



ARTS BALLET THEATRE OF FLORIDA

Presents

The Nutcracker

A ballet in two acts and three scenes, based on E. T. A. Hoffmann's
The Nutcracker and the Mouse King

Music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

A Study Guide for Teachers of Grades K-12



Choreography by Vladimir Issaev



Dear educator,

Thank you for choosing Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida's The Nutcracker as your preferred Outreach Educational Program.

This guide will provide you with materials and information to prepare you and your students for the upcoming performance you are going to experience.

It includes a synopsis of the ballet, information about the composer and the choreographer, other educational information and activities for your students to follow.

Please, apply accordingly to their ages and experience and feel free to copy and distribute any materials in this guide for your students or for other teachers as necessary.

The performance you and your students are about to see features excerpts of both Act I and II of the full-length presentation of Vladimir Issaev's The Nutcracker.

Our beautiful scenery, renovated costumes, and gorgeous choreography will provide your students with a very unique experience.

The Nutcracker is a story about dancing snowflakes, sugarplums, naughty little boys, magical dolls, and beauty beyond imagination danced to Tchaikovsky's famous musical score.

The dancers and staff of Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida, look forward to having you attend our upcoming performance.

We hope you enjoy our show!

Sincerely,

Giselle Deyá

Educational Program Coordinator

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Preparing Your Students

Before attending the ballet, let's learn some facts about this very beautiful art.

What is Ballet?

Ballet is a way of telling a story using music and dance instead of words. Dancers who perform ballet on stage are highly trained.

Ballet is a distinctive form of dance that requires a special technique established almost 500 years ago. It began in the courts of Italy and soon spread to the French courts. The first real ballet, mime, music and dance were combined in one performance. When ballets were first performed, men played the female parts, they wore wigs and masks. Girls didn't dance at all. All ballet steps have French names, these steps were first introduced by a ballet master in France many years ago.

There are five positions:

First Position: The balls of the feet are turned out completely. The heels touch each other and the feet face outward, trying to form a straight line.

Second Position: The balls of both feet are turned out completely, with the heels separated by the length of one foot. Similar to first position, but the feet are spread apart.

Third Position: One foot is in front of the other with the front foot touching the middle of the back foot.

Fourth Position: The feet are placed the same as third position, but one step apart.

Fifth Position: With both feet touching, the toes of each foot reach the heel of the other.



First position



Second position



Third position



Fourth position



Fifth position

THE NUTCRACKER

Before attending the ballet:

- Tell students that The Nutcracker Ballet is an annual holiday event in communities across the country. Ask whether any child has ever seen the ballet performed or whether they know anyone who has danced in a performance. What other activities do the students do around the holiday season?
 - Read *The Nutcracker*. Ask if anyone has ever had a dream? Can they remember their dream?
 - Listen to selections of *The Nutcracker Suite* by P.I. Tchaikovsky. Divide children up into small groups and allow them to create their own dances with the different pieces of music.
 - What do they imagine is going to happen during this piece? Have them write a story or draw a picture and compare it to what they actually do see.
- Discuss with your students what is necessary to put together a performance of *The Nutcracker*. Discuss the people involved and what their jobs are to create this huge production:
- **Choreographer:** This person creates the steps of the dances.
 - **Dancer:** This person performs the choreography on stage.
 - **Stage hand:** This person performs a variety of backstage work, including hanging drops, moving sets on and off the stage, monitoring props, etc.
 - **Costume Designer:** This person designs and assembles the costumes for the dancers.
 - **Lighting Designer:** This person designs the lights that will set the mood of the ballet.
 - **Sound Technician:** This person sets up and operates the equipment for the music.
 - **Stage Manager:** This person directs everyone backstage to do his or her job at the correct time so that the production can run smoothly.
- Research and present to the students the life of Tchaikovsky. Have them research different composers of the era and compare what they find to what they know about Tchaikovsky's life. For example, were they child prodigies? Did they have any other jobs besides being involved in music? Did they write ballets? etc.



It's Show Time: Audience Etiquette

Going to see a dance company or other performance groups in a theatre can be a magical, memorable event for the audience.

Make the children understand the importance of a well behaved audience.

