

# ABTKids Guide



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# Welcome to American Ballet Theatre!

ABT is America's National Ballet Company. Our mission is to create, to present, to preserve, and to extend the great repertoire of classical dancing, through exciting performances and educational programming of the highest quality, presented to the widest possible audience.

Thank you for joining us for today's performance. Attending the ballet can be a magical experience for children of all ages. Princesses turn into Swans, Romeo falls in love with Juliet, and even cupcakes come to life before our very eyes.

Watching the beautiful artistry of ABT's dancers, listening to the harmonious sounds of the orchestra and marveling at the magnificent scenery and costumes can create memories that last a lifetime. It can also leave you with a lot of questions.

This guide is designed to offer a window into the world of American Ballet Theatre and answer some of those questions you may have about ballet, the dancers, and the hundreds of people who bring a ballet to the stage.

We hope you have a wonderful day at the ballet and enjoy the ABT Kids Guide!

Please visit [www.abt.org](http://www.abt.org) to learn more about ABT's educational offerings, workshops and training programs.



# Over 75 Years of American Ballet Theatre

In 1940, American Ballet Theatre emerged onto the American cultural landscape with a unique and exciting vision of a ballet company that functioned like an art museum. Just as a museum presents paintings by different artists to showcase a wide range of beauty and art, the company would present ballets by diverse choreographers to showcase all the variety the ballet world had to offer.

In addition to bringing the classics to American audiences, ABT was at the forefront of laying the foundation for new American works. For the first time, audiences not only saw ballets in the traditional European styles, they saw ballets that were about the American experience.

Suddenly ballets were choreographed around themes ranging from American folk legends like Billy the Kid and Lizzie Borden, to cowboys and cowgirls on the American frontier and even sailors on shore leave during World War II.



Rodeo



Fancy Free

Agnes de Mille in Rodeo. Photo: Maurice Seymour. Herman Cornejo and Corey Stearns in Fancy Free. Photo: Marty Sohl.  
Opposite page: Original opening night poster and early Playbills

**3 WEEKS—Beginning THURS. EVE., JAN. 11, 1940**

# AMERICA'S FIRST

# Ballet Theatre

**THE GREATEST BALLET OF ALL TIMES**  
staged by  
**GREATEST COLLABORATION IN BALLET HISTORY**  
REPERTORY: 21 BALLETs — 6 WORLD PREMIERES

**CHOREOGRAPHERS**  
(All Fokine Ballets revived under personal supervision of)  
**BOLM—DE MILLE—DOLIN—FERNANDEZ—HOWARD—LORING—MORDKIN—NIJINSKY**

**DANCERS**  
**CONRAD—ESSE—FRONTES—STROGOV—TCHEREPNINE—VARKAS—WILSON**  
INIT of 12 and a

**DESIGNERS**  
**D—BARONOV—BENOIS—DE MOLAS—FRANK—STEVENS—TACK.**

**COMPOSERS**  
**CHOPIN—DEBUSSY—GRANADOS—LISZT—MILHAUD—MOSSOLV—NIN—SCHUMANN—RAYMOND SCOTT—TCHEREPNINE—KURT WEILL.**

**CONDUCTORS**  
**SMALLENS — HAROLD BYRNS — RALPH STONE**

**Lighting by FEDER**

**PROGRAM—1st WEEK—**  
**Gala World Premiere THURS. EVE., JAN. 11 at 8:40**  
**WILLIAM SAROYAN'S "THE GREAT AMERICAN GOOF"**

**THE PLAYBILL FOR THE MAJESTIC THEATRE**

**AMERICA'S FIRST BALLET THEATRE SEASON 1940**

**AMERICA'S FIRST BALLET THEATRE**  
staged by  
**GREATEST COLLABORATION IN BALLET HISTORY**  
REPERTORY: 21 BALLETs — 6 WORLD PREMIERES

# America's National Ballet Company

On April 27, 2006, by an act of Congress, American Ballet Theatre became America's National Ballet Company.® ABT has become a cultural ambassador, the only ballet company to perform in all 50 states and 50 international countries as represented by the red dots on this map. In 1957, with encouragement from President Eisenhower, the company's name changed from Ballet Theatre to American Ballet Theatre. But what does it mean to be America's Ballet Company? What does it mean to be American?



