



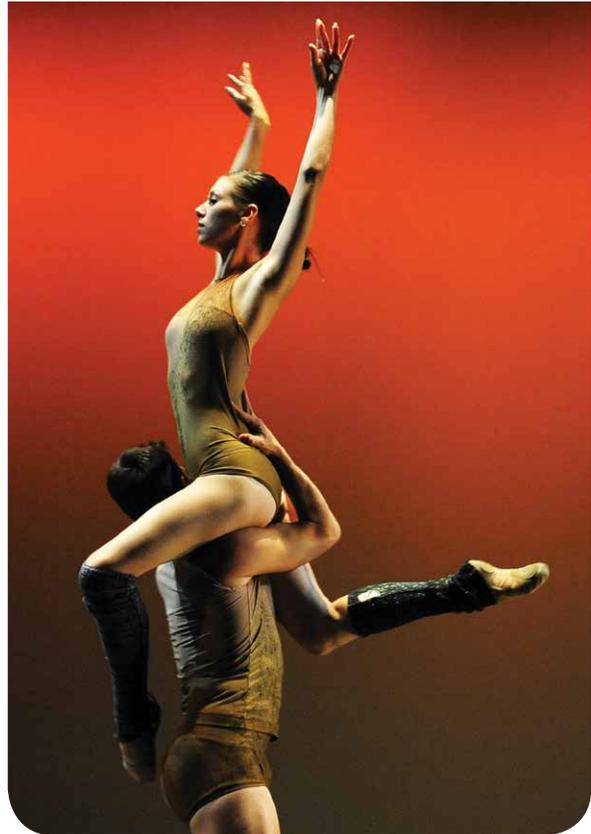
TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 7 2017  
11 AM

# BARAK BALLET



2017 > 2018  
FIELD TRIP SERIES

BROADEN THE HORIZONS  
OF YOUR CLASSROOM.  
EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT  
WORLD OF THE ARTS  
AT THE McCALLUM!



LEARNING LINKS

McCALLUM THEATRE EDUCATION  
PRESENTS

# BARAK BALLET

TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 7 2017  
11 AM

"We don't have people dressed in astronaut suits or anything. It's an abstract ballet that's meant to convey this atmosphere."

> MELISSA BARAK  
REGARDING HER BALLET  
*EOS CHASMA*

## Connecting to Curriculum and Students' Lives!

**HISTORY** > The 1970s and on, the space program

**ARTS** > Dance, music

**SCIENCE** > Space exploration, technology

### EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

**What is a "text"?** We invite you to consider the performances on McCallum's Field Trip Series as non-print texts available for study and investigation by your students. Anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website as companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that "texts" don't begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, plays, concerts, dances, radio programs, and a number of other non-print texts that students and teachers engage with on a regular basis.

We know that when we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Please consider how utilizing your McCallum performance as a text might align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

How do we help students to use these texts as a way of shaping ideas and understanding the world?

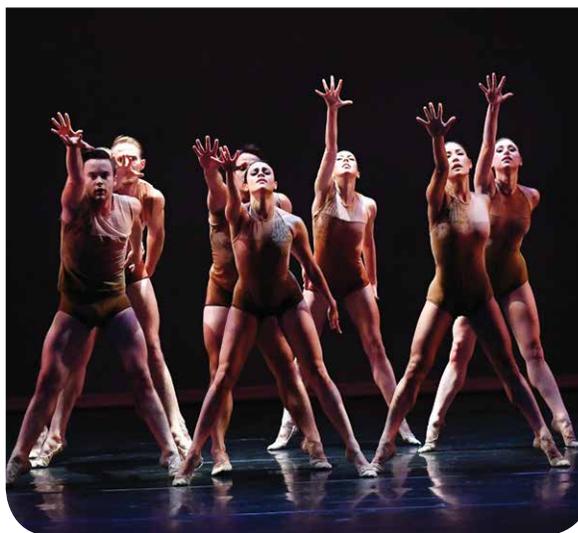
Please use this material to help you on this journey.

