



DON QUIXOTE

STUDENT MATINEE PACKET

ABOUT BALLET ARKANSAS



Ballet Arkansas traces its origins to the Little Rock Civic Ballet, founded in 1966 by Lorraine and Donald C. Cranford. Incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1978, the organization has, over the course of its 47-year history, touched the lives of more than half a million Arkansans through its performances, education programs, and community engagement initiatives. Today, Ballet Arkansas stands as the only professional ballet company in Little Rock and is widely recognized as the state’s premier ballet organization—serving audiences across every region of the Natural State.

Under the visionary leadership of Michael and Catherine Fothergill, Ballet Arkansas has grown into one of the 75 largest ballet companies in the United States, according to the Dance Data Project. The company of 17 world-class dancers presents an annual season of vibrant programming that spans classical masterpieces, landmark works of American dance, and world premieres by some of the field’s most innovative choreographers. With a performance and broadcast reach extending to all 50 states and over 60 countries worldwide, Ballet Arkansas engages nearly 50,000 audience members each year and serves as a powerful cultural ambassador for the state of Arkansas.

Ballet Arkansas is proud to serve as the official dance presenter of the Robinson Center, Little Rock’s most prestigious performing arts venue, and to hold the distinguished designation of Arts Partner Company in Residence at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts. These partnerships amplify the company’s capacity to deliver high-caliber, multidisciplinary programming to diverse audiences while deepening its integration within the state’s broader cultural ecosystem.

A recognized statewide leader in dance education, Ballet Arkansas is home to a thriving School for Dance that provides exceptional instruction to hundreds of students from diverse backgrounds. Led by a distinguished faculty, the School is complemented by the organization’s robust educational outreach initiatives, which engage more than 10,000 K–12 students annually. In addition, over 300 young dancers participate each year in Ballet Arkansas’s celebrated Community Cast productions, cultivating meaningful access to the performing arts and nurturing the next generation of artists and arts patrons across Arkansas.

THE LIFE OF A PROFESSIONAL BALLET DANCER



Ballet Arkansas's company of 17 professional dancers are full-time, salaried employees who receive employment benefits and work a standard Monday–Friday schedule. Many are graduates of the nation's most prestigious university dance programs, while others have trained at some of America's finest ballet institutions.

Each day begins with a 90-minute ballet class to condition and prepare their bodies for the physical demands ahead. The remainder of the workday is dedicated to rehearsals, where—on average—it takes 25 hours of practice to learn just one hour of performance material. Once choreography is “staged,” dancers devote the rest of the rehearsal period to refining every detail for the audience's enjoyment. While they are artists, they are also professional athletes, balancing artistry with peak physical performance.

In addition to mastering thousands of intricate dance steps and precise musical phrasing, company members must memorize hundreds of light cues, navigate shifting formations, and bring each character to life with theatrical nuance. Producing any Ballet Arkansas production requires hundreds of hours of meticulous rehearsal.

In fact, a 2020 ranking by InsuranceProviders.com and the U.S. Department of Labor identified dance as the most physically demanding job in the United States. The intensity of the profession often leads dancers to retire from performing in their mid-thirties, transitioning to other roles within the arts.



AUTHOR

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (September 29, 1547 – April 22, 1616) was a Spanish novelist, poet, and playwright whose masterpiece, *Don Quixote*, is widely regarded as one of the greatest works of world literature. First published in two parts in 1605 and 1615, the novel follows the adventures of the idealistic Don Quixote and his loyal squire, Sancho Panza, blending humor, romance, and profound reflections on imagination, honor, and the human spirit. In 1869, choreographer Marius Petipa created the ballet *Don Quixote* to the spirited score of Ludwig Minkus, adapting episodes from Cervantes' beloved novel into one of classical ballet's most dazzling and technically demanding works. Ballet Arkansas's production of *Don Quixote* celebrates this enduring masterpiece with vibrant choreography, colorful Spanish traditions, and the joyful artistry that has delighted audiences for generations.



THE STORY

In the sunlit streets of Spain, the spirited Kitri and the handsome barber Basilio are deeply in love, but Kitri's father, Lorenzo, is determined that she marry the wealthy nobleman Gamache instead. As the village comes alive with music, dancing, and celebration, the young lovers devise clever schemes to escape an arranged marriage and remain together.

Their story intertwines with the adventures of the idealistic Don Quixote, a noble gentleman whose imagination has been inspired by tales of chivalry. Accompanied by his faithful squire, Sancho Panza, Don Quixote embarks on a quest to defend honor, champion virtue, and seek his beloved Dulcinea, whom he believes he discovers in the beautiful Kitri. Along their journey, the travelers encounter lively taverns, colorful Gypsy camps, enchanted dreamscapes, and comic misadventures, all while Don Quixote steadfastly pursues his vision of heroism.