ABT's dancers come from all over the world, drawn to ABT for its repertoire, artistry, and camaraderie. In 2018, ABT's dancers hailed from 27 states and 16 countries.



# Why is ABT like a Library?



Close your eyes and picture a library. It is hard to imagine anything other than rows and rows of shelves filled from floor to ceiling with books of all shapes, sizes and colors. The books are all neatly organized by genre or categories. There are Fairytales, Fantasies, Dramas and Shakespearean plays, along with any subject you can imagine.

This library you are imagining is really no different from American Ballet Theatre, except instead of books, we have ballets. Every time ABT performs a new ballet, it is added to the Company's repertoire—our collection of ballets. Since 1940, ABT has performed over 475 different ballets with over 180 of those works commissioned or first performed by the Company.

When planning a season, ABT's Artistic Director Kevin McKenzie can pull any of these works down from the shelf and bring them to life for a new generation of dancers and audiences!

When you hear the word "Ballet," you may think of a beautiful ballerina in a tutu and pointe shoes dancing with a handsome prince. You may think of a dancer with no shoes and a free flowing outfit. ABT's repertoire is diverse in genres and also diverse in styles including—Classical Ballet, Neo-Classical Ballet, Contemporary Ballet and Modern Dance.



Swan Lake



Theme and Variations



Fancy Free



Diversion of Angels

**Swan Lake** by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov is an example of a classical story ballet and is based on a fairy tale.

Women wear tutus, pink tights, and pointe shoes. Men wear tights and decorative tops.

**Fancy Free** by Jerome Robbins is an example of a contemporary ballet. This style of ballet blends classical ballet, theater and modern dance.

Dancers have no restrictions—girls may or may not wear pointe shoes or tutus. Men may be wearing street clothing.

**Theme and Variations** is a neo-classical ballet by George Balanchine.

This is a style of ballet with more modern influences. The ballets do not tell a story the way a classical ballet does, but instead may focus on concepts of symmetry and beautiful imagery.

**Diversion of Angels** by Martha Graham is an example of modern dance.

Dancers may or may not be barefoot or in costume, and may dance to modern music. They move their bodies freely and often break from the traditions of classical ballet (for example, flexing their feet instead of pointing).

# A Dancer's Journey—I

Up close with ABT Principal Dancer Devon Teuscher



My journey with dance began when I was 8 years old. I started taking dance class because one of my best friends was taking lessons. I was hooked after my first ballet class. I tried many other forms of dance like jazz, tap, and hip-hop but I loved ballet the most. I trained rigorously for many years including at ABT's Summer Intensives, before moving to New York at age fifteen to attend the inaugural year of the JKO School at ABT. I was accepted into ABT Studio Company and the Main Company shortly thereafter.

## Fun Facts

### First Ever Role:

My first role in a full length ballet was with my home school in Vermont, where I danced the role of Chinese in *The Nutcracker*. I remember being so excited!!

### First Role with ABT:

My first role with the main company at ABT was a flower and a snowflake in the corps de ballet of *The Nutcracker*.

### Favorite Role:

My favorite role is Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*.

### How many hours do you dance each week?

During a rehearsal period I dance from 10am–7pm, Tuesday–Saturday. During ABT's performance week, I rehearse from 10am–5pm and then the evening performance is from 7–10pm.

### How many pairs of pointe shoes do you go through each week?

I can go through up to 5 pairs of pointe shoes a week.

### Favorite Ballet:

My favorite ballet is *Romeo and Juliet*.

### Most Challenging Role:

The most challenging role I have performed is Myrtha in *Giselle*.