**NON-PRINT TEXT** > any medium/text that creates meaning through sound or images or both, such as symbols, words, songs, speeches, pictures, and illustrations not in traditional print form including those seen on computers, films, and in the environment.

# THE WORK OF ART

## A NON-PRINT TEXT FOR STUDY

WHAT'S IT MADE OF? HOW CAN THIS WORK SERVE AS A COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS-MANDATED "TEXT" FOR STUDENT STUDY IN THE CLASSROOM?



Concert dance – and classical ballet in particular – has a long history of telling stories in the clearest and most specific ways. One thing that makes contemporary dance so different is that, while it may be based on thematic material, it jettisons explicit storytelling in favor of the open-ended reading. If the typical ballet tells us something, its modern counterpart asks us something. We in the audience must decide on our own answers.

What do the moves of Barak Ballet's five women and three men suggest to us? One reviewer has put it this way: the dancers explore "an abstract emotional terrain." Emotive they certainly are, but which emotions – and stemming from what situations? We are invited to draw our own conclusions.

In the central of several short works, we watch as each dancer scurries out onto the stage, faces the audience, and lifts up on half-point, knees bent so that their legs form the shape of diamonds. Body position and facial expression convey anxiety. Is there vulnerability here? They begin to pull together into a group and their careful watchfulness suggests that danger may lie just on the outskirts – off in various directions. What is the nature of the threat? Intrigued, we look for clues. The music, by Julia Wolfe, adds to the sense of foreboding. Minutes later, as the dance winds up, one of the men and one of the women engage in a powerful pas de deux. Weight and tension shift back and forth from one to the other. We hazard guesses as to their relationship and why it has emerged from the larger one of the full group.

This new work, *Eos Chasma*, is the main focus of the performance. Choreographed by the company's director Melissa Barak, it asks what happens when earthlings visit Mars. Since the 1970s, of course, a series of our interstellar vehicles have explored this celestial neighbor from one distance or another. The title itself refers to a canyon formation on the planet's surface.

Ms. Wolfe's minimalist musical score, *Cruel Sister*, is written for string orchestra. In the beginning it was meant to be a chamber orchestra version of the British murder ballad of the same name, but has morphed over the creative process. As abstract in its own way as the genre of contemporary dance, this score can seem brooding one moment and abrasive the next. Is there a drama, psychological perhaps, spun by Wolfe's work? And how much do its agitated rhythms and harmonies inspire the movement of the dancers – and how much is it a reflection of the dread the 'characters' must feel thrust into this hostile environment?

Lighting, designed by Monique L'Heureux, plays its own role in suggesting locations sometimes stark and sometimes threatening, yet avoids any sense of specific locale.

Early in its genesis, *Eos Chasma* was presented in tandem with a display about Mars exploration put together by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. "Exploring Mars is a growing part of our culture, and the arts can be an inspiring way of participating and showing what exploration means to us," said Sarah Marcotte, who is in charge of outreach on Mars projects for JPL. "In *Eos Chasma*, the dancers interpret the experience of the first human explorers on the Red Planet. NASA is already working on real tools and technologies to make that exploration possible. The arts are another way to engage new audiences with the innovative, challenging and creative work that happens at NASA and JPL."



# THE ARTISTS

WHO HAS PRODUCED  
THIS TEXT FOR STUDY?

Barak Ballet makes concert dance that emphasizes formal qualities. *Eos Chasma*, one notes, comes across as taut and clean. Large ensembles involving lots of unison work alternate with smaller groupings. Transitions are smooth. The demands of technique typical of ballet are on display here. Repetition – steps that recur – is big. Perhaps it is only natural that viewer are reminded of the great Balanchine's *Four Temperaments* ballet, with its own interface with the science of the ancient classical world. Melissa Barak, the eponymous head and choreographer of the company, has said she'd like to leave audiences with an impression of isolation and desperation, even fear, as they experience *Eos Chasma*.



