



Education and Outreach Department's School Matinee Program

*Classic*  
★ **AMERICANA** ★

*Western Symphony & Company B*

# STUDY GUIDE

For Teachers and Student

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## About NEVADA BALLET THEATRE

Now in its 46<sup>th</sup> 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 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 26<sup>th</sup> 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 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. That same year, NBT presented a brand-new and original production of *The Nutcracker*, complete with new sets, costumes and full orchestra. Choreographed by James Canfield, 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 oldest performing arts organizations in the state and one of the city's most beloved community treasures. Consistently seeking to engage new audiences and cultivate its identity within the national arts scene, 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 embarks upon its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this fall.

With an eye on the future, and a reverence for its past, NBT looks ahead to its 50<sup>th</sup> 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 *Western Symphony*

Music: Hershy Kay  
Choreography: George Balanchine

The ballet premiere on September 7, 1954 at the City Center of Music and Drama in New York. It was first performed in practice clothes and with no scenery! Scenery and costumes were added in 1955. The ballet follows no plot, but it does have several short stories that play out.



*Western Symphony* Choreography by George Balanchine © The George Balanchine Trust  
Photo by Rich Sofranko, Courtesy of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre

Set on a rugged Old West street populated by cowboys and dance hall girls, *Western Symphony* nevertheless is very much a classical work. The steps Balanchine uses from the traditional ballet vocabulary allude to the steps, formations, and gestures of American folk dancing. The ballet is a striking example of Balanchine's fascination with American themes. The lively and familiar score consists of classic American folk songs, including "Red River Valley," "Old Taylor," "Rye Whiskey," "Good Night Ladies," "Oh Dem Golden Slippers," and "The Girl I Left Behind Me." – The George Balanchine Trust

## About *Company B*

Music: The Andrews Sisters  
Choreography: Paul Taylor

Just as America began to emerge from the Depression at the dawn of the 1940s, the country was drawn into the Second World War. In a seminal piece of Americana, Paul Taylor recalls that turbulent era through the hit songs of the Andrews Sisters. Although the songs depict a nation surging with high spirits, millions of men were bidding farewell to wives or girlfriends and many would never return from battle. The dance focuses on such poignant dualities. Young lovers lindy, jitterbug and polka in a near manic grasp for happiness while in the background, soldiers as shadowy figures fall. The Paul Taylor Dance Company premiered *Company B* in 1991.



*Company B* Choreography by Paul Taylor. Photo by Frank Artura. Courtesy of the Sarasota Ballet

## About THE ARTISTS

### Choreographers

#### **George Balanchine (1904-1983)**

George Balanchine's real name is Georgi Melitonovitch Balanchivadze. He was born on January 22, 1904 in St. Petersburg, Russia. When he was only 9 years old he was accepted into the ballet division of the Imperial Theatre School in St. Petersburg. Balanchine started to choreograph as a teenager, creating his first ballet in 1920. In 1923, he and some of his friends formed a small troupe called "Young Ballet". They were allowed to tour outside of the newly formed Soviet Union, and did not return. While performing in London the dancers were asked to audition for the famous "Ballet Russes" and were all taken into the company. Not long after Balanchine joined the company he was promoted to ballet master (principal choreographer) for Ballet Russes, he was only 21 years old. He went on to create many famed ballets during his time there. In 1933 Balanchine formed his own company, "Les Ballets 1933". It was when the company was performing in London that Balanchine had a fateful meeting with a young American arts patron named Lincoln Kirstein. Kirstein told Balanchine that he wanted to create an American Ballet company, with American dancers. He arrived in New York in October 1933. "But first a school!" he famously said when he arrived. The School of American Ballet (the official school of The New York City Ballet) was founded in 1934, and still remains in operation today, training dancers for the New York City Ballet and companies worldwide. Within a year the professional company was born. Balanchine served as ballet master for the New York City Ballet, from 1948 until his death in 1983. He choreographed the majority of the ballets the Company has performed, from its conception to the present day. Balanchine created 425 works, including, *The Nutcracker* (1954), *Serenade* (1934), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1962), *Don Quixote* (1965), *Jewels* (1967), and *Who Cares?* (1970).



Balanchine is a trademark of the George Balanchine Trust  
George Balanchine and Former Soloist Leslie Roy  
Photo © Arthur Elgort

#### **Paul Taylor, Choreographer**

One of the most accomplished artists this nation has ever produced, Paul Taylor continues to shape America's homegrown art of modern dance as he has since becoming a professional dancer and pioneering choreographer in 1954. Having been a virtuoso performer with Martha Graham's company in the '50s, he uniquely bridges the legendary founders of modern dance and dance makers of the 21st Century. Through his initiative at Lincoln Center – Paul Taylor American Modern Dance – he presents great modern dances of the past, outstanding works by today's leading choreographers, dances he commissions from the next generation of choreographers, and his own growing repertoire for the Paul Taylor Dance Company. Recurring themes in Taylor dances include life and death; the natural world and man's place within it; love and sexuality in all gender combinations; and iconic moments in American history. *The New York Times* places him "among the great war poets" while Critic Terry Teachout calls him "the world's greatest living artist irrespective of medium." Among his many tributes, Mr. Taylor, 87, has received the Kennedy Center Honors, an Emmy, a MacArthur "Genius Award," and France's *Légion d'Honneur*.



