

A Teacher's Handbook for
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's Production

of

Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project

Choreography by **Stephen Mills**
Set & Costume Design by **Christopher McCollum**
Media Design by **Action Figure**
Light Design by **Tony Tucci**

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Educator,

The arts cross the boundaries of language and geography. They are multi-cultural and multi-national. Recently the City of Pittsburgh was privileged to host the G20 Summit with leaders from the world's largest economies. The purpose of a summit meeting is to bring those with different ideas, cultures, and philosophies together to make policies that can positively affect each one. The arts have an innate gift for accomplishing that end, and those of us who work in the arts are well aware of the tremendous value that they have in our lives and in the education of our children.

Dance has been widely used in history to perpetuate, modify and create culture for humankind. It gives us a perspective on the human existence that transcends our everyday activities. It enhances our lives in a way no other discipline can. In a tribute to playwright Vaclav Havel, actor Ron Silver reminds us that “...*art matters...artists speak to people in ways that politicians cannot...art has the power to define us, to challenge us, and to make us explore the frontiers of human existence.*”

Artistic representation of atrocities of The Holocaust bears a burden of responsibility for integrity and sincerity. We at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre are honored and humbled to be the standard bearers of such an important and timely message.

Thank you for continuing to keep Arts Education as a vital part of your school curriculum and for partnering with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre as we strive to give students a meaningful experience at the theater.



Terrence S. Orr
Artistic Director

Academic Standards and Objectives

The *Pennsylvania Department of Education Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities* are the guidelines for what students should know and be able to do in both the performing and visual arts, in addition to understanding the arts in relation to the humanities. Below we have included the Dance Content Standards developed by the National Dance Association, which are specific to dance in the Standards' unifying themes of production, history, criticism and aesthetics, in addition to the components that yield an overall knowledge of the Arts and Humanities.

DANCE CONTENT STANDARDS:

1. Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance
2. Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures
3. Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning
4. Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance
5. Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods
6. Making connections between dance and healthful living
7. Making connections between dance and other disciplines

Knowledge of the Arts and Humanities incorporates carefully developed and integrated components such as:

- Application of problem solving skills
- Extensive practice in the comprehension of basic symbol systems and abstract concepts
- Application of technical skills in practical production and performance
- Comprehension and application of the creative process
- Development and practice of creative thinking skills
- Development of verbal and nonverbal communication skills

This handbook is designed to aid you in your task of enabling your students to experience the arts and at the same time having a useful, educational experience.

Academic Standards and Objectives (*continued*)

The "Introduction" to the *Pennsylvania Department of Education Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities* states that "Dance Education is a kinesthetic art form that satisfies the human need to respond to life experiences through movement of the physical being." Becoming educated about the classical art of ballet even extends beyond dance education into music, theater, visual arts and humanities.

At the very least, the experience of attending a ballet performance will help your students develop an appreciation of their cultural environment, and through the information presented in this Handbook and DVD, the students should be able to –

- 9.1** Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts
 - ❖ Demonstrate how a story can be translated into a ballet.
- 9.2** Historical and Cultural Contexts
 - ❖ Demonstrate how a choreographer uses music, movement and mime to help create a ballet.
- 9.3** Critical Response
 - ❖ Demonstrate how costumes, scenery and lighting help support plot, theme and character in a ballet.
- 9.4** Aesthetic Response
 - ❖ Write a thoughtful, informed critique of a performance.

What to Expect at the Byham Theater

It is a special privilege to attend a live performance at the Byham Theater. Polite behavior allows everyone, including the dancers, to fully concentrate on the performance. Discuss with your students the following aspects of audience etiquette:

1. Once inside the Byham Theater you will not be permitted to leave and re-enter the building.
2. Playbills are available to students for use in follow-up classroom activities. Upon entering the theater, teachers should pick up the programs for their school at the Patron Services table. The playbill includes information on the ballet, casting and biographies of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre artists.
3. Be sure to sit in the section assigned to your school. An usher will be happy to help you find where your school's seats are located.
4. Talking to your neighbor in a normal speaking voice is fine prior to the performance. During the performance, even the softest whisper can be distracting to those nearby. **DO NOT TALK DURING THE PERFORMANCE.**
5. The taking of pictures is prohibited during a performance, so it is best to leave your cameras at home.
6. Remain with your class. In the theater it is easy to get separated or lost.
7. Chewing gum, food and drink are not acceptable in the theater.

