Capture your memories with ABT by taking photos in front of the theater, in the lobby and of your favorite dancer taking a bow at the end of the ballet!

First Time at the Ballet?

Here are some tips to best enjoy today’s performance:

1. **Arrive a little early.** Give yourself time to enter the theater, find your seats and read your program. Make sure you use the restroom and get a drink of water before the show starts. If you leave your seat during the show, you may not be allowed back to your seat until intermission, and it would be a shame to miss any of the amazing dancing.

2. **Whisper.** At the ballet, you will see many amazing things that you will definitely want to discuss with your neighbor. Try to remember all those magical moments and discuss during intermission or following the performance. If you see something so AMAZING and just can’t keep it inside, please make sure that you practice your best whisper and quietly share so you do not distract the audience around you.

3. **Save your snacks for intermission.** Live performances are different from going to the movies. Although everyone loves a big bucket of popcorn, any small noises or smells could become distracting for the performers and audience members. Please finish all food and drink before entering the theater.

4. **Turn off your phones.** It’s hard to appreciate all of the hard work of the dancers and designers if you are looking at the screen of a device. Please turn off all phones and tablets before the ballet begins. Also, please do not take any photos while the dancers are performing—flashes can be dangerous for the performers and disruptive to those around you.

5. **Applaud!** Applause is how audiences show appreciation for the artistry of the performers. In ballet, there are many times to practice your clapping. After a short variation, or solo dance, a dancer may finish dancing and take a small bow. Sometimes at the end of the ballet when dancers take their final bow, audience members shout “Brava” for the ballerinas and “Bravo” for the male dancers to show appreciation and admiration.

6. **Ask Any Questions.** Upon arrival, you will meet members of the theater staff, including ticket takers, ushers and security. If you have any questions or need any help, please speak with any of these staff members.

7. **Have Fun!** Don’t forget to enjoy yourself. Ballets can be dramatic, they can be romantic and they can even be funny.

Cover Image: Scene from Harlequinade
Photo: Rosalie O’Connor
Thank you for bringing your parents to the ballet!

My name is Kara Barnett, and I am the Executive Director of American Ballet Theatre. (Being Executive Director means that I run the company, along with Kevin McKenzie, our amazing Artistic Director.) Like many of you, I took ballet classes as a child. I grew up in North Carolina and started dancing at age three. I had posters of ABT dancers on my walls, and now, like you, I have the opportunity to watch these phenomenal dancers on the stage!

I have three daughters, ages 9, 7, and 3. All three are students at ABT’s Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School, and the youngest is in our ABTots program. Our favorite family outing every year is ABTKids, and we also love watching Whipped Cream, Harlequinade and The Sleeping Beauty together.

As you watch today’s performance, here are a few facts I thought you might like to know:

- American Ballet Theatre (ABT) is America’s National Ballet Company.
- ABT is almost 80 years old. Our 80th birthday is January 11, 2020.
- ABT dancers come from 15 countries and 25 states, plus Washington, D.C.
- The youngest dancer in the company is 20 years old.
- This year, ABT performs in Orange County (CA), Washington, D.C., Minneapolis (MN), Iowa City (IA), Chicago (IL) and Wolf Trap (VA). Last year, we performed Swan Lake in Singapore and Whipped Cream in Hong Kong.
- ABT has a big warehouse in New Jersey where all of our sets and costumes live.
- ABT’s rehearsal studios are not at Lincoln Center. They are on 19th Street and Broadway, which is also where ABT’s Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School is located.

If you enjoy today’s performance, don’t forget to yell “BRAVO!” during the bows. And please ask your parents to check out www.abt.org/familyprograms to sign up to receive information about ABT family programs year-round.

Enjoy your ABT Adventure today, and please return soon!

Best wishes,
Kara
In 1940, Ballet Theatre emerged onto the American cultural landscape with a unique, 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. The Company preserved many of the great European masterpieces and was at the forefront of helping to lay the foundation for new American works.

‘40s
Lucia Chase and Richard Pleasant (co-founders) assembled many of the world’s finest choreographers and dancers. Dance pioneers Michel Fokine, Eugene Loring, Antony Tudor, Jerome Robbins and Agnes de Mille were founding members of Ballet Theatre.

‘50s
The company traveled the world extensively and, at the request of President Eisenhower, added “American” to its name. The dancers of American Ballet Theatre became cultural ambassadors for the United States.

‘60s
In 1967, ABT performed its first full-length classical Russian ballet: Swan Lake. This success led to future full-length productions such as Don Quixote, La Bayadère and The Sleeping Beauty.