MELISSA BARAK

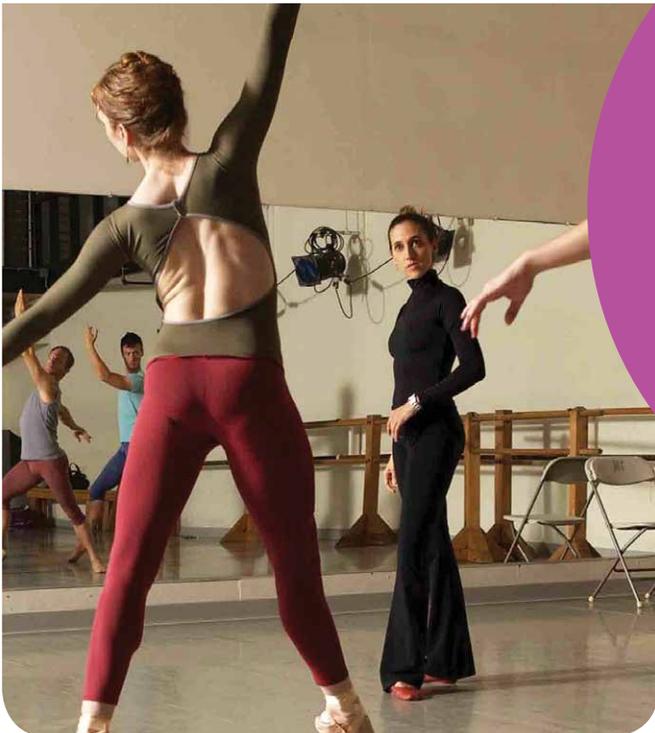
As the winner of the Paid Engagement Award at the McCallum Theatre's Choreography Festival in 2016, Melissa Barak brings her stellar company back to us with an exciting program of contemporary ballet, including her winning piece, *Eos Chasma*. An abstract ballet originally created when the Curiosity robotic rover landed on Mars, *Eos Chasma* intrigues and impresses. As an artist, Barak is drawn to cross-pollination; that is, bringing together areas of human experience which we may not normally think of as combined. Born and raised in Los Angeles, she has achieved a multitude of accomplishments as a professional ballet dancer and choreographer. While dancing with the New York City Ballet (1998-2007), she began exploring what it is to be a choreographer, and established her LA-based company in 2013. This dynamic program features several dances en pointe and off, as well as interaction with the choreographer herself.

She was invited by Peter Martins, director of the New York City Ballet, to participate in the inaugural NY Choreographic Institute. The piece she created impressed him so much that he commissioned her to choreograph a ballet for the School of American Ballet. The work she produced, *Telemann Overture Suite*, met with critical acclaim. Mr. Martins brought *Telemann* into the company's repertoire the very next season and asked her to choreograph again, this time at the company's expense. Only 22 years old, she was the youngest choreographer in New York City Ballet history to receive a commission for original work.

Ms. Barak was named one of the "Top 25 to Watch" by *Dance Magazine*. *Elle Girl* and *LA Times Magazine* have written feature articles on her. She has created new works for Richmond Ballet, American Repertory Ballet, Sacramento Ballet and Los Angeles Ballet. In 2009 and 2010, she was invited to return to the New York City Ballet where she created two more works, *A Simple Symphony* and *Call Me Ben*. She has even choreographed Mattel's animated feature film *Barbie in the Pink Shoes*.

Her dancing credits with New York City Ballet include roles in *Sleeping Beauty*, *Nutcracker*, and *Swan Lake*. In 2007, Barak danced lead roles with Los Angeles Ballet. The highly esteemed choreographer Christopher Wheeldon has created principal roles for her.

Barak formed her company to encourage both technical proficiency and artistic expression, a combination she feels is missing in many ballet companies today. The company focuses on presenting new works choreographed by Barak, as well as commissioned pieces and re-staging of other contemporary pieces.



"People might think of painting, sculpture, digital art or dance as the only means of expressing creativity, but science and engineering can be just as creative."