### One item in your dance bag that you can't go without:

I have a dog named Riley that I like to bring to work with me. He fits in my dance bag pretty well!

### Odette (White Swan) or Odile (Black Swan)?

Both roles have their strengths, but if I had to choose one, it would be Odette.

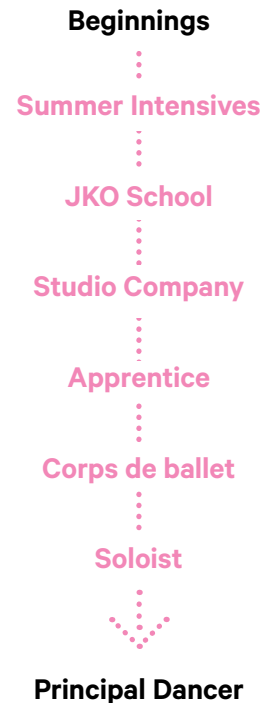


Photo: Rosalie O'Connor

# Devon's Daily Schedule

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| 8:00 AM  | Wake up. Walk Riley.                      |
| 9:00 AM  | Eat breakfast. Leave home.                |
| 10:00 AM | Ballet Class                              |
| 11:00 AM | Ballet Class                              |
| 12:00 PM | Rehearsal                                 |
| 1:00 PM  | Rehearsal                                 |
| 2:00 PM  | Rehearsal                                 |
| 3:00 PM  | Lunch                                     |
| 4:00 PM  | Rehearsal                                 |
| 5:00 PM  | Rehearsal                                 |
| 6:00 PM  | Rehearsal                                 |
| 7:00 PM  | Go home.                                  |
| 8:00 PM  | Walk Riley. Eat dinner.                   |
| 9:00 PM  | Take a bath.                              |
| 10:00 PM | Relax at home. Snuggle with my pup Riley! |
| 11:00 PM | Go to bed.                                |

# What is Your Daily Schedule?

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| 8:00 AM  |  |
| 9:00 AM  |  |
| 10:00 AM |  |
| 11:00 AM |  |
| 12:00 PM |  |
| 1:00 PM  |  |
| 2:00 PM  |  |
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| 5:00 PM  |  |
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| 7:00 PM  |  |
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| 9:00 PM  |  |
| 10:00 PM |  |
| 11:00 PM |  |

# A Dancer's Journey—II

## Up close with ABT Corps de ballet Dancer Erica Lall



### How did you start dancing?

My sister, who is 8 ½ years older than I am, has always been my biggest inspiration. I wanted to do everything she did. When I was two years old and would not leave the doorway when she was in dance class, her teacher let me in and gave me a spot in the back corner. I mimicked everything.

### Where did you receive your ballet training?

When I was 8 years old, I began training at Houston Ballet's Ben Stevenson Academy. However, I still wanted more, and by the time I was 13, I made my parents take me to additional classes in Houston with professional dancers. After one of these classes, a dancer told my dad that I needed to be in New York. I got the chance to audition for ABT's summer intensives and did the ABT Orange County program. I became an ABT National Training Scholar after that summer. The following year, when I was 15 years old, I did the ABT New York

Summer Intensive. That fall, I moved to New York on my own to continue my training on a full scholarship at ABT's JKO School. After a little over a year in ABT Studio Company, I received a contract for ABT's main company.

### How did you know you wanted to become a ballet dancer?

I always loved being on stage and the feeling that I could touch the audience and lift their spirits. I was a competition dancer before I started strictly ballet training, so my main focuses were tap, jazz, and contemporary. Once I focused on ballet, I loved the constant challenge, and I knew I wanted to work through those challenges everyday to eventually become a professional ballet dancer.

### What is typical day for you like?

I get to the studios around 9:45–10:00 to warm up for class! Then it's technique class from 10:15–11:45 and rehearsals from 12–7 with a lunch break from 3–4. Then it's home to cook, rest a bit, and prepare for the next day!

### If you had to be in another profession, what would that be?

I would either want to run track or be an actress!

