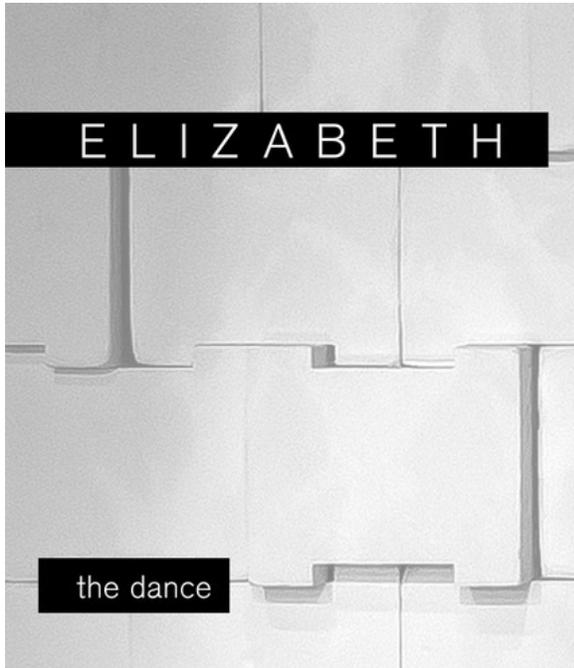


**Education Material Packet for
Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company's
Student Preview *SPRING SEASON* 2017
Elizabeth, the dance by Ann Carlson**



Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company presents the world premiere of *Elizabeth, the dance*, an evening-length work conceived and choreographed by visionary artist Ann Carlson. Built for the concert stage, this full-evening-length collaboration between Carlson and Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company is an episodic accumulation of dances that are poignant, surprising, and sometimes restrained. It traces personal and public histories through the lens of embodiment, desire, and delight. *Elizabeth, the dance* is a puzzle, a meditation, and a love letter.

Carlson says: “*My intention in this work is to pay homage to a present moment, to that which has come before, to teachers, to histories, to dancers and the powers of dancing, and to the joys, disappointments, and mysteries of desire.*”

Please find inside this information packet; artist biography, contextual information, and movement lesson ideas inspired by *Elizabeth, the dance* by Ann Carlson.



Artist Biography: ANN CARLSON



“Ann Carlson is a conceptual artist who uses gesture, text and humor to break your heart.”

– William Harris, New York Times

“Carlson’s work mines the ephemeral and the commonplace toward extraordinary results.”

– Robin Wander, Stanford News

Ann Carlson’s work borrows from the disciplines of dance, performance, theater, visual and conceptual art, and often dismantles conventional boundaries between artist and subject. Carlson’s work takes the form of solo performance, site-specific projects, ensemble dance and theatrical works, and performance/video. She also often works within a series format, creating socially engaged performance structures over a period of years that adapt and tour to multiple sites. Carlson is the recipient of over thirty commissions and numerous awards for her artistic work. Her awards include: a 2016 Creative Capital Award, 2015 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award in Contemporary Dance, five Multi-Art Production Fund Grants, a USA Artist Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, and a Fellowship from the Foundation for Contemporary Art. She was an Artist Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies Fellowship/Harvard University and at Stanford University’s Humanities Center. Carlson has received three awards from the National Choreographic Initiative; the first Cal/Arts Alpert Award in Choreography, and a prestigious three-year choreographic fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. *The Symphonic Body*, a performance/orchestral work made entirely of gestures, was recently performed by 100 people from across UCLA’s campus at Royce Hall in November 2015. Carlson’s *Doggie Hamlet*, a performance with a herding dog, a flock of sheep, and four human performers begins touring the US in 2017. Carlson’s project *Elizabeth, the dance* is inspired from a section of her *White* series (1992-1996). Carlson has developed *Elizabeth, the dance* as a concert dance that traces history and desire through the body of the dancer.

