



BALLET BC

SOLO ECHO

MAY 21, 2019

CURRICULUM
GUIDE



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Dear Teachers,

We are so pleased to be able to bring internationally acclaimed ballet company, Ballet BC to Des Moines! This dance company from British Columbia offers a fresh take on a traditional art form that brilliantly fuses ballet and modern dance. Ballet BC's Artistic Director, Emily Molnar, is one of Canada's new generation of ballet sensations and pushes the classical forms to new heights. The adventurous performance contributes to students' understanding of dance, pushing the boundaries beyond what they might have imagined ballet was capable of. We hope that students will learn something new about ballet and consider the power of movement to tell stories and to convey emotion as they watch the dancers at work.

This Curriculum Guide is designed to provide information, discussion topics, activities, and resources to use both before and after the performance. The materials are meant to help you integrate the show with learning objectives in many areas of the curriculum.

In the following pages you will find tips about how to be a good member of an audience at the Civic Center, contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a variety of discussion questions and activities. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. We look forward to seeing you and your students soon!

See you at the theater,
Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

SUPPORT FOR DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND THE APPLAUSE SERIES IS PROVIDED BY:

Anderson Erickson Dairy • Arts Midwest • Bradford and Sally Austin • Bravo Greater Des Moines • Clive Community Foundation • DuPont Pioneer • Ernest & Florence Sargent Family Foundation • Gannett Foundation/The Des Moines Register Hy-Vee, Inc. • Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs • John Deere • Judith A. Lindquist Scholarship Fund • Maytag Family Foundation • Richard and Deborah McConnell • McKee • Voorhees and Sease • Meredith Corporation Foundation MidAmerican Energy Foundation • Nationwide • Polk County • Prairie Meadows • Principal • SVPA Architects, Inc. • U.S. Bank • Union Pacific Foundation • Wells Fargo & Co. • West Bancorporation Foundation • Windsor Charitable Foundation and more than 300 individual donors.



DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS

BY THE NUMBERS

300,000

More than 300,000 guests attend performances and events in our four venues each year

75,000

DMPA education programs serve more than 75,000 Iowans annually.

500,000

More than half a million students and teachers have attended school-time performances as part of the Applause Series since its launch in 1996.

DMPA is central Iowa's premier not-for-profit performing arts organization.

Guests experience a wide variety of art forms and cultural activities, with presentations ranging from Broadway, comedy, professional dance, to family programming.

DMPA is more than the Civic Center! 
You can find us at the following spaces:

- Civic Center, 2744 seats
- Stoner Theater, 200 seats
- Temple Theater, 299 seats
- Cowles Commons (outdoor plaza)



Take thousands of Iowa students out of their classrooms, place them in a theater, sprinkle the stage with world-class performers,



AND WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

A recipe for learning that reaches new levels of possibility — for students and teachers.

APPLAUSE SERIES



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Each year, 50,000 students and teachers attend an Applause Series performance. The actual cost per person is \$8, but thanks to the caring contributions of donors, schools pay just \$1 per ticket. By removing the financial barriers to participation, donors introduce a whole new generation to the power of arts in action. That means stronger schools and communities now and in the future.



TICKET TO IMAGINATION

The Applause Series annually delivers 60 age-appropriate performances for pre-school to high school students. The impact stretches far beyond the Des Moines metro, reaching schools in over 35 Iowa counties. The theater becomes the classroom. One-hour matinees energize students to imagine new ways of creative expression, cultural diversity and even career opportunities.

BEYOND THE STAGE

For many Applause Series performances, we offer the opportunity for schools to go deeper by exploring an art form or theme that connects with what is seen on stage. Invite a professional teaching artist into the classroom or visit another cultural destination in Des Moines to help students make more meaning of a piece of theater.

BRINGING ARTS EDUCATION TO LIFE

The Applause Series is a flagship education program of Des Moines Performing Arts. Since its launch in 1996, more than a half million students and teachers have attended school-time performances as part of the series. You are joining us for the 23rd season of school performances!



FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

TEACHER GUIDE

WE WANT YOUR FIELD TRIP TO BE SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL!