### Who are your artistic influences and why?

Stella Abrera has been someone I have looked up to since I came to New York. Her artistry is something else, so beautiful and so incredibly real, and I strive to be an artist like her someday.

### What is your favorite ballet?

My favorite ballet is *Giselle*. There's something that I really love about how "Giselle" has to become completely vulnerable on stage.

### What is your favorite part of your job?

When the curtains open and I get that rush of excitement! It feels so good to go onstage after all the countless hours of hard work in the studios and behind the scenes.

### Any other advice you want to impart to aspiring young dancers?

Try not to compare yourself to others. It's one of the hardest tasks in all careers. Once you stop constantly comparing yourself to others, you can really focus in on being the best you.





# How is a Ballet Created?

On today's visit to the ballet, you entered this beautiful theater, found your seat and your attention was drawn to the elevated stage in front of you. You may see a beautiful backdrop, or the curtain may be drawn. You may hear the orchestra warming up before the show. We wait patiently in our seats for the grandeur of the performance to sweep us away.

Interestingly, ballet was not always presented on a stage or in a theater. Ballet's beginnings date back to 15th century Italian royal courts, where kings and princes used ballet to fill their courts with artistry to impress other powerful families. Ballet was performed in rooms and the gardens of the palaces, not in a theater or stage, and movements were small and restricted by many layers of clothing.

Louis the XIV of France is credited with popularizing the art form of ballet, and soon ballet moved from court to stage as a way to showcase and present dance to a wider audience.

So, you may wonder, how do we create ballets today? Many artistic jobs are involved in this process.

The idea begins with the artistic director and choreographer.

# The Making of *Whipped Cream*



**Kevin McKenzie**  
ABT Artistic Director

Mr. McKenzie was appointed Artistic Director of American Ballet Theatre in October 1992. His many responsibilities include hiring dancers, selecting ballets for ABT's repertoire and spearheading the Artistic vision of the Company.



**Hires**



**Alexei Ratmanský**  
Choreographer

Alexei Ratmanský is inspired by the music of Richard Strauss, a German composer of the late romantic and early modern eras.



**Mark Ryden**  
Set and Costume Designer

Mark Ryden is an American pop-surrealist painter known for his brightly colored paintings. *Whipped Cream* marked Mr. Ryden's first venture into designing for ballet.

**Remember**  
Creating a ballet is a team effort in which all the people involved need to collaborate and communicate continuously.

**Surrealism** An art movement that uses images to experiment with imagination. Surrealist artists like to combine things that are not normally seen together.

# Libretto

A libretto is the text or story of the ballet. Always look for the libretto in your program to help you learn the characters, settings and plot. For *Whipped Cream*, the libretto was written by Richard Strauss in Vienna in 1921–22.

On a beautiful Sunday, a Boy and his friends receive their first communion. To celebrate the special occasion, they are taken to a confectioner's shop, where they are served their favorite sweets. The Boy, who particularly loves whipped cream, eats so much that he becomes ill and has to be taken away.

With the children gone, the shop comes alive. Marzipan archers, spear-wielding Sugarplums and swashbuckling Gingerbread Men engage in military exercises. Princess Tea Flower appears and is captivated by Prince Coffee, whom she chooses as her mate. Prince Cocoa and Don Zucchero attempt to win her favor, to no avail.

The Chef appears with his bowl and whisk, whisking cream, and the shop fades away into a world of the Boy's dreams—a world made entirely of whipped cream.

The Boy, still sick from too much whipped cream, finds himself in a dark and sinister hospital room attended by a Doctor and an army of Nurses. They give him medicine and leave the room. In their absence, a fantastic procession, led by Princess Praline, arrives and helps the Boy escape.

The Doctor is suffering from a headache. He tries to relieve his pain with liquor. Then the liquor bottles come to life. The Nurses return and see that the Boy has disappeared. They find him and lead him back to his bed, but the liquor bottles intervene and intoxicate the Doctor and Nurses, allowing Princess Praline to free the Boy and whisk him away to her kingdom.

