bourgeois establishment when, in 1840, he gave his informal public debut as a pianist at the new St. Charles Hotel.



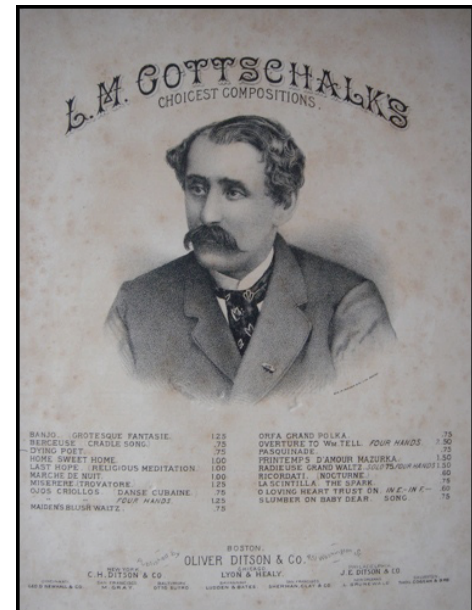
Louis Moreau Gottschalk

At the age of 13, he sailed to Europe for classical training in music. In a letter to his mother he wrote, "I definitely expect that in two years or perhaps less I shall be earning a living on my own." The Paris Conservatoire, however, initially rejected his application on the grounds of his nationality. His examiner commented that "America is a country of steam engines." In the years to follow, despite the initial rejection by the musical establishment, he built a career as a piano virtuoso, prompting Frédéric Chopin to predict that Gottschalk would become one of the foremost pianists of the century.

Back home, he established himself as a major figure in American musical life, partly as a result of tremendous hard work, as is evident from his travel schedule which, at one point

in 1862, included 85 concerts (all at different locations) in just four and a half months. In his diary he wrote, "Arrived half past eight at the hotel, took in a hurry a cup of bad tea, and away to business. One herring for dinner! nine hours on the train! and, in spite of everything, five hundred persons who have paid that you may give them two hours of poesy, of passion, and of inspiration. I confess to you secretly that they certainly will be cheated this evening."

Gottschalk lived and performed in Cuba, South America and the Caribbean for extended periods of time—his concerts were tremendously successful all across South America and sometimes took the form of "monster concerts" involving up to 650 performers—and he happily incorporated their musical influences and traditions into his compositions, employing syncopated rhythms, jagged melodic lines and folk dance elements.



Louis Moreau Gottschalk

THINK ABOUT IT...

Wunderkind is a German word that translates to "wonder child." It describes someone who is successful or shows great talent at a young age. Do you know of any *wunderkind*?

What was The Paris Conservatoire examiner trying to say about America and Gottschalk's potential to be a great artist when he said, "America is a country of steam engines."

Why would Gottschalk write a diary? How does it help us now to know about his experience and his time? Do you keep a diary?

Today, all around America, cities put on festivals that showcase many forms of art. In Portland, for instance, we have the multi-week Portland Institute for Contemporary Art's (PICA) *Time Based Art* festival, in which gallery showings and many types of performances occur. Musically, Portland hosts a Jazz Festival, Blues Festival and Battle of the Bands events. Do you ever attend these performances with your family or friends? Would these be considered to be "monster concerts" in our time?

CHOREOGRAPHER: GEORGE BALANCHINE (1904 – 1983)

Though Russian-born George Balanchine grew to be one of the greatest choreographers in history, at first he didn't want to be a ballet dancer. When he was nine, he tagged along as his sister auditioned for the Czar's Imperial Ballet Academy in St. Petersburg. The teachers felt he had a good physique for dancing, and persuaded his mother that he too should enroll in the ballet boarding school. Georgi (as he was known) was homesick and ran away, only to be brought back to his studies. He felt ballet was dreadfully dull, and consoled himself by playing the piano or reading Jules Vern's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Then he was cast as Cupid in *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Czar's Maryinsky Theater, and was hooked forever by the magic of performance.



George Balanchine (center) with his sister and brother

As a young man, Balanchine sustained a serious knee injury while dancing for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, and turned his concentration to choreography. He immigrated to the United States in 1933 under the sponsorship of Lincoln Kirstein. With years of on-again-off-again effort, they succeeded in establishing New York City Ballet in 1948, where Balanchine was Ballet Master in Chief for the rest of his life.

He made over 400 dances, with an astonishing breadth of inspiration. Some were story ballets, others were abstract like a modern painting. Some were for Broadway musicals or Hollywood movie extravaganzas, most were for his own company of ballet dancers. Balanchine liked to make rousing, purely entertaining ballets that tapped into national character, such as *Union Jack*,

to British traditional tunes, *Stars and Stripes* to famous John Philip Sousa marches, and the Italian-flavored *Tarantella* on this program. Balanchine even choreographed for his cooperative cat Mourka.



Balanchine enjoyed "rehearsing" with Mourka. There is a ballet step in which the dancer jumps to the side while tucking both feet up under the body, effecting a diamond shape in the air. It is called *pas de chat* and means "step of the cat." Look for this in *Tarantella*.

Look for *pas de chat* and other ballet steps in a ballet dictionary at this website:
<http://www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html>

THINK ABOUT IT...

George Balanchine might not have become a great American choreographer if two things had not happened: a teacher noticed his talent, and his sister enrolled in a prestigious ballet school. He was initially unhappy at the school but after developing skills and having exciting experiences, he came to enjoy and see the reason for all the tedious work. The seed of talent that the teachers saw in him began to flower. This is an example of a student who did not like the work that was requested of him until he had advanced to a certain level. Ask students if they have ever had such an experience. Discuss how challenging it is to do difficult, tedious work in order to become skillful, such as doing math drills, or practicing to shoot baskets. At the theatre students will see first hand how a dancer's hard work pays off, creating great skill.

One of the soloists at Oregon Ballet Theatre, Steven Houser, began his dancing lessons in a creative movement class in his

pre-school/kindergarten. He later took dance lessons with his sister. Both loved ballet, but it was Steven who chose dance for a career. Think about what would have happened if Steven had not had a dance class when he was a little boy.

OBT has a program called OBT L.A.B. (Learn About Ballet) that sends specially trained dance teachers, called teaching artists, into kindergarten and first grade classrooms to expose students to ballet training by dancing in the gym, going to OBT's studios to see professional dancers taking their daily class, and then to the theatre to watch a performance. Each year we find students who never even knew how much they loved to dance until we came to dance with them. Some of these students eventually come to the School of OBT to train to become a dancer, some of them on scholarship. OBT L.A.B. can come to any elementary school—contact OBT if you are interested in dance in your school!

LEFT UNSAID

Left Unsaid is a dance for six dancers (three men and three women) and three folding chairs. It occurs in five movements, or segments, with various groupings of dancers, all dancing in soft-soled ballet slippers to beautiful music by Johann Sebastian Bach. At the Student Performance Series, OBT will perform three excerpts from *Left Unsaid*—the first, second and, final movements. The dance's choreography is physically demanding and sculptural, balanced and asymmetrical. *Left Unsaid* is not a "story ballet" like *Nutcracker* or *Swan Lake*, instead, it projects a mood created by the choreography, stage set, lighting, and music. The costumes for this ballet are very simple, yet elegant. The men wear what looks like a men's suit and the women wear a short blue unitard.

As in *Tarantella*, there are moments when two dancers dance together, but interestingly, the groupings could be man and woman, two men, or two women dancing together, reflecting the way people work together in daily interactions. The chairs used in

the ballet are a key element. The place they rest on the stage, the direction they are facing, whether dancers are sitting on them or not, all add to the total effect. Fonte invented imaginative ways for the dancers to work with the chairs, making the chairs almost like additional dancers on the stage.

DANCE ABOUT IT...

Try to choreograph your own three-part dance that includes using a chair. A dance, like a good story, needs to have a beginning, middle and end. Part one could be your own unique way to "sit" on the chair. Part two could be your own way to move around the chair or your own way to move the chair to another place. Part three is the ending—perhaps repeating the beginning shape with a new twist added or doing something surprisingly different. Give your dance a name and show it to your friends.

COMPOSER: JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685 – 1750)

Though J.S. Bach is now considered among the greatest composers in history, and admired as the creator of works that defined the highest accomplishment of the Baroque era of music, he was better known as an organist and violinist during his lifetime. Felix Mendelssohn's performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829 sparked worldwide interest in his works, and many of them were published for the first time nearly a century after his death.



