

teacher resource guide

**schooltime
performance
series**



**the
nutcracker**

National Ballet Theatre of Odessa

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about the performance

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 fanciful, 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. Drosselmeyer, an interesting and mysterious figure, appears at the party and plays magic tricks and shows off dancing mechanical toys for the excited children. Masha loves one of the toys, a Nutcracker soldier, but Frantz grabs the toy and breaks it. Masha is distraught, but Drosselmeyer 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.

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 transformed into a handsome prince and Masha into a beautiful lady. They dance amongst snowflakes in a beautiful winter scene.

The couple is whisked away to a wondrous place where they celebrate their victory over the Mouse King. Dancers do different performances from other parts of the world: Arabian, Spanish, Middle Eastern, Russian, French, and Chinese. Masha and the prince then happily dance.

Dawn breaks in the grand hall. Masha's dream is over. Masha looks over to her doll in wonderment. What a marvelous, lovely dream!

Credits

Music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Libretto by Marius Petipa

Based on the fairy tale by E. T. A. Hoffmann

Choreography by Marius Petipa

Production by Anatoly Emelianov

meet the composer

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was an important Russian composer who is famous for his romantic, melodic and emotional musical works that are still popular and performed to this day. He is known for his masterful, enchanting compositions for classical ballet, such as *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Growing up, he was clearly musically gifted; 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.

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 hitting Saint Petersburg.

about the company

The National Ballet Theatre of Odessa is based in Ukraine and has received critical acclaim for performances across the world. The choreography for this production is based on the Bolshoi Ballet, one of the oldest and internationally renowned ballet companies in the world. For the production, about 55 ballet dancers will take part.



cultural connections

Ballet's roots

Ballet has its roots in Italian Renaissance court pageantry. During weddings, female dancers would dress in lavish gowns that reached their ankles and dance before a crowd of aristocrats, wealthy merchants, and politically-connected financiers, such as the Medici family of Florence. Thus, the word ballet comes from the Italian word for dance, *ballare*.

In the early days of ballet, dancers would wear richly detailed costumes of silk brocade and fine gauze. They wore masks and large hats. Dance shoes looked like court shoes, small footwear with heels.

“Dance steps were composed of small hops, slides, curtsies, promenades and gentle turns,” reads the *Atlanta Ballet* website.

Dance masters started writing about this dance and staging elaborate performances for important events, increasing ballet's popularity among the elite of Italy. “When Catherine de Medici of Italy married the French King Henry II, she introduced early dance styles into court life in France.”

Her marriage to the king was an important touchstone in the history of ballet, with the double marriage of French and Italian culture helping evolve the dance. Early ballet in the French courts looked like processions or parades instead of what we are used to seeing on the stage. Noble men and women danced in a central hall while other aristocrats sat around them.

During the reign of King Louis XIV of France, - the Sun King, Louis the Great, dance masters started to formalize/codify ballet. Pierre Beauchamp, a French choreographer in the king's court, created a form of dance notation called the Beauchamp-Feuillet notation for baroque dances. Notations are a visual record of a dance choreography using symbols to denote how a dancer should be positioned. It is also said that Beauchamp codified the five positions of the feet, a fundamental aspect of classical ballet that dictates where feet should be positioned.

King Louis was mad for dance and often held performances in his court with himself participating in the spectacle. Once, the teenage king danced and performed in a 12-hour ballet show, *Ballet of the Night*, where he assumed five roles, including Apollo, the Sun King - Le Roi Soleil. The ballet was a way to affirm the monarch's centrality in French nobility and cement his divine right to rule. Costumes were intricate and extravagant. The King's Apollo costume featured a large headdress with a crown of sun rays and a gold silk suit covered with jewels and embroidered images of the sun.

Jean-Baptiste Lully, a composer and dancer in the court of King Louis XIV, also did much to contribute to ballet's evolution when he combined music, storytelling, and dance in some of his important theatrical productions. He took ballet seriously as an art form to be professionalized instead of simply a dance for aristocrats who wanted to show off their wealth and prestige.

