TULSA BALLET PRESENTS SERGE PROKOFIEV’S PETER AND THE WOLF

CHOREOGRAPHY BY MA CONG

STORY ADAPTATION BY DAN McGEEHAN

A STUDY GUIDE
Peter and the Wolf

CONTENTS

3 Welcome!
   A Little Background
4-5 Ballet 101
6 Before the Show
7 The Characters
8-9 Our Story
10 The Composer
11 The Choreographer
12-13 Creating
14 After the Show
15 The Theatre
ULSA BALLET would like to thank all the teachers for providing this opportunity for your students to experience the great art of ballet.

A Little Background

PETER AND THE WOLF was created in 1936 by Russian composer Serge Prokofiev. He was commissioned by the Central Children's Theatre in Moscow to write a musical symphony for children. As written, the work is performed with a narrator accompanying a symphony orchestra and is used as an introduction to different musical instruments. Each character in the story is personified by its own instrument and melody. Peter and the Wolf is one of the most beloved works of twentieth century classical music and is regularly performed by orchestras around the world.

In 2016, Tulsa Ballet’s Artistic Director, Marcello Angelini, commissioned resident choreographer Ma Cong to create a ballet to Prokofiev’s most famous composition. They invited playwright Dan McGeehan to join in and he expanded the story by adding a prologue, making the work fill an hour’s worth of entertainment experience. All the music utilized in the new addition are selections from other works by Prokofiev, including snippets from piano concertos and operas.
Ballet 101

WHAT IS BALLET?

It's been said that ballet is "a way of telling a story using dance and music instead of words." It is the conscious use of rhythms, patterns of movement, and energetic expression—all of which have developed over the centuries—that, when combined, become a language all its own through which the dancers tell a story or convey a mood.

Ballet's beginnings can be traced back to the French court dances of the 16th and 17th centuries. Back then, all the royalty was encouraged to master dancing in the many forms used regularly in French courtly life. Gradually, these movements were formalized into elaborate scenarios: arms were to be held out wide to the side so as not to touch the clothing, and feet were to be pointed out elegantly to show off beautiful buckles and ribbons. Eventually, ballet became a specialized art form performed by professional dancers. French monarch Louis XIV was extremely fond of dancing and he founded the world's first ballet school, the Royal Academy of Dance, where many ballet steps were first introduced. That's why all dance steps today still have French names.

Another popular activity of the time was fencing. Many of the dancing masters of the French court noticed the graceful moves and balance of the fencing masters and incorporated some of them into dance. These fencer's movements were the inspiration for the five basic ballet positions still used today. Students can view a short video to learn more about the five positions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3bawTEPLtA.
Ballet is the fundamental training for many types of dance styles. Even athletes have studied ballet to increase their agility, balance, footwork and flexibility. Increasingly, college athletes are being offered dance training as a supplement to their workouts.

**THE ART OF PANTOMIME**

**Pantomime** is the art of using actions or gestures without words as a means of communication. It plays an important role in ballet, as it helps the audience better understand the story and what the characters are feeling. A dancer must use the arms, hands, fingers, head and eyes, as well as the feet and legs, to make a role “come alive.” Here are some of the most familiar gestures used in ballet:

- Me
- You
- Love
- Anger
- Hide
- Death
- Fear
- Sleep
Before the Show

BASIC ACTIVITIES

Read aloud or have the students read the story of Peter and the Wolf (A copy of the story is included in this Study Guide).

Listen to excerpts from Prokofiev's score and notice the way the music changes for each character. What kind of movement do you think a dancer would use for this music?

Discuss behavioral expectations of students when attending a ballet, concert, or play. How can an audience express their appreciation for a performer? Is it appropriate to yell and cheer, applaud, move around, or talk during a show? Can you eat while watching? Explain to the students that they will be making a special journey to see a performance of a brand new ballet. Explain that the theatre is a special place for people to experience amazing things but certain kind of behavior is necessary. (See the "Theatre Etiquette" section.)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Have you been to a ballet before? Which one(s)? Can you tell the story?

What kinds of dancing have you done before? Have you ever made up a dance? When do you dance and why? Do you ever dance in a group?

What is ballet? What makes it different from other kinds of dancing? How did ballet begin? (See "Ballet 101" section)

Have you been to a theatre before? Besides ballet, what other types of performances are presented in a theatre?
The Characters

THE PROLOGUE

First, the Grandfather. He is rough and grumpy. But he is a caring and loving soul. He regrets the foolish acts of his youth and worries about the safety of his grandson, Peter.

We also meet the grandfather as a Young Boy. He is, as he describes himself, "a scamp, a rascal, an always-getting-into-trouble type." He is the original Boy Who Cried Wolf.