## Composers

### **Hershy Kay (1919-1981)**



He was an American composer, arranger, and orchestrator. Mr. Kay was born Nov. 17, 1919, in Philadelphia, the son of Louis H. Kay, a printer, and Ida Aisen Kay, both recent immigrants from Russia. He was best known for his orchestrations of Broadway musicals, like *On the Town*, *Evita*, and *Chorus Line* to name a few. He worked with George Balanchine on several ballets in addition to Western Symphony, including *Cakewalk*, *Stars and Stripes*, and the *Grande Tarantella*.

### **The Andrew Sisters**



They were an American singing group during the swing and boogie-woogie era. The group consisted of three sisters, LaVerne Spophia, Maxene Angelyn, and Patricia Marie. They are still widely acclaimed today. They recorded over 600 songs and sold 100 million records. Some of their biggest hits include *Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy*, *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree*, and *I Want to Be Loved by You*. They recorded 47 songs with Bing Crosby. They are one of the most imitated female groups of all time.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS AND ACTIVITY SHEETS

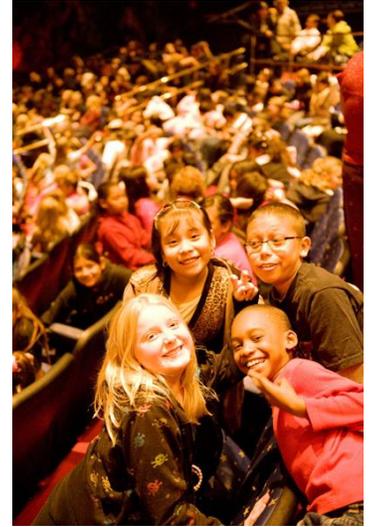
### Movement:

#### 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.

#### 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? Ask your students if they have ever heard any of the music before, if so where and what parts.

## Set:

### Pre-Performance Discussion:

In *Western Symphony* the backdrop looks like a rugged old west street. Ask your students to look for different details that help create the feeling of being in the Wild West.

### Post-Performance Discussion:

Have your students tell you how it made them feel. Did they like the lighting? How would they design the lighting? What colors would they use for lighting? Do they think it 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?



## WORDSEARCH

Test your wordsearch skills by finding the 10 words from the ballet *Western Symphony*

Cowboys      Balanchine      Western      choreographed      music  
 Symphony      Follies      composed      Ballet      American

Q	M	J	T	Y	N	P	G	B	V	R	U	B	H	W
A	M	I	R	U	M	O	T	V	W	E	Y	A	C	H
C	O	M	P	O	S	E	D	P	E	S	E	L	N	I
Z	J	U	E	I	N	L	B	R	S	A	D	W	A	Y
W	U	S	W	O	B	K	A	O	T	M	T	W	A	N
S	N	I	Q	P	V	K	L	L	E	E	A	E	L	K
X	H	C	W	A	C	M	A	Q	R	R	S	R	Y	J
B	Y	K	S	S	X	I	N	E	N	I	D	T	N	T
C	A	I	X	D	Z	I	C	W	S	C	F	Y	O	C
D	T	L	Q	F	W	K	H	R	E	A	G	G	H	O
E	T	L	L	H	L	J	I	T	R	N	H	Y	P	W
R	G	O	S	E	K	U	N	E	D	N	J	O	M	B
F	B	R	A	G	T	N	E	D	X	M	K	L	Y	O
V	E	P	Z	H	J	H	G	A	A	A	L	L	S	Y
G	C	H	O	R	E	O	G	R	A	P	H	E	D	S

## ANSWER KEY

### Wordsearch

Q	M	J	T	Y	N	P	G	B	V	R	U	B	H	W
A	M	I	R	U	M	O	T	V	W	E	Y	A	C	H
C	O	M	P	O	S	E	D	P	E	S	E	L	N	I
Z	J	U	E	I	N	L	B	R	S	A	D	W	A	Y
W	U	S	W	O	B	K	A	O	T	M	T	W	A	N
S	N	I	Q	P	V	K	L	L	E	E	A	E	L	K
X	H	C	W	A	C	M	A	Q	R	R	S	R	Y	J
B	Y	K	S	S	X	I	N	E	N	I	D	T	N	T
C	A	I	X	D	Z	I	C	W	S	C	F	Y	O	C
D	T	L	Q	F	W	K	H	R	E	A	G	G	H	O
E	T	L	L	H	L	J	I	T	R	N	H	Y	P	W
R	G	O	S	E	K	U	N	E	D	N	J	O	M	B
F	B	R	A	G	T	N	E	D	X	M	K	L	Y	O
V	E	P	Z	H	J	H	G	A	A	A	L	L	S	Y
G	C	H	O	R	E	O	G	R	A	P	H	E	D	S

## **Additional Resources**

### Further Study

- Balanchine [DVD]: Balanchine. Kultur Video, 2004
- Joseph, Charles M. (2004) George Balanchine: The Ballet Maker. Harper Collins
- “Live From Lincoln Center” NYC Ballet: A Tribute to George Balanchine. 10 Oct 1983
- Taper, Bernard (1996) George Balanchine: A Biography. University of California Press
- [www.ptamd.org](http://www.ptamd.org) (Information on Paul Taylor American Modern Dance Company)