

PENNSYLVANIA | BALLET

Angel Corella, Artistic Director

NUT CRACKER



DEC 7-31 / ACADEMY OF MUSIC

GEORGE BALANCHINE'S

THE NUTCRACKER®

SUPPORTED BY



SYNOPSIS

GEORGE BALANCHINE'S THE NUTCRACKER

The Nutcracker is set in late 18th century Germany in the home of the wealthy Stahlbaum family and their young daughter, Marie. Her godfather Herr Drosselmeier has given her a nutcracker for Christmas. Marie falls asleep after the family party and dreams of a magical journey she takes with her nutcracker including a battle with the Mouse King, an encounter with a handsome prince, a snowy forest kingdom and various inhabitants of the Land of Sweets. She dreams of being an honored guest for a grand celebration in the Land of the Sweets which is occupied by dancing candy canes, waltzing flowers, and a silly Mother Ginger. After the rulers of the Land, the Sugarplum Fairy and her Cavalier, dance a final pas de deux, they lead all the others in one last grand finale as Marie and her prince sail off into the sky.

Source: Oxford Dictionary of Dance

<http://paballet.org/george-balanchines-nutcracker%E2%84%A2-22>

HISTORY

The Nutcracker was first performed by the Imperial Russian Ballet in St. Petersburg, in December 1892. Master choreographer Marius Petipa (1819-1910) crafted the ballet and composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) wrote the score to accompany Petipa's choreography. The Ballet's synopsis originates from a short story written in 1816 by E.T.A. Hoffman (1776-1822) called *Der Nussknacker und Mausekonig* (*The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*) and was then adapted by Alexander Dumas in 1892 as a children's story (*The Nutcracker*). The first staging in London took place in 1934, San Francisco in 1944, and George Balanchine set his version at the New York City Ballet in 1954. For a ballet that has become a global tradition around the holidays, it is hard to believe that it first gained widespread popularity only after the Second World War. Today nearly every large-scale ballet company in the world has its own version to share.

Source: Oxford Dictionary of Dance

CHOREOGRAPHER

GEORGE BALANCHINE

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, George Balanchine (1904-1983) is regarded as the father of modern ballet. He came to the United States in late 1933, at the age of 29, accepting the invitation of the young American arts patron Lincoln Kirstein (1907-96), whose great passions included the dream of creating a ballet company in America.

At Balanchine's behest, Kirstein was also prepared to support the formation of an American academy of ballet that would eventually rival the long-established schools of Europe.

This was the School of American Ballet, founded in 1934, the first product of the Balanchine-Kirstein collaboration. Several ballet companies directed by the two were created and dissolved in the years that followed, while Balanchine found other outlets for his choreography. Eventually, with a performance on October 11, 1948, the New York City Ballet was born. Balanchine served as its ballet master and principal choreographer from 1948 until his death in 1983.

Balanchine created more than 400 ballets and also choreographed for films, operas, revues, and musicals. Among his best-known dances for the stage is *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, originally created for Broadway's *On Your Toes* (1936). The musical was later made into a movie.

A major artistic figure of the twentieth century, Balanchine revolutionized the look of classical ballet. Taking classicism as his base, he heightened, quickened, expanded, streamlined, and even inverted the fundamentals of the 400-year-old language of academic dance. This had an inestimable influence on the growth of dance in America. Although at first his style seemed particularly suited to the energy and speed of American dancers, especially those he trained, his ballets are now performed by all the major classical ballet companies throughout the world.

Source: <http://www.balanchine.org/balanchine/01/index.html>

COMPOSER

PYOTR ILLYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born in Votkinsk, Russia, Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) is widely considered the most popular Russian composer in history. He trained at an elite primary school and began his musical studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1862 as a full-time student. He taught harmony at the Moscow Conservatory beginning in 1866 and served as music critic for a Moscow paper from 1872-1876. He toured as a conductor domestically and abroad until 1887.

Tchaikovsky's more than 200 musical works include *The Maid of Orleans* (1878-79), *The Queen of Spades* (1890), *Swan Lake* (1876), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1888-89), *The Nutcracker* (1891-1892), and *Romeo and Juliet* (1869). His work varies from operas, ballets, symphonies, suites, concertos, and cantatas.

Source: The Harvard Concise Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1999

FUN FACTS

- The weight of Mother Ginger's costume is 50 pounds
- There are a total of 60 performers in the cast The Pennsylvania Ballet will go through 225 pairs of pointe shoes each Nutcracker season
- 40 pounds of snow is used during the performance
- Dancers will rehearse *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* for 200 hours before opening night
- There are 190 costumes used in this production
- Performers ranges in age between 7 and 70 years
- The Christmas tree on stage is 24 feet tall
- According to German legend, nutcrackers bring good luck to your family and protect your home. For that reason, nutcrackers were popular Christmas presents for children

LESSON PLAN 1 | GRADES 1-5

The Nutcracker is centered on the Christian holiday of Christmas. In this activity students will research other religious holidays that are celebrated in their own homes.

- What holidays does your family celebrate?
- Who is invited to these events?
- How long do they last?
- What types of food and beverages are consumed during this celebration?
- How does this compare to Christmas?
- What similarities are evident between the various religious holidays?
- Share one thing that you think your peers should know about this holiday.
- Draw a picture of your family celebration.
- Find a song that is played during this event.
- Create a movement or gesture that relates to your religious holiday. Share with your classmates.

LESSON PLAN 2 | GRADES 4-6

Marie receives a nutcracker from her godfather in the ballet. In this activity students will research a gift that their parents received as a child.

- What gift did your parent receive as a child?
- Who gave it to them?
- Why was this gift special?
- What significance did this gift have to your parent?
- Does your parent still have this gift?

- What memories arise when your parents think about this present?
- Would you want this gift today?
- Conduct research on the historical significance of this present.
- Think about a gift you recently received. How is this similar or different to your parents' experience?
- Create a drawing, painting, song, or dance of either your favorite present or your parents' gift. Share with your classmates.

LESSON PLAN

Vocabulary word activity; define the following terms and create an original poem.

Magical	Miraculous
Fairytale	Frolic
Cavalier	Promenade
Ballerina	Swing
Performance	Whirl
Whimsical	
Pirouette	
Chaînés	
Marzipan	
Sugar plums	
Tempo	
Fluidity	
Corps de ballet	
Saber	
Waltz	
Herr	
Godfather	
Auditorium	
Applause	
Leotard	
Pas de deux	
Pantomime	
Tutu	
Libretto	
March	
Curious	
Cheerful	
Animated	
Merry	
Enchanted	