

Queensland Ballet

AND QUEENSLAND PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE PRESENT

DEREK DEANE'S

STRICTLY GERSHWIN



Teacher
Resource Kit

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

If Queensland Ballet's 2016 Season is a celebration of all that glitters, then *Strictly Gershwin* is surely the jewel in the crown. This dazzling production is dance at its most joyous.

I am thrilled to bring Derek Dean's spectacular work to Australia for the first time. A renowned dancer and choreographer (Royal Ballet, English National Ballet), with *Strictly Gershwin* Derek evokes the silver screen magic of a bygone era and gives you Queensland Ballet as you've never seen us before.

Strictly Gershwin's challenging choreography demands impeccable technique and versatility from our dancers, with the much-loved music of George and Ira Gershwin paired with tap, ballroom, musical theatre and jazz dance, alongside classical ballet. For the astounding Busby Berkley-inspired numbers, our dancers will be joined by a team of the country's finest tappers, led by Red Hot Rhythm's Bill Simpson.

Under the musical direction of Gareth Valentine, Queensland Symphony Orchestra also takes to the stage in this production, joining us in the style of a 1930s big band with special guest vocalists, as much a part of the action as the dancers.

For students and teachers alike, *Strictly Gershwin* is a rare opportunity to experience the extraordinary physicality, artistry and technical ability of Queensland Ballet in a whole new light. This bold production brings together a variety of art forms and their interconnectivity will encourage students to expand their thinking and embrace the unexpected, just as our dancers have. Through this Teacher Resource Kit and our in-school workshops, you can bring even more of the rich Gershwin legacy into your classroom.

Shall we dance?

Li Cunxin
Artistic Director



Production Credits

Gershwin is a registered trademark of Gershwin Enterprises and is used under license. Generously supported by Amanda Talbot.

Strictly Gershwin images

Creative Direction: Designfront Photography: Simon Lekias

Styling: Mark Vassallo Make-up: Nicole Thompson, Senior Artist M.A.C. Hair: Richard Kavanagh

Sheldon College workshop images by Ali Cameron

BACKGROUND

About Queensland Ballet's Education program

Queensland Ballet is a vibrant and creative company that enriches and transforms lives through dance. With a culture of creativity and collaboration, complemented by an active program of engagement with our communities, the Company has become the central hub for dance in the State.

Our Education program offers students and teaching staff from state, Catholic and independent schools inspiring, accessible and life-long dance experiences regardless of age and ability.

Developed by a team of highly experienced program managers, teaching artists, community engagement specialists and registered educators, all opportunities are underpinned by artistic excellence, authenticity, accessibility and creativity.

Above all, the focus of our work is to complement and enhance the teaching and learning currently taking place in schools.

Queensland University of Technology and Queensland Ballet collaboration

In 2016, as part of an ongoing collaboration with QUT Dance, Queensland Ballet's Education representatives worked with Graduate Diploma of Education student-teachers to discuss the benefits of school students attending live dance performances, and the ways in which teachers can maximise student learning outcomes through creating and delivering pre- and post-show activities.

QUT student-teachers were required to create one Appreciation, Choreographic and Performance activity each, with five students having the opportunity to see their work published in this *Strictly Gershwin* Teacher Resource Kit.

Using this Kit

Queensland Ballet acknowledges the power of dance as an artistic medium and the many benefits available to students participating in dance within a school context.

To assist teachers in implementing these inspiring and creative activities into classrooms, activities have been linked to the:



YEARS 7 - 10

Content descriptions of the Australian Curriculum (AC) – The Arts Learning Area: Dance Subject (Version 8.1) across the two strands Making and Responding



YEARS 11 - 12

General objectives of the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) – Dance Senior Syllabus 2010 across the three dimensions Choreography, Performance and Appreciation

Strictly Gershwin in-school workshop, Sheldon College



About *Strictly Gershwin*

Strictly Gershwin, first performed in 2012 by the English National Ballet, is a spectacular tribute to George and Ira Gershwin and the big band era of the thirties, evoking the silver screen magic of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and the glamour of a golden age.

Queensland Ballet and special guests take the audience on a glamorous journey through ballet, jazz, tap and ballroom dance genres, culminating in a spectacular grand finale – the sparkling, energetic ballet from *An American in Paris*.

Devised, choreographed and directed by **DEREK DEAN**

Words and Music **GEORGE GERSHWIN AND IRA GERSHWIN**

Music adapted, supervised and conducted by **GARETH VALENTINE**

QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lighting Design

HOWARD HARRISON

Costume Design

ROBERTA GUIDI DI BAGNO

Assistant to the Choreographer

IVAN GIL ORTEGA

Tap Choreographer/Artist

BILL SIMPSON

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Why *Strictly Gershwin* in my Classroom?