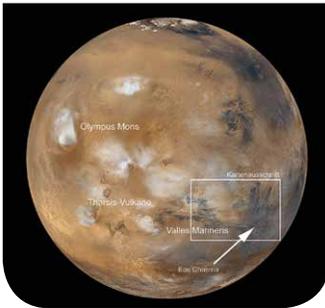
> SARAH MARCOTTE,  
MUSEUM SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE  
FOR THE MARS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT  
TEAM AT THE JET PROPULSION  
LABORATORY

# CONTEXTS

## WHAT INFORMATION SURROUNDS THIS TEXT FOR STUDY & COULD HELP MAKE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH IT MORE POWERFUL?

Melissa Barak originally created *Eos Chasma* for the Richmond Ballet in Virginia when, as noted earlier, the Curiosity robotic rover landed on Mars. "I was in awe," Barak said. "We've got eyes on Mars now; that was wild. I just kept thinking it would be so frightening if some creature just appeared out of nowhere and the machine caught a glimpse of life on another planet." Around that same time, Ms. Barak came across a piece of music composed by Julia Wolfe that she found haunting and felt captured the feeling of isolation in a vast, hostile environment. The work inspired her to create a ballet

about humans exploring Mars and what they would experience emotionally and physically. "We don't have people dressed in astronaut suits or anything," Barak said. "It's an abstract ballet that's meant to convey this atmosphere." *Eos Chasma* was a hit in Richmond! Since forming Barak Ballet in Los Angeles in 2013, she has been looking for the perfect moment to present it again.



In the Pasadena-based joint venture with JPL, *Eos Chasma* was paired with an exhibit on Mars and its exploration along with a huge 3-D panoramic image of the red planet and models of the Curiosity robotic rover. A JPL engineer spoke about the role they played on the Mars missions operating the robotic rovers Curiosity and Opportunity. The panel discussion after the performance, between Barak and the engineer, centered on how art and science inform each other. JPL spokesperson Sarah Marcotte said at the time, "Dreaming of innovative techniques to land a rover on Mars safely or finding new ways to solve fundamental scientific problems all require imagination and a bold vision.

The thrill of exploring a new place or of the possibility of discovering signs of life beyond our planet; engages people on an intellectual level and also captures their imagination and inspires them to dare mighty things."

Ms. Barak's goals include "always trying to think of ways to engage a new audience and for people to appreciate dance in a new way and see it in a different perspective. I think cross-pollinating with other organizations, artists and mediums is a great way to get people engaged and get them to see dance in a way that might click. This is an opportunity for people to see it in a way that's engaging and does pique their interest and hopefully piques their interest enough to continue seeing what else we do."

*Eos Chasma*, according to Wikipedia, is a feature in the southern part of the Valles Marineris canyon system of the Margaritifer Sinus quadrangle (MC-19) region of the planet Mars. *Eos Chasma's* western floor is mainly made up of an etched massive material – either volcanic or eolian deposits later eroded by the Martian wind. The eastern end of the *Eos Chasma* has a large area of streamlined bars and longitudinal striations. These are thought to be stream-carved plateau deposits and material transported and deposited by flowing fluid. Sulfate, hydrated sulfate, and iron oxides have been discovered in *Eos Chasma*.

According to an analysis by Vicky Hamilton of the University of Hawaii, *Eos Chasma* may be the source of the ALH84001 meteorite, which some cite as evidence of past life on Mars.

Melissa Barak would not be the first choreographer to go for mixing dance and science together. Paul Taylor's work *Syzygy* (1987), with its edgy music and planetary themes, heads in that same direction, while David Bintley's *Still Life at the Penguin Cafe* (also 1987) evokes a deep audience response to the story of extinction in the Anthropocene. As JPL's Mallory Lefland, now part of the team working on the next generation Mars vehicle, shared back in 2013, both choreographers and engineers are, at the heart of it, problem solvers who work toward solutions in designing complex structures.