Please read below for important tips and details to ensure a great day.

GET ORGANIZED

Double-check that all students, teachers, and chaperones were included in your ticket order. Request an adjustment if your numbers have increased. We want to make sure we have enough seats for you!

Tickets are not issued. Bring a copy of your invoice, which will serve as your group's "ticket".

Schedule arrival for 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This allows time to park, cross streets, find your seats, and go to the restroom.

Let drivers know that Applause performances are approximately 60 minutes, unless otherwise noted.

Remind chaperones that children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause Series events.

DIRECTIONS/PARKING

The Des Moines Civic Center is located at
221 WALNUT STREET, DES MOINES, IOWA

DIRECTIONS FROM I-235: take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3rd St and 2nd Ave. Turn onto 3rd Street and head south.

Police officers stationed at the corner of 3rd & Locust Streets will direct buses to reserved street parking near the Civic Center.

Buses are not allowed to drop groups off in front of the theater. Contact us in advance if there is a special circumstance.

Buses remain parked for the duration of the show. Drivers must be available to move the bus immediately following the performance.

Personal vehicles are responsible for securing their own parking on a nearby street or in a downtown parking ramp.

ARRIVAL/SEATING

An usher will greet you at the door and ask for your school name.

Adults will be asked to show proper identification (such as school IDs or visitor badges as applicable) at the door.

Each group will be assigned a specific location in the theater based on various factors. An usher will escort you to your section.

Your school may be seated in multiple rows. Adults should position themselves throughout the group.

Allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging student seats or taking groups to the restroom. This helps us seat efficiently and better start the show on time.

IN THE THEATER

Adults are asked to handle any disruptive behavior in their group. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.

Please wait for your group to be dismissed by DMPA staff prior to exiting the theater.

QUESTIONS?

We are happy to help!

Please contact us at:
education@dmpa.org
515.246.2355



AUDIENCE REMINDERS

ATTENDING A LIVE PERFORMANCE IS A UNIQUE AND EXCITING OPPORTUNITY!
UNLIKE THE PASSIVE EXPERIENCE OF WATCHING A MOVIE, AUDIENCE MEMBERS
PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN EVERY LIVE PERFORMANCE.

YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Artists on stage are very aware of the mood and level of engagement of the audience.
As such, each performance calls for a different response from audience members.



DID YOU KNOW?

THE THEATER IS DESIGNED TO MAGNIFY
SOUND. EVEN WHISPERS CAN BE HEARD!

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Do not bring food, drinks or chewing gum into the theater.

Turn off and put away cell phones and other electronics before the performance begins

Do not text or take photos or video during the show.

Respect the theater. Keep your feet off of the seat backs and cushions.

When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.

Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end.

Remember that this is a special experience. The artists are creating something just for you. Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated.

Pay attention to the artists — they will let you know what is appropriate.

Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience.

Enjoy yourself!

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

What kind of live performance is this?

- musical
- dance
- concert

What is the mood of the performance?

Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?

What is the mood of the artists?
Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?

Are the artists encouraging the audience to clap to the music, move to the beat, or participate in some other way?

Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?



ABOUT THE COMPANY

Ballet BC is an internationally acclaimed collaborative and creation-based contemporary ballet company that is a leader and resource in the creation, production and education of contemporary dance in Canada.

THE HISTORY

Founded in 1986, in Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada's westernmost province), Ballet BC has been under the leadership of Artistic Director Emily Molnar since 2009. Bold and innovative, the Company's distinctive style and approach has made a unique and valuable national contribution to the development of dance in Canada.



WHO IS BALLET BC?

Ballet BC's dancers are a group of open-minded and curious artists, each unique for their dynamic movement while sharing an intuitive passion for dance. Ballet BC values working with local communities in Canada as well as places around the world with fellow professional or student dancers.

“They came, they danced and they conquered. Artistic Director Emily Molnar's Ballet BC glided in . . . and flooded audiences with its impressive, athletic cast of dance wizards.”

