

the Nutcracker

2019-20 AUDIENCE STUDY GUIDE

Presented by the Department of Community Engagement



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MILWAUKEE BALLET

AN INTRODUCTION

THE NUTCRACKER

***The Nutcracker* has delighted generations of families in Milwaukee since 1977. Gather the family for this magical adventure!**

ABOUT

The Production

More than 200 dancers take the stage in this holiday favorite featuring elaborate sets, lavish period costumes, special effects, and magic tricks! Marvel at the grandeur of the Tannenbaum's Christmas party and delight in the colorful characters of the Land of Toys and Sweets. The childlike sense of wonder in *The Nutcracker* is underscored by students of Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy who dance onstage with the professional Company.

The Music

Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra plays Tchaikovsky's iconic score live and features Milwaukee Children's Choir during the snow scene. Experience the wonder of the world-famous suites, including "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy", "Waltz of the Flowers", and "March of The Nutcracker". Milwaukee Ballet is one of the only ballet companies in the nation to maintain its own symphonic orchestra.



Lahna Vanderbush, photo Mark Frohna



Parker Brasser, Alana Griffith, photo Nathaniel Davauer

THE NUTCRACKER

SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE

Drosselmeyer's Workshop

Drosselmeyer is a toy maker and it is Christmas Eve in his workshop. Drosselmeyer and his nephew, Karl, finish preparing a very special nutcracker doll as a gift for Clara Tannenbaum.

ACT I

The Tannenbaum Family Drawing Room

Drosselmeyer and Karl are guests of honor at the Tannenbaum family's Christmas celebration. The Tannenbaum children, Clara, Fritz and the eldest daughter Marie, anxiously await their arrival. The Tannenbaum children are delighted when their grandparents appear with gifts for each of them. Drosselmeyer and Karl finally arrive and the gift-giving begins. Drosselmeyer charms the children with his magic tricks, producing a frolicking jack doll and a shepherdess doll to entertain the guests.

Dinner is served and everyone except Marie, Karl, Drosselmeyer and Clara exit toward the dining room. Drosselmeyer gives Clara her special present, the magic nutcracker doll. Fritz returns to steal the doll, and, as Clara tries to rescue it, it breaks. Drosselmeyer repairs the nutcracker as family and friends return from the dining room to make a toast to peace and prosperity. The guests depart and the Tannenbaum family retires for the evening.

Party Scene

- Grandfather and Grandmother are fun (and funny) characters. The dancers need to act like they are 70 years old, so watch how they walk, sit and dance.
- Fritz and Clara are played by adult dancers who need to act like they are 6 or 8 years old! Do you think they're believable?

Patrick Howell, photo Mark Frohna



ACT I

The Transformation

The drawing room is dark and still as Clara enters to retrieve her Nutcracker doll. Marie follows her younger sister to escort her back to her bedroom. A tall, dark figure enters the room and moves menacingly towards them. Marie challenges the figure, only to find it is Fritz trying to scare them.

The drawing room clock chimes midnight and smoke pours out of the fireplace. Suddenly, a mouse runs out of the fireplace and starts to chase them around the room. Soon the room is filled with mice and rats. Drosselmeyer appears to banish them as the children run to him for protection. He sprinkles magic dust over them and the magical journey begins.

The Christmas tree grows rapidly, the furniture moves and the room transforms. The Rat King appears with his army of mice and tries to take Clara's nutcracker doll, which magically transforms into a real person.

Toy soldiers, led by the life-sized Nutcracker, try to protect the children. The Rat King suddenly overpowers the nutcracker, but Fritz seizes the opportunity to strike the Rat King over the head with his sword, knocking him unconscious.

Marie is distressed to see the nutcracker doll broken and defeated, but Drosselmeyer brings him back to life, transforming him into his nephew, Karl. Drosselmeyer introduces the children to the Snow Queen. She leads them to the Land of Snow and to the steam train that will transport them to the Land of Toys and Sweets.



Christina Dennis, photo: Nathaniel Deveau

Let it Snow!

- The snow scene is quite an aerobic workout for the dancers. It's also difficult to dance in the falling paper snow. The snow comes out of a big turning drum 20 feet above the stage. As it turns round and round, snow comes out of it as if through a sieve. The snow is recycled and used for each show.
- By the end of the production, bobby pins and jewels from the costumes can get swept up in the snow, so sometimes, there's more than paper falling. The snow can get slippery under the dancers' pointe shoes, so they have to be careful!