# TO GET READY FOR THE PERFORMANCE, STUDENTS COULD RESEARCH THESE:

- > MARS
- > EOS CHASMA
- > SPACE EXPLORATION

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HERE'S A 60-MINUTE LESSON IN COLLABORATION & PROBLEM-SOLVING YOU COULD TEACH TO HELP PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THIS WORK:

**LINE OF INQUIRY** – LOI is an essential question that generates a lesson:

How does choreographer Melissa Barak make a dance based on human exploration of Mars' surface?

## ASK STUDENTS

What do you think we might find on the surface of Mars?

## REVEAL

In *Eos Chasma*, the choreographer Melissa Barak has created a dance that explores what it might be like to land on that planet – and in particular in the Eos Chasma.

View this page for images of Eos chasma and contextual information:

[www.esa.int/Our\\_Activities/Space\\_Science/Mars\\_Express/Eos\\_Chasma\\_part\\_of\\_Valles\\_Marineris](http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Space_Science/Mars_Express/Eos_Chasma_part_of_Valles_Marineris)

## ASK STUDENTS

What are some of the details here that interest us?

With seat partners or in table groups, students create a scenario in which they (or characters they create) land on Mars and respond to the things they see and experience in the vicinity of Eos Chasma. Giving full reign to imagination, they write these scenarios out.

These are shared aloud and students notice interesting choices in the creation process, word use, and story structure.



# AFTER COMING TO THE THEATER, STUDENTS COULD RESEARCH THESE:

- > DANCE NOTATION
- > CONTEMPORARY DANCE

HERE'S A 45/60-MINUTE LESSON YOU COULD TEACH AFTER STUDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED THE WORK:

## DISCUSSION

Have students take a look back at the performance. What stood out, and why? Describe the performance. What were the different pieces – and how were they sequenced? What skills were the dancers using? What shapes did they make with their bodies? What moves stood out to you especially, and why? What were the different groupings of dancers? How did the dancers appear to communicate with each other? What evidence did you find of collaboration? What emotions were conveyed – and how? What connections between the exploration of Mars and the dance *Eos Chasma* did you see? What could we learn about the 'characters' in the dance by how they are related to their environment?

Share with students that choreographers sometimes use any one of various forms of notation. Here's an example: <https://publicdomainreview.org/collections/collection-of-dances-in-choreography-notation-1700/>

## PAIRS

Students, working in pairs or table groups, make some decisions about how they would turn their scenario of Mars exploration (from the prior lesson) into a dance, meeting these challenges:

1. What are some patterns of movement that you would have your dancers make across the stage space – and how would you notate them? Try that – on paper.
2. What are some shapes you would have your dancers make with their bodies? Choose some key moments in your scenario and sketch body shapes that would be effective choices in each instance.
3. What kind of music – or particular pieces – would you use as an accompaniment – and why? Note these.

These choreographic plans are shared. Students are asked questions about the ideas being shared. End with a general discussion: What makes dance a good way to connect to the idea of Mars exploration?

“Exploring Mars is a growing part of our culture, and the arts can be an inspiring way of participating and showing what exploration means to us.”

> SARAH MARCOTTE,  
MUSEUM SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE  
FOR THE MARS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT  
TEAM AT THE JET PROPULSION  
LABORATORY

# WHAT'S YOUR READ OF THIS NON-PRINT TEXT?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS - AND HOW COULD THEY BE ADAPTED AS GUIDING QUESTIONS TO SPARK STUDENT DISCUSSION?

