

Education and Outreach Department's School Matinee Program

DRACULA

STUDY GUIDE

For Teachers and Students

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About NEVADA BALLET THEATRE

Now in its 47th Season, Nevada Ballet Theatre (NBT) continues to bring the Las Vegas community closer to the art form of dance. With professional Company productions at The Smith Center for the Performing Arts, where it is the Resident Ballet Company, an affiliated Ballet and Dance Academy, as well as numerous Education and Outreach programs, NBT is at the heart of Las Vegas' cultural landscape.

The vision of a professional ballet company based in Las Vegas was brought to life in 1972 when Vassili Sulich, then the principal dancer with the Tropicana Hotel and Casino's famed Folies Bergere, gathered a group of ballet dancers from the Las Vegas Boulevard entertainment industry and presented a series of dance concerts to an enthusiastic public at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Performing Arts Center's Judy Bayley Theatre. The overwhelmingly positive reception of the community, combined with the support of UNLV, was such that within two years a volunteer board was established—headed by founding chairman and former dancer, Nancy Houssels. And during the next 25 years, a professional ballet company emerged.

In 1979, the Company established an affiliated Academy in order to provide a premier dance education to young people in Southern Nevada and groom the next generation of dance enthusiasts. After the organization received a major grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, and a donation of land from The Howard Hughes Corporation, plans for a world-class home for the Company and Academy began. The Academy is now regarded as one of the top ballet and dance training centers in the city and offers a variety of classes for children through adult. In 1980, the Company expanded its community reach by sharing the art form of dance with students in underserved populations within Clark County. In 1993, it established *Future Dance* in order to provide free in-school dance instruction and scholarship opportunities to students in need. Now in its 26th School Year, *Future Dance* is one of the longest running Education and Outreach programs in the state. With all of its Education and Outreach initiatives combined, NBT successfully reaches over 20,000 students a year through these life-changing programs.

NBT's long-awaited residency at The Smith Center for the Performing Arts became a reality on May 5, 2012, during the Company's 40th Anniversary. That same year, NBT presented a brand-new and original production of *The Nutcracker* choreographed by James Canfield. Complete with new sets, costumes and full orchestra, it is the first production of its kind built for the Reynolds Hall stage.

With a solid focus on dance education, a versatile Company of professional dancers and a growing repertoire, NBT stands as one of the city's most beloved community treasures. Consistently seeking to engage new audiences and cultivate its national identity, unique dance experiences like *A Choreographers' Showcase* (ACS), NBT's annual collaboration with *Cirque du Soleil*, create avenues of growth for local artists while providing the community with new and original dance works each year. Commanding critical acclaim, ACS recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

With an eye on the future, and a reverence for its past, NBT looks ahead to its 50th Anniversary and the continuation of presenting outstanding professional ballet and dance productions to the Las Vegas community.

About THEATER ETIQUETTE

- The matinee performance begins promptly at 11 a.m. and lasts approximately 1 hour
- Let your students know in advance what type of conduct is expected of them. This is a LIVE performance. Unlike television and movies, the performers are physically on stage and performing for your enjoyment, any noise may distract them. The performance will be exciting, but let your students know that they will be required to sit quietly in their seats for a reasonably long time
- School clothes are appropriate attire; however, some students may choose to “dress up”
- Please plan to arrive at the theater at least 30 minutes before the performance, as latecomers may not be seated once the performance has begun
- No food, drink, chewing gum, skateboards, cameras, cell phones 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. There will be no provisions for storing these items at the theater
- 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, an adult must accompany students to the restroom. Ushers will direct you to the restrooms
- We recommend that you provide your students with some guidelines of things to look and listen for during the performance
- **Students should be encouraged to:**
 - Watch the dancers
 - Listen to the music
 - Look at the costumes and lighting designs
 - Laugh when they see the dancers do something funny
 - Clap to show the dancers that they are enjoying the performance when the dancing has finished. It is also customary to applaud again when the dancers take a bow
- **Students should NOT:**
 - Talk or make noise because they might miss something important
 - Chew gum because it is disruptive to others and makes a mess at the theater
 - Leave their seats before the lights go on because this is very disruptive to their neighbors
 - Bring iPods or video games to the theater because this is disruptive to the dancers and other members of the audience
 - Put their feet on the back of the chairs
 - Text or talk on cell phones

