



Supplemental Guide

Created By:



**EDUCATION
& COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

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How long will it be?

Act 1 - 45 min
Intermission - 20 min

Act 2 - 45 min

Total Run Time
1 hour 50 min*

*Times are approximate

Synopsis of the Ballet

Act I Prologue: The Court of Duke Theseus

Egeus, Hermia's father, demands that she marry Demetrius against her wishes; she wants to marry her sweetheart Lysander. The Duke of Athens, Theseus, agrees with Egeus. Demetrius wants to marry Hermia, but is pursued by Helena. To escape, Lysander and Hermia flee into the woods, but Helena informs Demetrius of their flight. Demetrius follows in hot pursuit, with Helena close behind him.

Act I, Scene 1: The Woods

The lovers wander deep into the woods, watched by Puck, servant to Oberon, King of the Fairies, as sprites and fairies make their way to the court of their King and his Queen, Titania.

Act I, Scene 2: A Forest Clearing

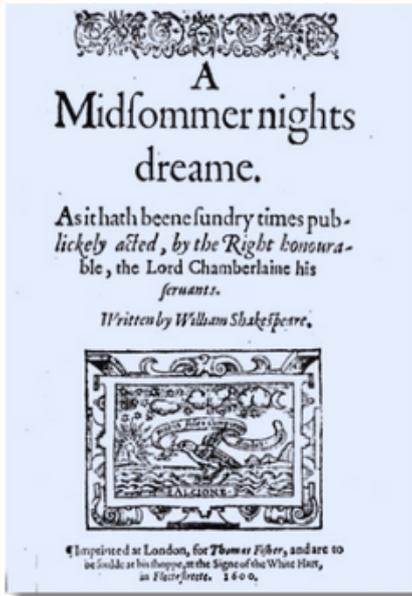
Titania and Oberon quarrel when she refuses to give him a changeling child. Angry, Oberon sends Puck to fetch a magical flower that causes love at first sight. He plans to use it on Titania and also help the troubled mortals in the forest. Mistaking Lysander for Demetrius, Puck enchants him, leading to confusion as Lysander falls for Helena. Meanwhile, Oberon casts the spell on the sleeping Titania. Elsewhere, village rustics wander into the woods, and Puck transforms Bottom into a donkey. Titania awakes, sees the donkey-headed Bottom, and instantly falls in love, completing Oberon's trick.

Act II, Scene 1 A Forest Clearing

Hermia, searching for Lysander, confronts Demetrius but storms off when he refuses to help. Demetrius falls asleep, and Oberon enchants him with the love spell meant for Lysander. Lysander enters, still enchanted, pursuing Helena, who is confused and upset when Demetrius also wakes and falls in love with her. Chaos ensues as both men compete for Helena. Hermia arrives, and Oberon, angry at Puck's blunder, uses magic to restore order, putting the lovers to sleep with their true partners. Meanwhile, Titania awakens from her enchantment, sees the beast she loved, and relinquishes the changeling boy to Oberon. At dawn, the fairies vanish. Theseus and Hippolyta find the sleeping lovers and, seeing all resolved, bring them back to Athens for a joyful wedding.

Act III The Court of Theseus that Evening The bridesmaids and court children prepare Hermia and Helena for their wedding. The lovers are married by Duke Theseus, and the court dances in celebration. That night, deep in the magical wood, Titania reconciles with Oberon. She presents him with the changeling child, and bathed in moonlight they dance, at peace with each other once more.

Behind the Ballet: William Shakespeare



Christopher Wheeldon's ballet is based on the famous play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by William Shakespeare. Full of mischief, mistaken identities, and magical creatures, the story is a perfect match for ballet, where movement and music help bring the enchanted world to life.

Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the mid-1590s, likely around the same time he was working on *Romeo and Juliet*. Some scholars believe it may have been written to celebrate an aristocratic wedding—just like the play's own grand wedding of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta. Unlike many of Shakespeare's other works, the plot seems to be entirely his own invention. The play is full of references to mythology, fairies, and dreams, and explores themes like the challenges of love, the power of magic, and the mystery of dreams.

