

PNB PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET

PETER BOAL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

KENT STOWELL'S *Cinderella*



Study Guide for Teachers and Students

Student Matinee | February 5, 2026 | 11:00am

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

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The **February 5, 2026** student matinee of *Cinderella* will feature excerpts from the ballet, open set changes, and a PNB dancer emcee. **The performance will begin at 11:00am and will last approximately one hour with no intermission.**

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Attending a Ballet Performance at McCaw Hall



- You may arrive at McCaw Hall on a bus 🚍, in a car 🚗, or by walking 🚶!
- McCaw Hall is at the Seattle Center, near the Space Needle.



© Alan Alabastro



- When you enter McCaw Hall, you will be in the lobby.
- Ushers will help your group find your seats inside the theater.
- McCaw Hall is a big theater- nearly 3,000 seats! Everyone's view of the stage is a little bit different, but there isn't a bad seat in the house!

The sculpture hanging in the lobby is called "An Equal and Opposite Reaction" by Sarah Sze. She explains that the piece is "filled with the fantasy, imagination, and excitement of attending a performance." Look up at the sculpture as you enter McCaw Hall!

👁️ What do you see?
❤️ How does it make you feel?



These images come from Jessica Lang's *Let Me Mingle Tears with Thee* from PNB's 2022-23 season (L), and Kent Stowell's *Swan Lake* from PNB's 2023-24 season (R).

- eye icon What differences do you notice in the dancers' costumes between the two images?
- brain icon How might their costumes help tell a story?

- The lights in the audience will **dim** before the performance begins. The theater is **dark** during the ballet.
- This performance will have an emcee who will speak from the stage to share about *Cinderella* and PNB. However, there will not be any talking during the dancing. The story is told through movement, facial expressions, music, costumes, and sets.
- In order for you and those around you to focus on enjoying the show, audience members do their best to sit with a calm body and quiet voice in their seats. However, you can clap when you enjoy something or laugh if something is funny to let the dancers know you appreciate their hard work.
- At the end of the performance, the dancers and musicians take a bow. This is a curtain call. You are welcome to clap and cheer to share your appreciation!

Going to the theater for ballet is similar to going to a movie:

- Photography and video recording are not allowed. **🚫**
- Cell phones and electronics should be turned off when you enter the theater. **🚫**
Devices to support access needs are welcome to stay on. **✓**
- There is no intermission. Use the restroom prior to the performance.

However, unlike the movies:

- Ballet is performed live. There are no second takes and dancers can react to the audience!
- Some people make their visit to the ballet a dress-up occasion; others dress casually. Wear something you are comfortable in so you can enjoy the performance.

Most Importantly: ENJOY AND HAVE FUN!

About Pacific Northwest Ballet



Founded in 1972 and led since 2005 by Artistic Director Peter Boal, Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB) is one of the largest ballet companies in the United States. PNB is also home to one of the United States' top ballet training schools—Pacific Northwest Ballet School.



PNB dancers are full-time professional artists. The Company has 48 dancers who dance over 100 performances each year at McCaw Hall in Seattle and on tour. The PNB Orchestra, consisting of over 60 professional musicians, accompanies many of these performances. PNB dances different types of ballets, including story ballets like *Cinderella*, as well as dances that are shorter, share ideas or feelings instead of telling stories, or are performed barefoot, in socks, or even in sneakers.



Founded in 1974, Pacific Northwest Ballet School, under the direction of Francia Russell since 1977 and now under Mr. Boal's direction, is nationally recognized as setting the standard for rigorous ballet training and offers a complete professional curriculum to nearly 1,000 students at two locations--Seattle and Bellevue.



PNB's Community Education Programs provide dance education in the greater Seattle area and reach approximately 15,000 adults and children each year through student matinees, in-school residencies, professional development for teachers, and other community-based programs.

© Joseph Lambert

A Dancer's Day

The dancers at Pacific Northwest Ballet are professionals. This means dancing is their full-time job. Their work is to dance, rehearse, and perform ballets. Regular classes and rehearsals take place at PNB's Phelps Center, right next door to McCaw Hall. No day is ever the same, as the dancers frequently work with new choreographers and coaches, and learn new roles. However, their days often follow a similar schedule.

Dancers make a serious commitment at a young age. Most dancers train for at least 10 years before becoming a professional. Like many professional sports, dance careers typically last less than 20 years due to the intense physicality required of a dancer's body.