About *Dracula*

Music: Franz Liszt

Choreography: Ben Stevenson

Dracula premiered on March 13, 1997, at the Wortham Center in Houston Texas. The full-length ballet was originally conceived to mark the 100th anniversary of Bram Stoker's iconic 1897 novel. Mr. Stevenson said, "I had the idea of making a ballet version of *Dracula* for some time. I envisioned *Dracula* as a classical tale, rather than something new with a rock score. In fact, in creating the scenario for *Dracula*, I've treated the story like a classical ballet...in the old sense. My production of *Dracula* uses the format of one of the great nineteenth century ballets, with three acts and a corps de ballet."



Photo by Rich Sofranko.
Courtesy of Pittsburgh
Ballet Theatre

In his scenario for the ballet version of *Dracula*, Ben Stevenson distilled the essence of Bram Stoker's novel, retaining key characters and dramatic situations. He amended elements of the novel to make it possible to tell the story in the language of ballet and to make the work more theatrically compelling. The ballet takes place entirely in Transylvania, with the first and third acts transpiring in Dracula's castle and the second act in the village.

Synopsis:

Dracula

Act 1: The Crypt of Dracula's Castle

Deep in his castle's crypt, Count Dracula and his wives are awakened when the trusted henchman Renfield arrives with a young girl from the village. Renfield has captured the maiden Flora to satisfy the lust of his master.

Act 2: The Village

The innkeeper and his wife are celebrating their daughter Svetlana's eighteenth birthday with the citizens of their village. Frederick asks the innkeeper for Svetlana's hand in marriage. Count Dracula has learned of Svetlana's extraordinary beauty and arrives to abduct her during the height of the festivities.

Act 3: The Bedroom of Count Dracula

Flora and the other brides await the return of Count Dracula. He enters with Svetlana, who is to become his next bride. At the climax of her initiation, Frederick, the priest and the innkeeper storm into the Count's bedroom to save Svetlana.



Photo by Jerry Metellus

About THE ARTISTS

Choreographer

Ben Stevenson

Ben Stevenson served as artistic director of Houston Ballet from 1976-2003, raising the company from a regional troupe of twenty-eight dancers to an internationally acclaimed ensemble of over fifty artists.



For his contributions to international dance, Mr. Stevenson was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) by Queen Elizabeth II in the New Year's Honors List in December 1999. In April 2000, he was presented with the Dance Magazine Award.

In July 2003, he was appointed artistic director emeritus of Houston Ballet, and the company's affiliated school was renamed Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy. Mr. Stevenson, a native of Portsmouth, England, received his dance training at the Arts Educational School in London. He appeared with the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet and English National Ballet where, as a principal dancer, he performed leading roles in all the classics.

In 1967, English National Ballet asked him to stage his first, and highly successful, production of *The Sleeping Beauty* which starred Margot Fonteyn. In 1968, Rebekah Harkness invited him to New York to direct the newly formed Harkness Youth Dancers. After choreographing *Cinderella* in 1970 for the National Ballet in Washington, D.C., he joined the company in 1971 as co-director with Frederic Franklin.

Mr. Stevenson has received numerous awards for his choreography, including three gold medals at the International Ballet Competitions of 1972, 1982, and 1986.

In July 2003, Mr. Stevenson assumed the artistic directorship of Texas Ballet Theater in Fort Worth, Texas.