‘70s
This decade marked ABT’s arrival as one of the world’s major classical companies, and dancers from around the world took notice. International stars Mikhail Baryshnikov, Erik Bruhn, Natalia Makarova, Rudolph Nureyev and Carla Fracci all performed with the Company during this period.

‘80s
The Company committed to commission and present post-modern works by choreographers such as Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, Paul Taylor and Merce Cunningham.

‘90s
In 1992, former ABT Principal Dancer Kevin McKenzie became Artistic Director. Under his leadership, ABT was recognized as having “the most unquestionably impressive roster of male dancers in any ballet company.”

‘00s
Alexei Ratmansky (former Artistic Director of the Bolshoi Ballet) joined ABT as Artist in Residence; he has choreographed 16 ballets for the Company in his first 10 years.

‘10s
In 2013, ABT launched the Project Plié initiative to further expand its diversity and inclusion efforts and increase awareness of the lack of diversity in the classical ballet community. In 2018, the ABT Women’s Movement began; it supports the creation, exploration and staging of new works by female choreographers.
On April 27, 2006, by an act of Congress, American Ballet Theatre became America’s National Ballet Company®. ABT is the only ballet company to perform in all 50 states and 45 international countries. In 1957, with encouragement from President Eisenhower, the company’s name was changed from Ballet Theatre to American Ballet Theatre. But what does it mean to be America’s National 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 2019, ABT’s dancers hailed from 15 countries and 25 states, plus Washington, D.C.!

Can you name all of the countries where ABT’s dancers were born?

Answers can be found in rear of booklet
DANCER’S JOURNEY

Hee Seo

Up close with ABT
Principal Dancer Hee Seo

My journey with dance began when I was 12 years old in my hometown, Seoul, Korea. I was taking swimming lessons with my two brothers and decided I didn’t want to swim anymore. My mom said I needed to do some type of activity, so she put me into a ballet class.

I’ve only participated in three competitions in my life, but each one was an important step on my journey. My first competition was when I was 12. I was accepted into an Arts School in Seoul, which then led to a scholarship with the Kirov Academy of Ballet in Washington, D.C. I entered another competition, Prix de Lausanne, that led me into the Stuttgart Ballet in Germany, where I trained in the John Cranko Ballet Academy and danced with their company. Finally, at the Youth American Grand Prix, I was offered a position with ABT’s Studio Company and joined ABT shortly thereafter. Over the next seven years, I worked my way through the company before being promoted to Principal Dancer in 2012!

First Ever Role: My first role was Red Riding Hood in The Sleeping Beauty when I was 12.

First Role with ABT: Ballet Imperial by George Balanchine. There are four groups, and I was the first girl to lead one of the groups. I was supposed to take my cue from the conductor to start, but I was too nervous to do so, so I asked the Ballet Mistress to switch me with one of the senior corps members so I was not the one leading the line.

Favorite Role: My favorite role is Odette/Odile in Swan Lake because it is so challenging, but so rewarding afterwards. Normally you either play a nice person or a bad person...but this is the only ballet you can actually play both good and evil (White Swan/Black Swan) in the same evening. It is so technically challenging that once you finish the full-length ballet, it feels like you have accomplished something. For me, it was the role where I became a ballerina. It was very special.

How many pairs of pointe shoes do you go through in a week? I think I probably go through 10 pairs per week.

Favorite Ballet? Swan Lake

Most Challenging Ballet? Swan Lake

Do you prefer playing Odette or Odile? I say this because I just rehearsed Odile. I think I like white swan better. No, that’s not true. I don’t know...I like them both!

One thing in your dance bag that you can’t go without? One thing? Two, I need two. Lipstick and perfume.

When did you start to love ballet? When I came to ABT. Before then I didn’t see enough beautiful dancing growing up. We didn’t have access to extensive videos or YouTube channels like today. When I finally made it to ABT, I got to see these incredible dancers that I saw on video in real life. I realized that a dance form could be this beautiful, and it really gave me the wings to fly!
How did you start dancing? I started dancing probably around 11 years old. I did this community project in Florida called The Chocolate Nutcracker, and that was my first introduction to dance. We did African dancing, hip-hop and jazz.

I went to a middle school for the performing arts and studied music. I thought that I wanted to become a pianist, but when I auditioned for the performing arts high school, I applied to all of the arts programs and was accepted into the dance program. The beginning of my journey began when I was a freshman in high school with two hands on the barre.

Where did you receive your ballet training? While studying at my high school, I participated in the Youth America Grand Prix, and I was invited to New York City to compete in the finals. This is where I was spotted by Franco DeVita and Raymond Lukens and received a scholarship to ABT’s Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School.