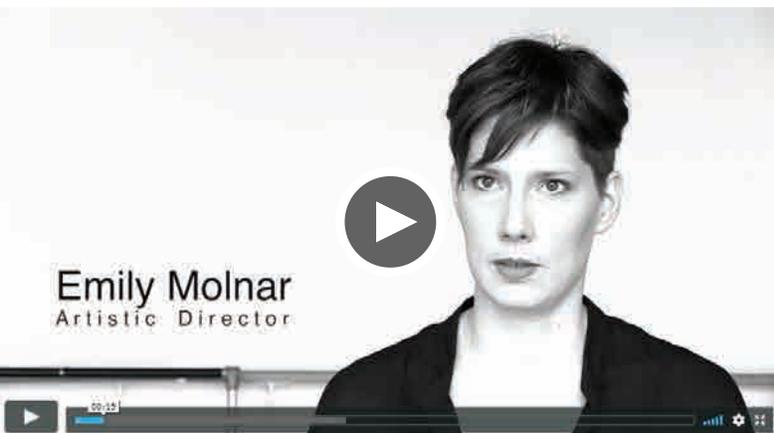
-Calgary Herald

ABOUT THEIR MISSION

The Company presents a diverse repertoire of Canadian and international work from the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and is a hotbed for the creation and performance of new works. Since 2009, the Company has developed a repertoire of more than 45 new works by acclaimed Canadian and international choreographers.

Under the artistic direction of Emily Molnar, the Company actively fosters collaborations that support artists, choreographers and audiences alike, furthering the boundaries of contemporary dance. They embrace excellence in the practice of contemporary ballet, with its wide diversity of technique and style, honoring its roots and components.

See a preview of their work [here](#).



BEHIND THE SCENES

This video features Emily Molnar speaking about the success of the company. Although the dances featured are not the ones they will perform in Des Moines, video gives you an opportunity to see Emily speak about the work.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



DEFINING CONTEMPORARY BALLET

Contemporary ballet is the term for the style of dance that Ballet BC presents. The dancers all take ballet classes as their training and conditioning method. They also take modern dance which is a style of dance which is happening now and constantly evolving. Modern dance draws from any source such as jazz, rhythm tap, hip hop or even making up your own new movements. When the two elements of ballet and modern are blended then the audience still sees the ballet

influence of pointed feet, long extended lines, use of point shoes and turned out positions. But instead of wearing tutus and formal classical costumes, the dancers might wear shorts or sweatpants, incorporate pedestrian movement, show dramatic facial expressions, and lift each other in unusual ways (not necessarily men lifting women, but anyone lifting anyone). The contemporary/modern approach is gender neutral with everyone showing their strength, stamina and creativity.

TO THIS DAY

In this 50-minute show, first, you will see a dance called “To this Day” which had its world premiere in January. To celebrate her 10th season as Artistic Director, Emily Molnar collaborated with the artists of Ballet BC to create a dance that sets her signature expressive style in conversation with the blues. Described as “zesty and buoyant” by the Vancouver Arts Review and set to an album by Jimi Hendrix, bluesy riffs are the perfect match to the movement. The dance might make the audience think about being at a rock concert and being caught up in the performance. Emily Molnar wanted the work to be bold and to really create connections to the audience, but even after all her years of dancing and being a choreographer it isn’t easy! She says, “The choreographic process continues to enthrall and humble me with each and every attempt.”

SOLO ECHO

Next, you will see a dance called “Solo Echo” by choreographer Crystal Pite. Made in 2015 for seven dancers, this piece was inspired by a poem called “[Lines for Winter](#)” by Mark Strand. Dances can be made in many ways. Some are inspired by music, an emotion, a life event, or a poem, among other choices. You will see some pedestrian movement such as running in “Solo Echo” mixed with some very technically difficult dance steps. Sometimes the dancers will move together in unison, but sometimes they will move asymmetrically or contact in complex partnering. The dance does not have a narrative like a story, but each movement is meaningful and ties back to the mood of the poem.

Watch an excerpt of the piece by clicking below



VOCABULARY

ABSTRACT

not depicting something in its original or literal form, but showing the essence of the idea or object.