8:30 - 9:15am: Arrive

Dancers arrive early in order to change into ballet clothes, stretch, and prepare for a full day of dancing.



9:15 - 10:45am: Class

The Company starts each day with a ballet class. Class starts with warm-up exercises at the barre, followed by longer combinations that move around the room.



- 10:45-11:05am: Break
- 11:05am - 2:00pm: Rehearsal
- 2:00 - 3:05pm: Break
- 3:05 - 6:00pm: Rehearsal

During rehearsal, dancers learn what will be performed on stage. Rehearsals are usually for smaller groups to practice certain sections or roles within a ballet.



7:30pm: Performance

On performance days, dancers start their day later. Once they arrive at the theater, they prepare by putting on costumes and makeup, and warming up.

About Cinderella

PNB's production of *Cinderella*, conceived and choreographed in 1994 by Founding Artistic Director Kent Stowell, is inspired by the classic Charles Perrault fairy tale. While some ballet versions of the story focus more on comedic and tragic aspects of the story, PNB's version is more sweet and tender—focusing on Cinderella's love lost (her mother) and love found (the Prince).

Important in this ballet is the contrast between Cinderella's Real World and her Dream World. A young woman whose beloved mother has died and whose father has remarried, she revisits the happiness of the past even as she tries to cope bravely with the unhappiness of her new home life. The fairy godmother and the mother in her memories are performed by the same dancer, representing that the love Cinderella experienced as a child remains with her into adulthood. As she meets the Prince at the ball in Act II and as he searches for and finds her in Act III, Cinderella begins to feel healing and wholeness made possible through the experience of love.

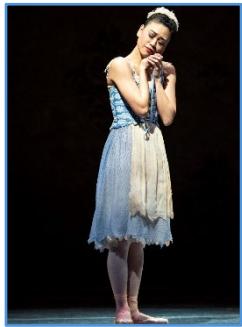
Cinderella is one of the largest ballets in the PNB repertory. The ballet has roles for the entire Company—48 professional dancers—as well as 64 students from Pacific Northwest Ballet School. Over 120 costumes and 30 wigs are used in each performance, and elaborately decorated sets and backdrops drape the stage. The tutus alone required over a mile of netting; the horse-drawn carriage is 23 feet long. The Prokofiev score was slightly altered in this original creation of *Cinderella*. Excerpts from other Prokofiev scores were added, and additional sections of the score were moved. All of these aspects combined—choreography, music, costumes, and set—give the audience a dazzling version of one of the world's most celebrated stories.



Founding Artistic Director, Kent Stowell, rehearsing *Cinderella* with PNB School students (L), and company dancers Dylan Wald and Elizabeth Murphy (R).

The Story of Cinderella

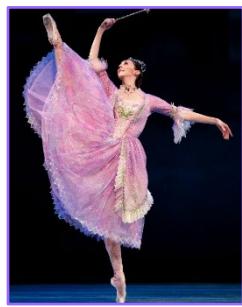
ACT I



At the beginning of the ballet, Cinderella is daydreaming about having a happier life. Her dream is interrupted by her stepmother and her two stepsisters who are getting ready for the Prince's ball. Cinderella's stepmother and her stepsisters are mean to Cinderella and treat her poorly. Even though Cinderella's father loves her, he cannot stand up to his wife and stepdaughters to ask them to stop treating her this way. Still, Cinderella remains cheerful and helpful to everyone.



Suddenly, an old woman in need appears, and Cinderella befriends her. Something about this mysterious figure reminds Cinderella of her mother, who died when Cinderella was young. As she looks at her mother's picture in a locket she wears around her neck, Cinderella remembers her happy childhood and loving parents.



Dress-makers, wig-makers, and hat-makers arrive to dress the family for the ball. A dance teacher tries to teach the clumsy stepsisters a few steps. Finally, they are ready and everyone leaves for the ball except Cinderella. Wishing that she could go to the ball too, Cinderella imagines that she is there and dancing with the Prince.

ACT II

Act Two takes place at the Prince's palace where the ball has started and the guests are dancing. The Prince enters and greets his guests, including Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters who want to get his attention. Soon after, Cinderella arrives in her golden coach and everyone notices her, especially the Prince. Cinderella and the Prince dance for each other as they move between the dancing couples.