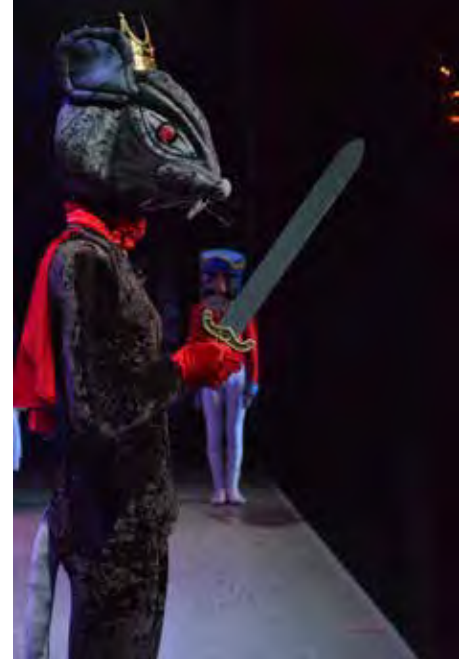
Whether they are coming to see a play, a musical, a concert, or a ballet, the rules are the same. The performers are working very hard to please the audience. When you show that you are paying attention and are enjoying the show by clapping, smiling, and laughing, it helps them to do a better job.

After entering the lobby of the theatre, students should stay in a single file line. This will make it easier for your class to walk together down the aisles without getting separated or interrupting other groups of audience members.

After the children are seated, the lights will dim until it is dark in the seating areas, but there is some light near the stage. This is a sign that the performance is starting. The curtains will open only after the lights have dimmed. The opening of the curtains means that the performance has begun.

When the performance is over is the appropriate time for applause. Applause is greatly appreciated by all of those who worked on the production; however, please remember that yelling is never appropriate behaviour for the theatre. Read these rules to the students:





TO DO RULES

Do make sure you are ready to sit and enjoy the show with plenty of time before it starts: get a drink of water if you are thirsty, visit the bathroom, get a Kleenex if you need one.

Do make yourself comfortable in your seat.

Do clap if you want to show the dancers you liked what you saw. Dressing nicely as a sign of respect to the artists and the theatre.

Do tell a teacher, parent, or chaperone before the show if the person in front of you is so tall that you may not be able to see well.

Sometimes it helps to change places to make sure everybody can see.



NOT TO DO RULES

Do not talk, laugh or whisper with companions. Excessive noise making is very distracting and disrespectful to the performers.

Do not eat during the performance: Theatres do not allow food in the seating areas. In the lobby refreshments are often served during intermission, before and after the performance and are to be consumed in the lobby.

Do not take pictures or video tape. Photographs and/or audio and video taping are not allowed in the theatre not only because they are distracting to the performers, but also because it is considered an infringement on the copyright law

Do not leave your seat once the show starts. The theatre will be dark, and people should leave their seats only if they have a very important need . Do not stand up, because people behind you won't be able to see.

The Nutcracker

A ballet in two acts and three scenes, based on E. T. A. Hoffmann's
The Nutcracker and the Mouse King

FOR BOTH, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

As the holiday season approaches, many dancers, professionals and non professionals around the world, from the smallest to the biggest ballet company, begin rehearsals for the most popular holiday entertainment traditions: The Nutcracker.

The Nutcracker has every element of a classic fairy tale, from the magic and mystery of dancing dolls, snowflakes and candy sweets, to the battle of the toy soldiers and the mice, and the fantastic journey of the young Clara and her Nutcracker Prince.

The Nutcracker was first performed at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia on December 17, 1892. The

great choreographer, Marius Petipa commissioned composer Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky to compose the score for the ballet. Petipa drafted the libretto based on Alexandre Dumas' adap-

