teacher resource guide  schooltime performance series

the nutcracker

National Ballet Theatre of Odessa
Prepare to be dazzled and enchanted by The Nutcracker, a timeless and beloved ballet performance that is perfect for children of all ages and adults who have grown up watching it during the winter holiday season.

The Nutcracker, held all over the world, varies from one production company to another with different names for the protagonists, choreography, and even new musical additions in some versions. But the story, a classical ballet fairy tale in two acts, is essentially the same: It is about a little girl named Masha and a fascinating, wonderful dream she has. It is set during a Christmas party in the grand house of the Stahlbaum family. Children are excited by the sight of a large Christmas tree and the presents under it. Drosselmey, an interesting and mysterious figure, appears at the party and plays magical tricks and shows magnificent toys for the excited children. Masha loves one of the toys, a Nutcracker soldier, but Frantz grabs the toy and breaks it. Masha is distressed, but Drosselmey repairs the toy for her. After the ball is over and the house is quiet, Masha sneaks into the grand hall where she sees the Christmas tree. She kisses her Nutcracker doll good night and then falls asleep in a big chair, all the white clutching the Nutcracker.

Her dream begins: An army of mice appear and start to battle the Nutcracker and his tin army. The Nutcracker fights a duel with the Mouse King, which scares Masha so much that she throws a shoe at the Mouse King. With that, the rodent disappears and the Nutcracker is whisked away into a wondrous place where he meets the Sugar Plum Fairy and celebrates their victory over the Mouse King. With that, the rodent disappears and the Nutcracker is whisked away to a wondrous place where he meets the Sugar Plum Fairy and celebrates their victory over the Mouse King. Masha's dream is over. Masha loves one of the toys, a Nutcracker soldier, but Frantz grabs the toy and breaks it. Masha is distressed, but Drosselmey repairs the toy for her. After the ball is over and the house is quiet, Masha sneaks into the grand hall where she sees the Christmas tree. She kisses her Nutcracker doll good night and then falls asleep in a big chair, all the while clutching the Nutcracker.

In his final years, Tchaikovsky took up conducting to great success and even visited America in 1891. He visited Carnegie Hall for its inauguration and conducted performances in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. In 1893, Tchaikovsky succumbed to a cholera epidemic that was sweeping the world, and his last years were filled with illness and despair.

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Tchaikovsky composed his first song at the age of four with one of his sisters. His parents wanted him to become a lawyer, but the pull of music was too great. He started learning piano and developed a passion for Italian music and Mozart. In Saint Petersburg, as a young man, he took classes on composition, harmony and instrumentation. After graduating from St. Petersburg Conservatory, where he spent three years, Tchaikovsky started to compose orchestral works, operas and piano concertos. Over the years, he became a famous composer and attracted the patronage of a wealthy benefactor, Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck, who supported him enough that Tchaikovsky could quit his day job at a conservatory.

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## Inspired Ideas in the Classroom

