

THE GEORGIA *ballet*

DANCE EDUCATION, PERFORMANCE, AND OUTREACH SINCE 1960

Presents:



Arts in Education 2011 – 2012

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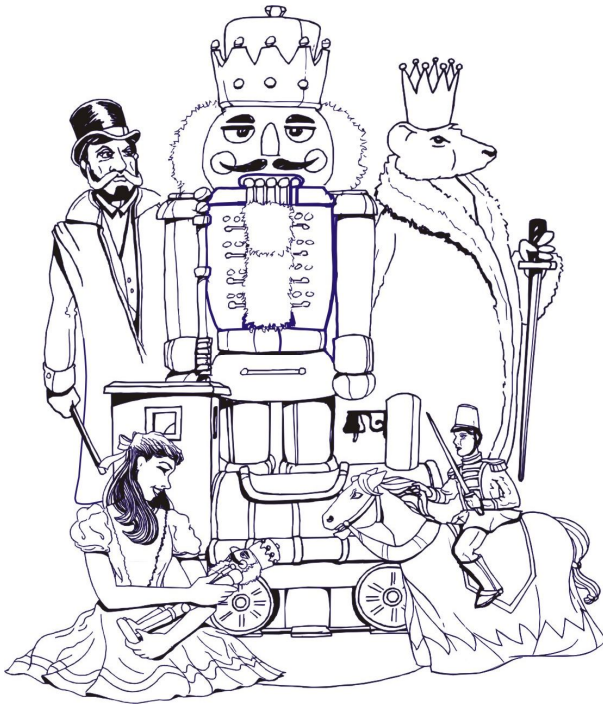


The Nutcracker



The Story

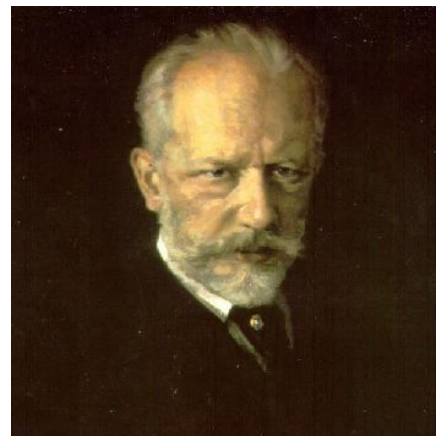
The Nutcracker is a holiday fairytale about a young girl Clara who receives a Nutcracker doll from her Godfather Drosselmeyer at the annual family Christmas Eve party. In a magical dream, Clara witnesses a daring battle between the Nutcracker and the evil Mouse King. With Clara's help, the Nutcracker triumphs, and they both journey through the Land of Snow to the Kingdom of Sweets where delightful dances are performed in their honor. Finally, Clara must bid her new friends farewell.



The Composer

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, born in 1840, was the son of a mining inspector in Russia. He studied music as a child, attending both the St. Petersburg Conservatory and the Moscow Conservatory. Over the course of his career, he composed numerous works, including six

symphonies, four concertos, and three ballets. He performed at the opening concert in Carnegie Hall in New York City in 1891. That same year, Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write the music for *The Nutcracker*. Marius Petipa, the original choreographer, presented him with the exact scenario that he wanted, including the rhythm, tempo, and number of measures for each dance. At the premiere the ballet was not at



all successful. However, it is now the most well known and well loved ballet in the United States.



Pre-Performance:

1. Listen to selections of *The Nutcracker Suite* by P.I. Tchaikovsky. Divide children up into small groups and allow them to create their own dances with the different pieces of music. [GA QCC Standards: Third Grade, Fine Arts (Artistic Skills and Knowledge: Creating Performing, Producing): 2, 7, 8.]
2. Discuss with your students what is necessary to put together a performance of *The Nutcracker*. Discuss the people involved and what jobs each one must do to create this large production. [GA QCC Standards: Kindergarten, Fine Arts (Theatre Arts: Creating, Performing, Producing): 1, 8; (Theatre Arts: Critical Analysis and Aesthetic Understanding): 20; First Grade, Fine Arts (Theatre Arts: Creating, Performing, Producing): 1, 7; (Theatre Arts: Critical Analysis and Aesthetic Understanding): 19; Second Grade, Fine Arts (Theatre Arts: Creating, Performing, Producing): 1; (Theatre Arts: Critical Analysis and Aesthetic Understanding): 26; Third Grade, Fine Arts (Theatre Arts: creating, Performing, Producing) : 1, 11, 18; (Theatre Arts: Critical Analysis and Aesthetic Understanding): 29]