How did you know you wanted to become a ballet dancer? It really didn’t occur to me to have the dream of becoming a professional ballet dancer, even after I moved to New York and began studying. I was still a student adjusting to a new city and getting the best training in the world. Then, after being in this environment and seeing dancers like Ethan Stiefel and Jose Manuel Carreño (whom I grew up watching on DVDs), I started to realize that this is something that I could potentially do as my career.

What is a typical day for you like? I get up at 8am every morning, and I try to get to the city by 10am because class starts at 10:15. I have 15 minutes to warm up and stretch before a 90-minute technique class. Then we have a short break followed by rehearsals from noon to 7pm, with a few breaks throughout the day.

If you had to be in another profession, what would that be? At ABT, I have been getting a lot of character-acting roles and developing those characters has been really fun for me. I especially like characters that are not my own personality, like an Evil Sorcerer. So, I think if I wasn’t a dancer, I would probably want to explore acting.

Who are your artistic influences and why? I just started reading a biography of Mel Tomlinson who recently passed away. He was one of the first dancers of color to dance with the New York City Ballet after Arthur Mitchell. He danced so many prominent roles and came from the South like me. I danced a ballet called Agon that was created for Arthur Mitchell by George Balanchine. So definitely Mel Tomlinson and Arthur Mitchell... they are the pioneers who changed people’s perceptions and the landscape of classical ballet.

What is your favorite ballet? My favorite ballet to watch would probably be Giselle. It’s super dramatic, and there are so many things that strike your heart when you watch it. As a performer, it’s Swan Lake—mainly because I get to play the sorcerer von Rothbart. This was the first role where I felt like I lost Calvin and transformed into this other person. You basically invite yourself to the ball, break in and make everybody fall under your spell. There’s just something so powerful about that.

What is your favorite part of your job? My favorite part of my job is connecting with other dancers in the Company. It makes it so much easier to come to work, because it doesn’t feel like work. It feels like I’m a part of something special, and it’s exciting!

Any other advice you want to impart to aspiring young dancers? Trust yourself! Sometimes we have the wildest ideas, dreams or visions for ourselves and they may not necessarily align with how other people see us. It’s okay to trust yourself!
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 fairy tales, fantasies, dramas and biographies, 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 or collection of ballets. Since 1940, ABT has performed more than 475 different ballets, with over 180 of those works commissioned or first performed by the Company.

At any time, ABT’s Artistic Director Kevin McKenzie can pull any of these ballets down from the shelf and bring them to life for a new generation of dancers and audiences! In 1992, ABT adds Charlotte Brontë’s literary masterpiece Jane Eyre to its repertoire.

In 1992, Kevin McKenzie was appointed Artistic Director of American Ballet Theatre after a successful career as a Soloist and Principal Dancer with the Company. As Artistic Director, Mr. McKenzie is responsible for spearheading the artistic vision of the Company, including hiring the dancers and selecting ballets for the Company’s repertoire.

**What is your biggest challenge?**
One of the biggest challenges of directing the nation’s ballet company is to keep the standard of measure of what classical ballet actually means.

**ABT’s mission is to create, to present, to preserve and to extend the great repertoire of classical dancing.** How do you achieve that? Every ballet company really wants to create the next great classic, and so does ABT, but my job as a Director is to help an audience and help our artists and staff understand that you can’t make new, groundbreaking work without knowing the history of what it is that you are breaking through.

Is that why each Spring we perform so many ballets that were originally created over 100 years ago? The repertoire of Marius Petipa is, in fact, that standard of measure that I spoke of earlier. Petipa (who created his masterpieces in the 19th century), laid the foundation for every single ballet company that exists today. Now, not every single ballet company still performs his works, but it is the work that every company started from.

And why is that? It’s because they are now called classics.

**What does it mean to be a classic?**
A classic is informed by classical beauty, and really that starts with the Greeks and their society, art, sculptures...it was about symmetry, it was about harmony, about the joining of the elements. It was also about the power of belief and the hope to embody those lines of the art form into the actual positions of the body in ballet. That is where our line comes from. Petipa took that line and further refined it.

Are Petipa’s ballets still relevant today? We, as the nation’s ballet company, need to keep these works fresh and relevant! I don’t really think that what we’re doing today reflects exactly what was really done 100 years ago, but the heart and spirit of it and the line of it is the same. It also gives the dancers a power of language they can then bring into the studio to work with our genius Artist in Residence, Alexei Ratmansky, who wants them to use that language in a very different way. Simply put, I like to think that the reason we have classical ballets in ABT’s repertoire, is because we respect our parents!
Marius Petipa

The Father of Classical Ballet

Marius Ivanovich Petipa was a French ballet dancer and choreographer, one of the most influential ballet masters and choreographers in ballet history. He began his dance training at the age of seven with his father, a dancer and teacher. In 1869, Petipa was named Premier Ballet Master of the Imperial Theatre and is considered to have laid the foundation for the entire school of Russian ballet. During his career, he created more than 50 ballets, many of which are still performed today.