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<th>Teacher Focus</th>
<th>Student Activity</th>
<th>NJ Student Learning Standards</th>
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<td><strong>Prepare for the performance</strong></td>
<td>Help your students understand the hard work and the pleasure involved in ballet dancing. Following are a few videos. Pick out the ones your students may find interesting and share them with your class(es). A day in the life of a ballet dancer <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvXb8NrmJZM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvXb8NrmJZM</a></td>
<td>NJ Health and Physical Education Standard 2.1C. Integrated Skills 2.5A Motor Skill Development NJ Arts Standard 1.3 The Creative Process English Language Arts NJSLA.SL.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12</td>
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<td><strong>Experience the performance</strong></td>
<td>Take your class to attend The Nutcracker at NJPAC. Notice when passé, 1st position and similar shapes are used. Prepare to help your students make connections between the videos you watched, the experience of doing passé and 1st position arms, and the dance you see performed.</td>
<td>English Language Arts NJSLA.SL.5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12 NJ Arts Standard 1.4 Aesthetic Responses</td>
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<td><strong>Reflect, respond and read</strong></td>
<td>Your students may think the dancing looked difficult or easy. Engage them in a discussion of how it looked. Help relate it to their experience of doing passé and 1st position arms. The effortless look of ballet is intentional. The look of ease helps create the illusion of dream worlds. Ballet dancers often have to appear light and free. In The Nutcracker, the look of ballet helps transform the audience to the dream world of Masha and The Nutcracker.</td>
<td>Social Studies 6.1B.2.9</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Look at your program for a list of the people and places that Masha and the Nutcracker visited (i.e. Spanish dance, Arabian dance, etc.). Make this list available to students. The next activity will ask students to look at world maps and history to better understand how the creators of The Nutcracker may have seen the world. You can use the Activity Sheet 2 to help them think about geography and economics. Alternatively, you can direct them to research and find 19th century world maps.</td>
<td>Social Studies 6.3A.1D.1X NJ Arts Standard 1.3 The Creative Process</td>
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<td><strong>Originate</strong></td>
<td>Guide your students through some brainstorming. They are going to create their own outline for a performance. First, help them choose a setting for the beginning. Where does the protagonist fall asleep? Who accompanies the protagonist in their dream? Next, brainstorm scenes that will happen in the dream.</td>
<td>Social Studies 6.3A.1D.1X,11 NJ Arts Standard 1.3 The Creative Process</td>
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<td><strong>Rehearse</strong></td>
<td>Help the students determine criteria for good scenes. What's important? For example, amount of detail, level of spectacle, and use of color could be factors. Put the students in small groups. Assign one scene to each group. Instruct the groups to flesh out the details of their chosen dream scene. Choose a medium that you feel most excited or comfortable in. For instance, students can write descriptions, draw sets and costumes, or create short dances. Tell the students what they will be doing (i.e. writing, drawing or making dances.).</td>
<td>NJ Arts Standard 1.3 The Creative Process 1.4 Critique Methodologies</td>
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<td><strong>Make magic</strong></td>
<td>Give the students a deadline by which to finish their projects. Notify them that the groups will be sharing with one another.</td>
<td>NJ Arts Standard 1.4 Aesthetic Responses 1.5 Performing</td>
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Ballet
Female dancer in a ballet production or company.

Ballet company
A dance troupe performing classical or modern ballet, who hold performances at their home base or travel to different venues.

Ballet master or ballet mistress
An important person in the company who teaches ballet classes to company dancers and runs rehearsals for productions.

Ballet dancer
A person trained in dance who creates new dance performances for the stage.

Balletomane
A ballet fanboy or fangirl.

Barre
Wooden horizontal pole in a dance studio that dancers use to help maintain correct posture.

Ballet master or ballet mistress
The particular combinations of steps in a ballet or dance performance created by the choreographer.

Classical ballet
Music, theatre and visual art.

Choreographer
A ballet lover. The particular combinations of steps in a ballet or dance performance created by the choreographer.

Choreography
The Nutcracker
A traditional style of ballet that relies on dance fundamentals and established academic techniques that have evolved during the dance form's history; it has a rigorous, precise and yet flowing aesthetic with formalized movement of the legs, arms and head; classical ballet has slight variations tied with geography such as Russian style, French, Italian, British and American.

Dancer
Make dancer in a ballet production or company.

Modern or contemporary ballet
A term that describes all ballet forms that are not completely based in classical forms but also incorporate elements of different modern dances, such as hip hop or jazz, or even from sport.

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the arts in your school

In-School Residencies: Drama + Social Studies. Dance + Math. It all adds up in NJPAC’s In-School Residencies in which professional teaching artists partner with educators to bring the arts into the classroom. Each 7- to 10-week program culminates in a student performance or an interactive family workshop. All programs address state and national standards. NJPAC is the regional provider in New Jersey for international arts programs like the NJ Wolf Trap Program and Dancing Classrooms Global.

Assemblies: NJPAC presents engaging school assembly programs that are presented by professional artists that invite students into the enchanting world of live performance. NJPAC’s assembly series promotes cultural awareness and invigorates learning by presenting works that are connected to your school’s curriculum.

Professional Development: NJPAC Professional Development engages classroom teachers, arts specialists and teaching artists as integrated teams that combine arts pedagogy, content, classroom management and social behavioral strategies to ignite and inspire arts-rich classrooms. Working as a team empowers teachers to share practice and strategy. Our goal is to inspire artistic and intellectual capacities in students, building competence and confidence in both students and teachers.

study the arts at njpac

Saturday Programs: NJPAC’s Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level—from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in film, contemporary modern dance, hip hop, jazz, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call our education sales team at 973.353.7058 or email artestducation@njpac.org. Visit www.njpac.org/education

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