Sprinkled into the story we see the Young Boy's schoolmates and the citizens of his little town. They are the one's the young boy torments with his tricks and practical jokes.

When the boy falls ill and has a feverish dream, we see Little Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Pigs. These are characters that the Young Boy knows have met the Wolf before and their appearance in his dream serve as a warning— the Wolf is dangerous.

And of course, there's the Wolf. He terrorized the Young Boy's town and cursed the Young Boy: "I'll get you someday!"

THE STORY

We have already met the Grandfather. He is still grumpy. In the orchestra, he is depicted by the bassoons.

Peter is his grandson. Fearless and resourceful, Peter is depicted by the string instruments.

The Cat, sly and a tad hungry, is depicted by the clarinet.

The Duck, perky and a bit silly, is depicted by the oboe.

The Bird, cheerful and helpful, is depicted by the flute.

The Hunters, strong and determined, are depicted by the woodwinds and their guns by the timpani and bass drum.

The Wolf, big and bad, is depicted by the French horns.
Our Story

PETER AND THE WOLF

PROLOGUE

As composer Sergei Prokofiev’s famous story is introduced, an elderly man barges into the theater, interrupting the performance. Perturbed at the announcer’s version of this tale, he takes over as narrator to tell the story as it really happened.

We learn that he met the Wolf in Peter’s story many years ago, when as a rascally young man he was charged with tending the town’s flock of sheep and became the infamous Boy Who Cried Wolf. After witnessing the Wolf eat the flock, he was so frightened he fell into a feverish dream, where he met Little Red Riding Hood and the Three Pigs, all of whom had also met the Big, Bad Wolf. The dream serves as a warning that someday the Wolf will return.

Years later, the Boy Who Cried Wolf has become a Grandfather, and he recognizes in his grandson Peter many of the same personality traits that he had as a young boy – impulsiveness, curiosity, and trouble following the rules. When news travels of the Wolf’s return, he takes Peter and moves to a hidden cabin in the woods, where he hopes the Wolf will never find them.

THE STORY BEGINS

As each character enters the story, they are represented by their own instrument:

- The Grandfather – Bassoon
- The Cat – Clarinet
- The Duck – Oboe
- Peter – Strings
- The Bird – Flute
- The Wolf – French Horn
The Grandfather and Peter are living in a cabin in the woods, hiding away from the Wolf. Peter enjoys watching the animals that share their pond - a Duck, a Cat and a Bird, and they all feel safe in the woods. One day, the Bird greets Peter with friendly chirps, and he is entertained by the Duck swimming in the pond and the Cat sneaking around the tree. Just as the Cat is about to pounce on the Bird, Peter shouts out a warning, and peace is restored to the group.

Just then the Grandfather arrives, and sees that Peter, distracted by his animal friends, had forgetfully left the gate open. Grandfather scolds him, reminding him that the Wolf could be lurking in the forest. Peter, never having met the Wolf, is unafraid.

THE RETURN OF THE WOLF

Suddenly, the Wolf does appear. He stalks the Duck, and though she tries to escape, he swallows her in one gulp. He sees the Cat and the Bird and hungrily circles the tree they are perched in. Peter, watching from the gate, makes a plan to catch the Wolf. He enlists the help of the Bird, who distracts the Wolf, while Peter readies a strong rope into a lasso.

As the Bird cleverly teases the Wolf, Peter manages to catch him by the waist. Peter, the Bird, and the Cat hold onto the rope with all their might. A group of hunters pass by and Peter convinces them to spare the Wolf and take him to the zoo.

FINALE

Thrilled with having caught the Wolf, Peter leads the victory parade through town and to the zoo. Everyone celebrates, except for the Grandfather, who is worried that Peter still hasn’t learned the importance of caution and planning. Suddenly, the Wolf, feeling ill, heaves up the Duck. Having been swallowed whole, she is still alive. Overjoyed at her return, Peter and the others celebrate once again.
Serge Prokofiev is considered one of the most important composers of the twentieth century. Many of his works are acknowledged masterpieces and are regularly played in concerts all around the world. He was born in 1891 in the town of Santsovka which was part of the Russian Empire at the time. A musical prodigy, he had written several piano works, an overture, and an entire opera all by the age of nine. With the encouragement of the famous Russian composer Alexander Glazunov, Prokofiev attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he received advanced musical training. Prokofiev went on to have a long and productive career. He even toured all around the world as an accomplished pianist and conductor.