- > What are some adjectives which describe the different sorts of energy used in the performance?
- > Which moves really stood out to you – and why?
- > How are these different dances sequenced?
- > Which elements seem more ballet and which more modern?
- > What makes a certain dancer stand out for you in the performance?
- > What are some of the skills in evidence? What capacities are implied?
- > How are different groupings used?
- > How are dances with narrative different from those without, in your view?
- > Which was the most powerful moment for you personally? Why was that so?
- > What telltale signs did we observe that told us a choreographer had guided the creation of this work?
- > If you were, like Melissa Barak, in the position of making artistic choices in the fashioning of this performance, would you make different choices? What would they be?
- > Are certain ways of moving more prevalent in certain pieces? How is this evidenced?
- > What was conveyed by these pieces – and how?
- > What about mood? Sense of location? Events depicted?
- > What did you notice about pacing?
- > Which moments were climactic – and what made them so?
- > How was the idea of contrast employed in this performance?
- > How would you describe the music? Is there more than one mood expressed? More than one tempo?
- > What were the relationships between the music and the movement?
- > What emotions were expressed by the dancers? How?
- > What are some of the stories these dances tell?
- > What specific evidence did you see that told you the dancers had been classically trained?
- > Which image most stands out in your memory – and why?
- > How do you know that the performers are paying attention to each other?
- > If anxiety is one feeling in evidence in this work of art, what are some others?
- > What roles does partnership play in this work?
- > What does costuming bring to this performance?
- > What are the themes in this work?
- > What does this work mean to you?

# INTERNET

## EOS CHASMA

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eos\\_Chasma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eos_Chasma)

## JET PROPULSION LABORATORY IMAGES OF EOS CHASMA

[www.jpl.nasa.gov/spaceimages/details.php?id=PIA13183](http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/spaceimages/details.php?id=PIA13183)

## DANCE MAGAZINE: WHAT EXACTLY IS CONTEMPORARY BALLET?

[www.dancemagazine.com/what\\_exactly\\_is\\_contemporary\\_ballet-2306944842.html](http://www.dancemagazine.com/what_exactly_is_contemporary_ballet-2306944842.html)

## KIDZSEARCH: MODERN DANCE

[https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Modern\\_dance](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Modern_dance)

## KIDZSEARCH: BALLET

<https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Ballet>

## DANCE FACTS: CONTEMPORARY DANCE - BALLET AND DANCE

[www.dancefacts.net/dance-types/contemporary-dance/](http://www.dancefacts.net/dance-types/contemporary-dance/)

# BOOKS

## *MARS: THE RED PLANET: ROCKS, ROVERS, PIONEERS, AND MORE!*

Reading Level: Ages 6-10

Publisher: National Geographic Children's Books, 2016

ISBN-10: 1426327544

This highly visual book covers all kinds of topics, from extreme weather to high-tech rovers to plans for a human colony on Mars. Complete with up-to-date facts about water and all the latest discoveries.



## *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC READERS: MARS KINDLE EDITION*

ASIN: B00KY3IDRK

Discover the fascinating world of Mars in this colorful book packed with amazing imagery. In this inviting and entertaining format, kids will learn about the newest information on Mars, the Mars Rover, and our ongoing exploration of the Red Planet. This Level 3 reader is written in an easy-to-grasp style to encourage the scientists and explorers of tomorrow!

## *THE BALLET BOOK*

By: Darcey Bussell

Reading level: Ages 7-10

Publisher: DK Children, 2006

ISBN-10: 0756619335

In this illustrated step-by-step guide, readers learn everything a graceful ballerina needs to know, from holding the barre to arabesques and pas de deux.

## *MODERN DANCE*

By: Wendy Hinote Lanier

Reading level: Ages 8-11

Publisher: Focus Readers, 2017

ISBN-10: 1635173426

# CDS

JULIA WOLFE: *CRUEL SISTER*

Performed by: Ensemble Resonanz with Brad Lubman, Conductor

Label: Cantaloupe, 2011

ASIN: B004KDO30G

“Studying whether there’s life on Mars or studying how the universe began, there’s something magical about pushing back the frontiers of knowledge. That’s something that is almost part of being human, and I’m certain that will continue.”

> SALLY RIDE, PHYSICIST AND ASTRONAUT WHO BECAME THE FIRST AMERICAN WOMAN IN SPACE



LEARNING LINKS HAVE BEEN  
CREATED BY:

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RESEARCH AND TEXT UNLESS  
OTHERWISE NOTED

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**KAJSA THURESSON-FRARY**  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION