



Nutcracker Spectacular

STUDENT MATINEE PACKET

ABOUT BALLET ARKANSAS

Ballet Arkansas's roots can be traced to the Little Rock Civic Ballet, founded in 1966 by Lorraine and Donald C. Cranford. The organization was incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation in 1979 with the dream to become the region's foremost professional ballet company. Over the course of its 44 year history, Ballet Arkansas's world-class programs and performances have touched the lives of nearly HALF-A-MILLION Arkansans.

Today, Ballet Arkansas is ranked among the Top 100 Ballet Companies in America, presenting the classics, masterworks of American dance, and premieres by some of the world's most daring dancemakers. The company is a regional leader in the presentation of innovative and inclusive dance programming and its K-12 education programs reach more than 10K each year.

Under the visionary leadership of Michael and Catherine Fothergill, the professional company is firmly committed to producing accessible and relatable programming for all Arkansans to enjoy. Student matinee performances are an important part of the effort.



ETIQUETTE 101

RULES FOR THE THEATER



Going to a ballet performance is an experience similar to going to a movie. The lights will dim before the performance begins, and the theater will remain dark for the duration of the performance - except during periods of Intermission. Audience members are expected to sit quietly while dancing is taking place, though applause is welcomed at the completion of each scene. Screaming, shouting, and whistling is discouraged and is distracting to performers and audience members.

Audience members are encouraged to dress in comfortable attire and the consumption of food, beverage, and chewing gum is prohibited within the auditorium. It is permissible to visit the restroom as needed, though it is important to do so quietly.

Because performance material is copyrighted, photography and video recording are strictly prohibited.

RULES OF THE THEATER

- Avoid Distractions - turn off your phone and give the performers your full attention
- Open your Mind - immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the performance, and arrive at your own conclusions
- Be a Curteous Participant - adhere to audience member policies at all times
- ENJOY THE SHOW!

THE LIFE OF A

PROFESSIONAL BALLET DANCER



Ballet Arkansas's company of 15 professional dancers are full-time, salaried employees that receive employment benefits and work a standard M-F work week. Many hold degrees from some of the nation's most prestigious university dance programs, and others come from some of the finest training institutions in America.

At the start of day, company members take a 1.5 hour ballet class to train and condition their bodies for the rigorous demands of the day's rehearsal. Thereafter they rehearse for the remainder of the work day. On average, it takes company members 25 hours of rehearsal to learn 1 hour of performance material. After material is learned or "staged," the company spends the remainder of the rehearsal period perfecting its performance of the material for your enjoyment. Though company members are artists, they are also professional athletes.

Not only must company members master the musical phrasing and physical execution of thousands of challenging dance steps within each production, but they must also be familiar with hundreds of light cues, changing line formations, and add characterizations to each scene. Hundreds of hours of rehearsal are required to produce any Ballet Arkansas production.

In 2020, InsuranceProviders.com and the U.S. Department of Labor ranked Dance as the most physically demanding job in the U.S. Due to the demanding nature of the job, many dancers retire from performing in their mid-thirties to pursue careers in other areas of the arts.



ARKANSAS'S LARGEST & LONGEST
RUNNING HOLIDAY PRODUCTION

THE SPECTACULAR BY THE NUMBERS



10,000 Served

2 Student Matinees

4 Public Performances

15 Professional Dancers

200+ Community Cast Members

1 Symphony Orchestra

2 Choirs

20+ Production Crew Members

150+ Volunteers

100 + Props

240 Costumes

300 Stage Lights

1,000+ Rehearsal Hours



AUTHOR

Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (born Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann; 24 January 1776 – 25 June 1822) was a German Romantic author of fantasy and Gothic horror, a jurist, composer, music critic and artist. His stories form the basis of Jacques Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*, in which Hoffmann appears (heavily fictionalized) as the hero. He is also the author of the novella *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, on which Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker* is based. The ballet *Coppélia* is based on two other stories that Hoffmann wrote, while Schumann's *Kreisleriana* is based on Hoffmann's character Johannes Kreisler. Ballet Arkansas's production of *The Nutcracker Spectacular* is adapted from Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*.



COMPOSER

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) studied at the Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia. Tchaikovsky is one of the most popular and influential of all romantic composers. His work is expressive, melodic, and grand in scale, with rich orchestrations. His output was prodigious and included chamber works, symphonies, concerti for various instruments, operas, and works for piano. His creations for ballet include Swan Lake, The Nutcracker, and The Sleeping Beauty



THE STORY OF THE NUTCRACKER

ACT 1 - THE PARTY

Excitement looms in the air as guests arrive for the Stahlbaum family's annual holiday party. Mr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum and their children, Clara and Fritz, welcome friends and family from far away lands. The party grows festive with music and dance as the Clara's mysterious godfather, Herr Drosselmeyer, arrives with his young nephew. Herr Drosselmeyer brings with him 3 magical life-size dolls that quickly become the delight of the party. Following a dance of the dolls, Herr Drosselmeyer presents Clara with a beautiful hand carved Nutcracker, drawing envious eyes from all the children. As Clara happily dances with her Nutcracker, a jealous Fritz prys the doll from her fingers and destroys it in front of the guests. Clara is heartbroken, but Herr Drosselmeyer quickly mends the Nutcracker with a handkerchief. After a final dance, the guests and their weary children depart, and the Stahlbaum household goes to sleep on Christmas eve.



ACT I - BATTLE SCENE & LAND OF THE SNOW

Just before midnight, Herr Drosselmeyer returns to fix Clara's broken Nutcracker. As the clock strikes twelve, he casts a spell on the house and mysterious things begin to happen. The Christmas tree grows to massive heights and enormous mice fill the room, taunting a frightened Clara. To her surprise, the Nutcracker arrives fully grown, commanding an army of wooden soldiers. As the battle rages, a hideous Mouse King appears and quickly overpowers the Nutcracker. Just as it seems the giant rodents will be victorious, Clara distracts the Mouse King by hitting him with her slipper and the Nutcracker valiantly defeats him. Herr Drosselmeyer reappears and escorts Clara and the Nutcracker on a fantastic journey through the Land of Snow.



ACT II - THE LAND OF THE SWEETS

After a journey through an icy wonderland, Clara and the Nutcracker are met by the radiant Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier in the Kingdom of the Sweets. The Nutcracker tells the two of Clara's heroism and the Sugar Plum Fairy awards her bravery with delightful dances from around the world. As the magical evening fades, Clara awakens on Christmas morning to the sight of her Nutcracker doll. The Stahlbaum household has returned to normal. Clara wonders if her adventures were all a dream? Only Herr Drosselmeyer knows for sure.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

In addition to Ballet Arkansas's professional dancers, the production of The Nutcracker Spectacular features more than 200 community performers from across Arkansas. Following an audition process, community cast members are selected for the roles of Party Parents, Clara, Fritz, Mice, Soldiers, Snow Flakes, and supporting roles within Act II. The Spectacular is the only production of its size in Arkansas where professional dancers and community performers share the stage.



HERR DROSSELMEYER

Herr Drosselmeyer is a mysterious, toy-making magician that just so happens to be Clara's beloved godfather. When he arrives at the Stahlbaum's Christmas party, he brings with him 3 life-sized dancing dolls, and is accompanied by his handsome Nephew, who transforms into the Nutcracker Prince when in The Land of The Sweets.



THE NUTCRACKER PRINCE

Herr Drosselmeyer presents his prized possession, a magical doll that comes to life, to Clara for Christmas. It is he who battles the Rat King and escorts Clara to the Land of the Sweets where she meets the Sugar Plum Fairy.



THE RAT KING

Sinister and cunning, the Rat King commands the mice and rat battalions that go to war with the Nutcracker Prince. In the heat of battle, he is vanquished by the Nutcracker Prince after Clara distracts him by throwing her slipper at him.



CLARA

Clara is Fritz Stauhlbaum's sister, and the heroine of our story. After receiving the Nutcracker Doll from Herr Drosselmeyer, she aids in the Rat King's defeat before traveling through the Land of the Snow to the Land of the Sweets. Her dream is the basis of many versions of the Nutcracker ballet, told across the world.



SUGAR PLUM FAIRY & CAVALIER

The Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier rule all in the Land of the Sweets. Together, they protect all from the dangers of the human world. The two are allies of the Nutcracker and Snow Queen, and gracious hosts to Clara and the Young Prince.

QUESTIONS

TO ASK YOURSELF



1. What are the overarching themes of the Nutcracker?
2. Was the narrative of the story clearly portrayed within the production?
3. Did the performer's characterizations make sense?
4. How was movement used to depict the storyline?
5. Describe the happenings of your favorite scene?
6. What impact did the costumes, sets, and special effects have on your audience experience?
7. How might performers use principles of STEM during performance?
8. What words or emotions would you use to describe the choreography?
9. Discuss the geometric shapes present within the dance formations.
10. Who was your favorite character within the production and why?
11. How did Tchaikovsky's score make you feel and what was your favorite part?
12. Describe the sights and sounds of a filled auditorium.
13. Describe the theater technology you witnessed in the production.