CHOREOGRAPHY

the arrangement of movement in space and time. A series of pre-planned movements usually set to music but can also be set to silence, poetry or text.

CLASSICAL BALLET

a system of dance based on formalized movements and positions of the arms, feet, and body designed to enable the dancer to move with the greatest possible agility, control, speed, lightness and grace. Classical-ballet technique is based on the turned-out position of the legs, which increases the range of movement through added mobility in the hip joint. With origins in the 17th century court ballet, the terminology is mostly in French and women traditionally dance on pointe.

CONTEMPORARY DANCE

a style of expressive dance that combines elements of several dance genres including but not limited to modern, jazz, hip-hop, lyrical, and classical ballet.

CREATIVITY

the ability to go beyond traditional ideas, rules, and patterns in order to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, and interpretations.

ENSEMBLE

a group of dancers performing together.

NEGATIVE SPACE

the designed space in between limbs of a body or between dancers (where the body isn't).

PAS DE DEUX

the French ballet term for a dance for two people; a duet.

PAS DE TROIS

the French ballet term for a dance for three people; a trio.

PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

movements such as walking, sitting, opening a door, etc. that you would see in real life.

REHEARSAL

practice in preparation of a public performance.

REPERTORY

the group of dances that are actively performed by a company.

SOLO

a dance performed alone (one dancer) or set apart from other dancers on stage.

SYMBOLISM

use of symbols to signify ideas or qualities by giving them meanings that are different from their literal sense. A dance movement can symbolize an emotion. A prop can have a symbol different than its literal object.

SYMMETRY

when two sides of a design are the mirror image of the other.

TECHNIQUE

a set of skills which dancers develop to perform a certain dance form.

TEMPO

the speed or pace of the music or activity.

UNISON

the same movement or series of movements performed at the same time by more than one dancer.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: OBSERVE, WATCH AND RESPOND

Visit the Ballet BC website and click on this [video link](#).

Show the students this three-minute excerpt of a dance called “Very Clear Instructions” performed by Ballet BC and choreographed by John Wood and Paul Harrison. The dance was commissioned by The Contemporary Art Gallery and produced in partnership with The Polygon Gallery. The choreographers were interested in the elements of trust, cause and effect, action and reaction, physical space, and dimensions.

The dance “Very Clear Instructions” starts with minimal movement we call pedestrian movement because it is movement you might see in everyday life. At 55 seconds into the video we suddenly see designed body shapes using the floor and the wall as partners to help create the body sculptures. At 1:38 seconds into the dance we suddenly see a man create a circle with his arms. He is making a negative space shape through which the woman suddenly jumps. The dance ends again with pedestrian walking movement. Watch the dance twice through. Just like when you read a book you might notice something different each time.

Questions:

1. Why did the choreographers choose gender-neutral costumes (the men and women all wear the same thing)?
2. Why do you think the choreographers chose that the costumes should be black in color?
3. Dance does not always have to happen on a stage. This dance takes place in a cleared art gallery space with the audience seated in very close proximity. What might you notice about the dance up close that you might not see from far away?
4. Do you think this dance could be interesting to present in other locations like outside, in a cafeteria, at a skateboard park? Where would you like to see this dance?
5. Pause the video at 2:26. Notice the horizontal geometric elements of bodies on the floor (low level) and bodies lifted (medium level). Notice this moment of symmetry.

ACTIVITY 2: APPLY, WATCH AND CREATE

Materials needed: A cleared space for dancers to move. If not possible, dancers can go in and around desks or tables like a maze and utilize the furniture as “props” for their dances.

Questions:

1. After watching and responding to “Very Clear Instructions” above, create your own short dance with 4-6 students in a group.
2. The dance needs to plan for a clear beginning, middle and end.
3. The beginning of the dance choreography should start with pedestrian movements such as walking, sitting, or opening a door, for example.
4. The middle of the dance can have more body design. Think of your bodies as building blocks or legos that can lean on each other, intersect in parallel or perpendicular lines, or move through each other’s negative space.
5. The dance should end with pedestrian movement again with either an exit or a freeze.
6. Show the composition twice to the rest of the class. The first time the class watches they just observe. The second time the class watches they respond with how they thought you used your “tools” of interesting body shapes and moving designs.