Some people to mention are:

Choreographer:	This person creates the steps of the dances.
Ballet Master/Mistress:	This person catalogues the steps and rehearses the dancers.
Dancer:	This person performs the choreography on stage.
Stagehand:	This person performs a variety of backstage work, including hanging drops, moving sets on and off the stage, monitoring props, etc.
Costume Mistress:	This person designs and assembles the costumes for the dancers.
Lighting Designer:	This person designs the lights that will set the mood of the ballet.
Sound Technician:	This person sets up and operates the equipment for the music.
Stage Manager:	This person directs everyone backstage to do his or her job at the correct time so that the production can run smoothly.

3. 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.

[GA QCC Standards: Kindergarten, Fine Arts (Theatre Arts: Artistic Skills and Knowledge Creating, Performing, Producing): 8, 9, 11, 13; First Grade,

Fine Arts (Theatre Arts: Artistic Skills and Knowledge: Creating, Performing, Producing): 9, 11]

4. 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. [GA QCC Standards: Kindergarten, Fine Arts (Dance: Critical Analysis and Aesthetic Understanding): 19; First Grade, Fine Arts (Dance: Critical Analysis and Aesthetic Understanding): 20]
5. 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.

Variations of this movement can be used. [GA QCC Standards: Kindergarten, Fine Arts (Dance: Artistic Skills and Knowledge: Creating Performing, Producing): 4, 7, 9, 12; Social Studies (Core Social Studies Skills: Civic Participation): 35]



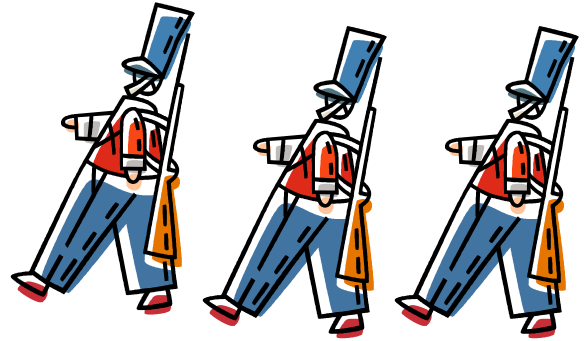
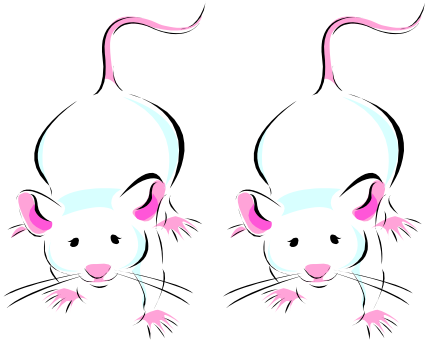
Post-Performance:

1. The Sugar Plum's Attendants present several types of candy to Clara when she sits on the throne to watch the divertissements. If the attendants bring 5 peppermints and 4 lollipops, how many pieces of candy have they brought to Clara? What if they brought 3 peppermints, 2 cupcakes, and 7 caramels? If Clara had 10 pieces of candy and she ate 2 pieces of candy, how many pieces of candy would she have left?

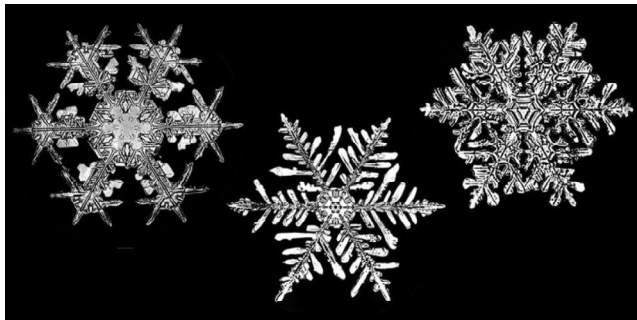


Substitute different numbers to create more equations. Young children can complete the attached worksheet. [GA QCC Standards: Kindergarten, Mathematics (Whole Number Computation; Estimation; Whole Number Operations: Sets 26; (Problem Solving: Problem Solving): 23; First Grade, Mathematics (Whole Number Computation; Estimation; Whole Number Operations: Addition and Subtraction): 43, 47; (Problem Solving: Word Problems): 43, Second Grade, Mathematics (Problem Solving: Addition and Subtraction): 29; (Problem Solving: Word Problems): 31]