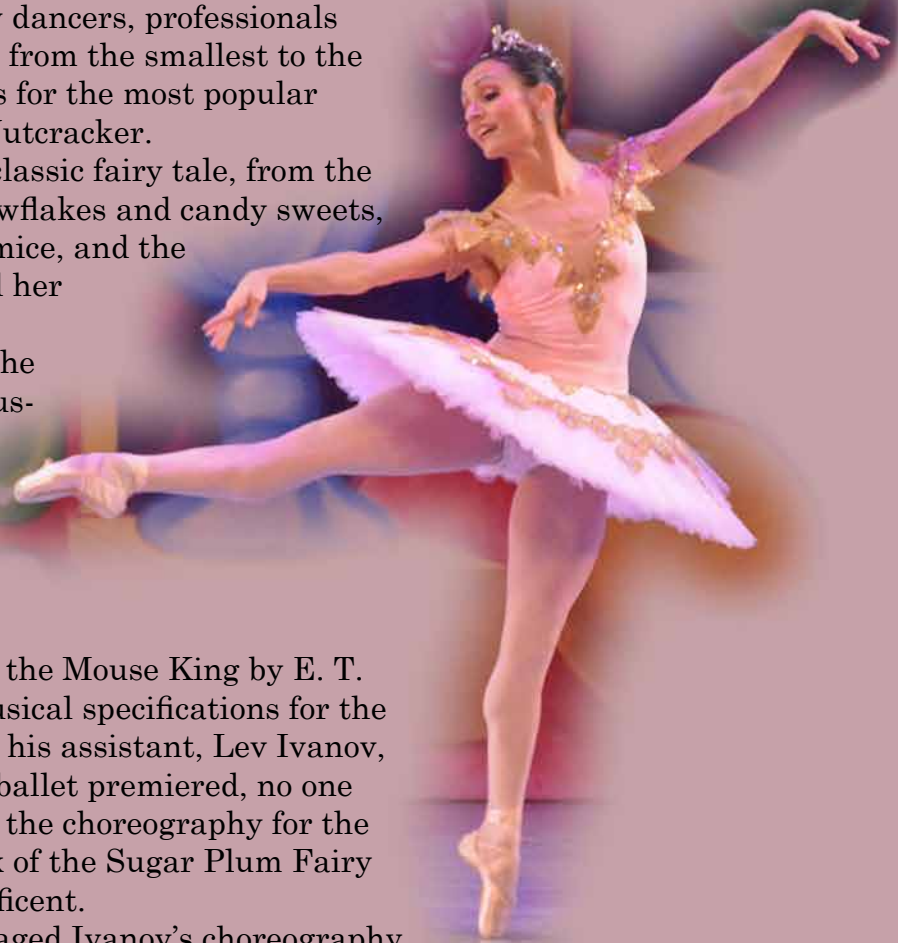
tation of the tale of The Nutcracker and the Mouse King by E. T. A. Hoffmann. Soon after sending the musical specifications for the ballet to Tchaikovsky, Petipa fell ill and his assistant, Lev Ivanov, completed the choreography. When the ballet premiered, no one thought it could be a success. However, the choreography for the Snow Scene and the Grand Pas de Deux of the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier was considered magnificent.

In 1934, The Royal Ballet in London, staged Ivanov's choreography under the title Casse-Noisette (Nutcracker in French). In 1944, the first production of The Nutcracker in the United States was staged by San Francisco Ballet. Through the years, ballet companies

worldwide have adopted The Nutcracker as a permanent feature in their repertory.

The beauty of Tchaikovsky's score and the charm of the story for holiday entertainment have inspired many choreographers to stage their own versions of the ballet.

In 1997, Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida, staged for the first time some suites or dances of Vladimir Issaev's version of The Nutcracker, and it was not until 1999 when a full production was presented with scenery, special effects and gorgeous costumes by our company.





THE STORY MAKER

E. T. A. Hoffmann.

Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (January 24, 1776 - June 25, 1822), was a German romantic and fantasy author and composer. He changed his third name from Wilhelm to Amadeus in 1813 in homage to the renowned composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Hoffmann's stories were tremendously influential in the 19th century, and he is one of the key authors of the Romantic Movement.



THE MUSIC MAKER

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia. Musically precocious, he began piano lessons at the age of five. He went on to study at the St. Petersburg Conservatory from 1861 to 1865. In 1866, he was appointed professor of theory and harmony at the Moscow Conservatory, established that year. Tchaikovsky traveled constantly, not staying long in any one place. He began conducting orchestras after filling in at a performance in Moscow of his opera, *The Enchantress*. Tchaikovsky visited America in 1891 in a triumphant tour to conduct performances of his works and in 1893, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Cambridge University. Tchaikovsky died on November 6, 1893.