Ballet became quite popular over the next two centuries, becoming an art form that was taken just as seriously as opera. French dance master Jean-Georges Noverre in the 18th century was another significant figure in ballet history in that he wanted ballet dancers to be technically proficient but also have their movements match the narrative of a story. In the 19th century, the importance of the star ballerina came to the fore, pointe shoes were developed for pointe work, and romantic tutus became *de rigueur* for the stage.

A short history on ballet and promoting diversity in the dance form

In the 20th century, ballet continued to evolve with the emergence of notable figures, such as Vaslav Nijinsky, a male ballet dancer virtuoso who could dance en pointe, a rare skill among male dancers, and George Balanchine, a giant in ballet choreography in America.

Today, ballet has morphed to include many different elements, besides traditional and classical. Contemporary ballet is based on fundamental, classic technique (such as en pointe) but departs from the rigid dance forms of classical ballet. It incorporates modern dance movement with contemporary music, such as jazz and rock.

Promoting diversity in ballet

For much of its history, ballet as an art form has been seen by many as a dance for predominately white dancers and a white audience. This view has been changing over the last several years with many dance teachers and companies realizing that for ballet to survive and reach a new generation of people, ballet must reach beyond its traditional audience and talent pool.

Teaching the next corps of ballet dancers to reflect America's ethnic makeup has been a big focus among the biggest ballet companies, such as American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet. Both companies, based at Lincoln Center in New York City, have increased enrollment of people of color, including black, Latinx, Asian, and multiracial—a true picture of what the city looks like too—through programs that look for and recruit young minorities. These programs vary from low-cost introductory ballet demos, free community auditions and other outreach programs. In another example, the School of American Ballet created a committee on recruitment and handling diversity.

With this recent push, why has ballet suffered a diversity problem? Experts say it's due to a number of factors, such as lack of role models and expensive classes.

On role models, there have been recent, notable figures, especially in the ascent of Misty Copeland, the first African-American female principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre. She has danced ballet's biggest roles, including Clara in *The Nutcracker*, Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*, and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. She has become such a big name in ballet and beyond that she danced in a Drake music video, “Nice for What,” makeup ads, and was even immortalized in her own Barbie doll.

“I never thought I could make a career out of something that I enjoyed doing, something I was passionate about, something that gave me a voice,” Copeland said in an interview for *Time* magazine.

On people who inspired her:

“There's just been a whole slew of African American women who have just really pushed me and motivated me during those times that I didn't know if I could do it.”

And she has advice for black girls, like her, who want to dance:

“I would say it's possible. The opportunities are out there. You just have to believe in yourself and not let anyone's words come in and define you and change your path. You are going to hear ‘no’ in life no matter what you do. You just have to keep pushing and persevering. And I think it's important to know that it doesn't matter what your skin color is or your body shape is. Whatever you want to do, you should go for it.”

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inspired ideas in the classroom