J.S. Bach

As a man of immense energy and ambition, Bach composed some 1,100 pieces of music in every genre except opera, and fathered 20 children, 10 of whom survived.

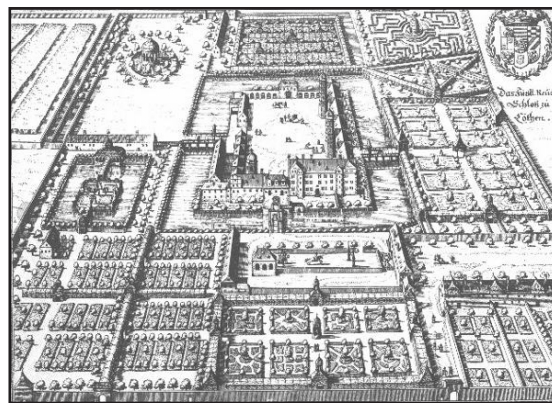
Bach was orphaned at the age of 10, and went to live with his older brother, also an organist in a family that was full of musicians (and of men with the



Bach at home

first name, Johann). In his drive to learn about music and about organs, Bach walked 200 miles during the summer of 1705 to study the music of Buxtehude.

Bach composed the *Partitas* for solo violin that are used to accompany *Left Unsaid* while working under the patronage of Prince Leopold von Anhalt-Köthen. The works epitomize virtuosity for the violin. Bach scholar Cristoph Wolfe wrote that "they demonstrate Bach's command of performing techniques, but also his ability to bring into play, without even an accompanying bass part, dense counterpoint and refined harmony with distinctive and well-articulated rhythmic designs, especially in the dance movements."



Koethen Palace, where Bach's violin music was played

THINK AND DANCE ABOUT IT...

Find a time to simply sit and listen to any of Bach's music. If you feel like dancing—go ahead!

CHOREOGRAPHER: NICOLO FONTE

Nicolo Fonte is a rising star among choreographers today. He has created 35 new works for dance companies that hail from Sweden to Australia and from Seattle to Aspen/Santa Fe since retiring from dancing in 2000 to concentrate on choreography. Fonte was born in Brooklyn, New York, and started dancing at the age of 14. He studied at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York as well as at the San Francisco Ballet and New York City Ballet Schools while completing a Bachelor Degree of Fine Arts at SUNY Purchase. Fonte danced the bulk of his career with Nacho Duato's Compañía



Nicolo Fonte choreographing the world premiere of *Bolero* for Oregon Ballet Theatre. Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.

Nacional de Danza in Madrid and forged a strong identity in the Spanish company for both his dancing and his choreography.

The premiere of Fonte's *Bolero* for Oregon Ballet Theatre last season drew standing ovations and rave reviews. Whether made to Ravel's brash *Bolero* or the quiet intricacy of *Left Unsaid's* Bach violin, Fonte's ballets have common ground: "The pleasure comes from seeing how Fonte works with and against the music in space and time...There's a pleasing sense of mystery and immersion in private thoughts." (Jones/*The Australian*)

THINK ABOUT IT...

To be a professional dancer is physically challenging. Often the dancers begin their professional work in their late teens, some dancing into their late 30's. Some dancers stop performing due to injury, like Balanchine. Some become dance teachers or choose to stop dancing and attend schools in related careers

such as physical therapy. But a select few, like Fonte, find that they have talent for choreography, and set out to make dances. This process of changing-careers-within-careers is similar to baseball, where a person may start out as a young player, move on to coaching, and possibly end up managing a team.

IL DISTRATTO

Il Distratto (The Distracted) is an abstract ballet in five movements set to Haydn's *Symphony No. 60*, a work originally composed as incidental music for Regnard's 1774 play *Le Distrait*. In the last movement, the violins retune their lowest string from F to G to reflect the "distracted" state of the play's principal character. Lew Christensen reflects the music in his choreography as the dancers move from symmetrical clarity to confusion. Christensen described the work as "an instructive analysis of how dancers

learn ... training each part of the body separately." But what sets it apart is its comic touches. Special lighting and costuming confuse the audience, illuminating only legs and ankles and then other parts. In a dancer's training each part of the body is explored and trained in isolation—legs, feet, arms, hands, head—but in the end, all must come together to produce a final complete result.