Elizabeth, the dance

Elizabeth, the dance is structured as ten episodic dances, woven together by multiple streams of inspiration; a mapping of the history of the contemporary dance form colliding with a tracing of desire and aliveness within the body of the dancers. Visually, *Elizabeth, the dance* takes place atop a white floor lying on top of a black floor, delineating the dancing space into a rectangle and amplifying the larger apparatus of the proscenium frame. A movable white wall also sits atop the white floor; the wall, moved by the dancers, shifts and morphs into a barrier, a back drop, or a boundary. Designed to come apart and be reassembled, the wall almost becomes another dancer— moving alongside the human forms in surprising, funny, and unpredictable ways. The dancers are dressed in "old school" black leotards, relating towards a different era. Gradually, as the work progresses, colorful additions are added and taken away (e.g., a wig, a belt, a cape, or part of the movable wall). During *Elizabeth, the dance*, the dancing body is constantly transforming and shifting, revealing the way the human body is itself both a canvas and a dynamic instrument of its time.



The work is accompanied by music that is a blend of popular songs from the 60's and 70's, current house music, electro pop, sound effects, and silence mixed live by a DJ. Carlson plans to acquire a DJ license to better understand the language of contemporary mixing. The movement material for *Elizabeth, the dance* borrows from dance history, embedding snippets of form and style from modern and postmodern dance of the 20th century, as well as post-postmodern and contemporary dance of the 21st century. In addition, Narrative Ballet, Polynesian influenced ideas, Native American influenced ideas are referenced in creative ways. This movement-based amalgam reflects the blurry lines of these categories, and plays inside and in spite of these



taxonomies. Pointing to the past in the present-ness of this work pays homage to those upon whose shoulders we stand as living contemporary artists. It also draws attention to the form's evolution and limitations of its labels.



Lesson ideas inspired by *Elizabeth, the dance*

- Pre-performance

Ann believes that dance is passed on like oral tradition from one generation to the next, and each “section” of *Elizabeth, the dance* utilizes a particular style or era of American modern dance in a contemporary way. Dance artists such as Isadora Duncan, Mary Wigman, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, José Limon, Alwin Nikolais, Pina Bausch, Trisha Brown, Elizabeth Streb are among those who are referenced in this work. In addition, Narrative Ballet, Polynesian influenced ideas, and Native American influenced ideas are also referenced in interesting ways.
- Discuss with your students - who are these historical dance figures mentioned above? What were they known for, or what particular characteristics made them become recognized as outstanding artists of their time?
- Do you know who choreographed the famous works below, and what year were they premiered (answers on the next page)? See if you can find a footage on the internet and take a look of these dances before you watch *Elizabeth, the dance*.
 - 1) Cafe Muller
 - 2) Crucible
 - 3) Set and Reset
- During the performance - look and see if you can recognize any of the artists, their characteristic movement, or famous work of choreography inside *Elizabeth the dance*. Some of them are more embedded than the others. What were some of Ann’s choreographic devices she used to make references to the dance history and events? Did she use a movement motif? Or literal gestures? Or did you hear something in the spoken text?
- Post-performance

There is a very strong scenic element to *Elizabeth, the dance*. The white wall can move through space. It can break apart, be thrown around, it can be assembled and

disassembled. It can serve as a podium or a chair, and make references to ancient ruins, toppling towers, or small stages. It acts like a seventh performer taking on a personality of its own. It also gives the work a unique visual design.

Find something in your studio, school, or dance studio that could be used as your scenic element. Then try the following task;
Choreograph a short dance with your scenic element/object. Your object has to have ways to a) change the space in a dramatic way, and/or b) change the feeling of the dance, and/or c)reference a historical event.

If possible, have a small performance and share with each other. Discuss what stood out for you and why? Could you identify the choreographer's intention, or was it open-ended for the audience's interpretation? What was the movement style? How was the dancer's performance? What were the movement choices that made the dance great?

Answers for the questions on page 4;

- 1) Cafe Muller (1978) by Pina Bausch
- 2) Crucible (1985)by Alwin Nikolais
- 3) Set and Reset (1983) by Trisha Brown

Enjoy the performance!

ririwoodbury.com
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Compiled by: Ai Fujii Nelson
Education Director
801.990.0252
education@ririwoodbury.com
Photo credit: Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company