Repetiteur

Dominic Walsh

In 2002, Dominic Walsh, Principal Dancer and Choreographer with Houston Ballet, founded Dominic Walsh Dance Theater. After the company's debut in February 2003, *Dance Magazine* declared, "At last Houston has a contemporary dance company on par with its symphony, opera and ballet companies." The company's roster included works by Walsh, Mats Ek, Jiří Kylián, Mauro Bigonzetti, and Matthew Bourne. Walsh was born in Elgin, Illinois and started his training with Lisa Boehm, Frank Boehm, Warren Conover, and Larry Long in Chicago. He joined Houston Ballet in 1989, and was promoted to Principal Dancer by 1996. Walsh danced throughout Asia, Europe, and North America. Walsh has danced all the major classics including *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, *Don Quixote*, *Romeo & Juliet*, and *Manon* with international stars such as Nina Ananiashvili and Alessandra Ferri. He danced Houston Ballet's entire contemporary repertoire, and Ben Stevenson created numerous roles for him including Marc Antony in *Cleopatra*.



In 1998, Walsh created *Flames of Eros* on Houston Ballet. This work won the Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography. He created three more works for Houston Ballet and in 2004, Walsh left to pursue Dominic Walsh Dance Theater full-time. Walsh won a second Choo-

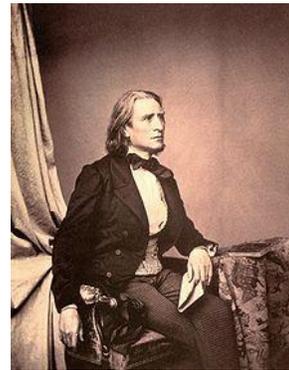
San Goh Award in 2007 and received a 2008 Princess Grace Award, both for *The Trilogy: Wolfgang Amadeau Mozart*. In 2012 he was inducted into the Fox Valley Hall of Fame.

Walsh continues to receive commissions to set and create works nationally and internationally. Walsh served as the Resident Choreographer for Sarasota Ballet of Florida, creating/staging *Wolfgang for Webb* (2008), *The Trilogy* (2009), and *Time out of Line* (2011), *Claire de Lune* (2011) and travels throughout the U.S. and abroad as a guest teacher and coach for both companies and academies. Walsh also stages the works of his longtime mentor, Ben Stevenson. The Carl Jung Center has shown interest in Walsh's creative process and he has given lectures at Houston's Jung Center. He has written for various publications on dance, and was a regular columnist for *Origin Magazine*. Walsh made his film debut as a co-director at the *Brussels Short Film Festival* in Spring 2015 with *Malta Kano, TX*. In 2015 Walsh became a proud father and closed DWDT after 12 seasons. In December 2015 he launched his 200 page photo book he created with company photographer, Gabriella Nissen, titled simply "Dominic Walsh Dance Theater". In September of 2018 Walsh will make his debut as Costume Designer for Stevenson's *Cinderella* with National Ballet of China.

Composer

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Liszt was born on October 11, 1811 in the Kingdom of Hungary. His father played the piano, violin, and cello. Liszt grew up listening to his father play and started composing his own music at age 8! At age 9 a group of wealthy sponsors offered to pay for his musical education in Vienna. He toured Europe as a famous concert pianist for 8 years. During that time he performed in over 1,000 concerts. He became so famous during this time that there are reports of women fighting over his silk handkerchiefs and velvet gloves. He was very philanthropic and gave most of his earnings from touring to charities and humanitarian causes, which added to his popularity. At the age of 35 he retired from being a concert pianist and focused more on composing. He is mostly known for his piano composition but he did write for a full orchestra as well.



Composer John Lanchbery worked with choreographer Ben Stevenson on finding the perfect score for *Dracula*. Being that *Dracula* takes place in Hungary and Liszt had many scores that were gothic like, "The Dance of Death", Lanchbery thought Liszt would be the perfect match. Stevenson agreed and Lanchbery worked hard to put together pieces of Liszt works to create the haunting score for *Dracula*.

