This is a good time for you to look into some history of ballet.  So we will be assigning you different weekly research assignments. This first week we will look at the ballet *Don Quixote*. We would like you to get familiar with the composer and the choreographer of this ballet,  and actually watch this ballet in full in the version you prefer. After watching the complete ballet, please answer the following question: *"If you could choose three roles to dance in this ballet, which roles would that would be and why?"*Be sure to include which version of the ballet you watched.

Riley:

"If you could choose three roles to dance in this ballet, which roles would that would be and why?"

Version watched: La Scala- Natalia Osipova

If I could dance any 3 roles in Don Quixote, I would love to dance Kitri, Mercedes, and the leader of the gypsies. First, I would love to dance Kitri because of the energy she brings immediately when she enters the stage. Watching Natalia Osipova’s jumps just makes the role seem more lively and vibrant, and I would love to try and bring life to the role in my own way. Second, I would like to dance Mercedes because she also demands attention when she enters the stage, but in a more mature way. She’s a more experienced dancer than Kitri and much older, but she still brings the audience in and captivates them in a much more mature and seductive way. Lastly, I would like to dance Lead Gypsy or Queen of the Gypsies because of her dramatic storytelling through her movements. It’s a character piece, and I feel like it would be good to be challenged with a role that requires so much acting and storytelling.

Jane:

***“If you could choose three roles to dance in this ballet, which roles would they be and why?”***

In the ballet Don Quixote, there are many roles to dance. All of these roles are danced in a way that display different character traits, which contribute to the overall storyline of the ballet. For instance, by the way Olesya Novikova danced the role of Kitri in the Mariinsky Ballet’s production of Don Quixote, you could tell that Kitri was a character with a very fiery and energetic personality. Out of the entire production of this ballet, three roles that I would choose to dance include, the Queen of the Dryads, Cupid, and Kitri. The reason I choose the Queen of the Dryads as one of these roles, is because of the regal and majestic way the character is displayed. I also choose this role because of the way that Alina Somova dances the Queen of the Dryads. When I watched her perform her variation, it seemed as if she was floating, and her movements produced such a relaxed and controlled effect, that I felt inspired by not only her, but by the character as well. I would also choose to dance the role of Cupid in the ballet, Don Quixote, because of how pure and free the character seems. I also felt very entranced by the precise and controlled movements this character displayed. Lastly, I would choose to dance the role of Kitri in the ballet Don Quixote, because of the bold and fiery energy the character emmits. Olesya Novikova dances this role in a very inspiring and entertaining manner, and all her movements seemed very sharp, but yet very polished and refined. The version of Don Quixote I watched, was produced by the Mariinsky Ballet in 2006.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exx4ImITxM8>

Christianna:

I watched the Bolshoi Ballet 2016 version and read the book Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes this semester, but I have watched many versions.

In the ballet, the intensity and boldness of the **Gypsy Queen** has always made her one of my favorites. The character dances across the floor with such energy that it commands the attention of every one who watches it. I love how she rushes across the stage so freely and openly and this especially true when the dancer performs barefoot. Dancing, without shoes, allows the choreographer to push the skills of the dancer to more dramatic movements and makes it a little lighter and more gypsy-like. The Bolshoi dancer wears character shoes, but she is extremely skilled and able to do dramatic cambré back even in those. I rarely dance in such free moving variations and would love the challenge.