Prokofiev’s musical compositions have became standards at classical music concerts. “Cinderella” and “Romeo and Juliet”—are still among the most performed ballets around the globe. And, of course, his most famous composition—“Peter and the Wolf”—has been performed and recorded more times than almost any other twentieth century composition. By the time he died in 1952, Prokofiev was one of the most loved composers in the world.
MA CONG

Ma Cong has been widely recognized by the dance world as an inspired rising star choreographer. Critics have described his work as powerful and passionate. He is the Resident Choreographer of Tulsa Ballet, and continues to create and stage his existing works in Tulsa and for companies internationally. Ma started his dance career at the Beijing Dance Academy where he trained in the art of Chinese Classical dance. He soon discovered his love for ballet and went on to graduate with honors. Ma danced with The National Ballet of China from 1995 until 1999, prior to joining Tulsa Ballet. During his 12-year tenure at Tulsa Ballet, he quickly rose to the rank of Principal Dancer. Ma was one of the most celebrated and loved Artists in the history of the company.

As a choreographer, Ma launched his career with Tulsa Ballet in 2004 and went on to create many original works for dance companies around the world. Ma has won many awards for his work and has been described as having “swiftly risen to become one of America’s most exciting choreographers.”
Creating A NEW BALLET

A lot of work, effort, and time go into the creation of a ballet. Music must be chosen; costumes designed and constructed. The same with the scenery. There is also the lighting that must be carefully worked out. The choreographer must create movements and motions that express true feelings and clearly tell the story. And the dancers must learn those steps in order to bring the characters and the story to life.
All of these people must work together to bring a new ballet to life. The same people and work were used in creating Tulsa Ballet’s “Peter and the Wolf.”

Some of these people include:

**Artistic Director:** Head of the ballet; envisions the project and makes all the final creative decisions

**Choreographer:** Creates all movement/dance for the ballet

**Costume Designer:** Designs the costumes and supervises their construction

**Composer:** Writes the music score for the ballet

**Playwright:** Writes the words spoken on the stage

**Wardrobe Mistress:** Assists with the costumes. Tells the performers how to wear them and take care of them

**Ballet Master/Mistress:** In charge of all company rehearsals and classes, including staging, setting, and coaching the dancers

**Technical Director:** Coordinates the lighting, sets, costumes, and all backstage crew members

**Crew:** Assist in construction, installation, and changes of the set, costumes, lights, and props

**Stage Manager:** In charge of all that happens backstage in performance and rehearsals

**Lighting Designer:** Plans the design, colors, and frequency of light changes on stage

**Set Designer:** Designs the set, supervises its construction

**Dancers:** Through their movements the ballet comes to life
After the Show

BASIC ACTIVITIES

Have students list the various jobs they think would be essential to putting on a ballet performance, and then have them discuss which one they would like to have.

Have the students select a character from Peter and the Wolf and design their own costume for that character. Or have them design a mask of their favorite character.

Have the students pick their favorite animal and act out their own story without words using some of the pantomime techniques mentioned earlier.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Who was your favorite character and why?

What does the melody of each character tell you about them?

In what way is Peter like his grandfather when his grandfather was a little boy?

Do you think it was a good idea or a bad idea for the Young Boy to cry "Wolf!" so much?

Why do you think the Three Pigs and Little Red Riding Hood show up in Peter's dream?

By working together, Peter, the Bird, and the Cat caught the Wolf. What did they each do to help?

The ballet ends with the Wolf being taken to the zoo. If you were to continue the story, what do you think happened to each of the characters after that?
ULSA BALLET is pleased and proud to share with you our production of “Peter and the Wolf.” As a courtesy to the dancers and your fellow audience members, we request simple rules of etiquette be followed:

✔ Arrive on time. Plan for possible delays in travel and parking.

✔ Leave recording devices of any kind at home or in your backpack at school. Video or audio recording and photography, including camera phones, are often prohibited.

✔ Turn off or silence all personal electronics. Beeps, clicks, tones, and buzzes as well as light pollution interrupt the performance and spoil the theatre experience.

✔ Be respectful. Talk very quietly. Keep your feet on the ground. Put your hands in your lap or fold your arms.

✔ No eating or drinking inside the theatre.

✔ Avoid talking, waving or shouting during the performance. Laughing and applauding are encouraged at appropriate times. Shouting to actors/friends is disrespectful to others. Save personal conversation for after the show.

✔ Do not exit the theatre during the performance except in an emergency. If you must leave, please wait for an appropriate break in the performance. Teachers, please arrive early enough to escort students to the restroom prior to the start of the show.

✔ Dispose of garbage in proper receptacles.

☆ Extend common courtesy and respect to your fellow audience members. Civility creates a comfortable and welcoming theatre experience for all.