2. Soldiers fought mice in the Battle Scene. If there were 2 rows of 4 mice on one side of the stage, how many mice would there be? If there were 3 rows of 3 soldiers on the other side of the stage, how many soldiers would there be? Are there more mice or more soldiers on stage? How many dancers on stage total? [GA QCC Standards: Second Grade, Mathematics (Whole Number Computation; Estimation; Whole Number Operations: Multiplication Readiness): 39, 40; Third Grade, Mathematics (Whole Number Computation; Estimation; Whole Number Operations: Multiplication and Division): 42, 43, 44]



3. Clara and the Nutcracker Prince travel through The Land of Snow to arrive at The Kingdom of Sweets. No two snowflakes are alike. How is snow made? At what temperature does it form? What time of year does snow form? Describe a snowflake. Make a paper snowflake card using the attached instructions. [GA QCC Standards: Kindergarten, Science (Physical Science: Structure of Matter): 5, 6; First Grade, Science (Earth/ Space Science: Earth Processes: Weather and Climate): 15; Sixth Grade, Science (Physical Science: Structure of Matter): 6]



4. Have the children write about their favorite dance from The Kingdom of Sweets. Describe the movement from that particular dance. Was it slow or quick, intricate or simple? How many

dancers were in it? What did the costumes look like and what country/sweet did they represent? Younger children can draw their favorite dance. [GA QCC Standards: Kindergarten, Language Arts (Written Communication: Writing): 13; Fourth Grade, Language Arts (Written Communication: Writing): 38, 39, 40, 42; Fifth Grade, Language Arts (Written Communication: Writing): 39, 40, 41, 42]

5. Use the attached sheet, which explains the divertissements (dances) from Act II, for the following activities:
- Tchaikovsky composed most of the dances for Act II according to the rhythms and styles of the folk dances of different countries from which those Christmas foods came. Discuss why the Spanish dance represented chocolate; the Chinese dance represented tea, and so on.
 - Different folk dances came from different countries. Match up which dance came from which country.
 - Find the various countries on a map of the world. Map a ship's voyage from Germany (where *The Nutcracker*) to various countries on the map. How long

would the voyage have taken in 1892 (when the ballet was originally set)? What were the other ways to transport goods during that time period? How do we transport goods today? [GA QCC Standards: Kindergarten, Social Studies (Core Social Studies Skills: Information Processing): 23; Fine Arts (Dance: Critical Analysis and Aesthetic Understanding): 20, Second Grade, Fine Arts (Dance: Artistic Skills and Knowledge: creating Performing, Producing): 13; Social Studies (Geography: Map and Globes): 44]

Divertissements: The Entertainment in Act II

One of the strange things about long story ballets is the way the story keeps getting interrupted by dances that have nothing to do with the story! Two of Tchaikovsky's ballets, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Nutcracker*, have second acts where the plot is simply "Lots of dancers come out and do entertaining dances to honor the hero and heroine of Act I". These dances are called *divertissements*, which is French for "entertainments". In *Sleeping Beauty*, the dances have a theme: characters from fairy tales, like Puss in Boots. In *The Nutcracker*, there is a theme too: it is delicious sweets. Act II contains all the tasty treats that family and friends might bring for one another during the holiday season. Your class will see the dancing treats!

A long time ago, when it was harder to get foods from distant lands, people had to make do most of the year with the food grown in their own area. Some of it could be stored up carefully to last the winter, but others, like nuts, might only keep for a few months after being picked. Some kinds of food would be pickled or salted to keep for a long time. Spices could be used to help preserve some foods. Other kinds could be dried or preserved in sugar and alcohol, but they might not last as long. So the nuts, the dried or sugared or brandied fruits, and the gingerbread or spiced foods would be eaten during Christmas time. For days there was a great festival when people visited each other and brought out their best foods. This is the origin of fruitcake.

