

Questions for Study -- “A New Season: A Celebration of Artistry, Place and Potential”

Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center at Gonzaga University
School Matinee -- Friday, April 26, 2019



[The Seasons in Art](#)

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The Seasons in Art:

1. Artists, writers, and composers have used the four seasons as themes in music, artwork, poetry, and stories for thousands of years. Can you name a famous painting, piece of music, poem, or play based on the theme of the seasons? Why do you think the seasons are a popular theme in different kinds of art?
2. Can you think of recent movies, songs, or books that use one or more of the four seasons as an important part of the setting or story? How does the season play an important part? How would the song or story be different if it took place in a different season?
3. What colors, sounds, feelings, smells, and tastes do you associate with different seasons? How would you use those elements to convey your feelings about the season in visual artwork, a poem, or a dance?

4. How do different seasons change our daily routines and habits throughout the year? As individuals? As a community?
5. In addition to changes in the weather and nature with each season, what other ideas might the four seasons symbolize in stories, music, and art?

Elements and Expression in Performing Arts:

1. Listen to excerpts from composer Alec Roth's "A Time to Dance" (*see link to suggested excerpts below*). How does the composer use different musical elements (instruments, voices, rhythms, and tempos) to create moods and effects that relate to different seasons? In what ways are the moods the composer creates similar to or different from your own ideas about each season?
2. What are some ways that physical movements can tell stories and express moods? Think of moods and feelings you associate with each of the four seasons. What physical movements could you use to communicate those moods and feelings?
3. "A New Season" includes poems written long ago in different countries (*see link to text of "A Time to Dance" below*) as well as poems written by people living in Spokane and Washington right now. Is poetry from other places and times more or less interesting to you than poetry from our own time and place? What kinds of thoughts and emotions do words, music, and artwork from our own time and place create for you compared to works of art from other times and places?
4. The costumes for actors in "A New Season" often represent styles that people would wear in different times in history or during different seasons. The costumes for dancers often represent colors and objects found in nature at different times of the year. What are some reasons that actors' costumes might be designed using a different approach than dancers' costumes?
5. Above the stage in "A New Season" is a giant ribbon shape that's used as a projection screen for pictures, videos, and lighting effects. Why do you think the designer chose the shape of a ribbon for a show in the brand new Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center? What might the images, colors, and movement in the projections add to the music, words, and dance in "A New Season?"
6. How is attending a live performance different from watching a show or movie at home? How are live performances different from movies at a theater?

Resources and Terms:

“A New Season” show overview:

“A New Season” is a collaborative production built around contemporary British composer Alec Roth’s cantata for choir and orchestra, “A Time to Dance.” The show contains four sections corresponding to each of the four seasons. Each section begins with a dramatic sequence using poetry to connect the seasons with local subjects. Dance sequences choreographed to Roth’s cantata complete each section. Costumes and projections visually represent the seasons throughout the performance.

“A Time to Dance” suggested excerpts for listening:

https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dw.asp?dc=W18368_68144

PART 1: SPRING MORNING

- #3: "Awake"
- #5: "Dancing on the hill-tops"
- #6: "Dance there"

PART 2: SUMMER NOON

- #9: "In Summer's heat"
- #11: "Thirsty fly"
- #14: "Give all to love"

PART 3: AUTUMN EVENING

- #15: "O Autumn"
- #17: "Autumnal"
- #18: "Fall, leaves, fall"

PART 4: WINTER NIGHT

- #20: "Deep midnight"
- #21: "Snowflakes"
- #23: "A glee for Winter"

Full text of “A Time to Dance”

<http://www.alecroth.com/assets/Uploads/Docs/A%20Time%20to%20Dance%20Text.pdf>

Terms:

cantata:

a musical composition for one or more voices and instrumental ensemble, usually with vocal solos, duets, and choruses, and often telling a story with words and music

choreography:

the sequence of movements followed by dancers in a performance

contemporary:

from the same period of time

collaboration:

the process of working with a group of people to create a project or work of art

ensemble:

a group of musicians, actors, or dancers who perform together

fly loft:

the tower above a stage where scenery and lighting equipment is raised and lowered with a system of ropes, cables, and pulleys to change scenery during a performance

instrumentation:

the assortment of musical instruments a composer selects to play a piece of music

projections:

images and videos that appear on a surface from a source of strong light at a distance