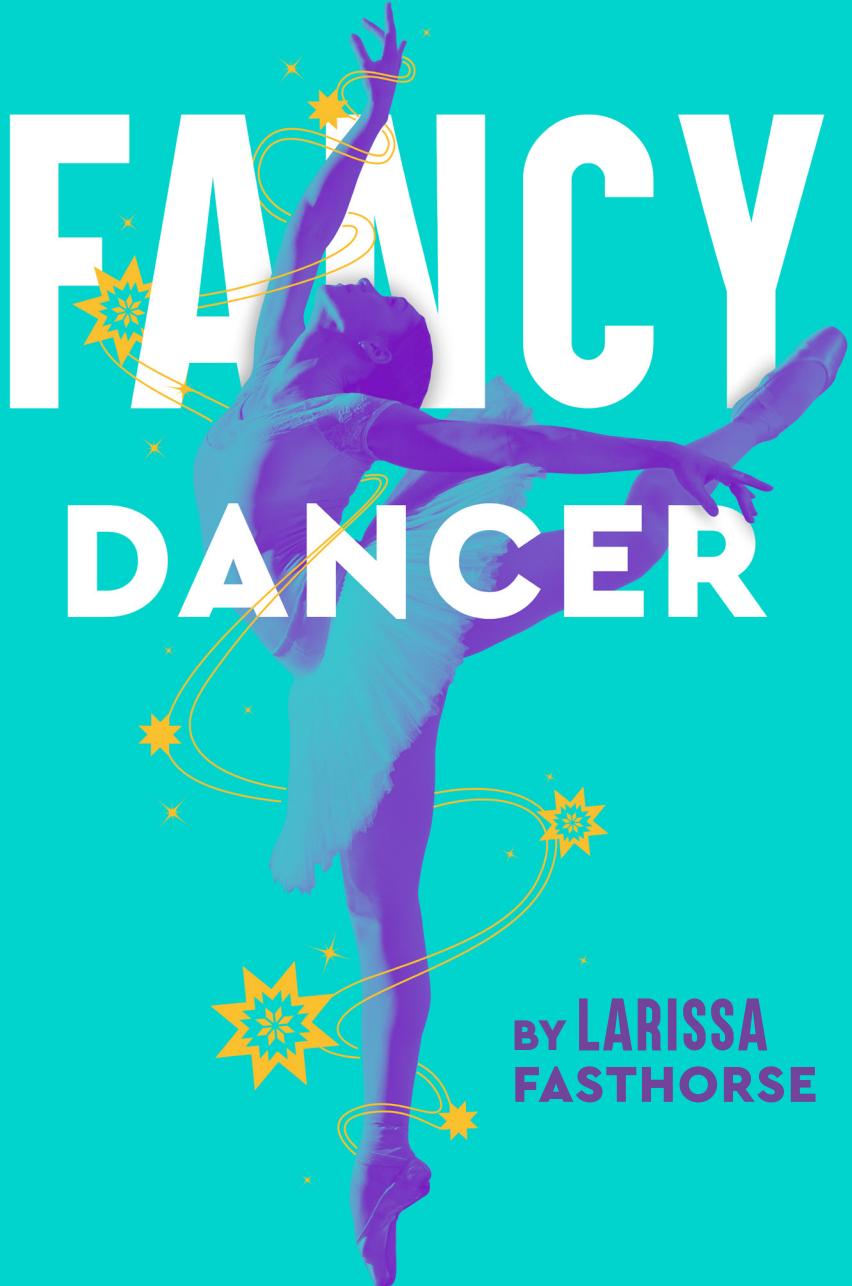


Seattle Rep and Seattle Children's Theatre present
the **WORLD PREMIERE** of



BY **LARISSA
FASTHORSE**

Youth Guide

Welcome to *Fancy Dancer*—a story about chasing a dream when the world keeps telling you “no.”

Lara grows up on the South Dakota prairie and carries a wish as big as the night sky: to become a professional ballerina. Along her path she meets closed doors, cruel words, and people who try to define her by what she isn't. But she also meets mentors who see what she can be, and moments that remind her of her own strength.

This play is about the courage it takes to stand in two worlds—and sometimes in no world at all—while fighting to claim your place. It's about transforming the things others call “weakness” into the very qualities that set you apart.

As you watch, notice the moments when Lara is fully herself—powerful, vulnerable, unshakably present. May they remind you that your truest self is worth fighting for.

Enjoy the performance.



Tiffany Malots
Adrienne Dillard-Coons Director
of Education & Engagement
Seattle Children's Theatre

Larissa FastHorse is a playwright who uses her own life, heritage, and experiences to tell stories that are both deeply personal and universally resonant. In *Fancy Dancer*, she invites us into a world shaped by self-expression, identity, and the search for connection. Through her words, she reflects on who she is and where she comes from—and in doing so, she opens the door for all of us to reflect on our own lives.

As you watch the performance, I encourage you to think about how Larissa expresses herself and why that matters to the story. Then, consider the ways you can use your own voice to explore your history, your values, and your unique perspective.

We hope this experience inspires you to share your own story. After all, no one else can tell it quite like you.



Deanna Martinez
Education & Community
Programs Director
Seattle Rep

To the Youth Here Today, From Lara

Deanna and Tiffany asked playwright **Larissa FastHorse** and actor **Burgandi Trejo Phoenix**—who alternate starring in the role of Lara in *Fancy Dancer*—some questions aimed at you and all young people in our audience today.

Deanna Martinez: How do you use writing as a tool for personal reflection?

