

HELLO FROM OREGON BALLET THEATRE!

The following Student Performance Series Study Guide is designed to help teachers support students' learning and enjoyment of Oregon Ballet Theatre's presentation of *Romeo & Juliet: Act I*. The work, choreographed by OBT's founding artistic director, James Canfield, to music by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev, will be a feast for the senses with a grand set, lush costumes, flashing swords and vibrantly beautiful dancing. It is important to note that the full-length version of the ballet takes several hours, and we will only have time to do Act I for the Student Performance Series—but never fear, that will carry us all the way to the balcony scene! The Study Guide provides information about the whole story, choreographer, and music. It will look at the history of OBT's "R&J", and suggest some activities and things to notice at the theater. This Study Guide is a collaborative effort between myself, Brook Manning (OBT's Dance Historian), and the education department of Nevada Ballet Theatre where James Canfield is now the artistic director.






Photo by Joni Kabana

When we get closer to the day of the performance, we will send an email that includes your lobby door entrance assignment and two notes: 1.) Directions for busses to the theater, and 2.) Things to know on the day of the show.

Thank you for including Oregon Ballet Theatre in your plan to enrich your students' arts exposure. We encourage students to ask questions about ballet as an art and a career. Please email questions to outreach@obt.org and I will do my best to get them answered. We appreciate partnering with you!


Kasandra Gruener, MA
 Director of Education Outreach


KEY TO USING THE STUDY GUIDE

-  = Academic connections or discussion points
-  = Activities designed to get students up and moving
-  = hyperlink to more information

THE STORY

The tale of *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare and first published over 400 years ago. It is the story of two star-crossed lovers: Romeo, from the Montague family, and Juliet, a young girl of the Capulet family. The two fall in love and are secretly married despite their families' age-old feud. Romeo is banished from the land and Juliet fakes her own death so that she can escape home to be with Romeo. But Romeo believes her death to be real. He returns to Verona, joining his love in her tomb where she appears dead, but has only taken a sleeping potion. Overcome with despair, Romeo decides to join his true love in death and takes his own life. When Juliet awakens she is so distraught that Romeo has died, she kills herself. The end of the story sees the Montague and Capulet families agreeing to make peace at last.

Young people might enjoy "Romeo and Juliet: A Puppet Music Video!"
 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fuile9Bfox0>

Older students might benefit from hearing the story offered in this 9 minute TEDEd VideoSparkNote:
 <http://ed.ted.com/on/x6x1uQVv>



Xuan Cheng & Brian Simcoe in James Canfield's *Romeo & Juliet*. Photo by Tatiana Wills.

KEVIN IRVING / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

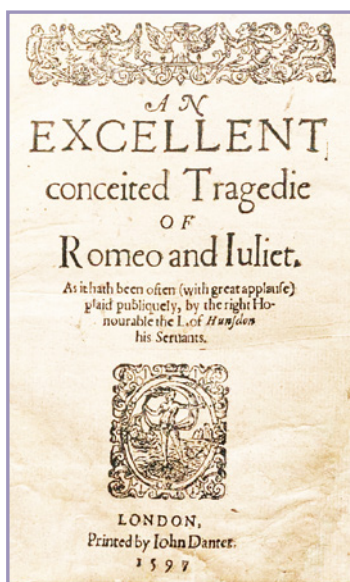
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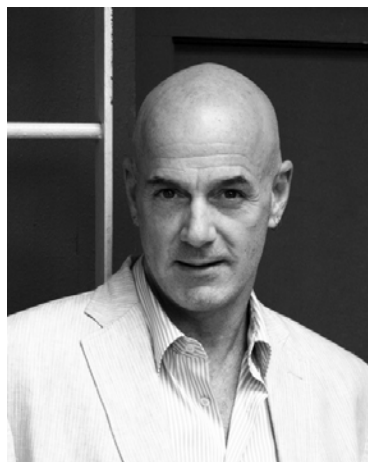


Title page of the first printed edition.

👋 The English language keeps changing. The word “conceited” in the title page from 1597 likely means a “fancifully imagined” or an “elaborately created metaphor” of tragedy. How do we use this word today? We often hear it used to describe someone who has a very high opinion of themselves. Think about other words that change or gather new meaning over time.