About William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

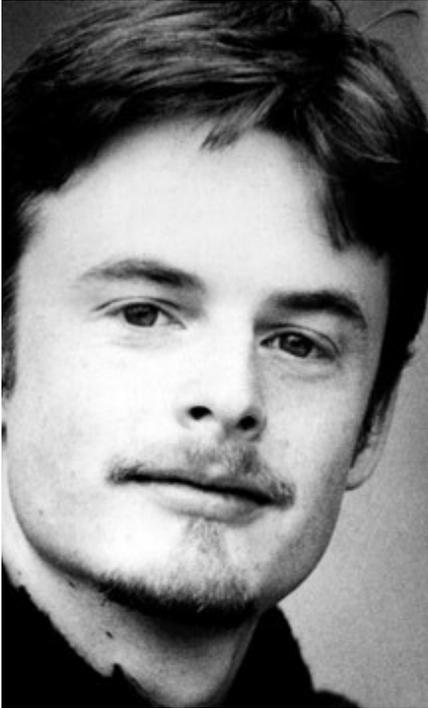
Widely regarded as one of the most influential writers of all time, William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Although his exact birthdate is unknown, he was baptized on April 26, 1564. He came from a middle-class family and attended grammar school but did not go to college. At just 18, he married Anne Hathaway, and they had three children.



In his mid-twenties, Shakespeare moved to London to pursue a career in theater. He began writing plays for his own acting troupe, Lord Chamberlain's Men, which later became The King's Men. He wrote 38 plays and over 150 poems, including famous works like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*. Despite some criticism in his time for lacking a formal education, his work was celebrated by both Queen Elizabeth I and King James I.

Shakespeare retired to Stratford and died in 1616 at the age of 52. After his death, his friends collected his plays in a book known as the First Folio, helping preserve his work for generations to come.

Choreographer



(Image © Holger Badekow)

Christopher Wheeldon

Christopher Wheeldon is being called a wunderkind in the ballet world for his choreography, recently making his triumphant operatic debut, drawing critical acclaim for his project with the Bolshoi Ballet, and creating his dynamic new company, Morphoses.

The New York Times praised his piece for the Metropolitan Opera as “dazzlingly glamorous and sophisticated as it is pretty.” Resident choreographer for New York City Ballet, Mr. Wheeldon was nominated for an Olivier Award for DGV (Danse à Grande Vitesse) with the Royal Ballet. His artistic brilliance has taken him around the world, with performances in Moscow, San Francisco, Oslo, Boston, Spain, Seattle, Miami, and beyond.

In August 2007, Mr. Wheeldon premiered Morphoses at the Vail International Dance Festival. His bold new company, he said, will restore ballet as a force of innovation and blend elements of traditional and classical ballet.

Born in Yeovil, Somerset, England, Christopher began his ballet training at the East Coker Ballet School and joined the Royal Ballet School at age 11. In 1991, he joined The Royal Ballet and won the Prix de Lausanne. In 1993, he moved to New York City Ballet and became a soloist in 1998. Mr. Wheeldon retired from dancing in 2000 to focus on choreography. As NYCB’s first artist in residence, he created Polyphonia and Variations Sérieuses in 2001, and was named resident choreographer that same year.

His ballets include Morphoses, Carousel (A Dance), Carnival of the Animals (with verse by John Lithgow), Liturgy, Slavonic Dances, and Mercurial Manoeuvres. He has created works for major companies including Boston Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, The Royal Ballet, and the School of American Ballet. He received the Mae L. Wien Award for choreography and the Martin E. Segal Award from Lincoln Center.

Mr. Wheeldon also choreographed for the film Center Stage and made his Broadway debut in 2002 with Sweet Smell of Success. Other notable works include Continuum for San Francisco Ballet and Tryst for The Royal Ballet.

What is a Choreographer?

A person who creates the sequence and movements for a dance performance.



Composer

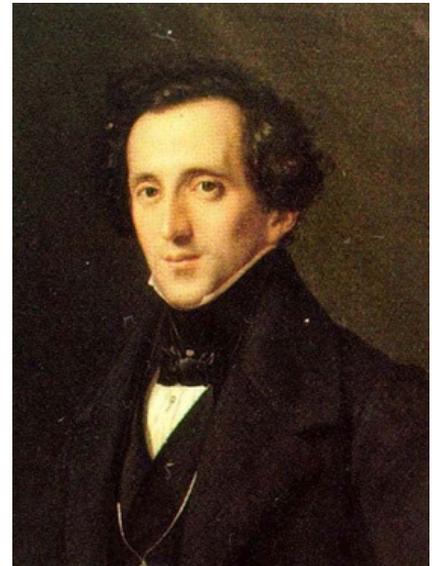
Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847) was a German Romantic composer. He wrote and conducted many symphonies (instrumental pieces of three or more movements for an orchestra), concerti (compositions for one or more instruments with orchestral accompaniment), and piano and chamber pieces (music for fewer than 10 instruments).