In the main square of Princess Praline's domain, creatures of all kinds are celebrating. The Boy meets Nicolò, the Master of Ceremonies, who welcomes him to this fantasy world that will now become his reality.

# From Sketch to Stage

Mark Ryden's designs and paintings come to life on stage thanks to the hard work of scenic artists who were in charge of building the set and painting scenery, and costume-makers who constructed these beautiful tutus.

## Fun Fact

For *Whipped Cream*, 78,000 Swarovski crystals were ordered. 64,000 of them were applied on costumes, and 14,000 were used on scenery.



Artwork by Mark Ryden. Stella Abrera as *Princess Tea Flower*. Photo: Doug Gifford.  
Opposite page: Artwork by Mark Ryden. Scene from *Whipped Cream*. Photo: Gene Schiavone.





# Jobs at American Ballet Theatre



## **Rena Most**

### **Wigs and Makeup**

Hair and makeup is a small part of a dancer's routine to get ready for a performance, but an important one. Having a designed and well done hairstyle and stage makeup helps the dancers look not only more beautiful but uniform and easier to see from the audience. When a style is more complicated or a different color than the dancer has naturally, we use wigs; we can spend time styling the wigs in a studio and then quickly put them on a dancer for the performance. To turn a dancer into a specific character, we use wigs and makeup (similar to face painting) to create that character. Some of my favorites are making the dancers into evil witches and silly old men! The Hair & Makeup room is where the magic happens!



## **Danielle Ventimiglia**

### **Production Stage Manager**

As the Stage Manager, I work closely with the dancers, artistic staff, designers and crew to bring the technical and artistic elements of a show together. During performances and stage rehearsals, I am in charge backstage. I "call" the show on a headset, giving cues to stagehands to make the curtain go up, the scenery to move, and the lights to change at the correct time in the music and choreography. During rehearsals, I help coordinate and prepare the shows by taping scenery out in the studio for the dancers, and providing props, music and video to help the dancers rehearse. My favorite cue I have ever called is: "Rocket, Go!"



## **Tomoko Ueda-Dunbar**

### **Wardrobe Supervisor**

As ABT's Wardrobe Supervisor, I oversee all of the costumes for every ABT production. I work closely with choreographers and designers to help implement their vision for the character and ensure the costumes fit for the demands of the production. For example, a designer might envision a dress with a laced-up back, but if the dancer needs to do a quick-change, then I have to make sure that the costume has a zipper or Velcro, to allow for this. The Wardrobe team is also responsible for ensuring the care and preservation of every costume. Since a single tutu can take over 100 hours to make, it is important to keep them pristine for as long as possible. ABT has so many costumes that we have to use an entire warehouse to fit them all. Some of ABT's costumes are as old or older than you are!



## **Charles Barker**

### **Conductor**

My job with ABT is to conduct the orchestra (make the music) for the ballet performances. Before this, I rehearse with the dancers in the studio to know their steps and decide just how the music must go for them to look their best. Then I rehearse the music with the orchestra until it is exactly right. Finally, we put it together at a "dress rehearsal" to make sure everything looks and sounds great.

# Jobs at American Ballet Theatre



**Ashley Baer**  
Company Manager

When ABT performs in theaters all over the country and the world, we travel with up to 130 dancers, crew, and staff to make those performances happen! It's Company Management's responsibility to get all of those people from place to place by booking flights, hiring buses, finding hotels, and applying for visas. Whenever ABT leaves New York, we put together our very own tour book that includes where to find a nearby grocery store, maps showing the route from the hotel to the theater, and—if we are traveling to a country that does not speak English—how to say “hello” and “thank you” in the local language so we can be polite wherever we go. When ABT is performing or rehearsing in New York, some of Company Management's responsibilities include sorting tickets, keeping track of names for the backstage list, making sure the dancers and crew are paid each week, and planning for the next tours.