THE CHOREOGRAPHER

The choreographer is a person who creates dance works. With this performance we celebrate the choreographic influences of James Canfield. Mr. Canfield was the Artistic Director of Pacific Ballet Theatre here in Portland, before becoming Oregon Ballet Theatre’s Founding Artistic Director in 1989. Mr. Canfield is currently Artistic Director of Nevada Ballet Theatre. But before he choreographed *Romeo & Juliet*, he danced the title role in John Cranko’s version with Joffrey Ballet to rave reviews.



James Canfield

James Canfield and Patricia Miller in John Cranko’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Photo by Herbert Migdoll.

DANCERS TELL THE STORY WITHOUT WORDS



While the story is set in Renaissance Italy, the themes and emotions are timeless. When *Romeo and Juliet* is performed as a theatrical play, the audience must listen very carefully to the words and notice the movements of the actors in order to catch the meaning of the play. In the balletic version, the audience must also listen—this time to the music—while

carefully watching the dancers’ emotive articulations. Dancers tell the story without saying words. Their bodies are the mode of communication, honed by powerful ballet training that includes attention to keen musicality, dramatic gesture, and facial expression.

👍 Try it out! Ask students to tell a story with their body only, perhaps working it out with a partner, that expresses an emotion like anger, love, fear, or joy.

👋 *Romeo and Juliet* is woven through with several themes about the human condition, such as: love vs. hate, family feuds or grudges, love at first sight, fate, and chance. Scholars cannot agree on one singular theme. After seeing the performance, ask students to share their one big take away.

👋 Before the show, ask students to take mental notes of how it is that the dancers make us understand the story. After the performance, discuss how the dancers expressed these themes. What else was noticed? Some ideas are easier to see, such as when swords are drawn, anger and feuding is obvious. Check out a video of our dancers practicing the sword fight. Scroll down and click on the “Photos & Video” tab:

🔗 <http://www.obt.org/index.php/boxoffice/single-tickets/romeo-juliet/>

LOOKING AT JULIET

In order to produce a ballet, dancers must learn their parts from the choreographer or rehearsal director. Several dancers learn multiple parts and may do one role on opening night and a different role the next show. For this presentation, three ballerinas are learning the role of Juliet.

When the work was originally created in 1989, Tracey Sartorio danced Juliet with Mr. Canfield's Romeo. Ms. Sartorio, currently the Executive Assistant for OBT's Artistic Director and the Artistic Coordinator, has enjoyed watching the next generation of dancers take on the role. When originally setting the ballet, Mr. Canfield insisted on the characters being portrayed as real people. To that end, he coached each of his Juliets to play their part in a character true to their own personality. Ms. Sartorio said, that as she danced the role of Juliet, Mr. Canfield with his wide arm span, would sweep her off her feet—all that was left was for her to lose herself to the story!



Ansa Deguchi and Brian Simcoe in James Canfield's *Romeo & Juliet*.
Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert.



Mr. Canfield and Ms. Sartorio in Oregon Ballet Theatre's *Romeo & Juliet*. Photo by David Straub



Mr. Canfield and Ms. Sartorio at OBT's 2016 Gala, celebrating the return of his *Romeo & Juliet* to OBT's performance repertory.

Below: Ms. Sartorio as Juliet in Oregon Ballet Theatre's *Romeo & Juliet*



Photo by Duane Morris



Photos by David Straub



Photo by Duane Morris

COMPOSER

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) was a Russian composer, pianist and conductor. He was born in Sontsovka (now the village of Krasnoe), Ukraine. He began piano lessons at the age of four and showed natural talent. His mother took him to many opera performances in Moscow and St. Petersburg. These inspired him, at only nine years old, to write his first opera! Some of his best known works are the ballet scores *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella*, *Prodigal Son* and the children's classic *Peter and the Wolf*.

Here are two links to music from *Romeo and Juliet*. Before listening to the music, ask students what they usually think about when they hear music. Do they let their imagination run free? Before the



November 19, 1945

show, suggest that they listen to the music and imagine how the dancers will move to the music. The two links are very different—ask students to describe the differences and similarities in the music and how it makes them feel.

Here is a link to The Montagues and Capulets (The Dance of the Knights):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LSxpxjMQ9c>

This is a link to the music for the balcony scene:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FX7PM04Jp_I

THANKS FOR SHARING!

