Ballet Tennessee celebrates 25 years in Chattanooga

Located in Chattanooga since 1987 and led by nationally-recognized founders Barry VanCura and Anna Baker VanCura, Ballet Tennessee is an exemplary resource for people of all ages to celebrate dance, learning, and their own unique creativity. Ballet Tennessee achieves its mission to make a positive impact on people of all ages, abilities, races, and economic levels by providing professional quality performance and instruction through award-winning programming with an emphasis on outreach and education throughout the community. Annually, the company offers three full-length, professionally staged productions; outreach targeting children (including preschool, at-risk, and those with disabilities); and professional training resulting in a performing company that reflects the diversity of the Chattanooga area and exceeds the expectations of the community. Ballet Tennessee annually serves 20,000 people. Recent awards and recognition include the 2012 Be More Innovative Award and the 2010 Be More Enriched Award for excellence in nonprofit outreach programs; First Place in Ballet Choreography for *Concerto* at the PANOPLY competition in Huntsville, AL; and student choreography awards from the Tennessee Association of Dance for *Limitations* (third place) and *Just for Fun* (first place). For more information about Ballet Tennessee, visit [www.BalletTennessee.org](http://www.BalletTennessee.org).

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**The Five Positions of Ballet**

1. First
2. Second
3. Third
4. Fourth
5. Fifth

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Barry VanCura, Executive Founding Director
Anna Baker VanCura, Artistic Founding Director

Ballet Tennessee Professional Ensemble, with selected dancers from:
Ballet Tennessee Company
Talent Identification Program Scholars

Teacher’s Guide by Laurel Shastri

Special Thanks to Claudia Cornett, Professor Emerita, Wittenberg University
Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the Interactive School Assembly Teacher’s Guide! This guide is designed to assist you in preparing your students for the ‘Target: Dance—Interactive School Assembly’ and providing post-performance lesson plan ideas with connections to the Common Core State Standards. Words relating to the CCSS are in bold type throughout the guide. Our goal with this specially-prepared school concert is to expose student’s to high quality dance performance, and also to make connections between dance and the skills of reading and writing. We hope that this guide, along with the performance, will assist in opening new and exciting pathways for learning.

We welcome feedback on all aspects of this program, including the quality and content of this guide and the performance. After the program, the school (via email) will be asked to answer brief evaluation questionnaire. Thank you for your participation in this program.

Sincerely,

Anna Baker VanCura
Artistic Director

Finding Meaning in Dance
Dance is a form of expression using movement and gesture to communicate ideas, emotions, and themes. Dance is also a form of text, but rather than reading words on a page, the audience reads the movements, patterns, gestures, and facial expressions of the dancers. Unlike many other forms of theater, most dance forms do not use the voice or spoken word in performance. Dances that tell a story are called story-ballets. Example of story-ballets include The Nutcracker, Cinderella, and The Sleeping Beauty. Other dances may be more similar to poetry, using structure, imagery, and patterns to express the choreographer’s ideas. (A choreographer is a person that creates dances, much like a poet writes poetry, a novelist writes novels, and a composer creates music.) Below are links to excerpts from Concerto, a playful work of classical ballet by choreographer Barry VanCura exploring the interactions between boys and girls. The first excerpt includes every day gestures that are meaningful to everyone (including people that are unfamiliar with dance) such as nodding and shaking hands. Have your students watch the excerpt and identify common gestures that they see. Can they draw conclusions about the mood that the choreographer wants to explore and cite textual evidence? For example: at the beginning of the excerpt dancers are nodding in unison with the solo male dancer’s jumps. Movements are large and exaggerated giving the impression of a playful mood.

Concerto Excerpt #1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UiT7ZAUBM1
Now watch the second excerpt and determine the mood. Have the student’s cite evidence to support their conclusion.

Concerto Excerpt #2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTVgi7Q-bHE
Ask the students to infer what might have caused the mood in the second excerpt. The third excerpt shows the choreographer’s reason (cause) for the mood (effect) in the second excerpt.

Concerto Excerpt #3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73Dg7LPSafk
Determining cause and effect is one way to develop and draw conclusions. What conclusions can you form now about the mood of the second excerpt?

Preparing for the Performance
If your students have never attended a dance concert, explain appropriate audience behaviors. It is okay to watch and react to the action that is taking place on stage. It is not okay to talk to your neighbor and ignore the show. It is okay to applaud at the end of a dance. It takes focus and concentration for the dancers to perform complicated movements and they welcome the audience’s appreciation of their work. This performance will take place at your school in a large multipurpose room or auditorium. Space considerations may place the dancers at floor level (rather than on stage), with the students sitting on the floor. During this performance, the Directors of Ballet Tennessee will speak to the students about the pieces they will see. Works will be presented in ballet and jazz idioms. All of the ballet works touch on cause and effect of different behaviors. The jazz work expresses the sheer energy and power of movement. Selected students will be invited to join the company on stage for the five positions. At the end of the program, students will have the opportunity to ask questions of the performers.

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Interactive School Assembly Program Order

Audience Interaction and Ballet Positions
Ballet Tennessee dancers will demonstrate and help teach members of the audience the five basic positions of ballet.

Kinderscenen—Scenes from Childhood (grades K-5—ballet idiom)
Choreography by Barry VanCura; Music by Robert Schumann
This piece explores how bullying can affect the relationships of groups.

Non Grata (grades 6-12—contemporary ballet idiom)
Choreography by Thomas Shoemaker; Music by Robert Schumann

Concerto (All Grades—ballet idiom)
Choreography by Barry VanCura; Music by Sergei Prokofiev

Turn Up The Music (All Grades—jazz idiom)
Choreography by Brittany Johnson Mills, Music by Chris Brown

Question and Answer Session
Dancers will answer questions from the audience

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Post Performance Discussion Questions
1. What thoughts and feelings did the choreographers communicate in the dances that you saw? (Draw conclusions/infer). What details did you see in the performance that leads you to your conclusions? (Evidence)
2. How is watching a story-ballet dance similar to reading a story? (Consider: Structure of beginning, middle and end elements like characters, plot and themes). How is watching a dance different from reading a story? (Draw conclusions/infer by comparing and contrasting)

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