

CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE DANCE DEPARTMENT

PRESENTS

# THE NUTCRACKER

BY

ALBERTA BALLET



## STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

NAC 2010-2011 DANCE SEASON

Cathy Levy, Dance Producer

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# ALBERTA BALLET

# THE NUTCRACKER

NAC Dance ~ Student Matinée

Date: Wednesday, December 1, 2010

Running Time: 1:00 pm – 2:45 pm (or 3:00 pm at the latest)  
Includes a 20-minute intermission

Location: Southam Hall, National Arts Centre

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE STUDENT MATINEE IS A DRESS REHEARSAL, WHICH MAY INVOLVE STOPS AND STARTS DURING THE PERFORMANCE.

## CREDITS

Artistic Director: Jean Grand-Maître  
Choreography: Edmund Stripe  
Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
played by The National Arts Centre Orchestra

Music Director: Peter Dala  
Costumes/Set: Zack Brown  
Lighting Design: Pierre Lavoie  
Stage Manager: Oliver Armstrong



Alberta Ballet in *Nutcracker* Photo: Gerard Yunker

***“Winter comes alive with Alberta Ballet’s performance of  
The Nutcracker.”***

– Jean Grand-Maître, Artistic Director Alberta Ballet

# THEATRE ETIQUETTE

**For your students to have the best experience possible, we have prepared a small outline of what is expected of them as audience members. As a teacher bringing your students to a performance at the NAC, please keep in mind that you are responsible for the behaviour of your students.**

**Being an audience member is as essential to the ballet performance as the dancers themselves. What helps to make a show a success is in part how the audience reacts to it, whether through applause, laughter or surprise. Discuss proper audience etiquette with students before the performance. Arrive approximately half an hour before show time to get settled in to enjoy the show.**

## **AUDIENCE ROLE ACTIVITY CHECKLIST**

### **Children should be encouraged to:**

- ✓ Freely react to the performance within reason (please no yelling). Dancers love to hear applause for something done well, or something you enjoyed seeing. There is no right or wrong time to show your appreciation for what you see on stage.
- ✓ Clap at the end of a dance (when there is a pause in the music) if you feel like showing appreciation.
- ✓ Watch in a quiet concentrated way. This supports the dancers so they can do their best work on stage.
- ✓ Enjoy the music and look at the sets and costumes.
- ✓ Consider that constructive criticism is always appreciated more than purely negative criticism.
- ✓ Remember, to turn off cell phones and no recording devices are allowed.

### **Children should not:**

- ✿ Move about in the seats or get up to leave during a performance (except in an emergency situation).
- ✿ Eat, drink, speak aloud, or otherwise cause a disturbance to those around you (these things are not only a distraction to other audience members, but also to the performers on stage, which can be dangerous for them.)

# CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE

Officially opened on June 2, 1969, **the National Arts Centre** was one of the key institutions created by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson as the principal centennial project of the federal government.

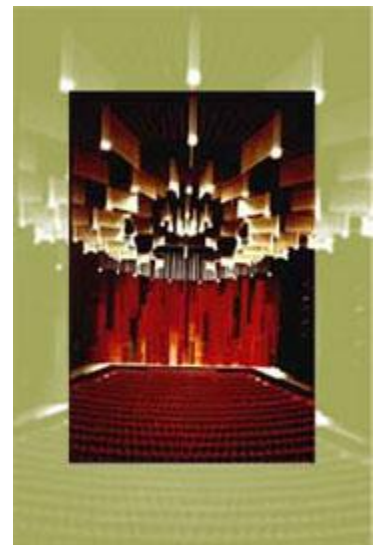


Built in the shape of a hexagon, the design became the architectural leitmotif for Canada's premier performing arts centre. Situated in the heart of the nation's capital across Confederation Square from Parliament Hill, the National Arts Centre is among the largest performing arts complexes in Canada. It is unique as the only multidisciplinary, bilingual performing arts centre in North America and features one of the largest stages on the continent. Designed by Fred Lebensold (ARCOP Design), one of North America's foremost theatre designers, the building was widely praised as a twentieth century architectural landmark.

A programme to incorporate visual arts into the fabric of the building has resulted in the creation of one of the country's most unique permanent art collections of international and Canadian contemporary art. Pieces include special commissions such as, *Homage to RFK* (mural) by internationally acclaimed Canadian contemporary artist William Ronald, *The Three Graces* by Ossip Zadkine and a large free standing untitled bronze sculpture by Charles Daudelin. In 1997, the NAC collaborated with the Art Bank of the Canada Council of the Arts to install over 130 pieces of Canadian contemporary art.

The NAC is home to four different performance spaces, each with its own unique characteristics. *Nutcracker* will be performed in Southam Hall, a 2323 seat theatre.

Today, the NAC works with countless artists, both emerging and established, from across Canada and around the world, and collaborates with scores of other arts organizations across the country. The Centre also plays host to the Canada Dance Festival. The NAC is strongly committed to being a leader and innovator in each of the performing arts fields in which it works - classical music, English theatre, French theatre, dance, variety, and community programming. It is at the forefront of youth and educational activities, supporting programmes for young and emerging artists and programmes for young audiences, and producing resources and study materials for teachers.