**Kara Medoff Barnett**  
Executive Director

Hello, my name is Kara Barnett and I partner with Artistic Director Kevin McKenzie to lead American Ballet Theatre. As Executive Director, I collaborate with an administrative staff of 75 to provide the dancers, the orchestra, and the creative team with everything they need to rehearse and perform the classic ballets we love, like *Swan Lake* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and to create exciting new productions, like *Whipped Cream* and *Harlequinade*. One of my favorite things about my job is introducing friends who have never seen ballet to experience the magic of ABT performances. On matinee days, I like to bring my daughters (ages 8 and 6) with me to work. My youngest daughter is just 2 years old, but maybe she can come next year. I hope you enjoy today's performance!



**Brad Fields**  
ABT Lighting Director

The Lighting Designer is in charge of creating the mood and atmosphere that we see on stage. They control each light through a computerized lighting system and describe how bright or dim they would like each light to appear. Although you may not see them all, there are hundreds of individual lights that can illuminate the stage. The lighting designer also decides what color each light should be. For example, a pink light can enhance a dancer's tutu or tights and a blue light can bring out the blue in a dancer's vest. The lighting helps to create the atmosphere of a moon-lit lakeside, a bright sunny day, or an evil sorceress in her spiderweb filled cave. Many times, we use what is called a followspot to follow the dancer around the stage and make them a little bit brighter than the corps de ballet dancers. This followspot is controlled by an operator in the front of the house, but the colors, and size and brightness of the “spot” are determined by the Lighting Designer. I often help create special effects like flashing lights for the lightning in *Giselle* or low lying fog in *Swan Lake* or reflection of water in the *Le Corsaire* grotto scene.



**Carlos Lopez**  
Ballet Master

The ballet masters are responsible for helping the dancers prepare for all of the different ballets in ABT's repertoire. Most of my job is spent in the ballet studio where I teach company class, lead ballet rehearsals and coach dancers as they prepare for their roles. While ABT is performing in the theater, I get to watch the ballet from the audience and then share notes with the dancers and production staff so they can make any corrections. It's very rewarding helping dancers to give their best on stage!