Can you identify the Petipa Ballets in ABT’s Repertoire?

Answers can be found in rear of booklet

1. This romantic ballet features restless spirits called Wiliis.

Stella Abrera
Photo by Gene Schiavone

2. Loosely based on a novel by Miguel de Cervantes, this ballet follows the love story of Kitri and Basilio. It also features a windmill.

Gillian Murphy and David Hallberg
Photo by Gene Schiavone

3. This ballet is a holiday tradition, featuring a young girl named Clara, toy soldiers and an army of mice.

Photo by Rosalie O’Connor

4. This comedic ballet features Commedia dell’Arte characters and uses pantomime to act out themes of love, jealousy and old age.

Isabella Boylston and James Whiteside
Photo by Marty Sohl

5. This ballet features lots of pirates! It’s name means “The Pirate” in French.

Photo by Hidemi Seto

6. Princess Aurora pricks her finger on a spindle, which causes a peaceful 100-year sleep for her and her realm.

Sarah Lane
Photo by Rosalie O’Connor

7. Prince Siegfried finally finds a beautiful princess to marry, but she is under the spell of an evil sorcerer who transforms her into a graceful bird.

Misty Copeland and James Whiteside
Photo by Gene Schiavone

8. Set in India, this ballet follows the story of Nikiya, a temple dancer, and a young warrior named Solor. The ballet is most famous for its “Kingdom of the Shades.”

Gillian Murphy and Cory Stearns
Photo by Rosalie O’Connor
My Favorite Petipa Ballet is...

Swan Lake

"It’s so grand, romantic and dramatic. You can read how much passion and love the dancers put through the steps that Petipa choreographed."

Photo by Luigi Bilancio

La Bayadère

"I love the depth of the characters. The ballet touches on all of the universal themes: love, betrayal, envy, power and nobility. The dances are classical, but also have some non-traditional classical movement that can be so much fun to perform. I love portraying Gamzatti...she is so powerful and menacing!"

Photo by Jade Young

Giselle

"It’s a beautiful story of forgiveness. I love it because it is a dramatic ballet. For Giselle, Act I is dramatic theatrically and through her movement, while Act II is dramatic lyrically and through her facial expressions."

Photo by Owen Bruce

The Sleeping Beauty

"I like how it’s a real fairy tale, it’s mystical and elegant. I love the range of characters from Carabosse to the Bluebird. This is also one of few ballets that has everyone on stage for most of the ballet, so you feel a real sense of community on stage!"

Photo by Hanna Bass

Don Quixote

"It’s super fun and fierce!"

Photo by Jade Young

Jose Sebastian

New York, NY
Corps de Ballet

La Bayadère

"I like the story and the period it is set in. Mostly, I love the music...from the beginning of Nikiya’s first solo until the end of the ballet...it’s all just so beautiful."

Photo by Renata Pavan

Sarah Lane

San Francisco, CA
Principal Dancer

Courtney Lavine

Fairfax, Virginia
Corps de Ballet

Swan Lake

"The storyline of Swan Lake is so dramatic...and I love the drama! The music from the second act is perhaps the most beautiful in ballet. I could listen to the pas de deux music over and over."

Photo by Rachel Neville

James Whiteside

Fairfield, CT
Principal Dancer

Stella Abrera

South Pasadena, CA
Principal Dancer

Tyler Maloney

Wyckoff, NJ
Corps de Ballet

Giselle

"Albrecht is the most involved role for a male principal dancer. I find the story and characters depth-wise to be the most interesting...there’s such a wide range of emotions and the virtuosic steps are so iconic to that ballet. And who doesn’t love a spooky ghost story!"

Photo by Rosalie O’Connor

Catherine Hurlin

New York, NY
Soloist
When ABT Artist in Residence Alexei Ratmansky creates a new ballet, it is documented on video so the ballet can be preserved and easily reproduced by future generations of dancers.

In 1890, however, there was no video, so Marius Petipa’s original production of The Sleeping Beauty could not be recorded in this way. Some other method had to be used to make sure his choreography would survive. There wasn’t yet an established code in which to write dance steps down on paper—many attempts to create such a system had failed.