Born in Hamburg, Germany to Jewish parents, Mendelssohn's family converted to Lutheranism and moved to Berlin in order to access the best in education. Felix and his siblings began piano lessons early on. Felix was regarded as a prodigy making his first public performance at the age of nine and publishing works by the age of thirteen, and his sister, Fanny, went on to become a pianist and composer herself. Because it was considered inappropriate at the time for a woman to have a career in music, select works of Fanny's were later published under her brother's name.

Mendelssohn wrote twelve string symphonies between the ages of 12 and 14, and his first full symphony at fifteen. A year later, he composed an octet for strings and the overture to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. These are among his highest-regarded early works. Sixteen years later, Mendelssohn created incidental music for the play, including his famous Wedding March, which continues to be used in many countries as the recessional, or closing music, for marriage ceremonies.

Mendelssohn's own marriage was happy, and he and his wife, Cécile, had five children. In 1835, he was appointed conductor of the orchestra in Leipzig, Germany, and he later founded and served as the first Director of a Conservatory, or College of Music there. The Leipzig Conservatory is still in existence, and now also includes Drama in its curriculum.

Suffering from ill-health later in life, and very sad over the death of his sister Fanny in May of 1847, Mendelssohn died just six months later after a series of strokes. After his death, the Nazi regime banned his work because of his Jewish origins, and Anti-Semitic critics denigrated his genius. Statues erected in his memory were destroyed in Germany. In England, however, Mendelssohn's work remained popular. In 1858, Princess Victoria began the tradition of including his Wedding March in her wedding to the Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia.



Felix Mendelssohn

What is a Composer?

A person who writes music, especially as a job.





Shakespearean Insults

Take that, thou puking, onion-eyed, bum-bailey! Shakespeare was not only a master of words, but also a master of the insult!

All of the words below are contained in Shakespeare's plays. The next time you want to really shock your enemies, combine terms from columns 1, 2, and 3, and preface them with the word thou. Better yet, research to find out what some of these epithets really mean!

1

**artless
bawdy
beslubbering
bootless
churlish
cockered
clouted
craven
currish
dankish
dissembling
droning
errant
fawning
fobbing
froward
frothy
gleeking
goatish
gorbellied
impertinent
infectious
jarring
loggerhead
lumpish
mammering
mangled
paunchy
pribbling
puking
puny
qualling
rank
reeky
roguish
ruttish
saucy
spleeny
spongy
surly
tottering
unmuzzled
vain
venomed
villainous
warped
wayward
weedy
yeasty**

2

**base-court bat-
fowling beef-witted
beetle-headed
boil-brained
clapper-clawed
clay-brained
common-kissing
crook-pated
dismal-dreaming
dizzy-eyed
doghearted
earth-vexing
elf-skinned
kat-kidneyed
fen-sucked
flap-mouthed
fly-bitten
folly-fallen
fool-born
full-gorged
guts-gripping
half-faced
hasty-witted
hedge-born
hell-hated
idle-headed
ill-bred
ill-nurtured
knotty-pated
milk-livered
motley-minded
onion-eyed
plume-plucked
pottle-deep
pox-marked
reeling-ripe
rough-hewn
rude-growing
rump-fed
shard-borne
sheep-biting
spur-galled
swag-bellied
tardy-gaited
tickle-brained
toad-spotted
urchin-snouted
weather-bitten**

3

**apple-john
baggage
barnacle
bladder
boar-pig
bugbear
bum-bailey
canker-blossom
clack-dish
clotpole
coxcomb
codpiece
death-token
dewberry
flap-dragon
flax-wench
flirt-gill
foot-licker
fustilarian
giglet gudgeon
haggard
harpy
hedge-pig
horn-beast
hugger-mugger
lewdster
lout
maggot-pie
malt-worm
mammet
measle
minnow miscreant
moldwarp
mumble-news
nut-hook
pigeon-egg
pignut
puttock
pumpion
ratsbane scut
skainsmate
strumpet
varlet
vassal
whey-face
wagtail**

Activities

LISTEN AND LEARN: Listen to music. Close your eyes, if you need to. Now, answer the following questions: If this piece of music were a shape, what shape would it be? A color? An animal? A season? A place? Why? Is it fast, slow, or varied? What is the mood of the piece, or what emotions do you feel when you listen to it? Think of three more adjectives that you believe describe the music. Compare your answers with other students' answers. Are any of your answers the same? Why do you think you came up with similar or different answers?

