

Guidelines for Teachers

Curriculum Connections:

- Dance
- Writing
- Media Literacy

Learning Goals:

- Recognizing and appreciating how dancers connect and communicate through live performance and media
- Experiencing, responding to, and analyzing contemporary ballet through reflective and critical writing
- Exploring Aszure Barton's *Come In* as a piece of living art

Big Ideas:

- Dance is a living art form
- Choreographers and dancers use the language of dance to communicate
- Choreographic works evolve as dancers' bring their own interpretations, identities, and experiences to the piece

Big Questions:

- How do choreographers use the elements of dance to create movement experiences?
- What can we learn about each other and ourselves through collective artistic experiences?
- How do choreographic works originate? How do dancers, choreographers, and audiences keep choreographic works alive?
- How can media texts facilitate a collective arts experience when we are physically separated?
- How does choreography evolve over time?

Getting Started:

- Assign the whole guide to your students as an extended project or pick and choose sections to assign at different times

Watch *Come In*: www.nbs-enb.ca/loveballet

Student Viewing Guide

Come In

Choreography: Aszure Barton

Staged by: Jonathan Alsberry

Répétiteur: Shaun Amyot

Music: Vladimir Martynov

About Aszure Barton:

Canadian choreographer Aszure Barton is the founder and director of Aszure Barton & Artists. She has created works for Mikhail Baryshnikov, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, American Ballet Theatre, The National Ballet of Canada, Nederlands Dans Theater, The Martha Graham Dance Company, Bayerisches Staatsballett, Sydney Dance Company, Houston Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and BJM Danse Montréal (Resident Artist 05-08), among others. Barton has led masterclasses, mentored and collaborated with renowned institutions including The Juilliard School, Harvard University, Canada's National Ballet School, and The Laban Institute in London.

Barton was the first artist-in-residence at The Baryshnikov Arts Center in 2005 and has been a resident artist at The Banff Center since 2009. She has been proclaimed an official Ambassador of Contemporary Choreography in Canada and has received many accolades including the prestigious Arts & Letters Award, joining the ranks of Oscar Peterson, Eugene Levy, Karen Kain and Christopher Plummer.

Barton was born and raised in Alberta, Canada, and received her formal training at Canada's National Ballet School where, as a student, she helped originate the Stephen Godfrey Choreographic Showcase. She graduated from NBS in 1993.

About *Come In*:

Aszure Barton's *Come In* was first created for thirteen dancers, including Mikhail Baryshnikov and Hell's Kitchen Dance. When Barton was an artist in residence at the Baryshnikov Arts Centre, Mikhail Baryshnikov shared a CD of Vladimir Martynov's score with her. In 2006, Baryshnikov reached out to Aszure, expressing his interest in being part of her creative process using Martynov's score as a guide. Through this process she began to find "humanity in the moments between the dance movements" (Barton), and collected a series of gestures that became the foundation for the work. After collaborating with Baryshnikov, she grew the cast to create a work that highlights individuality and oneness, with a sense of community that moves in the same direction with patience and humility.

When Mavis Staines, Artistic Director and CEO at NBS, approached Aszure to set a choreography on the professional students, she asked that Aszure work with an all-male cast. This newest version of *Come In* was modified for NBS students, and has been performed numerous times by an evolving cast of NBS students in Toronto, at the Mariinsky theatre in St Petersburg, and at the Holland Dance Festival.

Before watching *Come In*:

Who is Mikhail Baryshnikov?

- Do a quick internet search to find out about who Mikhail Baryshnikov is and what his impact has been on the world of ballet.
- Write a paragraph or point form notes highlighting interesting information you found

What is a movement motif?

- Look up the definition of the word motif, and describe how it can be used as a choreographic tool.

Take a moment to reflect. Read and think about the following statements:

- How can artistic works be remounted and reinvisioned over time?
- How can choreographers and dance artists collaborate to stage a choreographic work?
- Think about a time you created a piece of art for someone else or with someone in mind.

Watch *Come In*:

Because this is a recorded performance, you can watch it once through to fully experience it, and then again to take notes.

Take Intentional Notes:

Use the following to create your own note-taking template before you watch. You can do this on paper or on the computer. This will help you keep your notes organized. You may already have a template for the previous viewing. If that template worked well for you, use it again, or make some modifications based on your experience using it.

- **Before:** There are many bits of information you can gather and include in your notes before you start watching.
 - Date
 - Performance location
 - Title
 - Choreographer
 - Composer
 - Designers (costume, lighting, set)
 - Cast information, if available
 - Reason for performance (e.g., regular season, fundraiser, part of an event, student showcase)
 - Context (societal, cultural, historical)
 - Details about plot/theme

- **During:** It can be tricky to take notes while you are watching a performance. If you look down at your notebook the whole time, you'll miss a lot. Remember that you do not need to retell the whole performance. Fully experiencing the performance is important, so focus your note taking during the performance on the following:
 - Specific details relevant to the development of the story or theme
 - Your aesthetic judgement of movement phrases, images, or patterns
 - Particular dancer or dancers that stand out for you
 - Movement motifs you notice (recurring movement patterns that develop the theme, the story, the characters)
 - Artistic details you think you might forget by the end (e.g., the way the costumes moved on the dancers, or a musical phrase that moved the theme forward)

After: Write down your initial response. Use the following questions to help shape your response.

