

Dear Educators,

Thank you for joining Ballet Western Reserve for our annual student performance of the Nutcracker! We love to see that you are so committed to bringing the arts to your students. We are excited to see all of your smiling faces! Our staff and students have been working hard to bring you this magical story live on the stage.

The Nutcracker has been an annual holiday tradition for Ballet Western Reserve for many years and this year we have more than 80 local students that are performing. You may even recognize a performer!

The following are a few things that can be used in your classroom to familiarize your students with some of what they will see on stage; from story line to characters. There is also some theater etiquette to go over before your trip to the Deyor Performing Arts Center.

We look forward to seeing you on December 1st at 10 am at the Deyor Performing Arts Center. Enjoy the performance! Happy Holidays!

Sincerely

Ballet Western Reserve Staff

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**The Story of the Nutcracker**

Our story begins on Christmas Eve, at the family Christmas Party of Mr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum. Clara and her brother Fritz enter the living room in awe of the decorations, presents, and especially the beautiful tree. Clara’s best friends join in on the excitement as well. All of their guests begin to arrive and the party begins. Everyone is dancing and enjoying the party when Clara’s Uncle Drosselmeyer makes an appearance holding a special present…but for who? The special gift is a beautiful Nutcracker doll for Clara! As Clara and the party guests marvel in awe of her Nutcracker doll, Uncle Drosselmeyer brings in two very large gifts. To everyone’s surprise, out pops a life size doll and soldier doll. Uncle Drosselmeyer winds up each doll and they dance as if they were alive! When the dolls have been placed back into their boxes, Clara dances with her Nutcracker… but someone is keeping a close eye on the doll. Out of nowhere, Fritz takes the doll from Clara, runs with it, and breaks the Nutcracker. Clara begins to cry and her friends quickly try to comfort her. She carefully hands the broken doll back to her Uncle to fix. Clara then heads off to bed, waving goodbye to all the guests. The guests say goodnight and begin to leave the party. Later that night, Clara runs back into the living room, worried about her Nutcracker. She finds him placed safely on the mantle of the fireplace. After one last dance with her doll, Clara gets back into bed, not knowing what adventures are ahead of her.

Clara is suddenly awakened by little mice scurrying in and around her bed. She hides under her covers hoping that it is a dream. She gets out of bed and sees her Uncle Drosselmeyer. He starts using his amazing magic to transform her surroundings. The beautiful Christmas tree starts to grow and Clara is the size of toy soldiers and her real-life Nutcracker! But they were not the only ones…rats…oh no! The leader of the rats, the Rat Queen, begins a battle against the toy soldiers and Nutcracker. Clara and the Nutcracker team together to defeat the Rat Queen and send her rats away.

As the action is dying down, Clara watches in amazement as her Nutcracker turns into a handsome cavalier. The cavalier asks to take her on a wonderful adventure in a beautiful sleigh. That adventure starts in the Land of the Snowflakes. Clara and Nutcracker first meet the Snow Queen, who greets them with a burst of snow. Her snowflakes begin their dance and Clara is swept up into the dance as well. A while later, the Nutcracker tells Clara that it is time to continue on in their adventure. Clara climbs into the sleigh and they ride off.

The Angels and Sugar Plum Fairy greet the travelers with a dance. “But where are we?” Clara asked. “The Land of the Sweets,” replied the Nutcracker, “Sugar Plum Fairy is a friend of mine!” As Clara and Nutcracker enter the Land of the Sweets, they are greeted by more new faces… Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Mirliton, Arabian, and Flower dancers. Nutcracker tells the group of their adventure so far and talks about their defeat of the Rat Queen. In celebration, each of Clara’s new friends performs a dance for her. Mother Ginger and all of her children join in the celebration. Then a big group of Waltzing Flowers and Dew Drop dance for Clara. Finally, her handsome cavalier dances with the beautiful Sugar Plum Fairy. Clara waves goodbye to all of her new friends and suddenly, she finds herself back in her own bed. It was all a dream! She runs back to find her Nutcracker doll for one last dance, and one last surprise….

**Main Characters**

**Clara**: A young girl that is taken on a magical adventure

**Fritz**: Clara’s mischievous little brother

**Uncle Drosselmeyer**: Clara’s mysterious uncle who gifts her with the Nutcracker

**Nutcracker**: Clara’s doll that comes to life!

**Rat Queen**: The leader of the rats who battles against Clara and the Nutcracker

**Snow Queen**: Queen of the Snowflakes

**Sugar Plum**: Ruler of the Land of the Sweets.

**Dew Drop**: Queen of the Flowers

**Spanish Dancers Russian Dancers**

**Chinese Dancers Arabian Dancers**

**Mirlitons Mother Ginger**

**Nutcracker Theater Etiquette**

* Please arrive on time so that everyone can be seated before the performance time. Point out restrooms, emergency exits, the main curtain, and the beautiful décor of the theater. It may be one of your students first time to the theater!
* Have your group enter and exit in an orderly manner. There will be ushers to help.
* Let your students know that whispering and talking distracts the dancers but laughter and applause is great!
* If you need to leave the theater for any reason, please do so quietly and if you can wait for a pause in dance.
* Please NO CAMERAS/VIDEO This is not only dangerous for the dancers but it will ruin the magic for others. Please turn your phones off/ to silent and put away.

**Did You Know?**

**Short History Facts About the Nutcracker**

* It was commissioned by the director of Moscow’s Imperial Theatres, Ivan Vsevolozhsky, in 1891, and premiered a week before Christmas 1892 in St. Petersburg, Russia.
* The composer, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, considered the *Nutcracker* a failure and stated that it was “infinitely worse than *Sleeping Beauty*”. The *Nutcracker* did not gain its popularity until after Tchaikovsky’s death.
* Tchaikovsky based the "voice" of the Sugar Plum Fairy on a new instrument he discovered in Paris: the celesta. The instrument had a clear, bell-like tone with ethereal notes, perfect for the fairy-tale ambiance of "The Nutcracker." He also used children's toys as instruments in keeping with the tale as a children's story.
* The Christmas ballet was first performed outside of Russia in England in 1934, but the full-length production first appeared in the United States in 1944 at the San Francisco Opera Ballet under the direction of William Christensen.
* Choreographer Petipa became ill during the creation of the *Nutcracker* and withdrew. His assistant of seven years, Lev Ivanov, took his place and completed the choreography. Though Ivanov's style of dance differed from Petipa, it was hardly noticeable, as Petipa left strict guidelines for Ivanov to follow.



The very first Nutcracker in 1892.