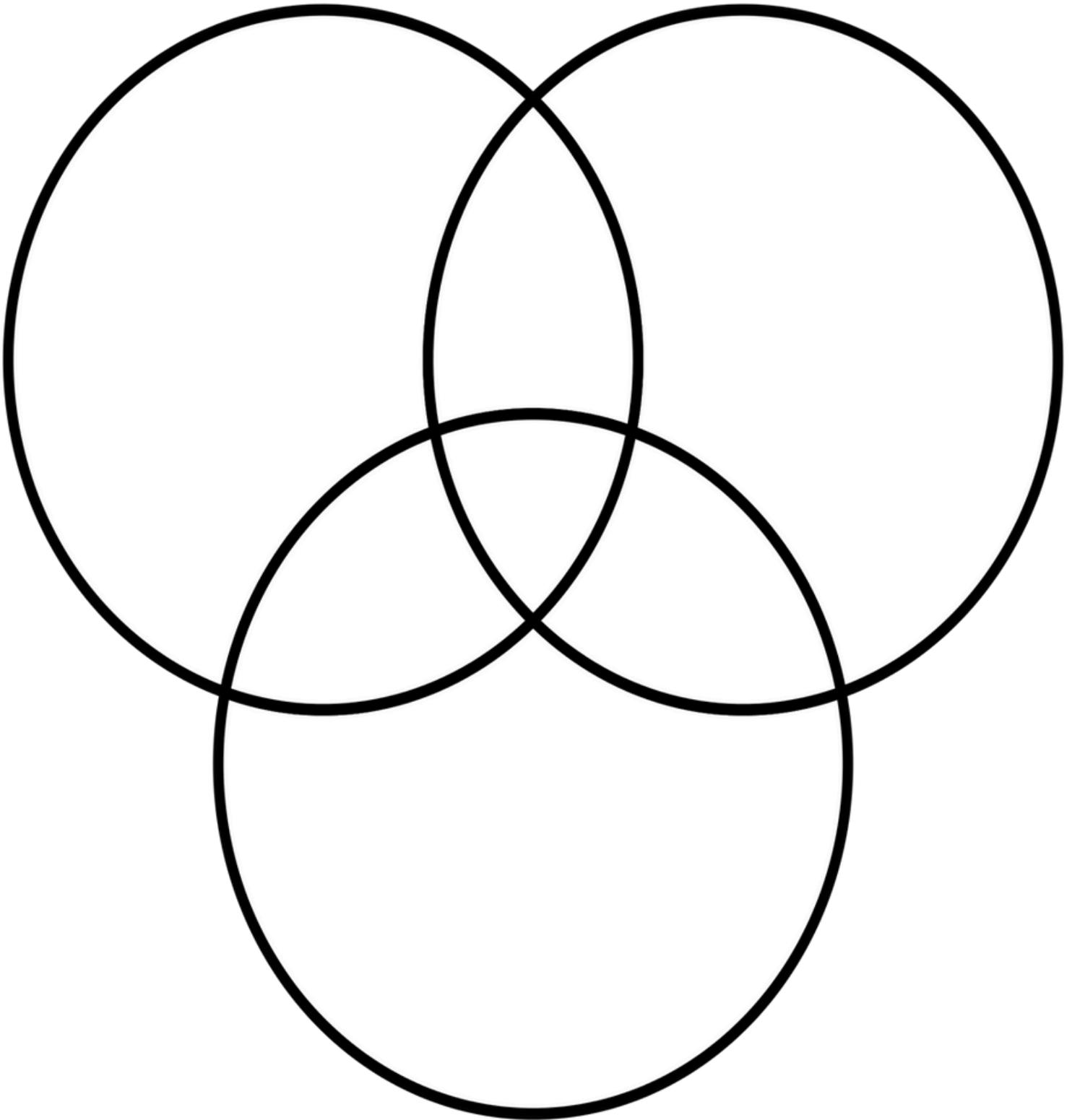
MOVE TO THE MUSIC: Now, divide into groups and create movements that go with your team's answers from the listening activity. Try to incorporate some of everyone's answers. How do the animals move? How would you move in winter that's different from how you move in summer? How would blue move, as opposed to orange? Some movements should be high; others should be low. Some should be fast; others could be slow. Be mindful of using all of your body, not just your feet. Link your movements together into a dance and perform it for the class.

POETRY IN MOTION: After seeing the production, write a poem inspired by the performance. Now, try reversing that process! Get into groups, find a poem that you really like, and create a dance to go along with it! Identify powerful words and themes within the poem, and associate movements with them. Link the movements together to create a dance to perform for your peers. If you were to make an entire production out of your dance, what kind of sets and costumes would be fitting? Draw or make a collage of pictures representing how you would set the scene.