# DANCE AT THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE



*Welcome teachers and students! Welcome to those who are devotees and those who are new to the art form. Dance is a magical force: it can connect to one's heart and soul like a beautiful song or a touching story. Through its largely non-verbal format, it can speak universally to both simple and complex themes, enriching our experience and our lives. Dance can be pleasurable, but it can also be compelling and engaging...even confronting.*

*I joined the NAC as Dance Producer in 2000, and since then have had the great good fortune of inviting choreographers from around the world to the National Arts Centre dance season, and presenting a broad spectrum of choreographers and ideas.*

*One of our many priorities is to bring dance to young audiences and support education and outreach to the school community. This will be my fourth year of presenting dance works for school audiences that are also part of my regular program. Feedback from teachers and our youth focus group for dance, during our youth commission project phase, was instrumental in this development in our programming.*

*Along with our three matinees for schools this year, there are many performances in our regular season that would be educational and entertaining for your students. We invite you to consider returning with your class to an evening show or enjoy a night out with your own family. Visit our dance page on [www.nac-cna.ca](http://www.nac-cna.ca) to learn about our recommendations for young people and families.*

**A World of Dance in Ottawa awaits you.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Levy'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

CATHY LEVY  
DANCE PRODUCER, NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE

# THE NUTCRACKER – SYNOPSIS

## ACT I

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Klara  
Mr. Drosselmeyer, Klara's godfather  
The Nutcracker/ Karl  
Father  
Mother  
Babushka  
Grandfather  
Hussar Doll  
Ballerina Doll  
Rat Doll & Rat Tsar  
Snow Tsarina  
Cavalry, Wolves, Snowflakes

Our story begins far away in Russia, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is Christmas Eve and the Vishinsky family is welcoming guests to a party at their home. Their children, Klara and Nikolai, play 'Blind Man's Buff' with the other young guests at the party. The game ends with Klara catching Nikolai. Presents are distributed and Klara and Nikolai lead the children in a boisterous dance. The parents, in turn, dance a courtly quadrille.

Suddenly, there is an interruption. It is the arrival of Drosselmeyer, Klara's godfather. He has arrived at the party with tricks and mechanical dolls to entertain the guests. His dolls perform an elaborate play, telling the story of a man who once made a mousetrap that was so successful that it enraged the Rat Tsar. The Rat Tsar took revenge on the man by turning his nephew into a hideous nutcracker. The only way to break the spell was to find someone who would love the nutcracker, not for what he looked like, but for what he was.

In the play, the young soldier, who is changed into a nutcracker, is helped by a young ballerina who falls in love with him. She defeats the toy Rat Tsar by hitting him on the head with her slipper.

After the play, Drosselmeyer invites Klara to dance with him, mysteriously presenting her with a nutcracker of her own. Nikolai accidentally breaks the nutcracker, but Klara soon forgives him. Drosselmeyer fixes the nutcracker, and Klara and the girls play with their dolls, despite some interruption by the boys and a somewhat overexcited grandfather.

Grandfather and Babushka are invited to dance, the parents and children joining in the fun.

The party ends and the guests depart, the parents taking their weary children with them. Drosselmeyer also appears to leave the party. Klara looks around searching frantically for her nutcracker. But it is nowhere to be seen and Babushka packs Nikolai and Klara off to bed.



Later that night, Klara returns downstairs to the parlour to search for her nutcracker. The town hall clock strikes midnight and at once she is surrounded by mice. Suddenly, Drosselmeyer appears and sends the mice to sleep. He explains to Klara that it was actually he who was being portrayed in the play earlier that evening and it was he who had built the mousetrap that had angered the Rat Tsar. The Rat Tsar, in revenge, had transformed his nephew, Karl, into a nutcracker, the very nutcracker that Klara was now holding!

With Klara's promise to love the nutcracker, Drosselmeyer employs his magic, causing the room to grow and themselves to shrink. The nutcracker now reappears, life-size to the now tiny Klara and Drosselmeyer. An army of soldiers stream out of the fort to engage in a battle with the cossack rats that have gathered on the other side of the parlour. With the nutcracker leading the soldiers, a fierce battle ensues and eventually the Rat Tsar himself appears. With his powerful magic, he attempts to attack Drosselmeyer, but the nutcracker intervenes to save his uncle.

Klara remembers the play that Drosselmeyer had presented in the parlour that evening and how the ballerina defeated the Rat Tsar by hitting him on the head with her shoe. She strikes the Rat Tsar on the head, distracting him long enough for the nutcracker to attack him with his own sceptre.

The Rat Tsar is mortally wounded and the Nutcracker collapses in pain at the feet of Klara and Drosselmeyer. Drosselmeyer realizes that his plans, and his magic, are still not enough to transform his nephew.

Klara and Drosselmeyer sense that their surroundings are changing and as Klara seeks help, she encounters wolves that she thinks are there to devour her precious nutcracker. However the wolves are the attendants of the Snow Tsarina who appears in her sleigh. She instructs Drosselmeyer to stand the nutcracker up and with a wave of her hand, casts a spell that transforms the nutcracker back into Karl. It takes a moment or two for Karl to realize that he is human again. Once he does, he embraces Drosselmeyer and Klara, and thanks the Snow Tsarina for her life-restoring spell.

The Snow Tsarina summons her Snow Princesses and as Klara and Karl frolic in the snow, she guides them towards a mysterious palace far away in the distance.

## ACT II

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Spanish Dancers  
Arabian Dancers  
Chinese Dancers  
Russian Dancers  
The Sugar Plum Fairy  
Her Cavalier  
Flowers and Flower Cavaliers  
Party Girls  
Party Boys  
Mice  
Soldiers  
Rats  
Palace Page Girls  
Palace Page Boys

The Snow Tsarina leads the sleigh to the gates of the Palace of the Sugar Plum Fairy. There they are greeted by the Palace Pages and are introduced to the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. The Sugar Plum Fairy introduces guests from

all over the world and one by one they dance for Klara and Karl in celebration. There are dancers from Spain, Arabia, China and Russia. Klara and Karl dance and are then entertained by the Palace Pages and the Waltz of the Flowers. The celebrations continue with the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier dancing for their honoured guests, concluding in a rousing finale.