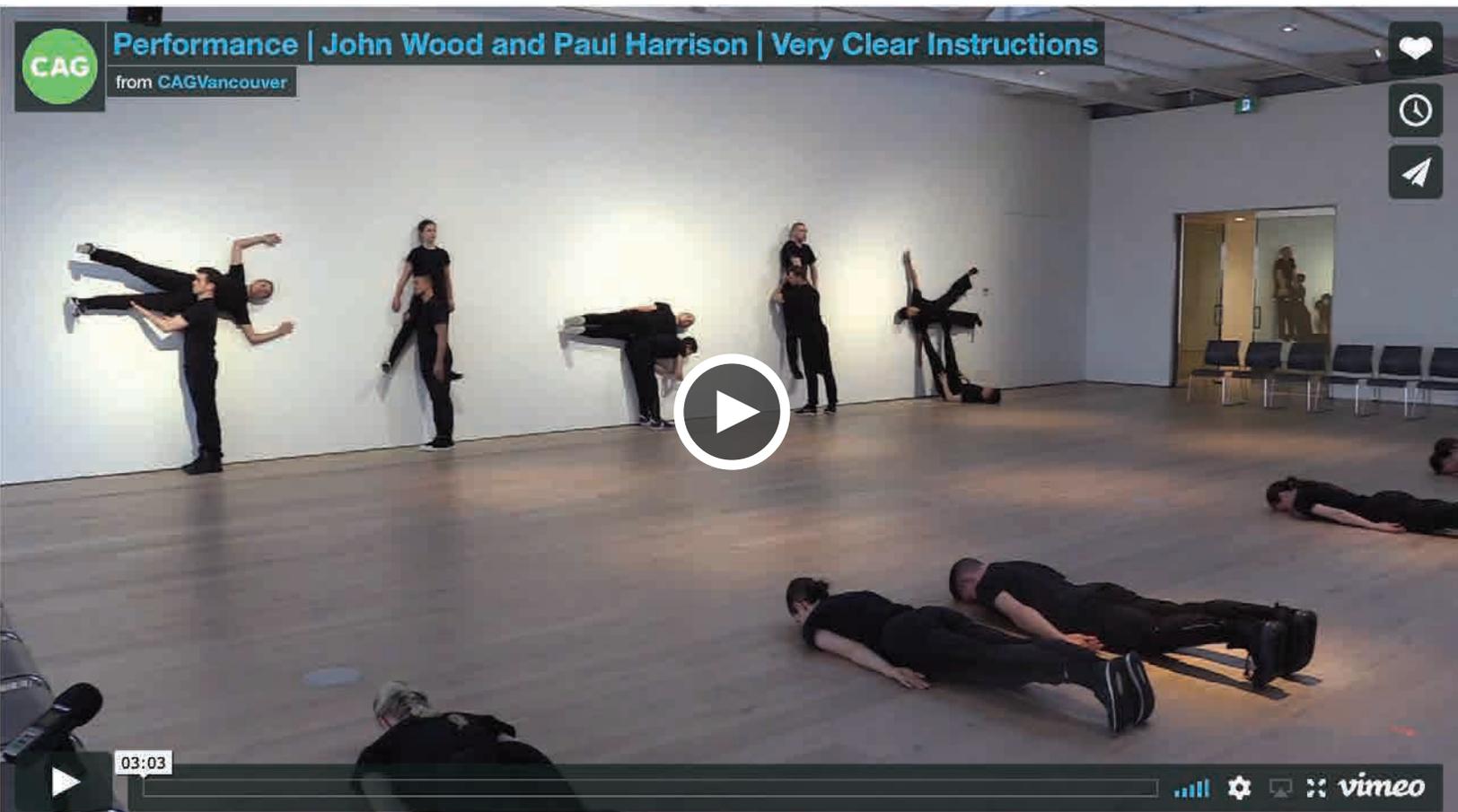
PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES (cont.)