But because people love all kinds of different foods, merchants who sailed to far-off lands knew that Christmas and New Year's was a time that people would buy special things to eat if they could find them in stores. Merchants would make sure to bring back the best sweets and treats, and also coffee, tea, and chocolate, right around that time. Also, during a November voyage it would be cool enough to keep such things well on board a ship. November or early December might be the only time of year when these foreign goods were fresh and available.

The Nutcracker ballet has a second act, which is really all about the treats of Christmas time. It is also a geography lesson. Tchaikovsky composed most of the dances for Act II according to the rhythms and styles of the folk-dances of different countries from which those food Christmas foods came. Here is a list of them:



Chocolate from Spain: Why from Spain? Spain owned most of South America, and that is where chocolate still comes from.



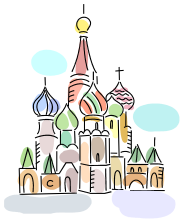
Coffee from Arabia: Coffee was grown in Arabia, Egypt, and other countries in that area. Although it is now grown all over the world, some people still prefer “Arabica” coffee.



Tea from China: Of course! Tchaikovsky was very clever in creating oriental-sounding music. In our ballet, we have a street parade for the New Year with a friendly dragon!



Marzipan Shepherdeses from Denmark: What is marzipan? It is made of ground sugar and almonds, kneaded into white clay, which can be shaped into fruits, animals, and even people! It was a favorite in Denmark and they made enough to ship to other countries.



Russian Sugar Candy: The storyline Tchaikovsky was working from said that this was supposed to be a dance of peppermint sticks, or maybe of caramels. Since he was Russian and his dancers were Russians, he put in the most wonderful showy kind of Russian village dancing.



Mother Ginger: Ginger is a wonderful Christmas spice. It originated in Asia but is also grown in Jamaica. Ginger was imported from the Caribbean. Mother Ginger is a clown, with her little twirling ginger candies popping out of her skirt. She is called Mother Goose or Mother Gigone in some versions of the ballet.



Waltz of the Candied Flowers: Yes, they preserved flowers in sugar too, and used them to decorate cakes. The story does not say where these flowers come from, but the waltz originated in Germany, so perhaps this is the dance for Clara and her Nutcracker. In our version there is a “Dew Drop Fairy”, making us think of real flowers with dew on them.



Sugar Plum Fairy: “The children were all tucked snug in their beds
While visions of sugar plums danced in their heads.”
This elegant lady is really the candy fairy of the Land of the Sweets.



The Teacher's Guide to Theater Etiquette

Introduction to the theater: Going to see a production at the theater is an exciting experience. You will be watching live dancers perform on stage. This makes each performance very special. No two performances are alike, due to the spontaneity of live performances. If a dancer forgets his/her steps, accidentally trips on stage, or if there is a problem with scenery, it all becomes a part of the performance. However, you might need a keen eye to pick out these blunders. The dancers are very skilled at staying in character and making sure that the show continues on.

What to expect: After entering the lobby of the theater, you should stay in a single file line. This will make it easier for your class to walk together down the aisles without getting separated or interrupting other groups of audience members.

What is expected of me: Everyone uses hushed voices in the theater. Noise carries very easily due to the high ceilings and raised seating. The theater is made this way so that the performers can be heard all over the theater when they are on stage. After you are seated, the lights will dim until it is dark in the seating areas, but there is some light near the stage. (Don't worry – you'll still be able to see) This is a sign that the performance is starting. You will notice that the curtains are closed on the stage. The curtains will open only after the lights have dimmed. The opening of the curtains means that the performance has begun. If you need to talk to someone during the performance, please use a quiet voice. (Remember – the dancers are on stage, and if you can hear them, they can hear you) This is a courtesy to the performers and others around you.

When the curtain closes: After the performance is over, the curtain will close. This is the appropriate time for applause. Your applause is greatly appreciated by all of those who worked on the production; however, please remember that yelling is never appropriate behavior for the theater.

Please note: Please remain in your seat until the entire performance has ended and the lights have come on in the theater. This ensures that you do not block anyone's view of the stage. We ask that afterwards you stay in your seat until your teacher has designated that it is time for your class to leave the theater.

Finally... The most important rule of the theater is the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Courtesy makes everything run smoothly in the theater, making the experience much more pleasant for everyone.

Information courtesy of www.depaul.edu/~sleigh1/study.html