ACT II

The Land of Toys and Sweets

The flying train travels over clouds of angels to the Land of Toys and Sweets. Drosselmeyer follows on the back of a bumble bee. Carousel animals transport characters from around the world. Clara, Fritz, Marie and Karl arrive in the magical Land of Toys and Sweets. Drosselmeyer introduces them to his creations. Darkness looms in this magical wonderland as the Rat King and his army of mice attempt to spoil the fun. Karl takes Fritz's sword and defeats the Rat King and his cohorts for good. The children celebrate their victory and are treated to entertainment featuring Drosselmeyer's creations.

Fritz and Clara take delight in the sight of the Spanish and Arabian couples. Clara dances with the Chinese Dragon and the Shepherdess Doll with her geese. Fritz frolics with the Jack Dolls, and both he and Clara join Mother Ginger and her many Russian children, as well as the dancing flowers. But the real surprise is seeing the evening culminate in a romantic dance between two people they know and love, chivalrous Karl and lovely Marie.

Drosselmeyer whisks the children magically back to their drawing room, where they will awaken the next morning, wondering if this was simply a dream or a magical treat they will not soon forget.



Milwaukee Ballet Company, photo Mark Frohna

Be on the Lookout

- Each of these sections of dance that make up the Land of Toys and Sweets are called "*divertissements*" in ballet - or "entertainments". They are small dances within a big ballet that don't really have anything to do with the story, but that show-off the dancers' talents. Which is your favorite?
- How do you think Mother Ginger gets so tall? Here's a clue - look at her feet! Any guess as to how they do that?
- In some versions of *The Nutcracker* only Fritz and Clara are in the story. Our version adds Karl, Drosselmeyer's nephew, and Marie, the oldest of the Tannenbaum children.



Milwaukee Ballet Company, photo Mark Frohna

MILWAUKEE BALLET FUN FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

4
There are 4 casts (or groups of dancers playing the roles) in the show

5
The dancers have been rehearsing *The Nutcracker* for 5 weeks

17
There are 17 performances of *The Nutcracker* and 4 student matinees

20
There are 20 dancers in Milwaukee Ballet II (MBII)

25
There are 25 dancers in the main company

31
The dancers dance from 9 AM to 6:15 PM, Monday through Friday for 31 weeks a year

46
There are 46 musicians in the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra

146
146 students are in *The Nutcracker* production

And Sew it Begins

- 300 yards of tulle (the material that a tutu is made of) was used to make the tutus of Sugar Plum Fairy, Snow Queen, the Flowers and Snowflakes
- There are 140 costumes on stage during each performance
- There are 66 tiny ruby-colored glass beads on the Shepherdess' lavender vest
- Four dozen handmade roses are attached to each shoulder of the Spanish dress
- Costumes were designed by Zack Brown and constructed by Milwaukee Ballet's Wardrobe Department

THE BALLET

BEHIND THE SCENES



MBSA, Jessica Kaminski

HOW DID THE NUTCRACKER BEGIN?

History

The Nutcracker was originally based on a story written by German writer E. T. A. Hoffmann. Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write the music in 1891 by the Imperial Theatre of St. Petersburg (Maryinsky Theatre) in Russia, but he was initially unhappy with the setting of a children's Christmas party. The legendary choreographer Marius Petipa (first ballet-master to His Imperial Majesty the Tsar) presented Tchaikovsky with the exact scenario he wanted, including the rhythm; tempo, and number of measures for each dance. Petipa later became ill and the choreographic work was assumed by his assistant, Lev Ivanov. (Lev Ivanov is also credited with choreographing the white acts of *Swan Lake* - the acts that feature the beautiful *corps* of dancing swans!)

The Nutcracker debuted on December 17, 1892, in the Maryinsky Theatre, which is still the home of the Kirov Ballet. The original cast included ballet students, just as the Kirov Ballet and Kirov Academy production does today. Although popular inside of Russia, *The Nutcracker* was not performed outside of Russia until 1934, when Nicholas Sergeyev staged it at the Sadler Wells Theatre in England. After the Revolution, the Russian presentation had been restaged by Vassily Vainonen.

The Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo debuted a shortened version of *The Nutcracker* in the United States in 1940. It was this production of *The Nutcracker* that George Balanchine and Alexandra Danilova remembered and "danced out" for San Francisco Ballet's William Christensen. Because of this, the United States got its first full-length version in 1944, even though the director had never seen it! This version gave birth to the American tradition that lives on through ballet companies every holiday season.

Kirov-trained Balanchine must have been inspired by the success and he created a new staging in 1954, which has become one of the most popular versions of *The Nutcracker*. The Balanchine production in turn, inspired many other versions throughout the world.

A lot of people think every version of *The Nutcracker* is the same - but they're not! Milwaukee Ballet's version was choreographed by our Artistic Director, Michael Pink.



THE CHOREOGRAPHER AND 5, 6, 7, 8!

