

THE  
**Piano**  
: THE BALLET



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# Introduction

25 years ago, cinema goers around the world were captivated by an extraordinary tale of desire, violence and hope, unfolding against a backdrop of New Zealand's imagined past.

The Royal New Zealand Ballet is honoured to stage the world premiere of this new full-length dance work by Jiří Bubeníček, inspired by the film *The Piano* with permission kindly granted by Jane Campion, Jan Chapman and Saddleback Productions.

As well as a wide range of production-related insights, this resource also includes some cross-curricular activities to introduce you and your students to the emotionally powerful and passionate world of *The Piano: the ballet*.

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WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE UNIQUE PROCESS OF ACKNOWLEDGING HOW OUR ART UPHOLDS THE MANA OF THIS LAND AND THE PARTNERSHIP VALUES WE STRIVE FOR, AS ALL NEW ZEALANDERS SHOULD.

We have recognised the complexities of staging a work that depicts the very real participants of the Treaty of Waitangi, as Tangata Whenua meet Pakeha settlers, and have attempted to address this with sensitivity and care. Of paramount importance has been the need to consider the depiction of Māori characters onstage, recognising that a literal portrayal, by non-Māori artists, would be inappropriate.

The story you see unfolding onstage tells not only a story of great imagination and courage, with iconic characters remembered from a legendary film, but has also been the beginning of a new journey for the Royal New Zealand Ballet. The incorporation of Tikanga Māori practice and protocols into this artistic process, with the support of Moss Patterson and his wider whanau, has been inspiring for us all. We look forward to continuing and strengthening this part of our identity, as a New Zealand company, in the future.

**Waiho i te toipoto, kua i te toiroa**

**Let us keep close together, not far apart**

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**PATRICIA BARKER AND  
FRANCES TURNER**

ROYAL NEW ZEALAND BALLET  
FEBRUARY 2018

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# The Piano: the ballet

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### In this unit you and your students will:

- Learn about the elements that come together to create a ballet experience.
- Identify the processes involved in making a theatrical production.

### CURRICULUM LINKS IN THIS UNIT

#### Values

Students will be encouraged to value:

- **Innovation**, inquiry and curiosity, by thinking critically, creatively and reflectively.
- **Diversity**, as found in our different cultures and heritages.
- **Community and participation** for the common good.

### KEY COMPETENCIES

- **Using language, symbols and text** – Students will recognise how choices of language and symbols in live theatre affect people's understanding and the ways in which they respond.
- **Relating to others** – Students will develop the ability to listen actively and share ideas regarding theatrical ballet performances.
- **Participating and contributing** – Students will be actively involved in their cultural community, understanding the importance of creative environments.
- **Thinking** – Students will reflect on their own thinking and learning after the personal experience of attending a live theatre show.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR LEVELS 7 & 8

#### Level 7 students will learn how to:

- **Understand dance in context** – Investigate and evaluate the effects of individual, social, cultural, and technological influences on the development of a variety of dance genres and styles.
- **Develop practical knowledge** – Extend skills in the vocabulary, practices and technologies of selected dance genres and styles.
- **Communicate and interpret** – Analyse, explain and discuss aspects of performance and choreography in a range of dance works.

#### Level 8 students will learn how to:

- **Understand dance in context** – Investigate, analyse, and discuss the features, history, issues, and development of dance in New Zealand, including the contribution of selected individuals and groups.
- **Develop practical knowledge** – Extend and refine skills, practices, and use of technologies in a range of dance genres and styles.
- **Communicate and interpret** – Critically analyse, interpret, and evaluate the artistic features and the communication of ideas in a range of dance works.

### NCEA

*The Piano: the ballet*, and the use of this resource, is ideal for NCEA level dance teachers and students who are learning to analyse and appreciate a dance performance.

# New ballet based on the movie *The Piano*



JANE CAMPION

Born in Wellington in 1954, **Jane Campion** is a screenwriter, producer and director who currently resides in New South Wales, Australia. Campion is the second of five women ever nominated for the Academy Award for Best Director and is

the first – and thus far, only-female filmmaker in history to receive the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, which she received for directing the acclaimed film *The Piano* (1993). She also won the Best Director Award from the Australian Film Institute and an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for her film in 1994.

Campion's other films include *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996), *Holy Smoke!* (1999), *In the Cut* (2003), and *Bright Star* (2009). She wrote and directed the Emmy Award-winning miniseries *Top of the Lake* (2013) and its 2017 sequel, *Top of the Lake: China Girl*. She chaired the jury for the main competition section of the 2014 Cannes Film Festival, and in 2016 was appointed a Dame Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit.



## THE PIANO – THE MOVIE

Written and directed by New Zealand-born Jane Campion, produced by Australian Jan Chapman and financed by French company CiBy 2000, *The Piano* premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1993. This New Zealand drama film set during the mid-19th century in a rainy, muddy frontier backwater town on the coast of New Zealand, was a lyrical heartbreaking film. Starring Holly Hunter as Ada McGrath, Sam Neill as Alistair Stewart, Harvey Keitel as George Baines and Anna Paquin as Flora, it caused a sensation, and was a success both critically and commercially.

*'Not just about a story, or some characters, but a whole universe of feeling.'*

ROGER EBERT, FILM CRITIC

Jane Campion...*"I wanted to offer the world something it can't easily get elsewhere"*

NZ HERALD

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 1993

Listen to an interview with Jane Campion and Jan Chapman about the making of the film:

PART 1

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DopuUIYBX-g>

PART 2

▶ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Vdv\\_Efu49l](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Vdv_Efu49l)

# INSTRUMENT OF CHANGE

BY JAN CHILWELL

## THE PIANO

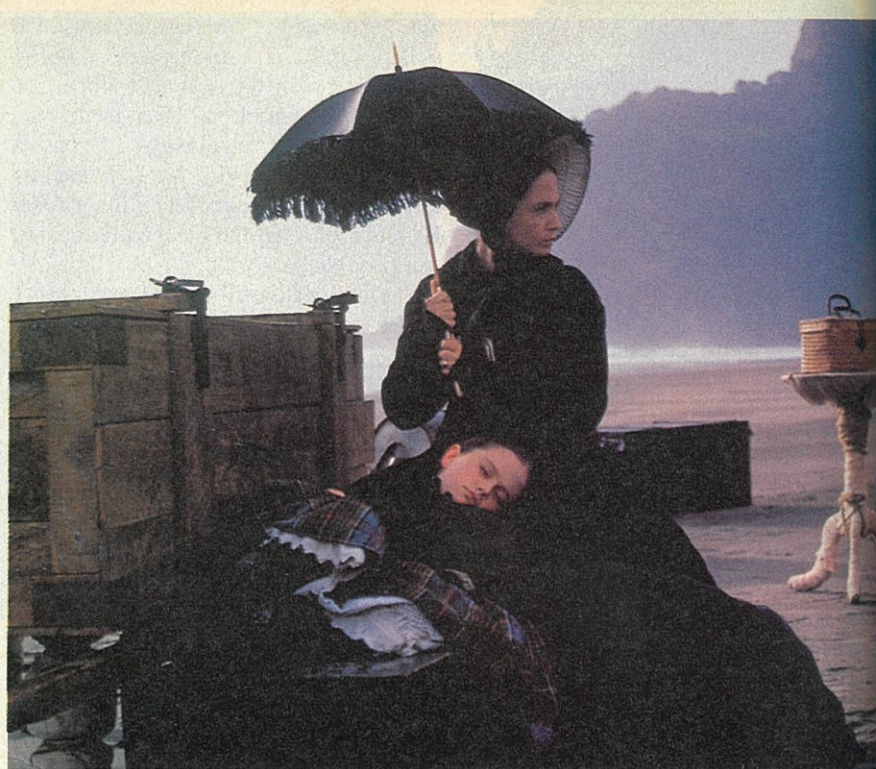
**RP13 Some scenes may disturb**

After its win at Cannes this year (it shared the prestigious Palme D'Or), Jane Campion's *The Piano* arrives here to very high expectations, some of which it grandly meets and some of which it sidesteps altogether.

In outline, the story, a period drama set in 19th-century New Zealand, reads like romantic melodrama. Ada (Holly Hunter), who has been mysteriously mute since the age of six (we are told in voiceover), arrives from Glasgow with her daughter (Anna Paquin) on a remote New Zealand ocean beach. They are to begin a new life with Stewart (Sam Neill), a settler she has never met – the marriage has been arranged long-distance by her father. Ada's most treasured possession – in effect, her "voice" – is her piano, which has been laboriously shipped and landed with her, but it is judged too bulky for Stewart and his retinue of native helpers to transport through the dense bush and muddy tracks to his homestead.

Later, Ada prevails upon a neighbour, an illiterate, tattooed ex-seaman named Baines (Harvey Keitel) to take her back to the beach, where the piano still stands in its packing boards. The passion with which she begins to play it fascinates him. He strikes a bargain with Stewart to exchange some of his land for the piano (as Ada's husband, Stewart has reflexively assumed ownership of the instrument). Part of that package is to be piano lessons from Ada. But, when Ada arrives for the lessons, Baines strikes a further bargain with her. He will sell her back the piano, at the rate of one black key per lesson, if she will allow him to do certain things to her as she plays. The arrangement introduces Ada, perhaps for the first time, to the deep sensuality of her own nature. And, for all the characters, it is the catalyst for powerful impulses and emotions.

Though we see the effects of this turmoil on the two main male characters – and both Neill and Keitel give marvellously effective performances, as does young Anna Paquin as Flora – it is Ada's experience that is central here. That experience may be melodramatic, but it is not romantic. We see the



**Holly Hunter as Ada and Anna Paquin as Flora in *The Piano*: epic romanticism.**

process by which she becomes connected to Baines (and through him to her new country), but the dominant tone in Hunter's performance is not Ada's attachment to Baines, but rather the strength of her will. At first it is focused on her child and her only means of expression – the piano. As the "lessons" progress, it shifts its focus to her sexual awakening.

This is far from the conventional portrait of a settler's wife. Campion never shows Ada in the kitchen or engaged in domestic chores. We see her at the piano, or communing with her daughter, who acts as her friend and interpreter (and that symbiosis, too, is ruptured by what happens). Though Ada burns with passion, we do not see her soften with love. The image of her that remains most strongly in my mind is her face – small, strained and steadfast – framed by two flat wings of hair and a black-rimmed Victorian bonnet. It is the outward expression, along with her muteness and her music, of the self-imposed buffer zone that lies between her and her surroundings.

Director of photography Stuart Dryburgh's evocative camerawork makes use of those surroundings as if they were players in these events. The wild indifferent beauty of the surf beach where Ada lands mirrors her alienation; the weightiness of rain, mud and thick emerald bush parallels the murky intensity of her entanglement with Baines. In this way at least, she is swallowed up by the new land.

In Neill's Stewart, however, we do see

something of the conventional European settler: he is separate from the land; his interest is in acquiring it. He has no understanding of or affection for the local Maori, with whom Baines has made close links. (Though Campion never focuses directly on her Maori characters, the film gives a strong sense of their individuality and place in the landscape.) But, whatever his shortcomings, Stewart is in many respects the most sympathetic of the central characters; he is certainly the most intelligible. His own sexual awakening – to the tortures of sexual jealousy – is preceded by a subtle portrait of a rather timid, proper man (at one point the Maori call him "old dryballs"), trying to assert himself in an unruly environment, reaching uncertainly for affection. His sketchy notions of Victorian propriety are blown aside in the storms unleashed by Ada's shameless, headlong self-discovery.

Hunter's Ada seems to live at a level of clear-eyed intensity that precludes empathy even as it arouses interest. And Keitel's Baines – already being described as a sort of Antipodean Lady Chatterly's lover – meets Ada at an instinctual level that is equally intense (at one point, in an echo of a scene from his recent release *Bad Lieutenant*, he is seen in full-frontal nakedness, caressing the piano). These powerful emotions, and the highly coloured, almost mannered style in which they are presented, threaten to overwhelm the human detail: *The Piano* works at a pitch of visual imagery and epic romanticism that can make it easier to admire than to feel. Still, it is undoubtedly a first-rate addition to Australasian cinema. ■

Listener SEPTEMBER 18 1993

Thank you to Tracy White, Senior Archivist – Documentation, Kaiatawhai Pūranga Matua, and Mishelle Muagututi'a, Documentation Team Leader, Kaiārahi Tira Pūranga ā-Tuhi, Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision, for assistance in viewing review and editorial coverage of *The Piano* from 1993. Excerpt from 'Instrument of Change', review of *The Piano* by Jan Chilwell, published on page 40 of the New Zealand Listener, September 18 1993.

## QUIZ TIME – WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. The ballet is based on:

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2. Who wrote and directed the film *The Piano*?

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3. Name some of the awards received in association with the movie *The Piano*:

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4. Who is the choreographer of *The Piano: the ballet*?

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5. In which city and country was the ballet originally created and performed?

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6. Where will this extended and new version of the ballet be seen for the first time ever?

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## Fun fact

Released in France, and then in the US, Australia and New Zealand, *The Piano* went on to win three Academy Awards, three BAFTAs, a Golden Globe, and numerous other awards, taking US\$140 million at the box office. In the pre-digital age, New Zealanders had to wait until September 1993 to see the film that had delivered a new vision of their country into cinemas around the world.

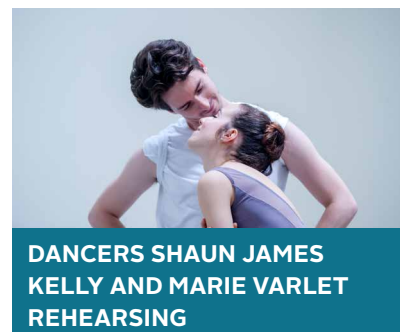
In 1994, *The Piano* received three Academy Awards at the 66th Academy Awards: Best Actress (Holly Hunter), Best Supporting Actress (Anna Paquin) and Best Original Screenplay (Jane Campion). It's important to note that Holly Hunter received an entirely deserved best actress Oscar for her role in the film, which is especially remarkable for a non-speaking part.



# The Piano: the ballet

## (WORLD PREMIERE)

Choreography – **Jiří Bubeníček**  
Set and Video Design – **Otto Bubeníček**  
Costume Design – **Elsa Pavanel**  
Music Arrangement and Composition – **Otto Bubeníček**  
Staging – **Jiří Bubeníček and Otto Bubeníček**  
Lighting Designer – **Jeremy Fern**



## JIŘÍ BUBENÍČEK

### CHOREOGRAPHY AND STAGING



A Czech citizen, **Jiří Bubeníček** was born in 1974. He studied dance at the Prague Conservatory prior to making his professional debut with John Neumeier's Hamburg Ballet in 1993. In a short period, he was promoted to Soloist (1995) and Principal Dancer (1997). In Hamburg, he danced all

the principal roles until August 2006, when he left Hamburg to become Principal Dancer with the Semperoper Ballett in Dresden, Germany.

Winner of the second prize at the 20th International Ballet Competition in Varna for his choreography *Made on Earth*, as well as the Public's Choice Award for *Prisoners of Feelings* at the 18th International Competition for Choreographers in Hanover, since 1999, Jiří has created many works for international companies including *Toccata* (New York City Ballet), *Le Soufflé de l'Esprit* (Zurich Ballet,

Manuel Legris's Vienna State Ballet and North Carolina Dance Theater), *Outrenoir* for the National Ballet of China and many more. His works have been performed throughout Europe, in Japan and in the USA.

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### 'The story begins like a river and ends in an ocean storm.'

*I first saw the movie The Piano a long time ago. I can't remember exactly when, but I was fascinated by it. The portrayal of nature, the characters and the acting, the tragic story, made me cry.*

*When I started to choreograph ballets, I always knew that I would make a ballet of The Piano one day, I just didn't know when. The first works that I made were abstract works – at least to the audience – and it took me a while to become confident as a storyteller in dance. When I started with narrative ballets, I fell in love with the genre and since then it has become a big passion. In 2013, I was talking to my friend Arsen Mehrabyan about my commission for a one-act story ballet from Ballet Dortmund. Arsen said 'This is it, you*

have to do *The Piano*. You always talk about this story' And I did: the one-act version of *The Piano*: the ballet was premiered in Dortmund in February 2014. Arsen became the dancer that danced the role of George Baines in the premiere with Dortmund Ballet, and now he is here as my assistant, accompanying me as I bring it to life again. I have the opportunity, and the freedom, to revisit my original ballet and to create a full evening work rather than just one part of a triple bill. It's exciting!

In some ways, creating a ballet from a film is easier than basing it on a play or a novel, because the pictures are in front of you. But you still have to translate the story and the images into dance, there's no spoken word. As I began work on the choreography for *The Piano*: the ballet, I imagined myself as every character, in the situations in the story, and tried to react to those situations with movement. Once I was in the studio with the dancers, I could see if the movement fitted with their versions of the characters – if it didn't we could change it. My aim is always for the story to be very clear, but for the movement to be free, without lots of gesture and mime.

Each character has their own movement vocabulary: Ada is elegant and neoclassical and quite 'closed', especially at the start of the ballet, and she wears pointe shoes some of the time. Stewart is very stiff and upright, then he explodes; Baines is gentle and fluid, and like the dancers portraying the local community, his movements are 'grounded' and more rooted in contemporary dance than

classical ballet. *The Reverend Campbell* is a little fussy – not comical, but a bit lighter than the others. The quality of acting is vital for all the characters, and this was something that was very important when we came to cast the young dancers as Flora. While they needed to be musical and able to dance, I wanted them to be very honest performers, unafraid to be onstage and to show true reactions and emotions.

To me, Jane Campion's film is a masterpiece. I want the audience watching the ballet to feel drawn back into the beginnings of New Zealand, as she portrayed them, but to experience the energy and emotions of the characters in the present. Dance is always in the moment, and that's what makes it a truly living art.

– JIŘÍ BUBENÍČEK



JIŘÍ BUBENÍČEK AND MELISSA HAMILTON IN THE BALLET MANON

JIŘÍ BUBENÍČEK DANCING IN THE BALLET IN THE MIDDLE SOMEWHAT ELEVATED





# The story of The Piano: the ballet

## A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE BALLET FOR THE CLASSROOM

### CHARACTERS

**Ada McGrath** – *mute since the age of six, travelling to New Zealand to meet the man she has married by arrangement and without meeting*

**Flora McGrath** – *her daughter*

**Alistair Stewart** – *Ada's husband, a Scottish settler in New Zealand, clearing land for farming*

**George Baines** – *a former sailor now settled in New Zealand, living alongside the Māori in the bush*

**Aunt Morag** – *Alistair's aunt*

**Nessie** – *Aunt Morag's companion*

**The Reverend Campbell** – *missionary and vicar to the isolated community*

**Local Community, settlers, sailors**

### SYNOPSIS

#### ACT I

After a long voyage, Ada McGrath and her daughter Flora are put ashore on a remote beach, surrounded by all their worldly goods including a packing case containing Ada's beloved piano. Due to the difficult journey from the settlement where he lives, to the shore, Alistair Stewart, Ada's new husband, whom she has never met, is not there to meet them. Mother and daughter spend the night alone on the beach.

The following day, Alistair arrives, together with his friend George Baines and men from the local community, whom Alistair has prevailed upon to act as porters, to carry

Ada's baggage to her new home. There are not enough men to carry the piano, and Alistair tells that she must leave it behind for now.

Disappointed with her new husband and desperate for her piano, Ada visits the beach with Flora, guided by George. Transformed by her passionate playing and with music giving her both voice and identity, Ada's true self is revealed. George is fascinated by her.

George suggests that he should buy the piano from Alistair, in return for some land, and Alistair agrees. Ada is to give George piano lessons, the thought of which appals her.

George suggests that Ada can 'buy' the piano back from him, in return for piano lessons:

one lesson per key. Ada acquiesces, but negotiates: rather than all the keys, she will trade only the black ones.

As the 'lessons' begin, it becomes clear that George is interested in Ada, rather than learning to play. As she sits at the instrument, George sets out to seduce her, requesting greater degrees of intimacy, for an increased number of keys.

Time passes, and as the isolated community prepares for Christmas, George's 'piano lessons' have become a source of gossip and amusement. At the Sunday School Christmas concert, which George has only gone to so he can be close to Ada, Aunt Morag asks him to turn pages for Nessie's piano solo, only to be rebuffed. After a chaotic end to the performance, Ada leaves with Alistair and Flora.

## ACT II

George increases his efforts to seduce Ada. Although Ada yields to his advances, George realises that she is doing it for her piano rather than because she desires him for himself, making him feel that she is prostituting herself. He ends their arrangement and returns the piano to Alistair's house.

Alone in the house with her piano, Ada misses George watching her as she plays. She returns to his hut in the bush, leaving Flora alone, and they consummate their relationship. Flora's behaviour rouses Alistair's suspicions, and he follows Ada, spying through the holes in the walls of George's hut to see his wife embracing his friend.

The next day, Alistair waylays Ada as she walks to George's hut. There is a violent struggle, interrupted by Flora.

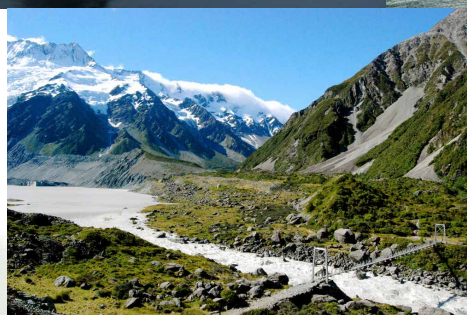
Back at the house, Alistair boards up the windows, making Ada a prisoner. Trapped, she begins to pay attention to Alistair for the first time in their marriage, unsettling him, but also giving him hope. Visiting the house, Aunt Morag brings news that George is planning

to leave the settlement. As Ada appears to respond to him, Alistair opens up the windows again, and tells Ada that he trusts her not to see George again. Content, he leaves her alone in the house.

Ada inscribes a love note on one of the piano keys and asks Flora to take it to George. Instead, Flora takes it to Alistair. Consumed with rage, Alistair takes an axe and cuts off Ada's finger, wrapping the severed digit in a cloth and commanding Flora to take it to George with the message that if he ever tries to see Ada again, more fingers will follow.

Later that night, Alistair hears what he believes to be Ada's voice inside his head, asking him to let her go. Alistair goes to George, who says that Ada has never spoken in his presence. Once Ada's hand has healed, Alistair sends her, with Flora, to George, and they leave the settlement together, setting out by boat from the shore on which Ada and Flora arrived.

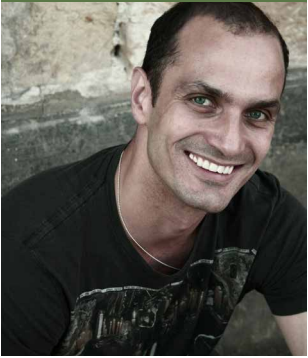
Whether it is an ending or a new beginning is up to the audience to interpret.



# OTTO BUBENÍČEK

## SET AND VIDEO DESIGN, STAGING, MUSIC ARRANGEMENT AND COMPOSITION

OTTO BUBENÍČEK



Principal Dancer of the Hamburg Ballet, composer and designer **Otto Bubeníček** was born in Lubin, Poland. He spent most of his childhood travelling around Europe with the circus, where his parents worked as acrobats. He trained at the Prague Conservatory, and in 1992, he received the 'Prix

Especies', along with the Television Viewers' Prize at the Prix de Lausanne. In 1993, he was invited to join Hamburg Ballet, where he was appointed Principal Dancer in 1997. Throughout his career he has been a sought-after guest artist, invited to perform with many renowned companies worldwide, and featured in many gala performances.

Aside from his role as a dancer, Otto is creative in many other fields, composing, designing, and creating short films and video-clips. He has composed classical and electronic music for film and dance, some of which has been performed among many others by the Hamburg State Opera, the Opéra National de Paris, the Semperoper in Dresden, and in Sapporo, Japan.

The short film *Nachtrausch (Nocturnal Ecstasy)* marks Otto's debut as director and film editor. His short dance film *Enlightened* was a finalist in the online video competition at Side By Side Art Center E.V. in Düsseldorf. Other musical compositions of Otto's include the score for *Nachtrausch*, and Jiří Bubeníček's ballets: *Unreachable Places* (Hamburg Ballet, 2005), *Ai No Yukue Mo* (Sapporo, 2005), *Le soufflé de l'esprit*, (Zurich Ballet, 2007) and *Toccata* (New York City Ballet, 2009), for which he also designed the set and costumes.

He has designed sets and costumes for his twin brother's ballets *L'Heure Bleue*, *Faun*, *Gentle Memories*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Le soufflé d'esprit*, which he has also co-choreographed.

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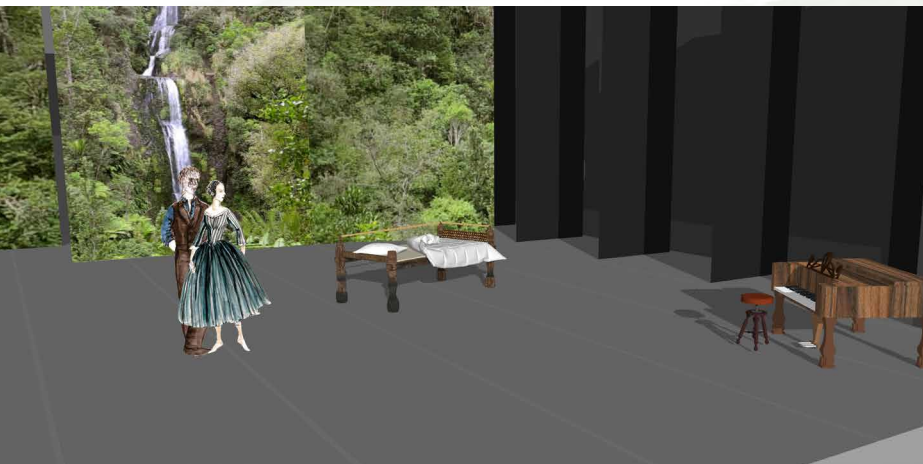
### 'I want to show the vastness of the New Zealand landscape onstage.'

*Making a ballet from the story of The Piano was Jiří's idea, but I loved the film when I watched it. I was pessimistic in the beginning, just figuring out how we could tell this story in dance, but once we got underway, it felt easy. We're not making a copy of the film, but telling a story, and there are so many things to draw on: the colours, the characters, the wide open spaces and the pictures onscreen all helped. We made our research trip to New Zealand in 2014 and found visiting the film locations really inspiring too.*

*The New Zealand landscape feels so enormous, and it was a good challenge to try to convey that onstage. I'm not a big fan of video projection in dance works, as it can really distract from the live action. So, the videos that I shot when we visited New Zealand are backgrounds, made by just filming the landscape, or trees, or the sea, with the camera in a fixed position for maybe 20 minutes. They are like photographs that are alive, and, even though there is sometimes very little movement, you can feel the vastness of the space, and that it's real. The videos are projected onto walls that move depending on the action onstage, so you can also change the sense of space depending on whether the characters are indoors or outside. It all adds to the story.*



SCENE 3A



SCENE 8



SCENE 10



Stage designs for dance need lots of empty floor, so everything onstage has to be there for a purpose related to the choreography. If there's a chair or a bed, it's because it's helping the dancers to tell the story – not like opera or theatre where you can have a lot of things onstage. And I've used colour to reflect Ada's journey. When she arrives, with the wild sea, her world feels grey, and so the colours are very drab. As she starts to feel alive, and embarks on her relationship with Baines, her world turns to colour.

When we came to New Zealand, we visited museums wherever we went, and our costume designer, Elsa Pavanel used the material that we gathered as her inspiration for the costume designs. It's very exciting to have the opportunity to revisit some of those designs, for the New Zealand characters, especially, so we can make the designs stronger.

What would I like the audience to take away from the performance? When we had the premiere [of the one-act version] in Dortmund, the audience couldn't speak at the end. I really hope that people here are touched in the same way, and feel so connected to the dancers' energy and emotion they want to stay in that moment for a little while longer. And, I would like the audience to see New Zealand with fresh eyes. I'm from Prague, and I sometimes forget how beautiful it is. When I have a visitor to the city, I'm reminded. I hope audiences in New Zealand will feel the same about my vision of their country onstage.

– OTTO BUBENÍČEK

# Music arrangement and composition

## OTTO BUBENÍČEK

### MUSIC

Excerpts from Michael Nyman's breathtaking iconic film score are blended with evocative music by Debussy, Arensky, Stravinsky, Schnittke, Brahms and Shostakovich. A grand total of 41 different music extracts are used in this ballet.

*I've put together the music and sound design in a very similar way to the visual design. I hear music and I see spaces, so the music I chose had to create the right space for the characters and for the drama. I love Michael Nyman's music for the film, and have used some of it for the ballet, but some of the film music wouldn't have worked for the ballet, as it was composed to be in the background.*

*All the music that you will hear is there to create a mood and to tell the story. For example, Ada's internal world is central for me: she has such strength and honesty, despite her strict education she opens up to love, and follows her heart. Beside Schnittke's music that fits perfectly with the ending's dramatic peak or Shostakovich's piano piece that closely follows the romance between Ada and George, I also kept some of the original music by Michael Nyman that corresponds in my opinion with Ada's inner voice and is strongly connected to her feelings and emotions.*

*I also recorded some sound when we were in New Zealand, so the sounds of the sea, or bird song, or trees that you can hear in the transitions between scenes are real. Some of my favourite moments in the ballet come when the sound and the video and the dance give the story layers – I love the beginning, with the very particular New Zealand sea, and Stewart's solo in Act II, with Māori music, and Schnittke, and video of the clouds.*

– OTTO BUBENÍČEK

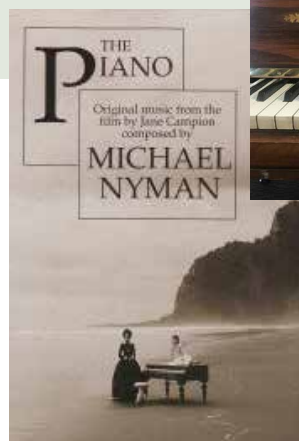
## Fun fact

The instrument used by the RNZB for this ballet's advertising campaign and on stage in all the performances, is one of the pianos that was used in the actual movie *The Piano*. The photo shoot took place at Karekare Beach (West Auckland), where some of the film was shot 25 years earlier, on 7 March 2017 at dawn (5am) and took all morning.

In 1993, the film's score by Michael Nyman became a best-selling soundtrack album.

The main piano theme "The Heart Asks Pleasure First/The Promise" was so popular that it was released as a single the same year.

Actress Holly Hunter who learned the piano as a child, played her own piano pieces for the film. She also served as sign language teacher for the young Anna Paquin.



# Introducing Māori advisor

## MOSS TE URURANGI PATTERSON

### MĀORI ADVISOR



MOSS TE URURANGI  
PATTERSON

Award winning choreographer and creative artist **Moss Te Ururangi Patterson** has over 18 years' experience in creating and delivering powerful performances in the indigenous dance space.

Born in Turangi Moss's proud ancestry comes from both the central North Island and the northern tribes of Aotearoa New Zealand. Moss has developed a significant body of choreographic work which has been presented on New Zealand's largest and most prestigious platforms for dance as well as selected International dance festivals.

Having performed and choreographed in New Zealand for Atamira, Black Grace and Footnote Dance companies, Moss was awarded Best New Choreographer by The New Zealand Listener and Best Choreography by Tempo Dance Festival for Atamira's *Whakairo and Haka*. His work *Moko*, was performed at the prestigious Jacob's Pillow Festival, USA and his main bill works '*Pango/Black*' and '*Marama/Moon*' were recently premiered at international dance festivals in Korea, Taiwan and China with return tours internationally in 2018.

Moss also co-choreographed the widely-lauded New Zealand Rugby World Cup opening ceremony and the Worlds League of Legends opening ceremony in Beijing, China, plus a series of six major large-scale works *Sacre*, *Poutama*, *Takarangi*, *Te Manu Ahi*, *Ruaumoko* and *Awa* in association with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and the Auckland International Arts Festival.

A recipient of the Creative New Zealand Tup Lang Dance scholarship and the Te Whakahaungia Choreographic Award from Toi Maori Aotearoa, Moss is a regular speaker at local and international events. Moss is a passionate advocate for Maori culture and contemporary dance in Aotearoa New Zealand.

#### MESSAGE FROM JIŘÍ BUBENÍČEK:

*"When we were planning the ballet, Otto and I travelled to New Zealand, hired a camper van for ten days, and toured around searching for locations that would inspire us. We read Jane Campion's book of the film and went to museums, and we bought books and recordings and tried to immerse ourselves in New Zealand, especially Māori culture. We filmed all the video footage that you see onstage, and recorded the natural sounds that you hear with the music – they feel alive. Now that we're revisiting the ballet here in New Zealand, it's an opportunity to deepen our knowledge, especially as we work with Moss Patterson. It's inspiring to see Māori culture all around us, as a living culture, not in a museum."*

## MESSAGE FROM MOSS TE URURANGI PATTERSON (NGĀTI TŪWHARETOA):

*When I first saw the video of the one-act version of the ballet from Dortmund, I saw so many opportunities to deepen the ballet's connections with Aotearoa and how the spirit and mana of our people and country were portrayed onstage.*

*Throughout the rehearsal process in Wellington, I've been involved in many aspects of the production, but especially the music, the design and creation of the waka and costumes plus elements within the choreography.*

*However, the most important part of my role as Maori advisor has been to problem solve the story's portrayal of Māori characters onstage. The original film had many great Māori actors, but the RNZB has had to grapple with the issue of non-Māori performers attempting to inhabit a Māori character onstage. In the movie Jane Campion deliberately juxtaposed Māori and English culture. Building that juxtaposition into a ballet which has long established European traditions and performance techniques was challenging. This stimulated many interesting and open conversations, getting to understand each other's different cultural perspectives. As the opportunity to explore*

*Māori movement was limited in my role I chose to focus on layering the sound score with authentic Māori aural expressions. The result of our continued dialogue, over many weeks, is that the dancers you see onstage are not portraying Māori, but they are imbued with something of the spirit of the land.*

*I wanted to connect Jiří and Otto with Māori artists and performers who can bring their specialist knowledge and richness to the production. James Webster (Tainui, Te Arawa, Pakeha) has worked with the RNZB production team on the design and fabrication of the waka which appears onstage. With Otto, I've done a lot of work on the score, sourcing and creating recordings with contemporary Māori performers in order to create something with an authentic Māori voice.*

*I hope that this production, and the way that we have worked together across our different cultures, will align the intention of a story told through dance with the many Māori artistic elements, to create a rich, confident whole that the RNZB, and all New Zealanders, can be truly proud of. It has been wonderful to see the dancers involved in the production taking first steps into Te Ao Māori; I hope that this spirit will continue to inspire and sustain them, along with Jiří and Otto, on their own artistic journeys.*



# Costumes

## ELSA PAVANEL

### COSTUME DESIGNER



**Elsa Pavanel** studied set design at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts et Techniques du Théâtre in Paris. Since completing her training, Elsa Pavanel has designed sets and costumes for ballet, opera, theatre and circus in France, including the Paris Opéra, Germany, Switzerland, Slovenia and Japan. Her collaborations with Jiří Bubeníček include *Doctor Zhivago*, *The Piano: the ballet*, *The Soldier's Tale* and *Unreachable Places*. On the operatic stage, she has created numerous commissions for the best in the industry including Alain Garichot, Celine Serreau, Daniel Schmid and Bernard Levy. She is currently the designer in residence for Paris theatre company La Compagnie In Cauda.

Here's what Elsa wrote about the conception of the costumes for this production:

*Firstly, my ideas came as a result of many discussions with Jiří and Otto Bubeníček as it was important that I know their intentions for the new work and the structure of the ballet.*

*The period for the costumes corresponds to what was described in the book written by Jane Campion – I was inspired by English photographs from 1850.*

*I selected fabrics that are similar to the ones used at that specific period. But it was necessary to adapt the shapes and patterns of the time (1850) to enable the movements of the dancers: stretchy fabrics and very light, shirt and pants jointed together, false boots made of pointe shoes extended with leather, ties with elastics etc. It was also necessary that the dancers were able to execute quick costume changes between the various scenes, especially Ada – we needed clothes that were extremely easy to do up and undo.*

*Also, all the costumes were designed to match with the various colours of the set. For example, the costumes of Ada evolve through the story; at the beginning Ada wears a blue dress with a crinoline, a coat and a bonnet and gradually she wears less and less clothing as the piano lessons/seduction with Georges Baines take place.*

#### – ELSA PAVANEL





# ELSA'S DESIGNS AND ORIGINAL SKETCHES FOR THIS PRODUCTION



ADA - FRONT



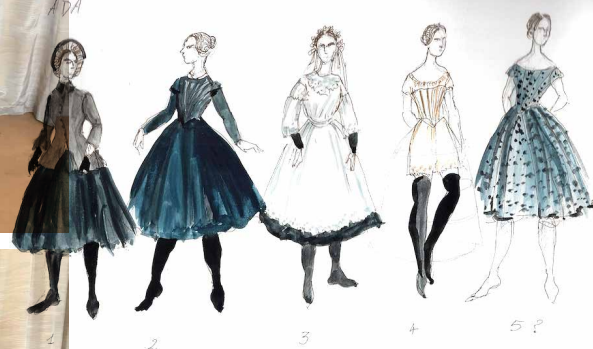
ADA - BACK



ALISTAIR STEWART



GEORGES BAINES



ALIPER STEWART 1



FLORA



# Lighting concept

## JEREMY FERN

### LIGHTING DESIGN



**Jeremy Fern** has been involved in the lighting business for the last 15 years. He has primarily designed for theatre and dance, working with companies including Atamira Dance Company, Auckland Theatre Company, Black Grace Dance Company, Douglas Wright Dance Company, Indian Ink Theatre Company, New Zealand Opera, Okareka Dance Company, Red Leap Theatre Company and Silo Theatre.

His work has been seen throughout New Zealand and in Australia, the United States, Mexico, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea and The Netherlands.

*The Piano: the ballet* is the first time Jeremy has worked with the Royal New Zealand Ballet and he is looking forward to lighting this iconic work.

Jeremy's notes:

*Aside from the basic functionality of lighting to enhance the emotive performance and story with its different worlds, essentially I see the lighting design helping portray the meeting of two cultures.*

*For the purpose of this production I have chosen the lighting quality for the new arrivals to be a crisp, cold, sharp white. All the scenes with this motif relate to the colonial immigrants; the reflection of the structured world from which they come and their change of the environment to that structure.*

*By contrast the scenes with the local community and George Baines who has tried to assimilate into the culture have a warmer, softer quality, more living within the environment.*

*There are other 'paces' that we go to that are more a reflection of the internal mind states of the characters which we have made more surreal and hopefully reflect the thoughts and emotions of the characters in those moments.*

– JEREMY FERN

# Q&A with the three Floras

Name – **Hazel Couper**

City – **Auckland**

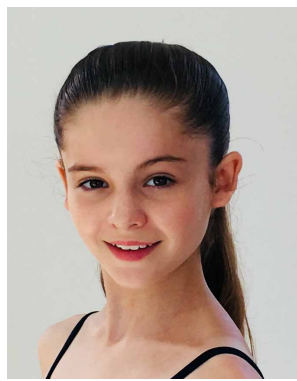
Age and school level – **12 years old – year 8**

Years of dancing – **Almost nine years**

Dance Studio – **Philippa Campbell School of Ballet**

Names of her dance teachers – **Philippa Campbell** and **Joye Lowe**

**Hazel Couper** is 12 years old and is a student at Ponsonby Intermediate School, where she enjoys taking part in school productions and dance performances. She learns ballet and contemporary dance at Philippa Campbell School of Ballet in Auckland, where her teachers are Philippa Campbell and Joye Lowe. She also takes Dance Pilates at Westmere Pilates and competes in competitions in Auckland and further afield. Hazel has two older brothers and a 19 year old Burmese cat named Jasmine.



HAZEL COUPER WITH RNZB DANCERS KATHERINE SKELTON AND ALYSSA KELTY

Name – **Bianca Lungu**  
City – **Auckland**  
Age and school level – **12 years old – year 7**  
Years of dancing – **nine years**  
Dance Studio – **Fusion**  
Name of her dance teacher – **Rosanne Watkinson**

**Bianca Lungu** is 12 years old and in Year 7 at Whangaparaoa College. She is a student at Auckland's Fusion Dance Studio, where she learns ballet and contemporary dance, and also takes jazz classes at Studio 246. She has one younger sister, likes mathematics, science and food technology, loves going to the beach and spending time with her friends.



Name – **Gemma Lew**  
City – **Wellington**  
Age and school level – **12 years old – Year 8**  
Years of dancing – **nine years**  
Dance Studio – **Kapiti Dance Centre**  
Name of her dance teacher – **Alison Pond**

**Gemma Lew** lives on the Kapiti Coast, Wellington and studies dance at the Kapiti Dance Centre. She is 12 years old and is currently undertaking the Royal Academy of Dance course at intermediate level. Gemma enjoys a wide variety of dance and in addition to ballet she also takes classes in contemporary, jazz, hip hop and acrobatics. At school she enjoys maths and science and when she is not dancing she likes to spend time with her friends and her dog Henry.





Hazel and Bianca will be sharing the role of Flora for the entire tour while Gemma is the understudy for the role of Flora while performing in all the Wellington performances as a child extra.

An understudy is a performer who learns an important role in order to serve as a replacement if someone is ill or injured.

### **What did you need to do to be selected for the role? What was the process?**

*Firstly, our teacher had to register us for the audition by sending in a photo and our contact details. We were required to meet some set criteria including an age and height range (9 – 12 years old and under 150cm). At the audition which was live in Wellington, each auditioned child was given a number to put on our leotard. We did a ballet class with the ballet master, did some partnering work and a selected group of the children were recalled to learn some choreography from one of the scenes from the ballet. After that they let us go and said that they will call us that night.*

### **What was your reaction when you found out that you were selected?**

*They were all very excited!*

**Bianca:** *“I was very excited as this was a dream comes true. My jaw just dropped and then I had the biggest smile on my face for a long time.”*

**Hazel:** *“I was surprised but really excited and a little nervous! I could hardly believe that my mum and I would need to move to Wellington for several weeks and that we would be going on tour with the RNZB to a whole lot of different places in New Zealand.”*

**Gemma:** *“I was very excited, but a little bit nervous as I was not sure what it was going to involve. Mostly I was just really excited that I was going to spend so much time at the RNZB with all the amazing dancers.”*

### **Is it how you expected it to be?**

*The girls were not sure what to expect.*

**Bianca:** *“It was how I hoped it would be. I’m loving everything about it and I think I am the luckiest girl in the world.”*

**Hazel:** *“I wasn’t sure what to expect but so far it’s been a lot of fun and lots of learning. One thing that was completely unexpected and quite freaky was when we found out that we had to sing too! It’s really short but I did not expect that!”*



**BIANCA LUNGU WITH RNZB DANCER ALEXANDRE FERREIRA, AND HAZEL COUPER**

**Gemma:** “I did not really know what to expect, but it has been better than I could have imagined as we get to spend a lot of time in the studios seeing how the production is put together, watching the dancers, taking class with the company and learning the choreography.”

### **What does it involved to be part of this production?**

They do class with the company each morning for an hour and a half with the RNZB dancers which involves stretching, barre work, a combination of moves in the centre and ending off with turns and jumps. After that they have a timetable of rehearsals, which is different each day, but usually they finish at 6pm. When they have big gaps in rehearsal times the Floras hang out and do things together like go shopping and eat lunch, and sometimes they do some stretching in the Pilates room and of course their school work.

### **What about school?**

The three girls go to school when they have days off from rehearsal, but there won't be a lot of days when they can go to school until after the rehearsal period is completed. They have brought some reading and maths books with them and they are planning to do school work during rehearsal breaks. That's where the online school work will be very helpful. The rest, they will have to catch up on.

### **Have you seen the movie in preparation to play the role of Flora?**

Bianca, Hazel and Gemma all watched the movie before the audition but with guidance from their mothers or even her grandmother in the case of Hazel. They also downloaded *The Piano* soundtrack to listen to and read the synopsis as well as some of the old reviews so that they could get a good idea of what it is about.

### **How valuable is this opportunity for you?**

**Bianca:** “the best experience of my life so far!!! I still can't believe it. Love meeting all the dancers, artistic staff and working with internationally acclaimed choreographer Jiří Bubeníček.”

**Hazel:** “It's amazing! It's an incredible opportunity; I'm getting to dance with the RNZB dancers. They are all so kind, friendly and nice, watching them dance is awesome. I'm learning so much. It's quite different being taught by the choreographer but he is really good at teaching us what to do and sometimes he makes everyone laugh. We will be going to Napier, Auckland (home- yay!), Dunedin, Christchurch and Palmerston North. I haven't been to many of these cities so that will be exciting. I will get to dance on all these stages with the RNZB!”

**Gemma:** “It is really valuable in that I get to see what it is like to work in a professional ballet company every day and how much goes into being a professional dancer. They work really hard! I would like to thank the choreographer Jiří Bubeníček and the RNZB for this amazing opportunity. It really is an incredible experience.”



**RNZB DANCER ABIGAIL BOYLE  
WITH HAZEL COUPER**

# Dance Activity

## INTRODUCTION TO CONTACT IMPROVISATION AND WEIGHT BEARING

In *The Piano: the ballet*, there is a lot of pas de deux work – two dancers working together lifting each other and supporting each other's body weight. This takes a lot of training and practice to perfect, but there are some simple ways to introduce students to working closely with another dancer. Basic contact improvisation and weight bearing exercises are good ways to start becoming more comfortable with being in another dancer's space. However, as this activity involves physical contact, it might take a few attempts before students feel confident with it.

## STATUES – WARM UP GAME

This is an introduction to making physical contact with another dancer.

Split your group into pairs and ask them to choose who will be **A** and who will be **B**.

**A** will be the sculptor first and **B** will be the clay/statue.

Let the group know that there is only five minutes for the creative part of this task then they will need to swap roles.

Get **A** to manipulate **B**'s body however they like, but encourage **A** to move only one body part at a time. **B** needs to hold whatever shape/position **A** puts them in.

In the five minutes, **A** can move **B** as much as they want until they are happy with **B**'s shape

After five minutes ask all the **A**'s to move away from their partners, ask the **B**'s to keep very still, and then get the sculptors to move around and have a look at all of the statues.

Swap roles.

You can do this several times, and you can have a theme each time. For example, ask the sculptors to make their clay into a shape inspired by the sea, a garden, or the zoo. Or you can introduce some elements of dance:

- guide the sculptors to use different body bases (body awareness)
- different levels (space)
- different shapes – soft/light, sharp/strong (energy)
- the statues will be alone once the sculptors have finished (relationships)
- ask the statues to move close to each other, or be in two groups in two different spots onstage (space/relationships)
- or all in a group but have two statues isolated (space/relationships)
- the statues will be non-locomotor – twist, bend, stretch, balance (body awareness).



RNZB DANCER NADIA YANOWSKY WITH GEMMA LEW

## CONTACT IMPROVISATION AND WEIGHT BEARING TASK

This can be done with or without music; you can use the music like musical statues or just have it as background sound.

Ask your students to walk around the space and when you give them a signal (either by stopping the music or clapping,) get them to make contact with one person, who is close to them, by putting their right hand on the other person's left shoulder and holding it for a few seconds. Ideally, the students should make contact in pairs, but if you have an odd number there may be a three. Repeat this a few times, encouraging the students to make contact with a different person each time. You can also ask the students to move a specific way in-between stopping and making contact with another. For example, move at a low level; let one body part initiate your movements; gallop, skip; move very slowly and smoothly; or make sharp, jerky movements.

Repeat the above task, asking your students to use the side of their body to make contact with another person. Then repeat it making contact back to back. Next, ask your students to make contact with different body parts (still using their hand at this point). Depending on how your students are responding, either guide them by telling them where to put their hand, for example, elbow, knee, foot, back, or you can let them choose for themselves.

The next stage is to get them to make contact but not using their hands. Again you can guide them, for example, make contact using their elbow, shoulder, knee, or you can let them choose.

This can be something that you repeat over a few sessions until the class is really comfortable with the idea of making physical contact.

If your students are feeling confident with physical contact, to progress this task, split the class into pairs and guide them through some different weight bearing and counter balance exercises:

- Standing back to back with your partner, have your feet quite far apart from each other, lean on each other and try to slowly and gently sit down and stand up.
- Standing back to back again, ask one person to bend their knees, and slowly bend their torso forward a small amount – they can use their hands on their thighs to help with support, while the other person relaxes backwards over their partner. This does not have to be a big movement, but if you have confident students with a good range of motion they can gradually make their movements bigger.
- Standing side by side with shoulders and arms touching, one person lunges to the side away from their partner. Their other partner maintains contact and leans to the side with them.
- Facing your partner, hold hands, lean back away from each other and slowly let the knees bend and imagine you're sitting on a chair behind you and sit down slowly and gently on the floor. Try standing up. You might have to play around with the distance between you and your partner's feet.
- Facing your partner, hold right hand to right hand, have your feet fairly wide (shoulder distance apart) and squat down with your partner just so your thighs are parallel to the floor, and stand up. Try with the left hand.



Then you can ask your students to find their own weight bearing and counter balance positions. Each pair must have at least four different positions, which can include things that they have created and the tasks they were guided through.

Once the students have chosen their positions ask them to find interesting ways to get in and out of them. Set some boundaries to help them be inventive, for example, if holding hands for a counter balance, make contact with your partner without using your hands at first and find a way to get the hands to connect; to come out of a counter balance use each other's weight to help move apart, but don't plan where to end up, let the impetus guide you; approach each other on different levels; or one person stay still and the other move towards them and manipulate them into the counter balance/weight bearing position.

Give the students some time to play around with this task, but at some point they will need to choose and set how they go in and out of their positions.

Once they have set the movements between their positions, if they haven't joined them together already, that is the next task. They must start away from their partner and travel towards each other (or only one person moves), then link everything together. To finish their duo, they can choose whether they end in a position or end moving away from each other.

This can be done to music, or just have the music in the background. You can give them a set number of counts that things must take or let them just work that out for themselves, but their pas de deux should be fixed at some point and not constantly changing.

The pairs can perform to the rest of the class two or three couples at a time, and you might find that some of them work really well together. Once everyone has performed, it can be quite fun to put some of the duos together and play around with them. For example, manipulate spacing; get them to start at different times from each other; ask some of them to freeze for a moment while others continue moving; change the direction that they are facing; or ask some of them to speed up or slow down what they are doing.

You might find that the whole class can do their pas de deux at the same time and you create a big group piece, or this can just be something that you do every now and then to encourage students to work closely with another dancer.



# Answers to activity

## (FROM PAGE 6)

### QUIZ TIME – WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. The ballet is based on:

**The film *The Piano***

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2. Who wrote and directed the film *The Piano*?

**Jane Campion**

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3. Name some of the awards received in association with the movie *The Piano*:

**Oscars – Best Actress Holly Hunter, Best Supporting Role Anna Paquin, and Best Original Screenplay Jane Campion. Golden Globes – Best Actress Holly Hunter.**

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**BAFTA Awards – Best Actress Holly Hunter. And many more – check them out on google.**

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4. Who is the choreographer of *The Piano: the ballet*?

**Jiří Bubeníček**

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5. In which city and country was the ballet originally created and performed?

**In Dortmund, Germany**

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6. Where will this extended and new version of the ballet be seen for the first time ever?

**Wellington, New Zealand**

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All *The Piano: the ballet* rehearsal in the studio images were taken by Stephen A'Court.

All *The Piano: the ballet* campaign images were taken by Ross Brown.