Often times when a work is newly created, dance companies build their own sets and costumes for the ballet. Sometimes costumes are rented, and sometimes pieces of sets are borrowed from other shows and reworked to fit the production. Dance companies are great recyclers! The scenery and costumes for our production are on loan to OBT from Nashville Ballet.

THE STAGE

The costumes and scenery for the ballet are meant to transport the audience back in time to Renaissance Italy. Some of the action of the ballet takes place in a town square, which is an open, public place where the community can gather. In Italy, the square is called a *piazza*.

☞ Compare the stage set to the picture of these Italian town squares. What did the designer include in the set to give the idea of a town square?

☞ In the theatre, ask students to remember the photos and note what features are on the stage that give the idea of a town square.

☞ Does Portland have a town square? What do people do now in a town square? How does a shopping mall compare to a town square?



Oregon Ballet Theatre's *Romeo & Juliet*. Photo by Duane Morris.



Piazza dei signori, Verona. Photo by Lo Scaligero. (Taken from Wikipedia)



Piazza delle erbe. Photo by Dan Kamminga. (Taken from Wikipedia)

THE USE OF MASKS



Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film

When Romeo first sees Juliet, it is at the Capulets' masked ball—a fancy dress party where guests are encouraged to disguise their faces with masks. Romeo is a Montague, and the Montagues and Capulets are sworn enemies. Romeo is able to sneak into the ball because he is concealed behind his mask. Masks date back to ancient times, and are worn for ceremonial events, spiritual rituals, or for sheer entertainment.

👋 Here are more masks from around the world. Ask students about their experiences with masks.



Stone mask from 7000BC. Probably the oldest mask in the world. (From Wikipedia)



Mask of Agamemnon from 16C BC, Greece. Photo by Xuan Che. (From Wikipedia)



Dogon ceremonial mask in use, Mali. Photo by Ferdinand Reus. (From Wikipedia)



Fang mask from 19C Gabon. Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen. (From Wikipedia)



Kwakwaka'wakw transformation mask, British Columbia. Photo by Myrabella. (From Wikipedia)



Venetian carnival masks. Photo by Frank Kovalchek. (From Wikipedia)

Marc Chagall's *Romeo and Juliette*

Check this out!

Oregon Ballet Theatre and other ballet companies around the globe present *Romeo & Juliet*. Read about San Francisco Ballet's history with *Romeo and Juliet* at

<http://sfballetblog.org/2015/04/romeo-juliet-through-the-years/>

Popular musicians have referenced *Romeo and Juliet*, too. Compare Taylor Swift's "Love Story":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xg3vE8le_E

with a rap created by a school teacher:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0H8OS37gWQ>

For a quick trip to 1964 check out The Reflections singing, "Just Like Romeo and Juliet"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycCZX-olchU>

The famous musical theatre adaptation, *West Side Story* (1957 Broadway, 1961 film), with choreography by Jerome Robbins to music by Leonard Bernstein brings *Romeo and Juliet* into the mid-twentieth century, pointing out the ongoing struggles of race and class. Here is an opening excerpt:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2CISABkDp8>

There are many works of visual art that depict the story. The photo above is Marc Chagall's *Romeo and Juliette*.

Send us a question and you might win an OBT T-shirt!



Do students have a question they would like to ask a dancer? Students are encouraged to email questions about being a professional dancer or specifically what it is like to dance in *Romeo & Juliet* to outreach@obt.org by March 10th to be entered in a drawing for an OBT t-shirt.

CONTENT STANDARDS

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

Create, Present and Perform: Apply ideas, techniques and processes in the arts.

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.

Aesthetics and Criticism: Respond to and analyze works of art, based on essential elements, organizational principles and aesthetic criteria.

Common Core State Standards: Attending the SPS gives students practice in building literacy across subject matter as suggested in the CCSS. Students notice key ideas central to the work, elements of the craft and structure of the work observed, and make connections or integrate this work (dance) with other curriculum.

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 *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Nutcracker*, or *Swan Lake* 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 39, but most are in their early-to-mid-20s. 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, China, and different areas within the United States.

There are dancers from California, Washington, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, New York, and several who grew up right here in Oregon.

APPLAUSE

DO clap after a really spectacular movement. Laugh if the situation onstage is funny. Applaud and say "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 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 use cell phones and other electronic devices in the theater. The noise and clicking can be distracting to your neighbors, and camera flashes can be dangerous to the dancers.