MICHAEL PINK, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Choreographer of *The Nutcracker*

Michael Pink began his tenure as Artistic Director of Milwaukee Ballet in December of 2002. Since that time, he has established himself as a prominent member of the Milwaukee arts community, demonstrating his commitment to the future of dance through education and collaboration. His artistic vision for Milwaukee Ballet is both exciting and challenging. Pink's dramatic productions of *Dracula*, *Esmeralda*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Peter Pan* have taken narrative dance drama to a new level of interpretation. His production of *The Nutcracker* thrills and delights audiences.



Michael Pink, photo Timothy O'Donnell

What is a choreographer?

A choreographer is the person who makes the dances. He or she takes their ideas and puts them together in movement and patterns to the music creating a total piece of art from start to finish. There have been many different choreographers of *The Nutcracker* over the years. One of the best and most-loved parts of *The Nutcracker* is the snow scene. Michael Pink had to think about what it would be like to make dancers look and dance like snow.

Let's try it!

Can you think of 20 words to describe snow? List them below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

TRY IT YOURSELF!

MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

Choreograph Your Own Dance

Unlike a play, characters during a ballet performances don't speak. This means dancers can only communicate a story through body movements and gesture. Below is a list of characters who are portrayed in *The Nutcracker* along with a small description. In a small group, pick two to three characters from the list and choreograph a dance routine using the chosen characters. Your dance should be about one minute long.

When choreographing, think about the story you want to tell and how the character would change how you move. For example, if you chose the evil Rat King, you should move like a rat would move. Maybe you would scurry and sniff around the room.

Drosselmeyer

Key words: mysterious, eccentric, dramatic

Key element: wears a large cape

Rat King

Key words: mischievous, evil, scampers and scurries

Key element: has a large rat tail

Sugarplum Fairy

Key words: regal, elegant, powerful

Key element: ruler of The Land of Toys and Sweets

The Nutcracker

Key words: heroic, brave, valiant

Key element: made of wood

Snowflake Queen

Key words: gentle, lighter than air, graceful

Key element: wears a crown

Jack (a clown)

Key words: silly, comical, clumsy

Key element: has dramatic facial expressions



WHAT WOULD YOUR SNOWFLAKE COSTUMES LOOK LIKE?

Draw your costume concept below:

A large, empty rectangular box defined by a thick pink border, intended for drawing a costume concept. The box is positioned to the right of the first row of snowflake icons and below the text prompt.

HOLIDAY FUN

'TIS THE SEASON

DID YOU KNOW?

International Traditions

In some parts of **Germany**, children go door-to-door in pairs dressed as angels on Christmas. In each home where they stop, they assist the parents in giving gifts to the children of the family.

The Philippines has the longest Christmas season in the world, December 16th through January 6th (that's three weeks!). Instead of Santa, the Three Wise Men bring presents to good children who leave out straw (instead of milk and cookies) for the Wise Men's camels before going to bed.

In **Ethiopia**, many people celebrate Christmas by staying awake all night to sing, dance and pray by candlelight in an underground church built 700 years ago.

Aunt Airie is a gift-giving fairy of **France** who wears a cape and is always accompanied by a donkey. In this part of the world, children put out shoes instead of stockings for their treats.

Most of the ornaments, wreaths, lights and artificial trees in the world are made in **China**.

Australians celebrate Christmas with a seafood barbecue at the beach. December is the middle of summer there, so the temperature can be over 100 degrees on Christmas.

These are Only a Few Traditions!

- What kinds of holiday traditions do you celebrate? Consider the foods you eat, the family members you see, decorations you set up. Do you travel? Do you listen to music?
- Pick 3 more countries and find out what they do around the Christmas holiday. Do they even celebrate Christmas? If so, what is unique about their celebrations?

THE NUTCRACKER

POP QUIZ!

CRACKED NUT

Oh no! The Rat King got a hold of the synopsis of *The Nutcracker* and ripped it apart. Now the story is out of order. Can you help put it back together? Figure out the correct order by numbering these events 1 through 6.

- The Rat King appears with his army of mice and rats.
- Karl and Marie are transformed into The Sugar Plum Fairy and the Cavalier Prince.
- Drosselmeyer and his nephew Karl finish preparing the nutcracker doll.
- Drosselmeyer delights the children with his dancing Clown and Shepherdess Doll.
- Clara, Fritz, Marie and Karl arrive in the magical Land of Toys and Sweets.
- Drosselmeyer introduces the children to the Snow Queen

WERE YOU PAYING ATTENTION?

How well were you were paying attention when you saw *The Nutcracker*? Read the sentences below and fill in the blanks with what happened in the ballet.