But at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, where Petipa was choreographing all his most famous works, a former dancer named Vladimir Stepanov came up with a way to record the ballet steps and stage directions on paper. This dance notation became known as the “Stepanov system,” and Petipa’s ballets were preserved using this method.

Today these notations are in the archives of the Harvard University Library Theatre Collection. Ratmansky, along with his wife Tatiana, learned how to read and decode them and used them to create his 2015 restaging of Petipa’s The Sleeping Beauty.

What was the process of researching the Sergeyev Collection for The Sleeping Beauty? It was like an endless little door into the magical world of Imperial ballet, so rich, so different from today’s technique. It’s wild. We tracked documents and memoirs and things in different archives... so there was a lot of historical research. The notations were created during rehearsals in real time by notators documenting the dancers, movements and are filled with legendary names like Pavlova and Fokine. You feel goosebumps when reading it!

Were the notations easy to work with? The problem with the notations is that they are not complete. So we needed to fill out the gaps in Petipa’s style that are missing from the documents. It was very challenging and difficult. You really needed to be up on your Petipa research and his choreography. While there was a lot of research, the ballet shouldn’t be a museum piece. It needs to be live theater and fun.
Spot the Difference

Can You Find Five Items That Are Different in the Two Photos?

Whipped Cream
Photo: Rosalie O’Connor
Thank You
from Our
Dancers

On behalf of the dancers at American Ballet Theatre, I would like to thank you for joining us for today’s performance. I am often asked “What is it like to perform on the world’s greatest stages?” Although I was born in England, I simply cannot find the words in the English language to describe the emotions that run through me when I step onto the stage in front of an audience of thousands.

Over my 13-year career at ABT, I have played every part imaginable: Pirate, Bumblebee, Evil Sorcerer, Giant Rat and even the Nutcracker Prince! While I don’t have a favorite role, I can say that the ABTKids performances are always my favorite and most memorable shows. The audience reactions are always so genuine and appreciative. I remember I had the opportunity to perform a solo piece called Paganini at our ABTKids: Schools performance, and hearing over 3,000 children laughing and cheering my performance was a feeling I will never forget.

I met my wife, Leann Underwood, while we were both dancers in ABT’s Studio Company and we are so pleased to introduce our two-year-old son Benjamin into the ABTKids family this year. While he has always enjoyed visiting ABT’s 890 Broadway Studios to see dad rehearse or mom teach in ABT’s JKO School’s Children’s Division, Benjamin was able to take his first dance class with the brand-new ABTots program for two-year-olds.

Our family is proud to join your family as well as the thousands of ABTKids families across the world in bringing the joys of classical ballet to our children.

Thomas Forster,
ABT Soloist

This 10-class series is designed as a unique parent and child or caregiver and child engagement program. Spark your child’s interest in ballet and prepare them for a future of ballet enjoyment and participation. Join ABT dance educators to learn ballet fundamentals, explore musicality and foster your child’s creativity and imagination through the world’s most iconic ballets at ABT’s Studios at 890 Broadway!

Tuition: $650 total

Students must turn 2 by September 1, 2019

abt.org/abtots
Ballet Fun Facts

• Dancers put rosin on their pointe shoes and flats to prevent slipping. It is also used by cellists, bassists, violinists and baseball pitchers.

• Every time a dancer stands on pointe, three times her body weight is carried on the tip of her big toe.

• In France, a male dancer is called “danseur,” while the principal dancer in Italy is called “ballerino.” In English-speaking countries, men who dance classical ballet are usually referred to as (male) ballet dancers.

• Creating each tutu requires 60-90 hours of labor and more than 10 meters of tulle or net.

• New York Jets Defensive Tackle Steve McLendon (310 pounds) takes ballet classes to help safeguard his body from wear and tear. He says “It’s the hardest thing I do!”

Games Solutions

Page 5:
A. USA
B. China
C. France
D. Japan
E. Italy
F. South Korea
G. Australia
H. Spain
I. Russia
J. England
K. Canada
L. Argentina
M. Brazil
N. Ukraine
O. Denmark

Pages 10-11:
1. Don Quixote
2. Giselle
3. The Nutcracker
4. Harlequinade
5. Le Corsaire
6. The Sleeping Beauty
7. Swan Lake
8. La Bayadère

Ballet Word Search

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ABTKIDS PETIPA SOLOIST BALLET THEATRE COMPANY
ABT Family Membership

Family memberships which start at a donation level of $360 ($30/month) include passes to many behind-the-scenes events, individualized membership cards for each member of your family and early notification of ABTKids and other special family events. Members at the Affiliate level enjoy passes to watch classes, rehearsals and more.

Call Alexandria Reffie at 212-477-3030 ext. 3218 or online at abt.org/family