ACTIVITY 3: CONNECT, WATCH AND DRAW

Materials needed: paper, colored pencils, crayons or markers
A cleared space for dancers to move.

Questions:

1. Watch the students' choreography from the previous exercise. The first time just watch to observe. Then if there are 4 dancers, watch four more times. If there are 6 dancers, watch six more times. Be ready to respond with drawing. Draw a response to the geometric shapes you see moving before you. Try to keep your eyes on the dance and not look too much at the paper.
2. No two people's drawing response will look the same. There is no "right" response drawing.
3. Each time you watch use a different color to represent each person. For example, if there are four dancers, use four different colors. With each viewing follow one dancer with your eye and respond with a corresponding color. On the next viewing follow the second dancer, and so on.
4. If the dancers physically interact then the colors on the page should touch. If the dancers walk side by side, the colors should go side by side.
5. After the dance performances show the drawings to the dancers. Did the drawers/observers use dark and heavy lines or light and feathery strokes? Why? What kind of movement were they responding to?
6. Did the drawers and the movers have different perceptions of what they saw versus what it felt like?



POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

READ AND RESPOND

After seeing the dance “Solo Echo” at the Des Moines Civic Center, read [this poem](#) by Mark Strand from which the dance drew its inspiration:

1. What special effect was used on stage that ties directly to the poem?
2. The choreographer Crystal Pite, designed the costumes herself with Joe Visser. After reading the poem, why do you think she chose to clothe the dancers in black?
3. What do you think the title of the dance “Solo Echo” means to you? How is sound different in winter snow outside than at other times of the year?
4. You saw some pedestrian movement such as running in “Solo Echo” mixed with some very technical dance steps. Why did the choreographer choose this mix? What do you think the running signified?
5. The music for “Solo Echo” was a recording of cellist YoYo Ma playing some Brahms Cello Sonatas. Do you think this dance would be interesting or effective with other music? What music would you choose? Would silence work?
6. Why do you suppose the choreographer did not choose to have the poem that inspired her creation to be read during the dance?



Dancers and choreographers love to hear what the audience thinks of their presentation. Write to Ballet BC and tell them what you loved about the performance, what questions you have, what it made you think about. You can include drawings too.

Send your letters to:

Des Moines Performing Arts
Attn: Education Department
221 Walnut Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Lines for Winter

BY MARK STRAND

for Ros Krauss

Tell yourself
as it gets cold and gray falls from the air
that you will go on
walking, hearing
the same tune no matter where
you find yourself—
inside the dome of dark
or under the cracking white
of the moon's gaze in a valley of snow.
Tonight as it gets cold
tell yourself
what you know which is nothing
but the tune your bones play
as you keep going. And you will be able
for once to lie down under the small fire
of winter stars.
And if it happens that you cannot
go on or turn back
and you find yourself
where you will be at the end,
tell yourself
in that final flowing of cold through your limbs
that you love what you are.

New Selected Poems (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007)

RESOURCES AND SOURCES

WEBSITES

Ballet BC

<https://balletbc.com>

Lines for Winter by Mark Strand

www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50977/lines-for-winter

Encourage movement in the classroom

<https://www.gonoodle.com>

VIDEOS

Ballet BC Preview

<https://balletbc.com/walking-mad/>

Behind the Scenes

<https://vimeo.com/131834585>

Solo Echo Excerpt

<https://balletbc.com/category/video/>

Very Clear Instructions Video

<https://balletbc.com/john-wood-paul-harrison-very-clear-instructions/>

Books

The Art of Movement by Ken Browar

<https://www.amazon.com/Art-Movement-Ken-Browar/dp/0316318582>

To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel by Siena Cherson Siegel

<https://www.amazon.com/Dance-Ballerinas-Graphic-Novel/dp/1416926879>

Born To Dance: Celebrating the Wonder of Childhood by Jordan Matter

<https://www.amazon.com/Born-Dance-Celebrating-Wonder-Childhood/dp/1523505494>

