

Cue Sheet

Guides for
Teachers

Highlights of The Nutcracker Ballet

Tuesday, November 29, 2022
10:15am

Questions to ask students **BEFORE** the performance

- Have you attended a ballet performance before or taken a ballet class?
- How does ballet differ from other types of dance?
- Have you heard the story of *The Nutcracker*?

Questions to ask students **AFTER** the performance

- How were the dancers able to tell a story without using words?
- How much did the music help in telling the story? Was any of the music familiar to you already?
- What did the dancers do with their bodies to depict different characters?



About the Performance

The first performance of *The Nutcracker Ballet* took place in Russia in 1892. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (pronounced *chai-KOFF-skee*) adapted the ballet from a story called “The Nutcracker and the Mouse King,” written by German author E.T.A. Hoffmann.

[Schooltime Show Page](#)

Marius Petipa (*PEH-tee-pah*) and his assistant Lev Ivanov created the original choreography. Although it is now an audience favorite, the first performance of the ballet was not regarded as a success. In fact, 25 years passed before it was performed outside of Russia!

A complete version of *The Nutcracker* was not performed in the United States until 1944, when it was presented by the San Francisco Ballet with choreography by William Christensen. It was this company that began the tradition of presenting *The Nutcracker Ballet* on an annual basis. In America, the dance has since become a holiday tradition.

This abbreviated version of *The Nutcracker Ballet* features highlights and on-stage narration for this introduction to ballet and classical music.

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Vocabulary

ballerina - a female ballet dancer

choreography - the art of composing dances; planning the movements, steps, and patterns of dancers

danseur - a male ballet dancer

glisser (*gliss-eh*) - to glide, a traveling step executed by gliding one foot in the required direction, the other foot closing to it

march - music characterized by its two- or four-beat pattern with the first beat emphasized

pas de deux (*paa-duh-dur*) - dances done by two people together

pirouette - a whirling about on one foot or on the points of the toes

plié (*plee-AY*) - to bend; a position where legs bend before rising or jumping up

relevé (*reh-leh-VAY*) - to rise; dancers lift their heels keeping toes down

sauté (*soh-TAY*) -to jump; done after a plié; dancer's spring into the air stretching their legs

silhouette - a likeness cut from dark materials and mounted on a light background; a shadow

solos - dances done by one person

spotting - dancers focus their eyes on one point as they turn their bodies, helping them avoid dizziness

tempos - the speeds at which music is played

tourner (*toor-neh*) - to turn; indicates that the body is to turn while executing a given step

waltz (*wa-ls*) - music characterized by its three-beat pattern with the first of the three emphasized

Theater Etiquette

- Stay with your chaperone at all times.
- Remove hats or caps when inside.
- Put away mobile phones and other electronic devices. Use of photographic, video recording, audio recording, phones, and gaming devices is prohibited during performances.
- Allow everyone to enjoy the performance by remaining quiet, except when a response is requested by performers. Some shows are interactive, while others are not.
- Stay seated and do not kick or hit the seat in front of you.
- Request to leave the hall with an adult chaperone if you need to use the restroom or cool down. If you are being disruptive, an adult chaperone may escort you out of the theater. You may view the show on screens in the lobby or lower lounge until you are ready to return with your chaperone.
- Clap after the end of a song during a musical or other music performance. During a ballet or dance performance, clap at the end of the number.
- Remain in your seats after the applause at the end of the show until our House Manager dismisses you.

Click here!

For more information and ideas for your classroom, download the Study Guide provided for this performance, developed by the New Mexico Ballet Company.

Facts about Popejoy Hall

- Popejoy Hall officially opened on October 1, 1966.
- The hall can seat up to 1985 people.
- Most walls inside the hall are not parallel or perpendicular to the stage. Curves, angles, and soft or textured surfaces scatter the sound throughout the hall so that audiences can hear performances better.
- Popejoy Hall has an orchestra pit which raises and lowers. It is the largest elevator in the building.
- The ceiling over the stage is three times the height of the curtain opening. Sets can be lowered into place by pulleys and raised high enough to be stored completely out of sight when not in use.