The Master of Ceremonies calls for the entertainment, and a Theater of Marvels presents a drama for the Prince and his guests. After the drama, everyone except the Prince and Cinderella go outside to enjoy the evening sky. Alone, they dance together. The other guests return for the last dance of the evening. Cinderella forgets the Fairy Godmother's warning until she hears the clock striking midnight! She runs away in a panic and leaves everyone, especially the Prince, wondering who she is. The only clue to her identity is one of the glass slippers that she accidentally left behind when she fled from the palace.



The Story of Cinderella

ACT III



Back at her home, Cinderella remembers the night before. Her sisters are upset that the Prince didn't notice them. Meanwhile, the Prince searches far and wide for the woman whose foot perfectly fits the glass slipper. Eventually the Prince arrives at Cinderella's home where her stepsisters and stepmother are determined to fit into the slipper. To their great surprise, Cinderella is the one whose foot fits perfectly.

Cinderella and the Prince dance together and are transported to the Fairy Godmother's world, where dreams really do come true.

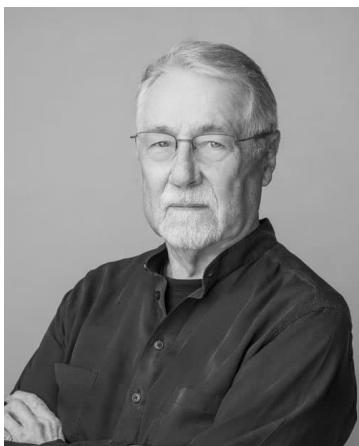
~THE END~



*Sections noted in **red** will be performed at the student matinee. Programming subject to change.

About the Artists

Choreographer: Kent Stowell



Kent Stowell was Artistic Director and principal choreographer of Pacific Northwest Ballet from 1977 until his retirement in June 2005. Mr. Stowell began his dance training with Willam Christensen at the University of Utah, later joining San Francisco Ballet. He joined New York City Ballet in 1962 and was promoted to soloist in 1963. In 1970, he joined the Munich Opera Ballet as a leading dancer and choreographer. In 1973, Mr. Stowell was appointed ballet master and choreographer of Frankfurt Ballet, and he was named, with Francia Russell, Co-Artistic Director of the company in 1975. In 1977, Mr. Stowell and Ms. Russell were appointed Artistic Directors of Pacific Northwest Ballet. During his tenure, Mr. Stowell choreographed thirty-six ballets for the Company. His many contributions to the repertory include *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *Stowell & Sendak Nutcracker*, *Carmina Burana*, *Firebird*, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, *Hail to the Conquering Hero*, *Carmen*, and *Silver Lining*. In 2001, the University of Utah honored Mr. Stowell with its Lifetime Achievement Award. Mr. Stowell's other awards and honors include the Washington State Governor's Arts Award, the Dance Magazine Award, an Honorary Doctor of Arts from the University of Washington, and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Seattle University. In 2004, Stowell received the ArtsFund Lifetime Achievement in the Arts Award, the Seattle Mayor's Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement and the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award and was recognized by the King County Council for his achievements in the arts.

Composer: Sergei Prokofiev



Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) was a leading Soviet composer and brilliant pianist. He left Russia in 1918 and lived in Germany and Paris for the next sixteen years, with frequent trips to America for concert appearances. In 1934 he settled in Moscow and composed busily until his death. Among his best known works are the ballet scores *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella* and *Prodigal Son*; the opera *The Love for Three Oranges*; the children's classic, *Peter and the Wolf*; the film score and cantata for *Alexander Nevsky*; and the *Classical Symphony*. His compositions are still played regularly world-wide. With the exception of Richard Strauss, his orchestral music is played in the United States more than any other composer of the last one hundred years. His score for *Cinderella* was created in 1943.

Scenic Design: Tony Straiges



A prolific scenic and costume designer for musical theater, **Tony Straiges** has also designed for Pacific Northwest Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre. He is best known for his sets for Broadway hits *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984) and *Into the Woods* (1987). Models of his designs are included in museums around the United States.

About the Artists

Costume Design: Martin Pakledinaz



Tony-award winner **Martin Pakledinaz** (1953-2012) designed costumes for Broadway, ballet, opera, theater, and film. In addition to designing scenery and costumes for PNB's acclaimed production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mr. Pakledinaz designed costumes for PNB's productions of George Balanchine's *Ballet Imperial* and Kent Stowell's *Cinderella* and *Zirkus Weill*.