COMPOSER: JOSEPH HAYDN (1732 – 1809)

In 1776, Haydn wrote this short autobiography, giving us the opportunity centuries later to hear from him directly about his early life: "I was born anno 1732 . . . in Lower Austria. My father was a wheelwright by profession . . . and had a natural love for music. Without being able to read music he played the harp, and when I was a boy of five I was able to repeat all of his short and simple songs. This caused my father to send me to Hainburg in the care of the school director, a relative, so that I might learn there the rudiments of music and other elementary general subjects. The almighty God (to whom alone be thanks for His bountiful grace) gave me enough musical talent so that in my sixth year I was able to sing along with the choir during Mass and to play some on the violin and piano. When I was seven the Kappellmeister von Ruetter came through Hainburg. He happened to hear my small



Haydn's country birthplace

but pleasing voice and accepted me at once for the Kappellhaus in Vienna. Aside from being instructed in academic subjects I learned from excellent teachers how to sing and had instruction in piano and violin. Until I reached the age of eighteen, I sang there, with much applause, soprano parts, both at St. Stephens and at court. When my voice finally changed I barely managed to stay alive by giving music lessons to children for about eight years. In this way, many talented people are ruined: They have to earn a miserable living and have no time to study. I had this experience myself, and I would never have reached this moderate degree of success if I had not continued to compose diligently during the nights as well . . . I eventually was given a position as music director to Count Morzin, and following this as Kappellmeister to His Highness Prince Esterhazy . . ."

From 1761 until 1790, Haydn worked under the patronage of the Esterhazy family, organizing and conducting the orchestras, chamber ensembles and choirs, and producing a flood of compositions that established him as one of the foremost composers of his time. From 1791 through 1795, he traveled to England, where performances of his works met with huge success. Though Haydn was revered during his lifetime—the Viennese called him "the darling of our nation"—he remained

COMPOSER: JOSEPH HAYDN *CONTINUED*

noted for his honest and gracious character, not to mention his sense of humor, evidenced in such works as his “Surprise,” “Toy,” and “Farewell” symphonies.



Joseph Haydn



The Esterhaza Castle

THINK ABOUT IT...

In the 1700's Haydn pointed out that “talent was ruined” because of low paying arts jobs. The struggle for basic survival left little time or energy for art. This is still a struggle for artists in our time. Haydn was able to develop his body of musical works because he was persistent as well as talented and because he came to have a patron. A patron is someone who gives money and other essential support to an artist. The idea of patronage exists in America, too, from individuals who love the arts and donate money to help pay for their costs. We also have businesses, corporations, and government agencies, like the National Endowment for the Arts who give money in the form of loans or grants to individual artists and arts organizations. Ballet companies, like other arts organizations, depend on these gifts and loans. And still many dancers must work at other jobs during their careers as dancers.

CHOREOGRAPHER: LEW CHRISTENSEN (1908 – 1984)

Lew Christensen is a towering figure in the history of ballet in America. He and his brothers, Willam and Harold, were among the first American born and trained dancers to attain distinction in the art of ballet. They went on to shape the development of ballet schools and companies in the western U.S.

The boys were from Utah and an extended family of dance teachers and musicians. The family ran schools where “The Polite Art of Dancing” was taught, offering ballroom dances approved by the Mormon Church and novelty dances of the day. Their uncles valued ballet as the most rigorous training available to a dancer, and sought out quality instruction with Italian teacher Stephano Mascagno.

When the brothers decided to earn their living as performing dancers, their brightest hope was vaudeville. Christensen brothers

performed in vaudeville in various incarnations as a “Class Act” from 1927 to 1934.

In the course of this work, they performed in New York and studied at George Balanchine’s School of American Ballet. Lew became a principal dancer with Balanchine’s New York City Ballet, while Willam ended up on the West coast as director of the fledgling San Francisco Ballet. Lew followed Willam as director of San Francisco Ballet, where he had a long and distinguished career from 1952 until 1974, and shaped SFB into a major American company.

As a choreographer, Lew had a flair for American subjects with ballets like *Pocahontas* and *Filling Station*, and for theatrical surprises such as occur in *Il Distratto*.