STORYTELLING THROUGH DANCE: Dance is an art form that tells a story through movement. Using a story or text your class is studying, you can recreate scenes from the story using dance. Put the students in small groups and assign different scenes from the story. Instruct the students to reinterpret the story using only movement. Invite the students to be creative in their reinterpretations, allow abstract or literal movement.

Activities

COMPARE AND CONTRAST: Utilize the Venn diagram as a way to compare and contrast three different media mediums for storytelling. Try comparing the ballet to two other stories – one in literature and one in film.

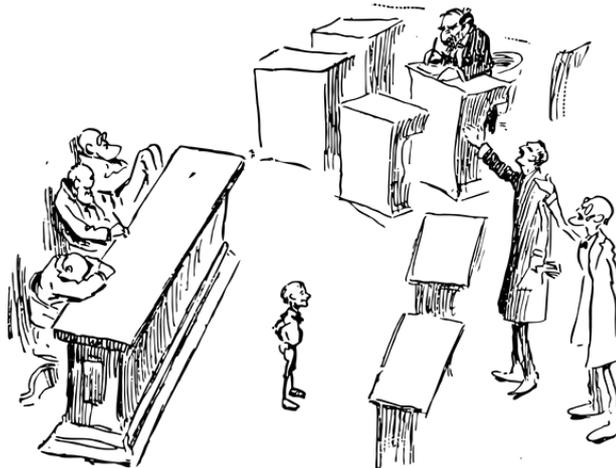


Activities

Midsummer Courtroom

Students act out a mock courtroom trial where one character from the ballet is on trial for causing chaos in the forest (Puck, Oberon, Titania, or even Bottom).

- Divide students into small groups to play different roles.
 - Judge
 - Prosecution Team
 - Defense Team
 - The Accused
 - Witnesses



How to Play:

1. The Prosecution argues how the accused is guilty of creating all the forest confusion (e.g., love potion mishaps, donkey head chaos, fairy fights).
2. The Defense explains why it's not their fault—or blames someone else!
3. The Judge listens, occasionally bangs a gavel (use a ruler), and asks silly questions like “Can love potions be regulated?”
4. Witnesses can add dramatic testimonies—Hermia might sob over her ruined love life, Bottom could defend his acting.
5. End with the judge giving a ridiculous but fair verdict (e.g., “Puck must write apology letters to all humans and fairies involved!”).



Writing Prompt

One summer night, you hear music coming from deep in the forest. When you follow the sound, you find a magical world where fairies, animals, and dreams come to life.

Think about:

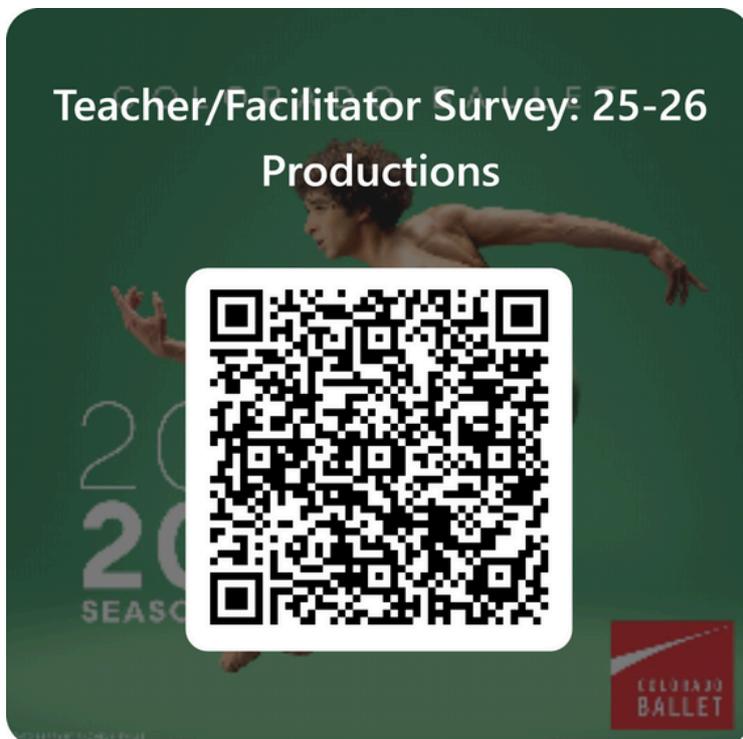
- Who are you in the story?
- What magical place do you dance through?
- What kind of dance helps fix the problem?
- Who do you meet along the way?

Surveys

Teacher/Facilitator Survey

CLICK HERE

or scan QR code below



Student/Viewer Survey

CLICK HERE

or scan QR code below