1. Before leaving for the party, Karl almost forgets his _____ for Marie.
2. Father Tannenbaum makes a big mistake at the party when he throws a _____ into the fireplace.
3. When Clara and Marie are downstairs after the party, they get scared by something that looks like a ghost. It turns out to be _____ playing around.
4. A big battle takes place between the toy soldiers and the mice. The _____ is the leader of the mice and the _____ leads the toy soldiers.
5. The Snow Queen comes out of a _____ .
6. The Tannenbaum children and Karl leave the Land of Snow on a _____ and head off to the Land of Toys and Sweets.
7. Drosselmeyer arrives in the Land of Toys and Sweets riding on a _____.
8. While Clara and the Shepherdess dance, something is wrong with one of the geese. In the end, it turns out that the goose just needed to lay an _____.
9. There are _____ clown dolls that dance with Fritz.
10. _____ and _____ are transformed into the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Cavalier Prince.

HOW TO BE A GOOD AUDIENCE

After weeks of rehearsal in the studio, the Milwaukee Ballet is excited to perform for our audience! To make it the best experience for the dancers and audience members, please respect our following rules:

1

Arrive at the theatre with plenty of time to find your seats. Late arrivals cause disruption for audience members and dancers.

2

No cameras or phones. Light is dangerous for dancers and unapproved photos and videos violate copyright laws.

3

Please feel free to post about your Milwaukee Ballet experience during intermission or after the show! Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @milwaukeeballet #MKEBallet #MBNutcracker

4

No running or shoving in the lobby.

5

No whistling or yelling during the performance. The performance has begun when the orchestra starts playing or when anyone enters the stage. You are welcome to laugh if someone on stage is being intentionally funny or applaud at the end of a solo. Feel free to shout "Bravo!" at the end of the performance to show the dancers and orchestra how much you loved the performance.

6

No talking or whispering during the performance. You will have plenty of time to discuss your impressions at intermission or after the show.

7

No gum or food in the theatre.

8

Use the bathroom before the show begins or at intermission, not during the performance. However, if you must leave during the show, please sit on the end of a row when you return. Don't walk across people to return to your seats.

THE NUTCRACKER

POP QUIZ!

ANSWER KEY

Cracked Nut

- 3** The Rat King appears with his army of mice and rats.
- 6** Karl and Marie are transformed into The Sugar Plum Fairy and the Cavalier Prince.
- 1** Drosselmeyer and his nephew Karl finish preparing the nutcracker doll.
- 2** Drosselmeyer delights the children with his dancing clown and Shepherdess doll.
- 5** Clara, Fritz, Marie and Karl arrive in the magical Land of Toys and Sweets.
- 4** Drosselmeyer introduces the children to the Snow Queen

Were You Paying Attention?

1. Before leaving for the party, Karl almost forgets his **present** for Marie.
2. Father Tannenbaum makes a big mistake at the party when he throws a **rat** into the fireplace.
3. When Clara and Marie are downstairs after the party, they get scared by something that looks like a ghost. It turns out to be **Fritz** playing around.
4. A big battle takes place between the toy soldiers and the mice. The **Mouse King** is the leader of the mice and the **Nutcracker** leads the toy soldiers.
5. The Snow Queen comes out of a **book**.
6. The Tannenbaum children and Karl leave the Land of Snow on a **train** and head off to the Land of Toys and Sweets.
7. Drosselmeyer arrives in the Land of Toys and Sweets riding on a **bee**.
8. While Clara and the Shepherdess dance, something is wrong with one of the geese. In the end, it turns out that the goose just needed to lay an **egg**.
9. There are **three** clown dolls that dance with Fritz.
10. **Marie** and **Karl** are transformed into the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Cavalier Prince.



MBSA, photo Jennifer Mazza

BECOME AN MBSA STUDENT

LEARN BALLET

ABOUT

The School and Academy

Grow in confidence, in agility, in dedication and be inspired. Through structured classes in classical ballet technique for novice through pre-professional, we build a foundation that helps our students elevate both their art and confidence to their highest potential. See how much you can gain on and off stage.

Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy (MBSA) is nationally accredited by the National Association of Schools of Dance. We are one of less than 15 professional ballet schools in the country to be accredited and the only one in the Midwest, this accreditation recognizes MBSA meets a rigorous set of national standards for excellence in dance training and organized operation.

Here's How

To learn more, visit our website, milwaukeeballet.org/school-academy/. Get information about locations, National Association of Schools of Dance, financial assistance and more! Or contact Alyx Johnson, MBSA administrator at Milwaukee Ballet, ajohnson@milwaukeeballet.org, (414)-902-2149.

MILWAUKEE
BALLET
SCHOOL
& ACADEMY
ROLANDO YANES, DIRECTOR



MBSA, Photo Jennifer Mazza