THE BALLET MAKER

Vladimir Issaev.

The Choreographer Vladimir Issaev was born in Russia in 1954. His career started at the age of 11 at the Choreographic School of Voronezh. After working as a ballet dancer at the Opera House of Odessa, he studied at the "Gitis Institute of Arts in Moscow" where he graduated as Ballet Master and Master Choreographer in 1986. He is currently Ballet Master, Choreographer & Artistic Director of his own school Vladimir Issaev School of Classical Ballet and of the professional company Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida.

As a Choreographer, he has created several ballets in Russia, Japan, Indonesia, South Africa, the United States, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. Among many other accolades, in May of 2009 Mr. Issaev was awarded Most influential teacher by the National Advancement for the Arts of the US and Best Educator in the Arts by the Florida Alliance of Arts Educators and he received the 2015 Miami Life Award.



Synopsis

For the Children

First Act

It is Christmas Eve at the Stahlbaum home. Family and friends gather around the beautifully decorated tree; it's a night of rejoicing, exchanging gifts, and dancing. The joy is suddenly interrupted when Herr Drosselmeyer enters. He is a strange, but kind old man who brings beautiful life-size toys for Clara and Fritz, which dance at the touch of his wand. Drosselmeyer has another present for Clara: a Nutcracker. When the party is over and all the guests leave, Clara sneaks down to the living room in her nightgown to take another look at the Nutcracker. The clock strikes midnight and as Clara goes to fetch the Nutcracker, pandemonium breaks loose; toy soldiers come to life along with the mice. A great battle takes place as Clara huddles in her chair. The Mouse King fights with the Nutcracker. Clara saves the Nutcracker by hitting the Mouse King's head with her shoe.

The battle is over and Clara is now transported to the Kingdom of Snow where she meets the Nutcracker, transformed into a prince.

Second Act

After dancing with the King and Queen of Snow and the Snowflakes, Clara and her Prince are taken to the Kingdom of Sweets where they are met by the Dew Drop Fairy and her Cavalier. The celebration begins in their honor, and dances representing Chocolate from Spain, Tea from China, Coffee from Arabia, and Marzipan follow. Flowers delight them with a waltz. To top it all, the Sugarplum Fairy and her Cavalier honor Clara and her Prince with a beautiful Pas-de-Deux. Everyone joins in the dancing of a spectacular Coda.





After the Ballet

For the Teachers

-Apply accordingly to the age and level of the students-

Assign the class to write a newspaper or magazine review of the performance. Discuss elements of a good review. What did you like about the ballet? and why?

Ask them how many dancers were there performing at one time? how were they interacting with each other? Were they moving in unison?

Different dancers in the ballet played different characters. How do the dancers' movements let them know which character they were playing?

You can ask them: When was the last time you lifted a person above your head and have it appear effortless? Or performed several gravity-defying leaps?

Make emphasis on the fact that Ballet can be enjoyed by boys, girls, men and women. It is very hard work and requires great athletic ability, coordination and strength. Many dancers perform a 2 ½ hour ballet with only a few short breaks. Male ballet dancers have to jump higher and turn more times than their female counterparts.

Ask students to describe the motions of the dancers in the performance that they saw and what they thought those motions symbolized. Have students brainstorm movements from dances that they are more familiar with (break-dancing, hip-hop, jazz, etc.) and what they symbolize. Have students compare and contrast the styles.

Another idea is to have them write thank-you notes to the dancers (DANCERS LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!).

Discuss with students how the performance was different from what they expected. What parts did they like/dislike? Would they want to go to a ballet performance in the future? What did they learn? You may want to quiz them verbally on some aspects of the performance.

Have students draw, paint or color a scene that they liked best.

Discuss the similarities and differences of the ballet performance and theatre to other performances students may have been to such as a movie, a sports event, a rock concert, or a school play. What are the differences between a live performance and one on television or video?

POST PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

LANGUAGE ARTS

NAME _____

GRADE _____

Post-Performance Activities / Language Arts / Grades K-1

NAME _____ GRADE _____

What scene did you like most about The Nutcracker ballet.