I love the juxtaposition of the Gypsy Queen and **Dulcinea.** In the ballet, everything about the two characters is antithetical. The music, choreography, costumes, acting and presence. Where the Gypsy Queen a non-classical dance to bold, dramatic music, wears a character costume, is assertive, flirtatious and commanding in character, Dulcinea is sweet, ethereal in dress, character, choreography and music. Dulcinea’s dance is beautifully classical and technically difficult. The musicality is difficult and precise. While Gypsy Queen demands attention by her boldness, Dulcinea does by her other world presence and regal nature. My favorite dream scene was performed by Mariinsky Ballet with Alina Somova, Euvgenia Obratsova and Oleysa Novikova. Novikova’s Dulcinea is masterful. She epitomizes the grandeur of the woman on a pedestal that Dulcinea is for Don Quixote. This is particularly great after reading the book which gave a new insight into this character. In the book, the name Dulcinea del Toboso was given to a rather vulgar, peasant woman with whom Don Quixote, in his delirium, fell in love. The name means sweet. The self-appointed Knight dreamt of her as beautiful and kind and exhibiting extraordinary grace and nobility. Novikova beautifully represents all these in her version. In the book, Dulcinea is mythic, ethereal and perfect. She is unattainable. The music, choreography, costume, and acting convey this beautifully. She is above it all. She is the perfect juxtaposition from the earthy Gypsy Queen. It’s funny though, because in the book, the real-life peasant girl who Don Quixote idolized would be closer to the Gypsy Queen. Dulcinea would be a very different challenge due to the precise classical nature of the dance and acting. I would love to try both for the extreme differences they provide.

The **Queen of the Dryads** variation is one of my favorite in the ballet world (besides Nikiiya and Gamzatti). The elegance and maturity, mixed with suspension, is truly breath taking. The entire character, like Dulcinea, is purely classical, ethereal and elegant in music, dance, costume and acting. The control needed to perfect the character is so demanding and is a challenge I hope to achieve one day. Also, like Dulcinea, it is juxtaposed with characters like the Gypsy Queen and Mercedes which are much freer in their movements and dance to much bolder music. While I love the other world nature of Queen of the Dryads and Dulcinea, the acting of Mercedes is very interesting and would present its own fun because she is so mischievous, flirtatious and sassy. I love acting and like to push myself in very different roles.

Annabel:

Version: Natalia Osipova at La Scala Theatre

Gypsy Queen:

Though the version of Don Quixote I watched didn't include a gypsy queen, my favorite part of Don Quixote has been the Gypsy Scene ever since I watched Mollie Sharples dance the lead gypsy four years ago. I remember when I watched the scene in Parks, it was so powerful that I could feel its energy all around and within me. I felt that I was right there with that group of mysterious, strong, and free gypsies. The wild, yet united choreography made the scene invigorating and inspiring from the start, but once Mollie entered, I felt completely immersed. When she was first revealed on stage, her powerful energy felt hidden under careful control and seduction. It soon exploded from within her, and filled every space around her. The energy then quieted into a kind of sadness that had everyone instinctively leaning forward, before her fire once again erupted. I loved how layered her performance was, demonstrating the true range of human emotion while constantly maintaining themes of strength, freedom, and beauty. It is a rare and precious opportunity to be able to share yourself with an audience in such an honest and real way– to be so raw on stage. My only hope would be that my performance could leave a lasting impact on my audience the way that Mollie’s did with me.

Street Dancer:

Another one of my favorite roles in Don Quixote is the role of the street dancer. The street dancer has an undeniable confidence on stage that draws every eye towards her. She has no doubt in her own abilities. There’s one section where the male dancer is flirting with other girls, and she commandingly taps his shoulder before falling into his arms. She doesn’t wait to see that he’s ready to catch her, she’s just naturally certain that he’ll be there. Taking on that playful, feisty, and self-assured persona would be a challenge, of course, but it’s exactly the kind of confidence that I aspire to attain. One of my greatest challenges in dance is performing. Even when I’ve reached a comfortable point in the studio, I always feel unassured when it comes time to perform. The energy of the street dancer is exactly the opposite of that self-doubt, and thus everything I’m trying to become. I’ve learned and gained so much from different choreography and roles through the years, and I honestly think that this one has a lot it could teach me.

Queen of Dryads:

The dream scene is the enchanting, calming, and ethereal presence in Don Quixote, and the Queen of Dryads holds it all together. Don Quixote is such a vibrant ballet, with something exciting constantly occurring. The dream scene offers some brief solace from it all, and the Queen of Dryads commands this peace. She is strong, elegant, and just a little bit unreal in contrast with the rest of the ballet. Even within the dream scene, she is the most controlled presence on the stage. In my opinion, this contrast is what makes the ballet. She floats in and off, and in doing so varies and textures the entire performance. Her commanding and calming presence captivates the audience, leaving them breath taken before returning to the excitement. I would love the chance to dance a role of such classic elegance, and touch the sentiments of the audience in a gentler way.