- Which moments were the most memorable?
- Which dancers stood out for you?
- What was your aesthetic impression of the piece?
- What was missing?
- What message do you think the choreographer was sending?
- What was the emotional effect?
- Describe some images that stick with you.
- How did the choreographer and dancers use the elements of dance (time, space, energy, body, and relationship)?

Short Answer Questions:

After watching *Come In*, answer the following questions in approximately 1-2 paragraphs each.

1. How does the title fit the piece? Use specific examples from the choreography to support your response.
2. How do you see relationships and friendship represented in the piece? Describe two examples, emphasizing the movement.
3. Explore the use of stillness, solos, and unison in *Come In*.
 - a. How does the choreographer use stillness in *Come In*? What is the value of stillness in choreography? What kind of a visual and/or emotional effect does it create?
 - b. How does the choreographer use solos in *Come In*? What is the impact of a solo within a group work?
 - c. How does the choreographer use unison in *Come In*? How might the visual effect of unison differ with small and large groups of dancers?
4. Choose one of the elements of dance (time, space, energy, body, relationship), and describe the use of that element in *Come In*. Give at least 3 examples.
5. How does the choreographer use everyday gestures and movements? Choose one example and describe how it is repeated and varied throughout the excerpt of *Come In*.
6. When you were watching the piece, did you think of anything else (a person/people in your community, a memory, a place, an experience, a book, a movie, a song, etc.)? Why do you think that came to mind?
7. Which was the most memorable moment of the choreography for you? Describe the movement. Why was it memorable?
8. How might this online viewing platform inform your experience of watching *Come In*? What do you think would be different about watching this piece live? What would be the same?
9. Think about the following words. How does the meaning of each word apply to the choreography?
 - a. Patience
 - b. Honesty
 - c. Humanity

Essay Prompts:

After watching *Come In*, choose **one** of the following prompts, and respond with a persuasive essay.

1. What is the significance of *Come In* as a student performance? What kind of an impact do student performances have on dancers and audiences?
2. Who's artistic voices and identities are present in *Come In*? How are those voices heard through movement and music?
3. In what ways is *Come In* a work of living art? How might a work like *Come In* evolve over time? Who can keep choreographic works like *Come In* alive and relevant?

Journal:

After watching *Come In*, respond informally to the following journaling prompts. Choose how long you would like your responses to be. Responses can be oral, written, or graphic.

1. How did you feel watching *Come In*? What emotions did the performance evoke?
2. Did watching the choreography bring up any memories for you? Why do you think that memory came up?
3. Did you feel a personal connection to this piece? Why or why not?
4. Would you share *Come In* with others? If so, who would you like to share this with? Write a letter to that person saying why you are sharing it and why you think they would want to see it.
5. Have you ever created a work of art for someone else? Did you create it with them? Was it inspired by them? Or was it a gift?

Performance Review

Practice writing a (1-2 page) performance review of *Come In*, using the attached guidelines. Use your notes, your journal, and your short answer questions to inform your review.

Performance Review Guidelines

Introduction:

- Include the following:
 - Date (if it is a video, include the actual performance date)
 - Title
 - Choreographer
 - Composer
 - Designers (lighting, costume, sound, etc.)
 - Relevant historical and societal context about when/where/how the piece was created and/or performed.
- Include a short synopsis of the piece. Remember that you are not recounting the whole piece. The reader may not have seen it yet, so give just enough information for your reader to understand your opinion. No spoilers!

- Offer your general opinion about the piece. Like a persuasive essay, you will begin with a thesis statement, and supporting arguments.
 - A good thesis will go further than simply saying you liked or disliked the performance. The following questions might help you create your thesis.
 - What is the purpose of this piece? Do you think it was achieved?
 - Who might want to watch this and who might not want to watch this?
 - Would you see it again? Why?
 - What was well executed about the performance and what could be improved?

Body

- Develop your argument using specific examples from the choreography.
- Support your argument by describing and analyzing the following:
 - Choreography
 - Dancers
 - Theme/story
 - Costumes
 - Music
 - Lighting/stage design
- Make sure to provide evidence for aesthetic judgements by describing the movement you saw and analyzing why you responded that way.
- If possible, name dancers when describing their movement.
- When analyzing, avoid absolute statements like “the best”, “the worst”, or “perfect”.
- Instead, think about what you thought was effective or ineffective. For example, “the choreography was moving because...”, or “the storyline was confusing, because...”.
- Avoid exaggerations like, “she is the most beautiful dancer ever.”
- Instead, think about why you felt that way. For example, you could write that “her sensitive port de bras and graceful leaps were captivating.”

Conclusion

- Restate your thesis.
- Summarize your argument.
- Leave off with an engaging ending.

Before you start writing, explore examples of dance performance reviews on <https://dancetabs.com/>

Some movement verbs you can use instead of 'do' and 'be':

- Move
- Leap
- Exit
- Share
- Inspire
- Jump
- Travel
- Lift
- Step
- Stretch
- Enter
- Carry
- Support
- Reach
- Rebound
- Turn
- Execute
- Balance
- Connect

Some adverbs you can use to describe movement:

- Carefully
- Sensitive
- Gently
- Creatively
- Accidentally
- Precisely
- Vigorously
- Enthusiastically
- Elegantly
- Fluidly
- Energetically
- Quickly
- Confidently
- Boldly
- Mechanically
- Effortlessly
- Slowly
- Generously
- Awkwardly