The collaborative nature of musical theatre involves dramatic elements and storytelling through music, dance and song and promotes exuberant expression in students through a range of dance genres including ballet, tap and jazz.

The study of musical theatre allows teachers and students to explore a range of eras and to chart the historical influences that shaped this dance genre. *Strictly Gershwin* embraces the music from the Tin Pan Alley era of the 1930s. George and Ira Gershwin created unconventional music that was recognisably American in nature, combining blues and jazz in a classical compositional form, shaping the choreography of Hollywood choreographers such as Fred Astaire (*Funny Face*), Hermes Pan (*A Damsel in Distress*), George Balanchine (*Shall We Dance*) and Gene Kelly (*An American in Paris*).

Students studying this material will have many opportunities to explore the cultural and ethnic influences of the period, making links between a range of art forms including dance, music, theatre and opera. By exploring this vibrant era of dance and music, students observe the influence of popular music and dance on the more established arenas of opera, ballet and the concert hall.

Kym Stevens

Lecturer in Dance Education
School of Media, Entertainment and Creative Arts
Creative Industries Faculty
Queensland University of Technology



Q and A with Bill Simpson

Tap Choreographer/Artist of *Strictly Gershwin*

How is your version of the tap choreography different to the English National Ballet version?

I love the tap choreography from the original production although I've really tackled this project personally, as if for the first time. I have opted to embrace a very 'gentlemanly' style of tap, a throwback to the elegant charm of Fred Astaire's era.

How has the music inspired your tap choreography?

Music is always my primary inspiration. Fortunately, inspiration comes easy with the remarkable music of George and Ira Gershwin which is rhythmically complex, while at the same time a joy to listen and choreograph to; a rare combination. Sometimes I exactly match the tap choreography rhythms to that of the music, at other times I prefer to explore with my own rhythms in an attempt to compliment the music, and occasionally I simply step back and allow the music to unfold on its own.

What similarities can you describe across the dance genres in *Strictly Gershwin* which transcend specific techniques?

I think the music emanates an elegance that is born out of confidence and humility and is reflected through the different dance genres. To accommodate this, I have choreographed a graceful style of tap that glides along the stage but still embodies a strong energy. I have really pushed the dancers and myself to seek this balance of grace and strength and indulge in the music and choreography.

For you, what are the most enjoyable aspects of tap?

Tap is a rare form of magic. Nothing compares to performing tap. You have to be both dancer and musician; constantly striving to find the balance between the two. Arguably, this sets tap apart from the rest of the dance genres and styles and is the most fun you can have in shoes!



Bill Simpson

ACTIVITIES FOR BAND 4:

A Year 7 – 8 Classroom

1

CHOREOGRAPHY

- Discuss the use of expressive skills and time elements of the tap genre.
- Explain and discuss how these time elements are also present during pedestrian movements such as secret handshakes (e.g. high fives and fist bumps).
- Group students into pairs and ask them to create two secret hand shake combinations experimenting with different time elements.
- Introduce a sample piece of music from *Strictly Gershwin* (e.g. *Rhapsody in Blue*) and discuss George Gershwin's use of time elements.
- Ask students to develop their choreography, creating links between the music and their phrase, abstracting their phrase.
- Group two pairs together and ask students to teach each other their phrase, deciding the order (creating binary form) and making a start and finish position.
- Provide time for students to share their choreography with each other.

Activity provided by Corey Papinniemi, QUT.

Making – (ACADAM013)

Making – (ACADAM014)

Making – (ACADAM016)

2

PERFORMANCE

- Teach students a modified ballet or tap phrase from *Strictly Gershwin* with arms placed on hips.
- Discuss with students the use of dynamic and time elements and technical and expressive skills specific to the dance genre.
- Examine various pictures and videos of the genre and identify the various ways that the performers use their arms and expressive skills to enhance the intent of the choreography.
- Divide students into pairs and ask them to take turns (call and response pattern) performing eight counts of the phrase at a time and improvising with various arms and facial expressions.
- Students can select and discuss their favourite use of arms and practice and refine the phrases to share with the rest of the class.

Activity provided by Kate Jones, QUT.

Making – (ACADAM015)

Making – (ACADAM017)

Responding – (ACADAR018)

3

APPRECIATION

- As a class, watch a short excerpt from *Strictly Gershwin* and discuss the various ways that the elements of dance were used.
- Divide students into groups of five and provide each a different section of *Strictly Gershwin*.
- Ask students to make a poster using words, drawings and magazine cut-outs to represent, describe and analyse that music genre and dance genre.
- Ask students to consider the various space, time, dynamic and relationship elements of the dance genre as well as how the music makes them feel. Groups can present their posters to the other groups, pointing out key features and discussing how these may be different to previous ballets they have seen.

Activity provided by Siobhan Rogers, QUT.