Teacher Focus		Student Activity	NJ Student Learning Standards
Prepare for the performance	<p>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).</p> <p><i>A day in the life of a ballet dancer</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XolbNzvZ_BM</p> <p><i>Misty Copeland and teenager Raegan Taylor meet</i> (Watch cue points 0-1:00, 2:54-end) https://www.youtu.be.com/EHd9WtsoWF0</p> <p><i>Men’s class</i> https://www.youtu.be/kBDR0FuumPw</p>	<p>Watch the videos, selected by your teacher. What surprises you? What is interesting? Discuss with classmates.</p> <p>Experience the challenge of ballet yourselves! Try standing in a <i>passé</i> position: stand on one leg, with the toes of your lifted leg lightly touching the knee of the standing leg. The link of images of dancers show legs in <i>passé</i>. Unlike the dancers in the attached photographs, you do not need to jump or go on your toes. You can simply stand on one leg. For an extra challenge, hold your arms in 1st position, as if they’re wrapped around a beach ball in front of you. (Images available at https://www.pbt.org/learn-and-engage/resources-audience-members/ballet-101/basic-ballet-positions/)</p> <p>Who in the class can hold the <i>passé</i> and/or 1st position arms the longest? When you finish, notice if you feel sore or tired anywhere. Compare with your classmates.</p>	<p>NJ Health and Physical Education Standard 2.2C. Integrated Skills 2.5A Motor Skill Development</p> <p>NJ Arts Standard 1.1 The Creative Process</p> <p>English Language Arts NJSLSA.SL1.</p>
Experience the performance	<p>Take your class to attend <i>The Nutcracker</i> at NJPAC. Notice when <i>passé</i>, 1st position and similar shapes are used. Prepare to help your students make connections between the videos you watched, the experience of doing <i>passé</i> and 1st position arms, and the dance you see performed.</p>	<p>Attend <i>The Nutcracker</i> at NJPAC. While watching, notice the movement vocabulary. Notice when <i>passé</i>, 1st position and similar shapes are used. How does the ballet movement look? How do you think it feels?</p>	<p>NJ Arts Standard 1.4 Aesthetic Responses</p>
Reflect, respond and read	<p>Your students may think the dancing looked difficult or easy. Engage them in a discussion of how it looked. Help them relate it to their experience of doing <i>passé</i> and/or 1st positon arms.</p> <p>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 <i>The Nutcracker</i>, the look of ballet helps transform the audience to the dream world of Masha and <i>The Nutcracker</i>.</p>	<p>Did the movement look difficult or easy? How do you think it felt? Why would a dancer want to make a hard movement look easy (or vice versa)? What is the effect of showing or hiding effort?</p>	<p>English Language Arts NJSLSA.SL1.</p> <p>NJ Arts Standard 1.4 Aesthetic Responses</p>
Focus	<p>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.</p> <p>The next activity will ask students to look at world maps and history to better understand how the creators of <i>The Nutcracker</i> 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.</p>	<p><i>The Nutcracker</i> takes the audience to a dream world, where the Nutcracker leads Masha through a series of different scenes and characters. Consider the list of places that Masha and the Nutcracker visited. Note that the dances you saw were created in Russia in 1892. What was happening in 1892 Europe that may have informed the worldview that you saw on stage? Research and look at maps. Think about how different nations did or did not interact with one another. Identify stereotypes and caricatures you saw.</p>	<p>Social Studies 6.2.8.B.1.a</p>
Originate	<p>Guide your students through some brainstorming. They are going to create their own outline for a performance.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Imagine staging your own dream ballet. Where would you fall asleep? Who would guide you through the different lands? Brainstorm scenarios in which your class ballet might start. As a class, choose (or vote on) a scenario with which to begin your ballet.</p> <p>Next, brainstorm different scenes. What people and places do you want to visit? Please avoid stereotypes and caricatures. As a class, list settings that may be in your dream.</p>	<p>Social Studies 6.3.12.D.1</p> <p>NJ Arts Standard 1.1 The Creative Process</p>
Rehearse	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.)</p>	<p>As a class, determine criteria for good scenes. What’s important in them? What should they have? Write out criteria where it can be seen for the duration of this project.</p> <p>After determining criteria, in your small groups, create your dream scenes. Your teacher will assign you a setting and specify if you should use writing, drawings, or dancing to create it.</p>	<p>NJ Arts Standard 1.1 The Creative Process 1.4 Critique Methodologies</p>
Make magic	<p>Give the students a deadline by which to finish their projects. Notify them that the groups will be sharing with one another.</p>	<p>Share your scenes with your class. Self-assess your scenes according to the criteria that the class created. Imagine them in a sequence. Reflect on the class ballet as a whole.</p>	<p>NJ Arts Standard 1.4 Aesthetic Responses 1.3 Performing</p>

curriculum standards

NJ Arts Standards

1.1 The Creative Process

All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles that govern the creation of works of art in dance, music, theatre and visual art.

1.2 History of Arts & Culture

All students will understand the role, development and influence of the arts throughout history and across cultures.

1.3 Performance

All students will synthesize skills, media, methods and technologies that are appropriate to creating, performing and/or presenting works of art in dance, music, theatre and visual art.

1.4 Aesthetic Response & Critique

All students will demonstrate and apply an understanding of arts philosophies, judgment and analysis to works of art in dance, music, theatre and visual art.

National Arts Standards

- 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experience to make art.
- 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

new jersey student learning standards

NJSLSA.SL1.

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NJ Health and Physical Education Standard Integrated Skills 2.2C.