Larissa FastHorse: Because of my ADHD, I always have twenty-five thoughts happening at once and it really helps me to write down how I feel and how I want to express something. I write it in a letter, in an email, in a social media post, in a play. Then I can practice it and know exactly what and how I want to say something to make sure it makes sense and doesn't hurt someone else. To me, that's the easiest way to take all the noise that's in my head and distill it down to what I really mean to say.

Tiffany Maltos: Who was your favorite teacher and why did you like them?

LF: That's a hard one. I hated school a lot. It didn't fit with the way my brain worked, and I lived in a place where there was only one school, so there wasn't another choice.

My favorite teacher was the one that's in [*Fancy Dancer*]. His name is Gregory King. He was a professional ballet dancer and became my greatest mentor in ballet, and eventually my partner and someone I loved very much.

I loved Greg because he was direct. I love direct. I loved him because he was clear and fun, because he was passionate and cared so much about what we were doing. And I loved him, most of all, because not only did he believe in me, but he made *me* believe in me, and that's something extraordinary that not everyone knows how to do.

Burgandi Trejo Phoenix: My favorite ballet teacher was also one of my hardest teachers. She was very, very tough on me, but if there was one thing that Ms. Linda taught me, it was that I was capable of way more than I could've ever imagined. She was constantly pushing me past my limits and placed me in more advanced classes that I didn't feel ready for because she saw something in me that I didn't. She

was encouraging, straight to the point, and relentless about technique. And although I didn't see it then, all these years later, I'm very grateful for the training I received from her and her staff.

TM: If you could speak to your high school self, what would you tell her?

AS: I would tell her that I promise, *I promise* it gets better. You just have to get through this part. It's funny because I remember people saying, "this is the best part of your life," but it was really the worst for me. It was so hard and stressful and awful. I was bullied. It was just a really difficult time for me because I didn't know who I was. I knew what I wanted, but I didn't know how to get there. I felt like I was an alien living in the wrong world.

I wish I could have told myself to just take a breath, get through it, and things will get better. It is a tough time, but it's also a beautiful time. Every time of your life is beautiful because they're never going to happen again. I wish I hadn't been so desperate for that time to be over and could've enjoyed it a little bit more.

BTP: Oh wow, so many things! First, don't be in such a hurry to grow up, savor these years, soak them all in and don't worry about having a "plan" to execute before you even know what you truly want and don't want in your life. It's *your* life and this is likely going to change many times, and that's ok! Find ways to accept yourself and your flaws—these are your best qualities and will help you become the badass creative artist you want to be.

Don't play it small and don't put a lid on who you are, ever. You can't please everyone, so focus on yourself and on the things and people who are important to you. Talk to your nana's and tata's and great tia's and tio's and ask all the questions—they have so much wisdom and historical information about your family and ancestors. And while family is super important, remember, no one is worth sacrificing your wellbeing. The most important thing you can learn is how to be kind to yourself, how to take care of yourself, and to make your health—mental, physical and emotional—a top priority. Oh, and I love you girl!

The World of the Play



Ballet

Ballet is a kind of dance that started in Italy and France hundreds of years ago. Some of the steps even still have French names. For example, a **plié** ("plee-AY") means to bend your knees, and a **pirouette** ("peer-oh-ET") is when a dancer spins on one foot. Dancers often tell a story with their bodies instead of words, using twirls, jumps, and balance. Special shoes called **pointe shoes** let dancers rise up on the very tips of their toes. Ballet takes discipline and practice, but it can feel magical—like stepping into a fairy tale where movement becomes its own language.

JMACPHERSON



Fancy Dancing

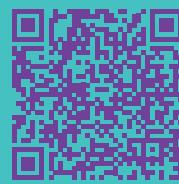
Fancy Dancing is a social dance seen at Native American **powwows** (gatherings with dance, music, and community). Fancy Dancing is known for being very fast and exciting. Dancers wear colorful **regalia** with feathers, beads, and ribbons that swirl as they move. The beat of the big drum keeps them moving with quick steps, spins, and jumps. Some Lakota dancers call the drum the "heartbeat of the people." In Lakota, the word for dance is **wacipi** ("wah-CHEE-pee"), which literally translates to "they dance." Fancy Dancing is both a competition and a celebration, honoring family, culture, and tradition while showing amazing athletic skill.



Maria Tallchief

The character of Lara in *Fancy Dancer* is inspired by Osage prima ballerina Maria Tallchief. Learn about Maria in materials from the National Women's History Museum.

(Left) Maria Tallchief, 1954.



Go Beyond the Show



Read more from Larissa and Burgandi about *Fancy Dancer* on Inside Seattle Rep, and find other resources to enhance your experience—including a media list curated by librarians at Seattle Public Library!

LESSON

Sensory Poem – Word Bank

In each section below, fill in three of your favorite items for each sense. For each item, be as specific as possible. For example, for "Smell," rather than writing Grass, write something like *The grass right after my brother has trimmed it with the lawn mower*.

In the sixth section, fill in one BAD item for each sense.

SMELL 1. 2. 3.	 HEARING 1. 2. 3.	 SIGHT 1. 2. 3.
TASTE 1. 2. 3.	 TOUCH 1. 2. 3.	 BAD! 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Sensory Poem – "Remember Me"

My name is _____ but you can call me _____.
(name you like to be called) (good sensory item)

I am _____ and _____.
(good sensory item) (good sensory item)

Remember me.

I come from _____ and _____.
(good sensory item) (good sensory item)

My people are known for _____ and _____.
(good sensory item) (good sensory item)

Remember me.

I know _____ and _____.
(good sensory item) (good sensory item)

Because I am made of _____ and _____.
(good sensory item) (good sensory item)

Remember me.

When the world feels like _____ and _____.
(bad sensory item) (bad sensory item)

Just imagine _____.
(good sensory item)

And

Remember me.