## EPILOGUE

The next morning, Klara exits the house. She has just woken up from an amazing dream and is not quite sure what is real anymore. Down the street, Drosselmeyer and a young man who seems strangely familiar, appear. Drosselmeyer introduces his nephew, Karl to her. Karl, in turn, gives her a gift. After they depart, she unwraps the gift. It is a nutcracker and Klara begins to wonder whether it was all a dream after all.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The first public performance of the Nutcracker was in December 1892.
- The tutu appeared in the 1800s.
- The average tutu takes 60-90 hours of labour and 100 yards of ruffle to create. The same tutu costs up to \$2000!
- A male ballet dancer lifts over 1.5 tons worth of ballerinas during a performance.
- A three-hour ballet performance is roughly equivalent to two 90-minute soccer games back to back, or running 18 miles.
- A prima ballerina can complete 32 fouette turns, while staying in the exact same spot on the floor. After the turns, her pointe shoe tip is HOT to the touch and it is so worn out that it is used then only for rehearsal. On average, ballerinas wear out three pairs of pointe shoes per week. A ballet pointe shoe lasts an average of only eight dancing hours. A single pair of pointe shoes costs approximately \$100, which means each dancer goes through about \$15,000 worth of pointe shoes in a season!

## ALBERTA BALLET

Alberta Ballet is based in Calgary and Edmonton and has been in operation for 43 years. Artistic Director Jean Grand-Maitre is the company's Artistic Director. Alberta Ballet's dancers are extreme athletes, training from childhood to defy gravity, to build endurance and to move with grace. Building on a rigorous base of classical skills, Alberta Ballet is inventing new variations and forms of dance for the 21st Century incorporating classical, jazz, contemporary and show dancing traditions. Visit [www.albertaballet.com](http://www.albertaballet.com) for more information.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## Edward Snipe, Choreographer

Alberta Ballet



Now in his 7th season with the Alberta Ballet, Edmund Stripe has previously been Ballet Master with West Australian Ballet and Singapore Dance Theatre. Born in Enfield, North London, he trained at the Royal Ballet School, where his distinguished teachers included Nancy Kilgour (now senior pedagogue at the School of Alberta Ballet). As a dancer, he was a soloist with Ballet Gulbenkian (Portugal) and principal dancer with London City Ballet. From 1987-1997, Mr. Stripe was principal dancer with West Australian Ballet and was appointed Ballet Master there in 1998, before joining Singapore Dance Theatre in 2000. He has assisted in the mounting and re-creation of works by such noted choreographers as Jiri Kylian, Nacho Duato, George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, and Christopher Wheeldon. An award-winning choreographer, Mr. Stripe has created over 30 major works for many international companies. He has created three critically acclaimed works for Alberta Ballet, *Unquiet Light*, *Swelter*, and the hugely popular *Alice in Wonderland*.

## Marius Petipa, Choreographer

Source: *The National Arts Centre's* [www.ArtsAlive.ca](http://www.ArtsAlive.ca)



Marius Petipa, the “father of classical ballet,” was born in Marseilles, France, in 1819. He became the pre-eminent choreographer of Imperial Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He received his early training from his ballet-master father and was a principal dancer in France, Belgium, and Spain before joining the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg in 1847. There he created several ballets, including *The Pharaoh's Daughter*, which led to his appointment as chief choreographer in 1869. By his retirement in 1903, he had produced more than 60 ballets for the imperial theatres in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Petipa was able to combine entertainment with artistry, creating works that have remained popular over time, including *La Bayadère* (1877), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *The Nutcracker* (1892) and *Swan Lake* (1895). (Lev Ivanov assisted Petipa in creating these last two ballets.)

## Peter Tchaikovsky, Composer

Source: The National Arts Centre's [www.ArtsAlive.ca](http://www.ArtsAlive.ca)



Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky was born in Russia in 1840. He loved and created great music all his life. Music was a big part of Peter Tchaikovsky's schoolwork. His class often went to plays and operas together. He sang in the school choir and took piano lessons. Tchaikovsky was born in Russia where music was not considered a proper profession. It was only encouraged as a pastime for young ladies from wealthy families. The only Russian music that was really heard were the folk songs of the peasants and the choral singing in the church services. At first there weren't many schools that even offered training for Russian musicians. That all changed during Tchaikovsky's lifetime.

Peter Tchaikovsky became a full-time music student when he was 22 years old. He enrolled in the Russian Musical Society. It was like going to university. When he graduated, he moved to Moscow to become a professor at the Music Conservatory there.

Peter Tchaikovsky composed operas, ballets, orchestral music, fantasy overtures, chamber music, piano music and vocal music as well. Tchaikovsky is famous for using Russian folk themes in many of his works.

Here is a list of some of Tchaikovsky's compositions you may know or want to listen to:

*Romeo and Juliet*

*Swan Lake*

*The Maid of Orleans*

*Queen of Spades*

*Piano Concerto No. 1*

*The Nutcracker Suite*

*The 1812 Overture*

When Tchaikovsky was 51, he left Russia to do a very successful music tour in North America. He even came to see the Canadian side of Niagara Falls. In 1893, two years after that North American tour, Peter died. His funeral was held in St. Petersburg. Huge numbers of people attended Tchaikovsky's funeral. Everyone wanted to show their respect for a great musician. Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky was buried in a little Russian village that he loved.

# THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ORCHESTRA

Consistent praise has followed this vibrant orchestra throughout its history of touring both nationally and internationally, recording, and commissioning Canadian works. Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra, now under the direction of renowned conductor/ violinist/ violist Pinchas Zukerman, continues to draw accolades both abroad and at its home in Ottawa where it gives over 100 performances a year.

The NAC Orchestra was founded in 1969 as the resident orchestra of the newly opened National Arts Centre, with Jean-Marie Beaudet as Music Director and Mario Bernardi as founding conductor and (from 1971) Music Director until 1982. He was succeeded by Franco Mannino (1982 to 1987), Gabriel Chmura (1987 to 1990), and Trevor Pinnock (1991-1997). In April 1998, Pinchas Zukerman was named Music Director of the NAC Orchestra.

In addition to a full series of subscription concerts at the National Arts Centre each season, tours are undertaken to regions throughout Canada and around the world. Since the arrival of Pinchas Zukerman, education has been an extremely important component of these tours. Teacher Resource Kits have been developed for distribution to elementary schools in the regions toured and across Canada, and the public has been able to follow each tour through fully interactive websites which are now archived on the NAC's Performing Arts Education Website at [www.ArtsAlive.ca](http://www.ArtsAlive.ca).

The NAC Orchestra offers a number of programs dedicated to fostering a knowledge and appreciation of music among young people. In addition to a highly popular subscription series of *TD Canada Trust Family Adventures with the NAC Orchestra*, the Orchestra presents a variety of opportunities for schools to learn about classical music: *Student Matinees*, and *Open Rehearsals* to allow students to hear the Orchestra perform in its home at the NAC. In addition, *Musicians in the Schools* programs including ensemble performances and instrument sectionals take the music to the students in their schools.

# ABOUT BALLET

**ballet** – (noun) an artistic dance that usually tells a story or expresses a mood, performed by either a soloist or a group of dancers in a theatre, concert hall, etc.

**balletic** – (adjective) of or having to do with the ballet

**balletomane** – (noun) a person who is enthusiastic about ballet



The word ballet refers to a specific dance technique that has evolved over the last 350 years. Its roots lie in the royal courts of the 16th century. Ballet involves a combination of movement, music and design where emotions and stories are translated through precise body movement and facial expressions.

## A Short History of Ballet

People have always danced. The first dances were part of religious and community ceremonies, but by the time of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, dancing had also become a form of entertainment. In the Middle Ages, the church in Europe claimed that dancing was sinful, but when the Renaissance arrived in the 1400s, dancing had become popular once again. It is in the European courts of the 16th and 17th centuries that the true origins of ballet lie.

## The First Ballet

In 16th century France and Italy, royalty competed to have the most splendid court. Monarchs would search for and employ the best poets, musicians, and artists. At this time, dancing became increasingly theatrical. This form of entertainment, also called the *ballet de court* (court ballet), featured elaborate scenery and lavish costumes, plus a series of processions, poetic speeches, music and dancing. The first known ballet, *Le Ballet Comique* was performed in 1581 at the wedding of the Queen of France's sister.

## **The Sun King**

In the 17th century, the popularity and development of ballet can be attributed to King Louis XIV of France. He took dancing very seriously and trained daily with his dance master, Beauchamp. One of his famous roles was the Rising Sun and this led him to become known as the “Sun King.” King Louis also set up the Academie Royale de Danse (Royal Academy of Dance) in 1661, where for the first time steps were structurally codified and recorded by Beauchamp. These are the same steps that have been handed down through centuries, and which now form the basis of today’s classical ballet style.

## **The First Professional Dancers**

At first, ballets were performed at the Royal Court, but in 1669 King Louis opened the first opera house in Paris. Ballet was first viewed publicly in the theatre as part of the opera. The first opera featuring ballet, entitled *Pomone*, included dances created by Beauchamp. Women participated in ballets at court, but were not seen in the theatre until 1681. Soon, as the number of performances increased, courtiers who danced for a hobby gave way to professional dancers who trained longer and harder. The physical movement of the first professional dancers was severely hindered by their lavish and weighty costumes and headpieces. They also wore dancing shoes with tiny heels and pointed toes, which made it rather difficult to dance.

## **Revealing Feet and Ankles**

Early in the 18th century, the ballerina Marie Camargo shocked the audiences by shortening her skirts – to just above the ankle. She did this to be freer in her movements and to allow the audience to see her intricate footwork and complex jumps, which often rivalled those of the men. At this time, female dancers also began to dominate the stage over their male counterparts. Ballet companies were now being set up all over France to train dancers for the opera. The first official ballet company (a collection of dancers who train professionally) was based at the Paris Opera and opened in 1713.



Photo: Bruce Monk

## **The Pointe Shoe**

By 1830, ballet as a theatrical art truly came into its own. Influenced by the Romantic Movement, which was sweeping the world of art, music, literature and philosophy, ballet took on a whole new look. The ballerina reigned supreme. Female dancers now wore calf-length, white bell-shaped tulle skirts. To enhance the image of the ballerina as light and elusive, the pointe shoe was introduced, enabling women to dance on the tips of their toes.

## **Classical Ballet**

Although the term “classical” is often used to refer to traditional ballet, this term really describes a group of story ballets first seen in Russia at the end of the 19th century. At this time, the centre of ballet moved from France to Russia. In Russia, the French choreographer Marius Petipa collaborated with the Russian composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky to create the lavish story ballet spectacles such as *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*. Today, these ballets still form the basis of the classical ballet repertoire of companies all over the world.

## **One Act Ballets**

In 1909, the Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev brought together a group of dancers, choreographers, composers, artists and designers for his company, the Ballets Russes. This company took Paris by storm, introducing short, one act ballets such as *Schéhérazade*, *Les Sylphides*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Firebird* and *Petrouchka*. Some of the world’s greatest dancers, including Anna Pavlova (1881– 1931), Vasslav Nijinsky (1889–1950) and choreographers Mikhail Fokine (1880–1942) and George Balanchine (1904–1983) were part of Diaghilev’s company.

## **Establishing Dance in North America**

Almost all contemporary ballet companies and dancers are influenced by Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes. The first visit by this company to North America in 1916–1917 stimulated great interest in ballet. Dancers from the Ballets Russes were instrumental in furthering this new interest in ballet. For example, dancer George Balanchine went to the United States and founded the New York City Ballet (originally called the American Ballet). He became renowned for perfecting the abstract ballet and for establishing neo-classicism through his choreographic masterpieces such as *Serenade*, *Agon* and *Concerto Barocco*. Ninette de Valois and Marie Rambert also went on to found, respectively, England’s Royal Ballet and the Rambert Dance Company.

# BALLET TRAINING

The career of a dancer is relatively short and it is not unusual to spend more years training than dancing professionally. The movements demanded of the human body in ballet are of a very specific nature, requiring great precision and care. As a result, the physique must be prepared for this future at a young age. A student aspiring to be a classical ballet dancer must undergo much preliminary work in order to become accustomed to the demands that will be imposed upon the body when dancing the many hours required of a professional dancer. The professional training period usually consists of at least eight or nine years of intensive, precise work. Ideally, girls and boys should begin their professional training at the age of nine. Training is a very progressive process. The young professional student begins with daily classes, practicing the basic ballet positions and movements, learning body placement, correct carriage, balance and artistry. As the student progresses, time spent in classes each week increases, as does the difficulty and extensiveness of the skills taught. As well as the daily class in classical technique, students are required to receive instruction in variation (solo) work, pointe (dancing on the toes), pas de deux (a dance for two), character (ethnic), jazz and modern dance.



Prior to the introduction of pointe work, a number of criteria must be considered. These include the amount of previous training, a student's strength and ability, as well as age as it relates to the bone development in the dancer's feet. Pas de deux and repertoire (the collection of different ballets that a dance company performs) are introduced only when the student has adequate strength, ability and training. Students who graduate to a professional ballet company usually begin dancing as a member of the corps de ballet (ensemble). After a few years, corps de ballet members who demonstrate growth in artistry, technical ability, musicality and ability to communicate with the audience may be promoted to the rank of soloist or second soloist. Finally, the highest achievement in the company, the position of principal dancer or ballerina, is attainable by only a few gifted dancers.

# BASIC BALLET POSITIONS

Source: *Connexions*® <http://cnx.org> by Alex Volschenk

Every new step you will learn will make use of the basic positions. All dancers, even the greatest, use exactly these positions every day.

## Positions of the Feet

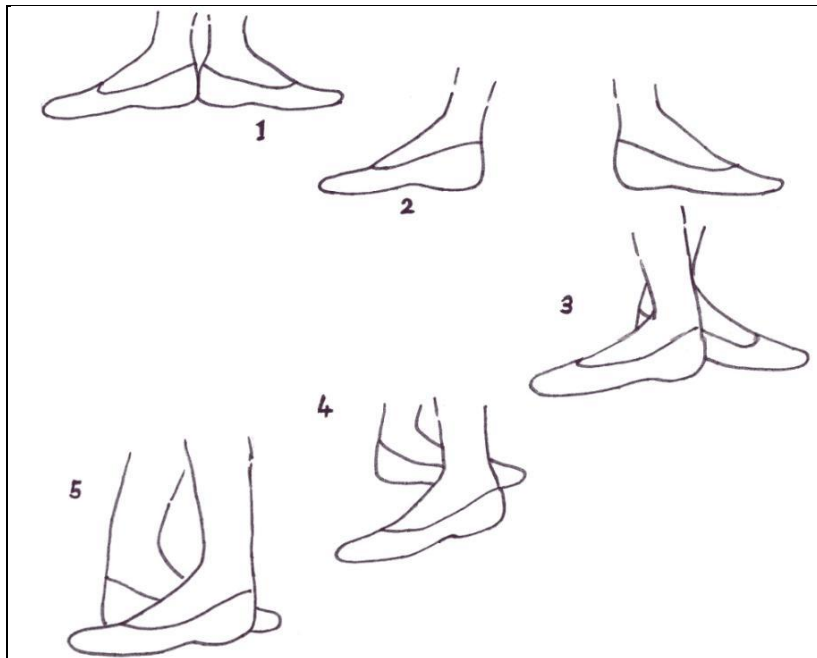
**FIRST POSITION:** turn your feet out to the side with your heels touching – turn your whole leg out at the hip, not just the foot.

**SECOND POSITION:** turn your toes out on the same line as first position – stand with feet apart – the space between your heels should be about the length of one of your feet – place the whole of both feet on the floor – don't roll forwards and put too much weight on your big toes.

**THIRD POSITION:** cross one foot halfway in front of the other – your weight should be balanced evenly on both feet.

**FOURTH POSITION:** place one foot exactly in front of the other with some space between them.

**FIFTH POSITION:** your feet should be turned out, fully crossed and touching each other firmly.



# BALLET TERMS

<p><b>Adage:</b> In ballet, a slow section of a pas de deux or an exercise in a dance class focusing on slow controlled movements that highlight balance and extension, and require strength and poise.</p>
<p><b>Adagio:</b> The part of a dance class where exercises for balance and sustained movement are performed; a musical composition performed at a slow tempo.</p>
<p><b>Alignment:</b> Creating harmony with the body so that unbroken lines are formed with the arms and legs without displacement of the torso.</p>
<p><b>Arabesque:</b> In ballet, a pose held on one leg with the other leg and both arms extended away and up from the centre of the body; also, positioning of the arms in relation to the legs. As with positions of the feet, each position is distinguished by a number, such as first, second and third arabesque.</p>
<p><b>Barre:</b> A horizontal pole, either attached to the wall or freestanding, to support dancers while stretching, warming up or doing exercises "at the barre". Barre exercises like pliés, battements and ronds de jambe form the first part of a traditional ballet class and are the basis for all technique.</p>
<p><b>Battement:</b> In ballet, the "beating" of either a stretched or flexed leg. The types are : a battement tendu, a battement dégagé, a battement fondu, a petit battement et a grand battement.</p>
<p><b>Corps de ballet:</b> In ballet, performers who do not have lead roles and perform during group scenes or action. In narrative ballets, members of the corps de ballet will perform roles such as peasants, wedding guests and swans.</p>
<p><b>Enchaînement:</b> A "chain" or linked sequence of movements.</p>
<p><b>Turnout:</b> A way of standing and using the legs that is initiated in the pelvis, where both sides of the body rotate outwards from the hips, away from the spine.</p>
<p><b>Pas de deux:</b> In ballet, a sequence or dance for two dancers.</p>
<p><b>Pirouette:</b> In ballet, a spin or turn of the body performed on one leg. Pirouettes may be performed <b>en dehors</b> (turning away from the supporting leg) or <b>en dedans</b> (turning toward the supporting leg).</p>
<p><b>Plié:</b> In ballet, a bending of the knees. This can be done either in <b>demi-plié</b> ("half-plié"), where the heels remain on the floor, or in <b>grand plié</b> (large or full plié), where, except in second position of the feet, the heels leave the floor at the deepest point of the bend.</p>
<p><b>Port de bras:</b> In ballet, arm movements around the body.</p>
<p><b>Rond de jambe:</b> In ballet, a movement that goes "round the leg". A rond de jambe may be performed in two ways:  <b>À terre</b> ("on the ground"), where the pointed toe of a stretched working leg traces a circular pattern <b>en dehors</b> (from the front of the body to the back), or <b>en dedans</b> (from back to front), passing each time through first position of the feet.  <b>En l'air</b> ("in the air"), either <b>petit</b>, with the working leg raised just a few centimeters from the ground, or <b>grand</b>, where it is raised to 90°. A rond de jambe en l'air may also be performed as an isolated movement with the working leg raised <b>à la seconde</b> (to the side) and the knee bending and straightening as the toe describes quick circular patterns in the air without moving the thigh.</p>

# WATCHING AND APPRECIATING DANCE

## CURRICULUM CONNECTION – Reflecting, Responding and Analysing

Attending Dance Matinees at the NAC, and using questions and activities here and in Student Activity Section, are intended to develop students' competency in applying *The Critical Analysis Process* for all grades, in The Arts (Ontario) Curriculum Grades 1-12.

A ballet is a choreographic composition interpreted by the dancers. Each dancer tells a story in movement and pantomime. There are no words spoken in a ballet. Watch the show and look for the choreography, the movement, gestures and facial expressions of each dancer and how they work in relationship to each other. In dance there are basic elements that are always present in this live art form, where the body is the dancer's instrument of expression. Try to recognize the elements of dance such as the placement of the body, whether the body is moving through space or on the spot, type and quality of the movement, the timing and musicality, how space is used, the energy and the relationship between the dancers. Each person watching may have different interpretations about what they saw and how they felt. All are valid.

Relax, breathe deeply and open yourself to the spirit of dance.

### **During the show, watch for:**

- ✓ The dancer's movements, such as the dance technique used of jumps, pirouettes, and ballet positions of the feet, as well as the emotions and facial expressions used.
- ✓ How the dancers use the space on stage.
- ✓ Your real impressions of the piece during the show, for example: excitement, curiosity, frustration, surprise, sadness, humour etc.
- ✓ The combination of sequences or *enchaînements* and shapes on stage.
- ✓ The relationship between the choreography, the music, the props, costumes and set.

# *STUDENT ACTIVITY SECTION*



# THE NUTCRACKER

## Word Search

AUDIENCE  
BALLERINA  
CHARACTER  
CHOREOGRAPHER  
CLASSICAL  
COMPOSER  
CONDUCTOR  
COSTUME  
CROWN  
DANCE  
NUTCRACKER

KINGDOM  
ORCHESTRA  
PERFORMANCE  
POINTE  
PRESENTS  
REHEARSAL  
RUSSIA  
SHOE  
RAT KING  
TALE  
TUTU

V X H R C L A S S I C A L T D  
D A N C E M O D G N I K Z A F  
X A L A S R A E H E R U I L I  
X N N S H O E U C R O W N E Z  
S T N E S E R P O I N T E C B  
T Z J R E A R T S E H C R O N  
X E C N E I D U A I P X J S U  
I O C D F A I S S U R U O T T  
E C N A M R O F R E P P M U C  
Z D C H A R A C T E R G Q M R  
D L B A L L E R I N A Y R E A  
G C O M P O S E R R T H G I C  
U T U T H J V G N I K T A R K  
D R O T C U D N O C H L U D E  
R E H P A R G O E R O H C P R

## ACTIVITY WORK SHEET

Name:

Age:

Grade:

What was your favorite part of *The Nutcracker* ballet?

Draw a picture of it here:

A large empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to draw their favorite part of the ballet.

Describe your favorite part here:

Did you enjoy watching the ballet? Why or Why not?

Was this the first ballet performance you've seen? YES / NO

Would you like to see more ballet? YES / NO

# ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS FOR: YOUNGER STUDENTS

Movement is an integral part of the ballet experience. Below are a few more exercises for younger students to participate in to get them engaged in the theatre-going process.

1. Dancing is the communication of dialogue or emotion through movement rather than words. Choose a section of a story that you are reading in class and communicate it through movement or expressions rather than words. Ask the students to laugh if the character finds something funny; to frown if the character becomes sad, or to show fearful faces if the character is scared.

2. The corps de ballet consists of dancers who dance together in one group on stage. They must work together to create the beautiful patterns that we see on stage. Students can also work together to create a simple dance. Here would be an example:

- a. Holding hands in one big circle, everyone walks 8 steps to the right and stops.
- b. Walk 4 steps into the middle of the circle. Then, walk four steps out of the circle.
- c. Everybody lets go of each other's hands. Bend to touch the ground and then reach up high into the sky.
- d. Hold hands once again and repeat to the left
- e. Add on one movement sequence that you or the students create, and repeat.

3. In the Nutcracker there are many different characters and creatures represented. Along with costumes, the quality of the movement and the choreography used expresses the different types of animals or characters. Movement quality defines a specific use of weight, tension and flow. Through changing movement quality students can express themselves in many different ways. Begin by discussing and imitating how the soldiers or rats moved in the show:

- The Soldiers: heavy movement, strong, precise and big arm gestures. Experiment and explore imitating how the soldiers moved. Create a movement sequence of walks, jumps, travelling through space and on the spot, moving like a soldier.
- The rats: quick and small movements, bold jumps and arms darting out from the body, travelling in zigzags, jerky, through the space. Creative a movement sequence of runs, jumps, turns and jumps using all the space you have.

4. Then explore your favorite character in the show and get inspired by his/her movements.

- 1- The Nutcracker – describe the movement qualities of this character, then explore.
- 2- Klara – describe the movement qualities of this character, then explore.

5. Have the students choose an animal of their choice; explore how that animal moves and describe, in words, the movement qualities the animal possess when it moves. Create a movement sequence that can be memorized and repeated and perform for each other. Try to match similar and contrasting movement qualities of the animals and perform them in small groups.
6. The Nutcracker is a story set during Christmas. Use the show as a way of discussing how students and their family celebrate special holidays from religions and cultures of the world.
7. Have the children make a 'ticket' for *The Nutcracker*. What is listed on a ticket to a performance (Name of the show, Time, Date, etc.)? How much does the ticket cost? Role-play with selling tickets (sell tickets to different shows at different costs), collecting tickets, and entering the performance.

## POST-SHOW QUIZ

- 1) What is the name of the principal character in this ballet?
- 2) When was the *Nutcracker* first performed?
- 3) What holiday is being celebrated?
- 4) Who gives Klara the nutcracker?
- 5) Who composed the music for *Nutcracker*?
- 6) Which Canadian ballet company performs this production?
- 7) Who reigns over the kingdom of the sweets?
- 8) After killing the Mouse King what does the Nutcracker become?
- 9) How many regions/countries dances are performed?
- 10) What country is this Nutcracker set in?

# ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Klara
2. December 1892
3. Christmas
4. Mr. Drosselmyer
5. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
6. Alberta Ballet
7. The Sugar Plum Fairy
8. A handsome human prince
9. 4 – Spain, Arabia, China, Russia
10. Russia

# ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS FOR: OLDER STUDENTS

1. Write a creative short story about your visit to The National Arts Centre to see Alberta Ballet. Use the following sentence as a starting point:

*It all began when I sat down in my seat at The National Arts Centre to see Alberta Ballet perform...*

2. This *Nutcracker*, by the Alberta Ballet, is a set-in-Russia production. Discuss with your students how the production would look if it was made as a set-in-Canada production. Use this as a basis for discussion around national identity. What does it mean to be a Canadian? How is this identity constructed? Have your students imagine what the production would be like if it was set in a different country. What would it look like? Have them design their own modern *Nutcracker* set in a location and time period of their choice.
3. Have students create their own modern *Nutcracker* story. What would the different characters do or say in modern times?
4. Why do you think this ballet has become such a classic that it still resonates with audiences today? Compare and contrast classic ballets with classic novels or pieces of music. Why did they stand the test of time?
5. What similarities and differences does ballet have with other dance forms, such as modern, break dance, jazz dance, folk dance, Latin dance?
6. Compare the qualities of professional dancers with professional athletes. What are their similarities and differences?

## MORE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Summarize the story of the ballet.
- Talk about your first impressions of the ballet?
- What part of the show was your favourite?
- How were the various parts of the performance different? How were they the same?
- Describe the movements and choreography you saw; describe the music; describe the set and costumes.
- Discuss the relationship between choreography and dance, music, lighting, costume, set and props.
- How did the dancers tell the story without any words? How did their movements and dancing express a story?
- Did the dancers express different emotions during the ballet? What emotions did you see?
- What emotions did you feel when watching the ballet?
- Dancers play different characters in the ballet. How did the dancer's movements let you know which character they were playing?
- Which character was your favourite, why? Describe the movement of the dancer in words and by trying to move like that character. What type of movement was used (Low, high, sustained, light, heavy, fast slow, jump, pirouette, rond de jambe, plié, battement, etc.) Refer to section later in the guide on ballet technique and ask your students to look for and identify the technique in the show.
- How did the costume, wigs, make-up, help to portray a character?
- How did the music affect or influence the dance?