Staging: Francia Russell and Kaori Nakamura



Francia Russell was Artistic Director of Pacific Northwest Ballet and Director of Pacific Northwest Ballet School from 1977 until her retirement in June 2005. Ms. Russell oversaw the development of an extensive community education program in PNB School and founded the DanceChance program in 1994. In her early career, Ms. Russell joined New York City Ballet in 1956 and was promoted to soloist in 1959. In 1964, Balanchine appointed her ballet mistress of NYCB. Ms. Russell was one of the first ballet masters chosen by Balanchine to stage his works. To date, she has staged 246 productions of Balanchine ballets worldwide. From 1975 to 1977, Ms. Russell and Kent Stowell were Co-Artistic Directors of Frankfurt Ballet. Ms. Russell's numerous awards include the Washington State Governor's Arts Award, the Dance Magazine Award, an

Honorary Doctor of Arts from the University of Washington, an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Seattle University, and the Brava Award from Women's University Club of Seattle. In 2004, Ms. Russell received the Arts Fund Lifetime Achievement in the Arts Award, the Seattle Mayor's Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement, and the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award and was recognized by the King County Council for her achievements in the arts.



Kaori Nakamura performed an impressive repertory of full-length and mixed repertory works in her career as a principal dancer at Pacific Northwest Ballet. Her portrayals of classic ballet heroines (Cinderella, Aurora, Clara, Juliet, among others) were appreciated by audiences at home in Seattle and on tour. Originally from Gumma, Japan, she trained at the Reiko Yamamoto Ballet Company and the School of American Ballet. In 1986, she won first prize at the Prix de Lausanne competition, and in 1988, she won a bronze medal at the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria. Ms. Nakamura joined Royal Winnipeg Ballet in 1990, where she was made a soloist, and joined PNB as a soloist in 1997 and was promoted to principal in 1998. Ms. Nakamura joined the faculty of PNB School in 2014 upon her retirement.

As you can see, PNB has a large behind-the-scenes team who have contributed to the development of this production. It's important to recognize the hundreds of people it takes to make a show happen—there are so many more people involved than just the dancers you see onstage!

💡 If PNB asked you to be a part of creating their next ballet, which role would you like to try? Do you like to listen to and make music, like a **composer or musician**? Do you like to create and teach movement, like a **choreographer or stager**? Do you like to make visual images, like a **scenic designer**? Do you like to design outfits, like a **costume designer**?



The PNB Orchestra in action at McCaw Hall.



Scenic design for *The Sleeping Beauty*
by artist Preston Singletary



Choreographer Eva Stone creating a work on PNB dancers.



Costume sketches for George Balanchine's Jewels.

Discussion Topics

Movement:



Discussion:

Dance is a way to communicate stories, ideas, and feelings without using words. How can our bodies show feelings and ideas without talking or sounds?

Pre-Performance Questions:

- What kinds of movements might match emotions such as love, anger, happiness, or sadness?
- Are these movements fast or slow? Sharp or smooth?
- How would you show a celebration? Something scary?

Post-Performance Questions:

- How did the choreography communicate the story and the characters' feelings?
- Give an example of something the dancers told the audience through movement. Show it with your own body!
- Are there any parts of the ballet that you have questions about?

Costumes:



Discussion:

Costumes are important because they help identify the characters in the story. The audience can use costumes as clues to identify and learn about the characters. Some dancers will perform multiple parts and change costumes several times. There are over 120 costumes used in *Cinderella*—including dresses, tutus, jackets, boots, wings, and headpieces. Each piece helps create a character and adds to the fairy tale setting.

Pre-Performance Questions:

- What kinds of costumes do you expect to see in *Cinderella*?
- What kinds of materials do you think are used to make the costumes?

Post-Performance Questions:

- How long do you think it would take to make so many costumes? (over one year)
- Think about the different costumes in *Cinderella*. How did they help tell the story?
- Which costumes looked easiest to dance in? The most difficult? Why?



Go Deeper!

Learn more about costumes at PNB in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfENmiltIAM&t=1s>

Discussion Topics

Music:

Discussion:

Since ballet does not involve talking while dancing, music is a very important part of the performance. In addition to music helping to tell the story and set the mood, dancers use it to remember their choreography and stay together with the musical beat while performing. The music for this student matinee will be played live by a piano soloist. You may wish to play short musical excerpts of Prokofiev's music from *Cinderella*.

Pre-Performance Questions:

- What kind of music tells you when something scary or exciting is happening in a movie?
- What kind of music do you expect to hear during *Cinderella*?
- How do you think music and dancing work together?