Preparing Students for the Performance

The ballet itself is 90 minutes in length and will be performed without intermission. Please have your students use the restroom facilities before the performance because leaving the theater during the ballet would not be appropriate unless it is an emergency.

Included with this packet of materials is an educational DVD that was produced by Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre to give students an insight into the performance and its impact on the emotions. **PLEASE MAKE TIME TO SHOW THIS DVD** to your students before coming to the Student Matinee on November 13th.

You have also received copies of an insert that was created for the Fall 2009 issue of the Pittsburgh Quarterly magazine. It includes background information about the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre project and about some of the other exhibits and performances that are scheduled. An updated Community Events Calendar is also included in this Handbook. **PLEASE SHARE THIS INFORMATION** with parents so they may be aware of the importance of this performance and also be able to take advantage of the wealth of artistic exhibits and performances included in the *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project*.

Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project was created at Ballet Austin in 2005. The research that was done on the history of The Holocaust and the impact that it had on the world and will have on future generations is extensive. Although their Footnotes Study Guide focuses on their particular community endeavor, it is suggested that you use the following information in your classroom:

http://www.balletaustin.org/documents/light_footnotes.pdf beginning on Page 4.

About the Collaboration

Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project is the most unique and extensively collaborative project in the history of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. PBT has forged a partnership with each of the following arts and culture organizations that have participated in this project through performances and exhibits unique to their disciplines and missions.

The Holocaust Center of the United Jewish Federation
Agency for Jewish Learning
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Mellon University
Chatham University
Senator John Heinz History Center
Opera Theater of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh Jewish Israeli Film Festival
Pittsburgh Quarterly
The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
The University of Pittsburgh
Winchester Thurston School

Included in the Teacher's Handbook of materials is a **Community Events Calendar** with a description and dates of each program that is being offered as part of the *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project*. The exhibits, performances and educational workshops and seminars commemorate the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* or "Night of Broken Glass" on November 9th. The events occurring in Germany on this date in 1938 are recognized as the beginning of The Holocaust.

Please encourage your students and fellow faculty to take advantage of this wonderful and important series of artistic events. In most cases, admission is minimal or free.

About the Ballet

Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project is a unique ballet that deals with a very serious historical event. The emotional impact on the artistic and administrative staff and dancers of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre has been considerable.

The experience in the theater will include two exhibits in addition to the performance. "Poland Personally" is an exhibit of artifacts that were buried by Holocaust victims to tell their stories. It is being presented by the Agency for Jewish Learning. "Lost, Loved, Remembered." is an exhibit created by the eighth graders at Winchester Thurston School that follows the lives of Holocaust victims and survivors through artistically created journals.

Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project

Although no artistic representation of the Holocaust can accurately express the catastrophic events endured by innocent victims of this period of history, Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project humbly seeks to speak about the human issues embedded within it. These issues are of family, culture, segregation, deportation and indiscriminate decisions made daily about life and death. This work follows the experiences of one survivor, from the loss of her family to her liberation and the illumination of human relationships encountered along the way.

Ballet Austin

The ballet is divided into seven sections:

- Adam and Eve
- Family
- Targets Behind Doors
- Isolation and Degradation
- Boxcar
- Ashes
- Hush

There are five pieces of music accompanying the dance:

Tehillim

Rhythm Song from "Greatest Hits"

Weather

Tabula Rasa

"Dennis Russell Davies performs Philip Glass"

Steve Reich

Evelyn Glennie

Michael Gordon

Arvo Part

Philip Glass

The music will not be the easiest listening, but it appropriately and accurately accompanies the brilliant choreography and shocking reality of the events.