Responding – (ACADAR018)

Responding – (ACADAR019)



Strictly Gershwin in-school workshop,
Sheldon College

ACTIVITIES FOR BAND 5:

A Year 9 – 10 Classroom

1

CHOREOGRAPHY

- Discuss with students the use of space, dynamic and relationship elements of the jazz genres within dance and music.
- Provide students with video excerpts from *Strictly Gershwin* and point out examples of how movement has been structured to build to a climax.
- Divide students into groups of four, supplying them with art deco pictures of jazz dancers. Using these pictures, ask students to improvise and individually create three freeze frames (motifs), each placed in a different group formation.
- Drawing from the earlier discussion, ask students to create a locomotor phrase that incorporates a choreographic device and one of their motifs, traveling from their first group formation to their second group formation.
- Ask students to link arms to form a chorus line and choreograph a locomotor phrase (travelling forwards like a pinwheel) to then separate and form their third freeze frame.
- Provide time for students to share their choreography with each other.

Activity provided by Corey Papinniemi, QUT.

Making – (ACADAM020)
 Making – (ACADAM021)
 Making – (ACADAM023)



2

PERFORMANCE

- Teach students a tap phrase (e.g. a soft shoe shuffle) to a piece of music from *Strictly Gershwin* (e.g. 'S Wonderful') and two modifications of this phrase, adapted by applying the characteristics of two other dance genres in *Strictly Gershwin* (e.g. a ballet to *Rhapsody in Blue*).
- Discuss the similarities and differences between the genre-based techniques, technical and expressive skills, and space, time and dynamic elements of each phrase and the different mood/intent created.
- After practicing and refining, students can perform for each other and provide constructive feedback on how successful they were in conveying the different moods/intents and how they could better convey this through either technical or expressive skills.

Activity provided by Belinda Raisin, QUT.

Making – (ACADAM022)
 Making – (ACADAM024)
 Responding – (ACADAR025)

3

APPRECIATION

- Divide students into groups of four and provide each group with butcher's paper.
- Ask students to brainstorm elements of dance (qualities and characteristics) that they associate with a ballet performance.
- Ask groups to share their discoveries with each other.
- Discuss with students the origins of ballet and how it has evolved over time, including the different uses of the elements of dance.
- As a class, watch a short excerpt from *Strictly Gershwin* and discuss with the students how the elements of dance of this ballet may differ to those that they wrote down on their butcher's paper, relating the discussion back to the evolution of ballet.

Activity provided by Claudia Rasche, QUT.

Responding – (ACADAR026)

ACTIVITIES FOR SENIOR YEARS:

A Year 11 – 12 Classroom

1

CHOREOGRAPHY

- As a class watch several segments of *Strictly Gershwin* and discuss and evaluate how effectively props are used to create the intent/mood of the piece (e.g. canes, hats and prams).
- Divide students into pairs and provide them with a prop.
- Ask students to explore how they use actions, movement components, and technical and expressive skills to interact with their prop to convey a choreographic intent.
- Provide students with time after each session to write a brief blog post to justify their choreographic decisions and reflect on the collaborative choreographic process.

Activity provided by Jacob Williams, QB.

Choreography – (QCAA 2010)



2

PERFORMANCE

- Warm up with a technique class that includes both ballet and tap exercises.
- Discuss with students the specific movement vocabulary and the different use of the elements of dance across the two dance genres.
- Teach students two excerpts (one tap and one ballet) from *Strictly Gershwin*. Two effective pieces that could be used are *Rhapsody in Blue* (ballet) and *Lady be Good* (tap) in Act 1.
- Discuss and compare with students the differences and similarities between the technical and expressive skills required when performing these two excerpts.

Activity provided by Jacob Williams, QB.

Performance – (QCAA 2010)

3

APPRECIATION

Derek Deane's *Strictly Gershwin* is performed to a range of Gershwin songs that were originally composed for musical theatre or opera (e.g. *Summertime* was originally composed for the opera *Porgy and Bess*, 1934).

- Students select one of the songs performed from *Strictly Gershwin* that was originally composed for a musical theatre or opera and compare and contrast the different choreographic intents of the dances performed to this piece.
- They may also evaluate how effectively the movement and non-movement components were used to convey this choreographic intent.
- Remind students to use relevant ballet terminology and reference ideas appropriately.

Activity provided by Belinda Raisin, QUT.

Appreciation – (QCAA 2010)

Queensland Ballet

Contact Us






For more information about how Queensland Ballet supports students and teachers, or to discuss ways to get involved with us, please contact:

Jacob Williams, Education Coordinator
jwilliams@queenslandballet.com.au

Felicity Mandile, Education and Engagement Director
fmandile@queenslandballet.com.au

queenslandballet.com.au

Sign up to Repertoire, whether dance is your profession,
your passion — or both

 Facebook  Twitter  YouTube  Pinterest  Instagram



LEAD PARTNER



CREATIVE PARTNER