Post-Performance Questions:

- How was the music different in each scene? The same?
- How did the music help to tell the story?
- If you were creating a ballet, would you prefer to pick a piece of music that was already composed, or one that was created specifically for your dance?

Scenery and Lighting:

Discussion:

The set for *Cinderella* is elaborate and ornate, fitting with the fairy tale setting. Comprised of intricately painted backdrops, large set pieces (including a 23-foot carriage), dramatic lighting, and props, the design took over one year to create.

Pre-Performance Questions:

- What kinds of things would you expect to see onstage to show a ballroom? A home?
- What kinds of considerations might scenic designers need to make for ballet?
- How could lighting change the mood on stage without changing anything else?

Post-Performance Questions:

- What did the scenery look like? How many different settings can you remember from the story?
- How and why were the sets and lights different for each scene?
- Did the set design coordinate with the costume design?

Cinderella Stories Throughout History

The story of *Cinderella* is timeless. Known by many names around the world, this folk tale emphasizes the innately human desire to overcome unjust oppression and find happily ever after. The roots of the story, more ancient than we may ever know, can be traced back for many centuries. Here are just a few historic versions of this classic tale.

In the Greek story of **Rhodopis**, which translates to “Rosy-Cheeks,” a Greek girl marries the king of Egypt after an eagle steals one of her sandals and drops it in his lap. This version, which dates back to the first century CE, is one of the earliest recorded *Cinderella* variants.

The Chinese story of **Ye Xian** can be traced to the ninth century (860). In it, Ye Xian’s deceased mother appears to her as a magic fish and helps her get ready for a local festival. As she flees from the festival, she loses one of her golden shoes, which a king subsequently finds and uses to search for her. Similar stories can be found throughout Asia.

In **Moon Brow**, an Iranian version of the *Cinderella* story, Shahrbanou lives with her evil stepmother and stepsister, and marries a prince after he falls in love with her at a wedding.

The Italian tale **Cenerentola** dates back to 1634. This version includes a wicked stepmother, magical transformations, a missing slipper, and a hunt by a monarch for the owner of the slipper.

One of the most popular European versions of the story comes from France. **Cendrillon ou la petite pantoufle de verre**, written by Charles Perrault in 1697, saw the introduction of the pumpkin, the fairy-godmother, and “glass” slippers.

The Brothers Grimm adapted a characteristically intense version of the story, **Aschenputtel**, in 1812. This tale includes a wishing tree, instead of a fairy godmother, and Cinderella’s stepsisters suffer a terrible punishment for their cruelty.



L to R: 1) “Rhodopis and the Eagle,” *Stories from the Earthly Paradise*, 1915; 2)Portrait of Du Qiuniang (杜秋娘) by Zhou Lang (周郎) from a silk scroll in Palace Museum, Beijing; 3) Rosina Pico in the character of *Cenerentola*, 1845; 4) An illustration from *Tales of Mother Goose* by Charles Perrault; 5) “Aschenputtel” by Darstellung von Alexander Zick

Today, there are over 500 variants of *Cinderella* in Europe alone. Hundreds of films feature direct adaptations or have plots loosely based on the story. *Cinderella* is so ubiquitous in the English-speaking world that the phrase “*Cinderella Story*” has come to describe any rags-to-riches tale. For a ballet *Cinderella* story, check out [A Child's Introduction to Ballet: The Stories, Music, and Magic of Classical Dance](#) by Laura Lee.

Additional Resources

MUSIC

Listen to sections of Prokofiev's *Cinderella*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcLzTufSTRA> (Godmother telling Cinderella to return at midnight)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOV7yWEv54o> (Cinderella's Waltz- At the Prince's ball)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLImILFwRk8> (The clock strikes midnight)

ABOUT PNB's CINDERELLA

Photos, program notes, and other behind-the-scenes information are available on PNB's website.

<https://www.pnb.org/season/cinderella/>

SOCIAL NARRATIVE

Information about what to expect for attending a PNB Student Matinee at McCaw Hall.

<https://www.pnb.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/PNB-Student-Matinee-Social-Narrative-FY26.pdf>

GET TO KNOW PNB- photos, videos, behind-the-scenes, and more!

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/pacificnwballet/featured>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PNBallet>

Blog: <https://www.pnb.org/blog/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/pacificnorthwestballet/>



This study guide was created by Pacific Northwest Ballet's Community Education staff for use by teachers and students attending the student matinee of *Cinderella*. Reproduction of this guide in its entirety is allowed and encouraged.

For questions, contact education@PNB.org or 206.441.2432.