*We'd love to hear from you!*

*Please send completed assignments to:*

The National Arts Centre, Dance Department

P.O. Box 1534, Station B, Ottawa ON K1P 5W1 Fax: 613-943-1401 [dance@nac-cna.ca](mailto:dance@nac-cna.ca)

# Bibliography of Resources Available at the Ottawa Public Library



Compiled by Rebekah McCallum,  
Children's Services, Ottawa Public Library

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The Nutcracker	Jeffers, Susan	JEFFE
The Nutcracker	Koppe, Susanne	KOPPE
The Nutcracker	Hague, Michael	HAGUE
The Barefoot Book of Ballet Stories	Yolen, Jane	792.84 Y54

## History, Facts, and Activities

Corbett, Pie	<i>Dancing and Singing Games</i>	J 796.13 Dan
Lundsten, Apryl	<i>Dance!</i>	J 792.8 L962
Malam, John	<i>Song and Dance</i>	J 780.9 Mal
Maze, Stephanie	<i>I Want to Be a Dancer</i>	J 792.802 Maze
Murphy, Liz	<i>A Dictionary of Dance</i>	J 792.803 M978
Wilson, Sarah	<i>The Day We Danced in Underpants</i>	J PIC Wilso

## Dance Around the World

Ancona, George	<i>Capoeira</i>	J 793.31981 A542
Collins, Pat Lowery	<i>I am a Dancer</i>	J PIC Colli
Connolly, Liz	<i>Let's Dance</i>	J ER 792.8 C752
Grau, Andrée	<i>Dance</i>	J 792.8 G774 2000
Hudak, Heather C.	<i>Cultures of Canada: Dance</i>	J ESL 792.8 Dance
Jonas, Ann	<i>Color Dance</i>	J PIC Jonas
McMahon, Patricia	<i>Dancing Wheels</i>	J 792.8087 M167
Meadows, Daisy	<i>Serena, the Salsa Fairy</i>	PB FIC Meado
Morris, Neil	<i>Music and Dance</i>	J 793.31 Mor
Raczek, Linda Theresa	<i>Rainy's Powwow</i>	J F Rac
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## Ballet

Burgess, Melvin	<i>Billy Elliot</i>	J PB FIC Burge
Bray-Moffat, Naia	<i>Ballet School</i>	J 792.8 B827
Ellison, Nancy	<i>Becoming a Ballerina</i>	J 792.8 E47
Gladstone, Valerie	<i>A Young Dancer</i>	J 792.80973 G543
Holabird, Katherine	<i>Angelina Ballerina</i>	J PIC Holab
Isadora, Rachel	<i>On Your Toes: A Ballet ABC</i>	J 792.8 I74
Lee, Laura	<i>A Child's Introduction to Ballet</i>	J 792.8 L478
Little-sugar, Amy	<i>Marie in Fourth Position</i>	J PIC L
Mayhew, James	<i>Ella Bella Ballerina and the Sleeping Beauty</i>	J PIC Mayhe
McMullan, Kate	<i>Noel the First</i>	J PIC M
Streatfeild, Noel	<i>Ballet Shoes</i>	J PB FIC Strea
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Young, Amy	<i>Belinda the Ballerina</i>	J PIC Young

# INTERNET RESOURCES

- Alberta Ballet: [www.albertaballet.com](http://www.albertaballet.com)
- National Arts Center: [www.nac-cna.ca](http://www.nac-cna.ca)

## DANCE AND ARTS EDUCATION WEBSITES

- ArtsAlive, the NAC's performing arts education site [www.artsalive.ca](http://www.artsalive.ca)
- Council of Drama and Dance in Education (Ontario) [www.code.on.ca](http://www.code.on.ca)
- Kennedy Centre (USA) [www.artsedge.kennedy-centre.org](http://www.artsedge.kennedy-centre.org)
- Canadian Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance [www.cahperd.ca](http://www.cahperd.ca)

## CANADIAN BALLET COMPANIES

- The National Ballet of Canada [www.national.ballet.ca](http://www.national.ballet.ca)
- The Royal Winnipeg Ballet [www.rwb.org](http://www.rwb.org)
- Les Grands Ballet Canadiens [www.grandsballet.scom](http://www.grandsballet.scom)
- Ballet British Columbia (Ballet BC) [www.balletbc.com](http://www.balletbc.com)
- Ballet Jorgen [www.balletjorgen.ca](http://www.balletjorgen.ca)

## BALLET RESOURCES

- ABT - American Ballet Theatre Library: Ballet Dictionary and Repertory Archive, USA  
<http://www.abt.org/education/library.asp>
- American Ballet Theatre's Ballet Dictionary  
[www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html](http://www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html)
- Ballet.co, UK  
<http://www.ballet.co.uk/>
- CBC.ca: "Into a fantasy world: A history of ballet"  
A brief history of the deceptively simple but evocative dance form.  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/ballet/>

- [Ladanse.net](http://www.ladanse.net)  
History of dance from prehistory to 18th century ballet (in French), France and Belgium  
<http://www.ladanse.net/histoire/accueil.html>
- Chorème [www.choreme.ca](http://www.choreme.ca)

## ONLINE DANCE PUBLICATIONS

- Dance Collection Danse [www.dcd.ca](http://www.dcd.ca)
- The Dance Current [www.thedancecurrent.com](http://www.thedancecurrent.com)
- Dance International Magazine [www.danceinternational.org](http://www.danceinternational.org)
- Dance Magazine [www.dancemagazine.com](http://www.dancemagazine.com)

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