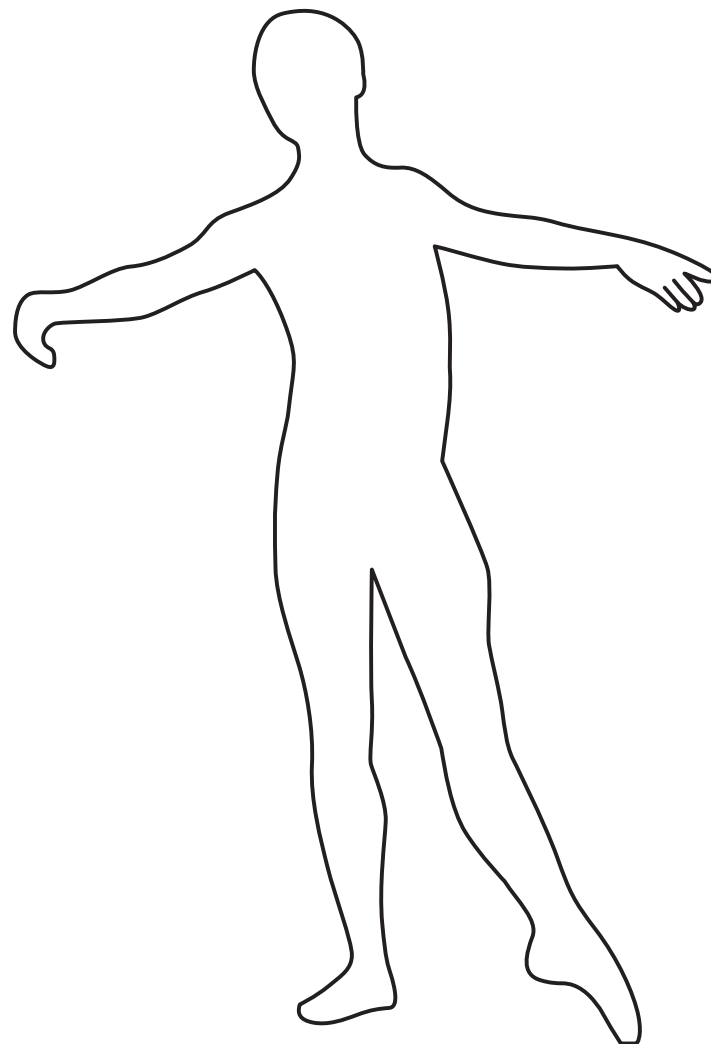
# Design Your Own Costume

At the ballet, we get to meet many exciting characters. In ABT's newest ballet *Harlequinade*, the leading character Harlequin wears one of the most colorful costumes of the entire season. Use the figure on the right to draw and design your very own dancer in any costume you want!



*Harlequin Act 2  
"Harlequinade"  
Harrison Follisworth  
Rhyder 7/10*

Artwork by Robert Perdziola





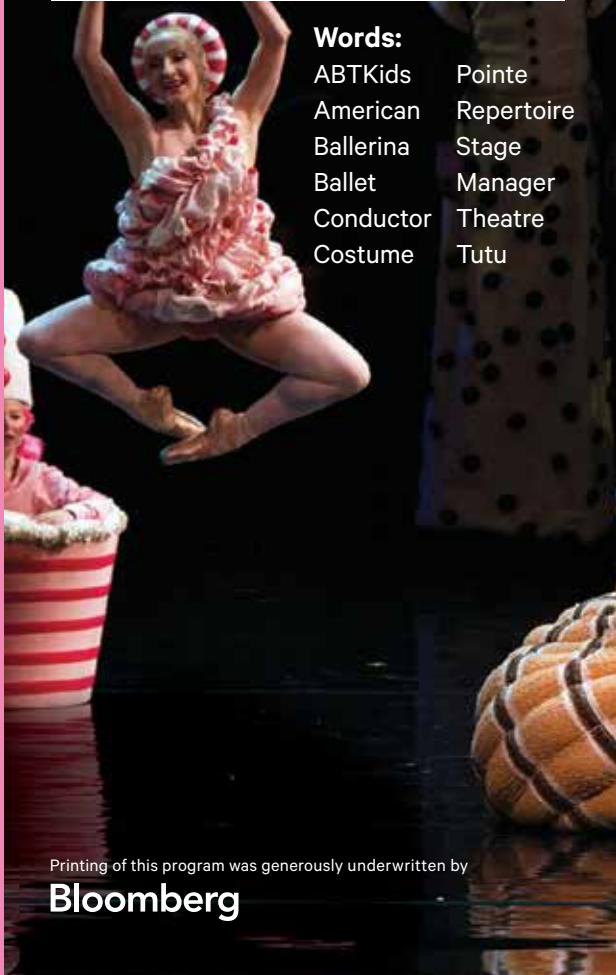
- Not made to last, a ballerina can go through 5 pairs of pointe shoes per week.
- Pointe shoes need to be broken in and some ballet dancers go through extraordinary measures to mold their pointe shoes to their feet. This can include: scraping the shoes to make them slip less, banging on them to reduce sound on stage, and cutting the shank—the inner part of the shoe—to make the shoes more malleable.
- Tutus are hand-sewn and require several hours of labor. One tutu can cost almost \$5000.
- When a ballet dancer jumps on pointe, all of her weight is carried in her big toe.
- Men initially danced ballet and women did not appear until 1691. It was 40 years later that women began to rival men in their technique.
- The male equivalent of a ballerina is called a danseur.

[www.abt.org](http://www.abt.org)

## Ballet Word search



- Words:**
- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| ABTKids   | Pointe     |
| American  | Repertoire |
| Ballerina | Stage      |
| Ballet    | Manager    |
| Conductor | Theatre    |
| Costume   | Tutu       |



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