Draw a picture of that scene

Draw a picture that illustrates your **new version** of The Nutcracker

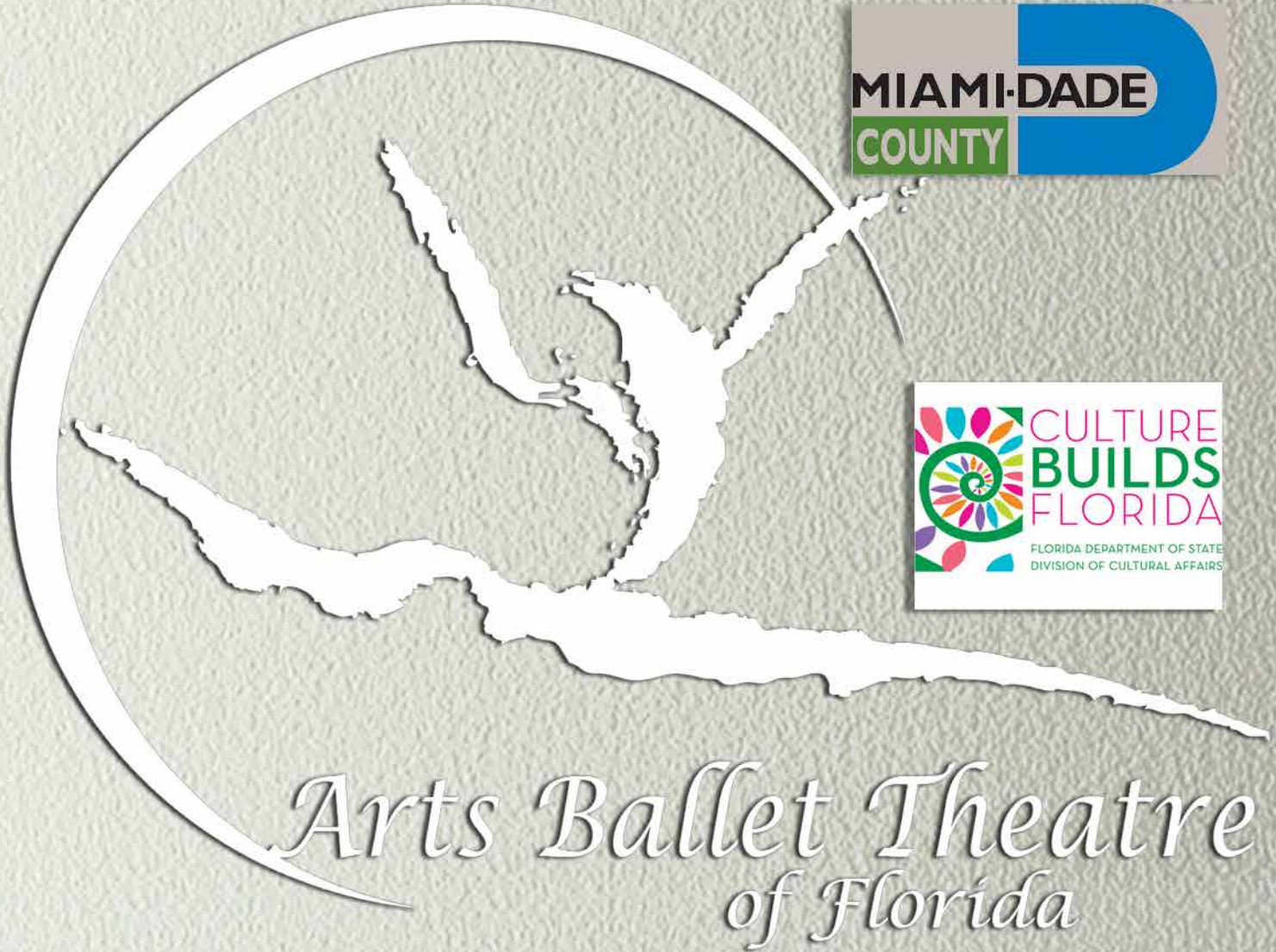
The Nutcracker Ballet / Word Search

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GENRE
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MOTIF
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