Taylor:

Version watched- La Scala (Natalia Osipova)

Composer: Ludwig Minkus

Choreographer: Marius Petipa

*"If you could choose three roles to dance in this ballet, which roles would that be and why?"*

If I could dance any three roles in the ballet *Don Quixote,* they would be Street Dancer, Queen of the Dryads, and Kitri. All of these are dream roles of mine that I have loved watching ever since my second summer at BBT when we did Don Quixote. I remember Felicity and Hannah’s Kitri, Sarah’s Street Dancer, and Gabby’s Queen of the Dryads all so vividly even to this day. These are all difficult roles with varying intensity, style, and of course the movements themselves. However, I still find myself dreaming of these roles as they are different and push for a strong presence. Not only that but in all of them, the dancers seem like they are having an amazing time as they perform. In general, this is what I love about all of the roles, yet, there are some specifics about each that draw me to them.

When it comes to Street Dancer, she almost dances as if she has a slow fire burning inside of her that can get ignited and creates a different person. This is interesting because the character and the dancing is full of textures to utilize. Something else I like about this role is her variation, as she dances in between the knives in this version. A setting like this is something new and would be a real challenge to perform in due to its complexity. The next role is one that I enjoy watching, and that is Queen of the Dryads. This role is very different from the rest of the ballet because it is soft and smooth. This is something that is so mesmerizing to watch as one movement must flow effortlessly into the next. As a whole, this role demands a ton of attention to detail with technique and port de bras. The last role I want to talk about is Kitri. I feel that for many people, Kitri is enticing because she overflows with energy and liveliness. With this said, giving that amount of energy must be exhausting. Nonetheless, something about this role just draws the audience in like a moth to a flame, and someday I would love to perform it. To conclude, Don Quixote is such a vibrant ballet with so many amazing roles that require intense technicality.

Hector:

My top 3 roles in Don Quixote

I watched the Natalia Osipova version of the ballet on youtube. There were a handful of characters that stood out to me as interesting, or possibly roles I would like to fill. One of those was Sancho Panza. I think this would be a challenge for me because it is a lot of acting, but I think I could really get into the role. His happy-to-be-here attitude is something I really enjoy watching, and hopefully if I were to play this character I could portray the same emotions. Another intriguing character to me is Basilio. Firstly, I think the costume for his role is splendid. Secondly, the dancing he does is really incredible. It would definitely be a challenge for me, but the pas de deux with him and Kitri is phenomenal to watch and I’d love to perform it. And the one handed press that he does with kitri is one of the things on my bucket list for dance. Lastly, I think the dancing men in the first scene looks like a ton of fun. I’ve never really been in a men's corps and even though this is danced with 8 people in the version I saw, it would be a totally new and fresh experience for me.

Luiza:

***"If you could choose three roles to dance in this ballet, which roles would that be and why?"***

1. Kitri’s bridesmaid - It is a small variation with a high and upbeat energy, which is something that I love, besides that it is full of big jumps, my favorite part of ballet.
2. The girls in the scenario of the first act - This role just seems really fun to perform, with a lot of acting, using the fans and dancing short and exciting choreographies (specially the scene of the Toreadors).
3. Kitri’s friends at the first act (duo) - This choreography is just so pretty and powerful, those girls are full of charm and beauty. All of the jumps and legs on the dance just makes me want to get up and start dancing it!

*Version watched: La Scala (Natalia Osipova)* ​*Minkus: Don Quixote - La Scala (Natalia Osipova)*

Mateusz:

The first role I would like to be is Sancho Panza. The reason I would like to do this role is because it would be a fun and challenging role for me. I really like performing grotesque roles such as mouse in Nutcracker and I believe I would enjoy this role just as much. I still think this role would be challenging for me because it requires some acting.

The second role I would like to try is one of the four men who dance together in Act one. The reason I would like to do this role is because it looks really fun to do.

The third role I would like to try is the street dancer. The role looks fun and challenging. This role would be challenging for me because there is some partnering. There is also a good deal of jumping and I would have to work on getting stronger and better jumps.

I watched the version with Natalia Osipova as Kitri.