A Deportment Guide like this was used in the ballroom dancing schools run by Lew Christensen’s family.



The Christensens in vaudeville

Lew Christensen in *Filling Station*

THINK ABOUT IT...

Vaudeville was important to American performing arts. Before television and movies, vaudeville brought entertainment to the masses. Its many acts mingled together—trick dog acts, comedians, magicians, singers, snake charmers, ballet dancers—

to bring entertainment to people. Often family members joined together to create an act. Imagine what it would be like not to have television, movies, the internet or any electronic media. Would your family make a good vaudeville act?

CONTENT STANDARDS

This *Student Performance Series* and Study Guide provide opportunity for engaging in Oregon Content Standards for the Arts, especially:

Historical and Cultural Perspective: Understand relationships of works of art to their social, historical, and cultural context, and the influence of arts on individuals, communities and cultures. (AR.05.HC.03, AR.08.HC.03, AR.CM.HC.03) PASS Criteria: Standard B.3

Aesthetics And Criticism: Respond to and analyze works of art, based on essential elements, organizational principles and aesthetic criteria. (AR.03.AC.01, AR.05.AC.01, AR.08.AC.01, AR.CM.AC.01) PASS Criteria: Standard A.1

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BALLET

Why do the guys wear tights?

Almost every activity requires a special uniform of some kind. Just as football players, wrestlers, and baseball players wear stretchy material to help them move with flexibility and speed, ballet dancers often wear stretchy tights so they are able to leap, kick, and stretch as they dance. Another reason tights are worn is so the audience can see the incredible leg muscles that allow them to jump so high.

How do the ballet dancers stand on their toes?

Female ballet dancers wear special shoes called "pointe shoes" to help them achieve dancing on the tips of their toes. Pointe shoes are hard at the ends, and are handmade with layers of satin, glue and leather. Dancers must take several years of ballet lessons before they are allowed to wear pointe shoes. With hard work and good training to develop strong ankles and feet, most young ballet students begin working *en pointe* at age 11 or 12.

This ballet has no plot! Or does it?

Some do, and some don't. Ballets with plots, like *The Nutcracker*, are called story ballets. There are also abstract ballets, with a focus on movement instead of a specific story. Abstract ballets are meant to evoke ideas or emotions, and the audience can interpret them many different ways.

How old are the dancers?

Oregon Ballet Theatre's professional company members range in age from 18 to 34, but most are in their early-to-mid-20s. A few of the apprentices, however, are still in high school. All of the dancers began studying ballet when they were children, as it takes many years of dedication to become a professional ballet dancer.

How often do they practice?

Ballet dancers take class every morning for 1.5 hours, and then they rehearse all day. They have Sundays and sometimes Saturdays off, and they have a lunch break. Dancing is their full-time job.

Where are the dancers from?

Oregon Ballet Theatre dancers come from all around the world: Japan, Russia, and different areas within the United States. There are dancers from Nebraska, California, New York, and several who grew up right here in Portland.

APPLAUSE

DO clap after a really spectacular movement. Laugh if the situation onstage is funny. Applaud and yell "Bravo!" at the end.

DON'T boo, whistle, hiss or make noise during the performance. It is distracting and disrespectful of the performers and to your neighbors in the audience.

FOOD

DO eat before you get to the theater if you think you might get hungry before the performance is over.

DON'T bring food or gum into the seating area. It makes noise, trash, and distractions.

TALKING

DO wait. Make a note on your program or a piece of paper if you want to remember something. Tell your friend at intermission or after the ballet is over.

DON'T whisper or discuss things with other people during the performance. Your friends may want to listen to the music or pay attention to the dancers' movement or the story.

DRESS & BACKPACKS

DO dress neatly as a sign of respect to the artists and the theater.

DON'T wear over-powering perfume, big hats, or jingly bracelets. Leave backpacks at school. If you must bring one, you'll be asked to leave it in the lobby.

CELL PHONES, CAMERAS, IPODS, MP3 PLAYERS, ETC.

DO relax when the lights in the house (seating area) get dark. Sit back and enjoy the live performance with your eyes, ears, and imagination.

DON'T bring electronic devices into the theater. The noise and clicking can be distracting to your neighbors, and camera flashes can be dangerous to the dancers.