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND ACTIVITY SHEETS

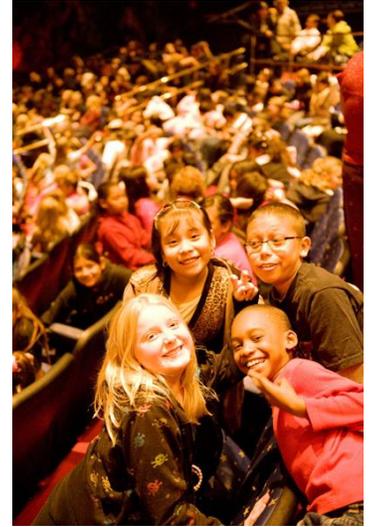
Movement:

Pre-Performance Discussions:

Ask your students how different emotions make them move. Have them get up and show you how you move when you are sad, excited, or upset! Each ballet has different movements to show an emotion. For example *The Brides* dance with flowy and fluid movements ask the students what emotion they think that would be.

Post-Performance Discussion:

Ask questions about each scene and how the movements made them feel, and have them act out those emotions. Ask how the movements were different in each scene and how they were the same, do they think the movements were effective at getting across what the choreographers wanted the audience to feel.



Costumes:

Pre-Performance Discussion:

Costumes help the audience to feel the emotions and characteristics of each ballet. Based on what the students know about the ballet now what do they think the costumes will look like?

Post-Performance Discussion:

Did the costumes help your students feel the mood of the ballet? Do your students think the costumes are the right design? If not have them draw what they think the dancers should have worn and why their design would help the audience to better understand the ballet. Have the students tell you what colors they would use and what fabrics or materials.

Music:

Pre-Performance Discussion:

Talk with your students about how music is the only thing that you hear during a ballet. Ballets are not like the movies, and plays, the dancers do not speak. They show their emotion through movement and pantomime. If you have access to the music you can even play parts of it to the students. Also play different types of music like classical or even hip-hop and ask them how it makes them feel and then have them act out that emotion with the music!

Post-Performance Discussion:

Did your students like the music, what was their favorite part? Do they think it helped to show the emotions that the choreographer wanted the audience to feel?

Set:

Pre-Performance Discussion:

In the first act we are inside Dracula's castle, tell your students to pay attention to the lighting, props and scenery that make up the castle. In the second act we are in the village have your students look at what is used to make up the village scene.

Post-Performance Discussion:

Have your students tell you the difference in each set and how it made them feel. Did they like the lighting and the scenery? How would they design the lighting and the sets? What colors would they use for lighting? Do they think the set helped to show the emotions of the ballet to the audience?

More Post-Performance Questions:

If your students were the choreographers, how would they create the ballet? Have them go through every aspect of creating a ballet; would they keep some things the same?

Overall did they enjoy the ballet, what were their favorite parts?





Dracula by the Numbers

52 Roles

3 Casts

26 Wigs

3 Acts

4 Performances

1 Student Matinee

6 Weeks of Rehearsals

Photo by Ellen Appel. Courtesy of
Texas Ballet Theatre

Additional Resources

Resource Credits

- Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Liszt)
- Dunning, Jennifer. "A 'Dracula' Beyond Stoker's Dreams." *New York Times*, March 17, 1997, pp. B1 & 6.
- Holmes, Ann. "Houston Ballet Delivers Lavish 'Dracula,' Marking Novel's 100 Years. *Christian Science Monitor*, March 21, 1997.

Further Study

- YouTube: "Ben Stevenson Dracula"
- Bram Stoker. *Dracula*. Wordsworth Classics, 1997
- *Totentanz* Reiner/Janis & Ozawa/Zimmerman RCA (audio on YouTube or iTunes)
- *Mephisto Waltz* and *From the Cradle to the Grave* "Liszt Complete Tone Poems" Philips (audio on YouTube, iTunes, or for sale on Amazon)