Through wit, courage, and a touch of theatrical trickery, Kitri and Basilio ultimately win Lorenzo's blessing to marry. The ballet concludes with a joyous wedding celebration filled with dazzling virtuosity, spirited Spanish dancing, and exuberant festivities, as love triumphs over convention and Don Quixote continues his timeless pursuit of honor, hope, and impossible dreams.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

In addition to Ballet Arkansas's acclaimed company of professional dancers, *Don Quixote* features a cast of nearly 100 student and community performers from across Central Arkansas. Following a highly anticipated audition process, dancers are cast in roles such as villagers, toreadors, street dancers, tavern patrons, flower sellers, Gypsies, Dryads, Cupids, pages, and members of the royal court, creating the colorful world through which *Don Quixote* and Sancho Panza journey. Ballet Arkansas's professional artists portray the ballet's principal roles, including *Don Quixote*, *Kitri*, *Basilio*, *Sancho Panza*, *Gamache*, *Lorenzo*, *Mercedes*, *Espada*, the *Queen of the Dryads*, *Cupid*, and other featured characters. Together, community performers and professional artists create a vibrant theatrical experience that celebrates the humor, romance, dazzling virtuosity, and infectious spirit of one of classical ballet's most beloved masterpieces.

QUESTIONS

TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What are the overarching themes of Don Quixote?
2. Was the story of Don Quixote clearly portrayed through the dancers' movements and performances?
3. How did the performers use movement, expression, and partnering to bring their characters to life?
4. How did the choreography tell the story without spoken words?
5. Which scene was your favorite and why? Describe what happened and what made it memorable.
6. What impact did the costumes, scenery, lighting, and theatrical effects have on your experience as an audience member?
7. How did the lively village celebrations, bustling marketplace, tavern scenes, and dreamlike moments come to life on stage?
8. How might dancers, choreographers, costume designers, scenic designers, and stage technicians use principles of STEM to create a successful ballet production?
9. What words or emotions would you use to describe the choreography throughout the ballet?
10. Describe the patterns, symmetry, and geometric shapes you noticed in the dancers' formations.
11. Which character was your favorite (Don Quixote, Kitri, Basilio, Sancho Panza, Gamache, Lorenzo, Mercedes, Espada, the Dryads, or the Queen of the Dryads)? Explain why.
12. How did the music by Ludwig Minkus enhance the story? Which musical moment stood out to you most?
13. How did the music, movement, and staging work together to capture the humor, romance, and excitement of the story?
14. Describe the sights and sounds of attending a live ballet performance in a theater.
15. What examples of theater technology (lighting, scenery, stage effects, costumes, props, or sound) did you observe during the performance?

ETIQUETTE 101

RULES FOR THE THEATER



Attending a ballet performance is much like going to the movies—only the magic is live. The lights will dim before the performance begins, and the theater will remain dark until the end, except during intermission. Audience members are expected to sit quietly while the dancers perform, with applause warmly welcomed at the conclusion of each scene. However, loud expressions such as shouting, whistling, or screaming are discouraged, as they can distract both performers and fellow audience members.

Guests are encouraged to dress comfortably, keeping in mind that food, beverages, and chewing gum are not permitted inside the auditorium. Restroom visits are allowed as needed, but should be done quietly and with minimal disruption. Because all performance material is protected by copyright, photography and video recording are strictly prohibited.

Rules of the Theater

- Avoid Distractions – Silence or turn off your phone and give the performers your full attention.
- Open Your Mind – Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the performance, and enjoy forming your own interpretations.
- Be a Courteous Participant – Follow audience guidelines at all times to ensure an enjoyable experience for everyone.
- Enjoy the Show!



SHARE THE POWER OF DON QUIXOTE WITH YOUR STUDENTS!

Friday April 16, 2027 • 10:30 a.m.

Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock

One of the most beloved works in the classical ballet repertoire, Don Quixote is a joyful celebration of romance, humor, and dazzling virtuosity. Inspired by Miguel de Cervantes' timeless novel, Ballet Arkansas's production combines exhilarating choreography, vibrant music, colorful Spanish-inspired costumes, and lively theatrical design to transport audiences to the sun-filled streets of Spain. Overflowing with spirited dancing, unforgettable characters, and infectious energy, Don Quixote is a spectacular theatrical experience that delights audiences of every generation.

Tickets: \$5 Student & \$10 Educator