

SLEEPY HOLLOW

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

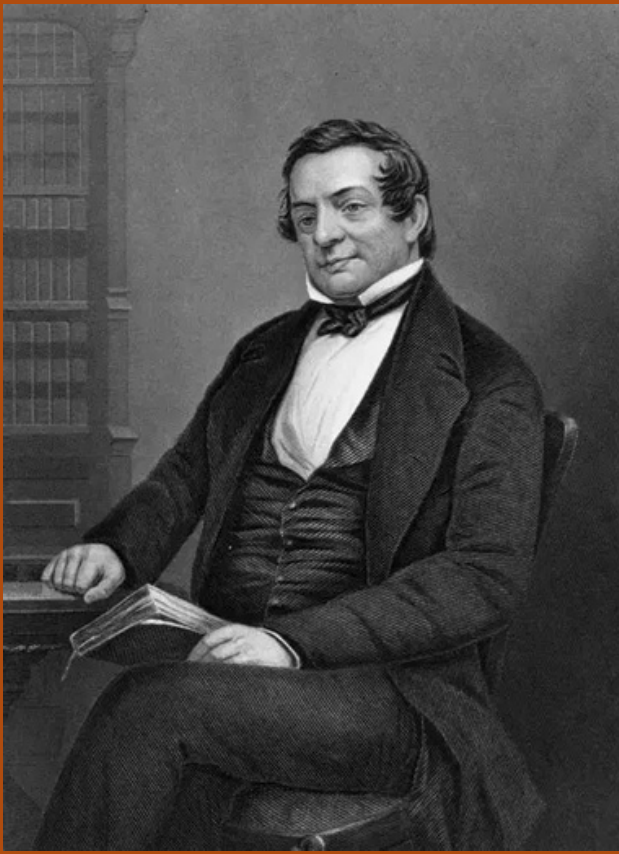


Ballet Arkansas's company of 17 professional dancers are full-time, salaried employees who receive employment benefits and work a standard Monday–Friday schedule. Many are graduates of the nation's most prestigious university dance programs, while others have trained at some of America's finest ballet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

Washington Irving was one of the first internationally acclaimed American authors and is often called the “Father of American Literature.” He was born in New York City just after the American Revolution and named after George Washington, whom he later met as a young boy.

Irving began his career writing satirical essays and sketches for newspapers under pseudonyms. His early success came with *A History of New-York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* (1809), published under the pen name Diedrich Knickerbocker—a name that became synonymous with New Yorkers.

In 1815, Irving traveled to Europe, where he spent 17 years living abroad. During this period, he wrote some of his most famous works, including *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819–1820), which contained *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*. These stories established his reputation both in the United States and abroad, blending European Romanticism with distinctly American themes and settings.

Known for his graceful prose, gentle humor, and ability to weave folklore into engaging narratives, Irving influenced generations of American writers, including Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. He spent his final years at his estate, Sunnyside, in Tarrytown, New York—near the very village that inspired *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

STORY BREAKDOWN

Setting

The story takes place in the early 19th century in Sleepy Hollow, a quiet, superstitious Dutch settlement near Tarry Town, New York. The area is steeped in ghost stories, the most famous being that of the Headless Horseman, the ghost of a Hessian soldier who lost his head to a cannonball during the Revolutionary War.

Main Characters

- Ichabod Crane – A lanky, superstitious, and somewhat awkward schoolteacher from Connecticut who comes to Sleepy Hollow to teach. He’s ambitious and eager to improve his social standing.
- Katrina Van Tassel – A beautiful, wealthy young woman, daughter of a prosperous farmer. She’s charming, flirtatious, and enjoys having multiple suitors vie for her attention.
- Brom Bones (Abraham Van Brunt) – A strong, boisterous local hero and Ichabod’s main rival for Katrina’s affection. Known for his love of practical jokes and horse riding.
- The Headless Horseman – A legendary ghost said to ride through the Hollow at night in search of his missing head.

Plot Summary

- Ichabod Arrives – Ichabod Crane becomes the local schoolteacher and boarding guest in the homes of the villagers. He charms his students and ingratiates himself with the townspeople, especially by helping with chores and joining in local gossip.
- Romantic Rivalry – Ichabod meets Katrina Van Tassel and quickly sets his sights on her, partly for love but largely for her inheritance. Brom Bones, her favored local suitor, sees Ichabod as competition.
- The Harvest Party – The Van Tassels host a lively autumn feast with music, dancing, and ghost stories. Brom Bones recounts tales of the Headless Horseman. Ichabod lingers afterward to propose to Katrina but is rejected.
- The Ride Home – Dejected, Ichabod rides home through the dark woods, haunted by tales from the party. He sees a mysterious horseman who appears to have no head.
- The Chase – The rider pursues Ichabod, eventually throwing his “head” (a pumpkin) at him, knocking him from his horse.
- The Aftermath – Ichabod disappears from Sleepy Hollow. Some say the Horseman spirited him away; others suggest he fled in humiliation. Brom Bones later marries Katrina, hinting he may have orchestrated the entire scare.

Themes: superstition vs. reason, the power of folklore, rivalry, ambition, and the blending of humor with the macabre.

QUESTIONS

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you know about life in early 19th-century America, when *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was written?
2. How might costumes, scenery, and props in the ballet help us understand that time period?
3. Why do you think Washington Irving's ghost story has remained popular for over 200 years?
4. What details from history—like the Revolutionary War—are connected to the legend of the Headless Horseman?
5. How did the dancers show personality traits (like Ichabod's awkwardness or Brom Bones's confidence) without using words?
6. Which dance movements or gestures helped you understand the emotions in a scene?
7. Were there repeated movements or "motifs" that helped tell the story or signal important moments?
8. How did the choreography change between lighthearted scenes and scary or suspenseful scenes?
9. How did lighting affect the mood—bright and welcoming vs. dark and mysterious?
10. Which props or set pieces helped make the setting feel like Sleepy Hollow?
11. How did costumes tell you about each character's role, social status, or personality?
12. Were there moments when stage effects (fog, shadows, lanterns, etc.) made the scene more dramatic?
13. How did the music change to match different moods—romantic, playful, tense, or frightening?
14. Did the rhythm, tempo, or instrumentation help you feel the urgency of certain moments (like the chase scene)?
15. Were there parts where the music and movement seemed to "talk" to each other? How did that add to the story?

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 MAGIC OF THE SLEEPY HOLLOW WITH YOUR STUDENTS!

Friday, October 10, 2025 • 10:30 a.m.

Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock

This thrilling new ballet adaptation of Washington Irving's classic American ghost story will have students on the edge of their seats. Set in the mysterious, folklore-rich village of Sleepy Hollow, the production blends powerful choreography, vivid storytelling, and a touch of suspense. Ichabod Crane, Katrina Van Tassel, and the legendary Headless Horseman bring Sleepy Hollow to life in a way only live performance can. Tickets: \$8 Student & \$10 Educator