All students will develop and use personal and interpersonal skills to support a healthy, active lifestyle. - Character Development

NJ Health and Physical Education Standard Motor Skill Development 2.5A

All students will utilize safe, efficient, and effective movement to develop and maintain a healthy, active Lifestyle. - Movement Skills and Concepts.

Social Studies

6.3.12.D.1

Analyze the impact of current governmental practices and laws affecting national security and/or individual civil rights/privacy.

6.2.8.B.1.a

Explain the various migratory patterns of hunters/gatherers that moved from Africa to Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas, and describe the impact of migration on their lives and on the shaping of societies.

FIND THE STANDARDS

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:

NJ ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2016/ela/

NJ SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS
www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2014/ss/

NJ WORLD LANGUAGE STANDARDS
www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/wl/

NJ ARTS STANDARDS
www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2009/1.pdf

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS
www.nationalartsstandards.org

vocabulary

Ballerina

Female dancer in a ballet production or company

Ballet company

A dance troupe performing classical or modern ballet; they 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

Balletomane

A ballet fanboy or fangirl

Barre

Wooden horizontal pole in a dance studio that dancers use as a practice aid

Choreographer

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

Choreography

The particular combinations of steps in a ballet or dance performance created by the choreographer

Classical ballet

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.

Danseur

Male 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

Pas de Deux

A dance for two people

Pirouette

When a dancer turns around and around on one spot while rising the working leg into a pointe position

Pointe shoes

The distinctive satin ballet shoes that dancers wear when they dance on the tips of their toes or pointes. The shoes have a box at the tip toe end usually made of paper and fabric glued together and tightly packed. Satin ribbons and elastic tie the shoes to dancer's legs. The shoes are made to enable the dancer to look elegant, ethereal, and weightless as she dances. Dancing in them requires strength and mastery of dance technique.

Tutu

Short dance skirt made of usually white net fabric; a romantic tutu is a longer version.

resources

Websites

Tchaikovsky biography at the Kennedy Center
<http://www.kennedy-center.org/artist/C3651>

Tchaikovsky biography at Faber Music
<http://www.fabermusic.com/composers/peter-tchaikovsky/biography>

"How *The Nutcracker* Colonized American Ballet"
<http://time.com/3640792/nutcracker-american-history/>

"How Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* became a Christmas classic"
<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20151218-how-tchaikovskys-nutcracker-became-a-christmas-classic>

"No Sugar Plums Here: The Dark, Romantic Roots of *The Nutcracker*"
<https://www.npr.org/2012/12/25/167732828/no-sugar-plums-here-the-dark-romantic-roots-of-the-nutcracker>

"The Celesta: The Sound of the Sugar Plum Fairy"
<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1568920>

"The Long, Dark History of the Russian Ballet"
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/03/long-dark-history-bolshoi-russian-ballet/317545/>

"The History of Russia, as Told Through Ballet"
<https://paw.princeton.edu/article/history-russia-told-through-ballet>

"Behind ballet's diversity problem"
<https://www.pointemagazine.com/behind-ballets-diversity-problem-2412811909.html>

Videos

Tchaikovsky' *Nutcracker* Soundtrack
https://youtu.be/7U_gpW1J4LM

BBC: Great Composers Tchaikovsky
<https://youtu.be/eXfPpRb5oDY>

Tchaikovsky's Biography with Charles Greenwell
<https://youtu.be/x3EwvTmY894>

The History of *The Nutcracker* Ballet
https://youtu.be/rGkWczs4_lc

The origins of ballet - Jennifer Tortorello and Adrienne Westwood
<https://youtu.be/OEekFTj5PvU>

Ballerina Misty Copeland stands out in world of white swans
https://youtu.be/T-VgXR_r19U

Books

Barton, Chris and Gendron, Cathy. *The Nutcracker Comes to America: How Three Ballet-loving Brothers Created a Holiday Tradition* (Millbrook Picture Books). Millbrook Pr Trade, 2015.

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Durante, Viviana. *Ballet: The Definitive Illustrated Story*. DK, 2018.

Ezrahi, Christina. *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Russian and East European Studies). University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012.

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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 artseducation@njpac.org. Visit www.njpac.org/education

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