

# River Region Ballet

## THE NUTCRACKER



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The River Region Ballet, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. Under the artistic direction of Susan Ferrara, it has performed a full length Nutcracker in the river region since 1995, and in 1998 a Spring Concert was added to the ballet company's season. The Spring Concert opens the doors to many more ballets for our dancers and audience to explore and experience. RRB's dedication to the community can be seen in several outreach programs such as performances and events for school children, nursing homes and public libraries.

Our dancers are chosen through open auditions. Their performance opportunity allows them to meet, dance with and observe professional guest artists contracted for each production. The inspiration given by these professionals is priceless to aspiring dancers. Company and Junior Company members are also offered education opportunities in the form of workshops, guest choreographers, master classes, and field trips.

**River Region Ballet**  
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# THE NUTCRACKER BALLET

## History at a Glance

The Nutcracker Ballet is based on a book written by E.T.A. Hoffman titled  
“The Nutcracker and the Mouse King”  
However, the ballet libretto is based on a much sweeter version by French author  
Alexander Dumas (père)

In 1891, the legendary choreographer Marius Petipa commissioned the music to be written by  
P.I. Tchaikovsky

December 17, 1892

First performance of *The Nutcracker*  
Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, Russia  
(present Home of the Kirov Ballet)  
The Imperial Russian Ballet  
Choreography - Lev Ivanov  
Scenario - Petipa/Ivanov, after Dumas père, after E.T.A. Hoffman

January 30, 1934

First performance of *The Nutcracker* outside of Russia  
Sadler Wells Theatre, London, England  
The Vic-Wells Ballet

October 17, 1940

First performance of *The Nutcracker* in the United States  
A condensed one act version  
51st Street Theater, New York  
Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

December 29, 1944

First full length production of *The Nutcracker* in the United States  
War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco  
San Francisco Ballet  
Choreography - William Christensen

February 2, 1954

The production *The Nutcracker* that reached the masses  
This production was eventually televised and presented to a mass audience their first glimpse of *The Nutcracker*.  
City Center, New York  
New York City Ballet  
Choreography - George Balanchine

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## Fun Facts

The first title of *The Nutcracker* was *Casse-Noisette* which means nut breaker.

The heroine of *The Nutcracker* is usually called Clara. In some productions she is called Marie.

Balanchine's 1954 *The Nutcracker* introduced the first Christmas tree that grew.

In Act II, the Kingdom of the Sweets, there are several dances representing different countries. This is what they represent:

Spanish	Chocolate
Arabian	Coffee
Chinese	Tea

Act II also has a dance "Marzipan Shepherdesses". Did you know that *marzipan* is a confection made of almond paste and sugar that is molded in various shapes?

The Marzipan dance has another name. It is called the "Mirliton" dance. A *mirliton* is a reed flute. This piece of music is often referred to as the Dance of the Reed Flutes.

The beautiful "tinkling" sound in the music for the Sugar Plum Fairy is an instrument called the *celesta*. Tchaikovsky discovered this new instrument in Paris. He secretly had one brought to Russian. He wanted to be the first Russian composer to use it.

*The Nutcracker* is not as popular in other parts of the world. Only in the United States and parts of Canada has it become a Christmas tradition.

## History of Nutcrackers

In mountainous areas of Germany in the 1800's, many villagers worked in mines. During the winter, when it was too cold for mining, these men would carve wood. The villagers were often poor and endured many hardships while working very hard for their superiors. Carvers began to shape nutcrackers in the form of soldiers, policemen, and kings. Villagers enjoyed the idea of these powerful people performing the lowly task of cracking nuts. Since the nutcrackers were carved during the winter, they eventually became a popular Christmas decoration.



# THE NUTCRACKER BALLET

## The Story

(abbreviated school show version)

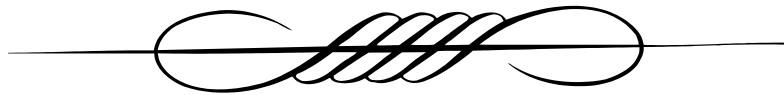
A Christmas Eve celebration is being held by the Silberhaus Family. After all the guests have arrived, the Christmas Tree is lit to the delight of everyone. Clara, however, seems to be anxiously looking for someone. Finally a very mysterious guest arrives. After a few tense moments, the magical Uncle Drosselmeyer reveals himself. This is Clara's godfather for whom she has been waiting.

All the children gather round while Uncle Drosselmeyer distributes a present to each child. Fritz, mischievous as always, disrupts the gift giving by chasing Clara with his "rat puppet". Huge boxes are then brought into the room. With his magic, Drosselmeyer produces life-size dolls which dance and entertain the guests. It is now time for Clara to receive her present. Out of the box comes an odd wooden soldier. Fritz jealously hovers while Drosselmeyer demonstrates to Clara that the soldier is a *Nutcracker*. Clara is mesmerized by the doll as if he were her knight in shining armor. Fritz attempts to steal the doll from Clara only to succeed in breaking Clara's nutcracker doll. Uncle Drosselmeyer repairs the nutcracker and returns it to Clara. The guests soon depart leaving the Silberhaus Family to retire for the night.

Clara reappears in the darkness looking for her nutcracker doll. She finds him under the tree and curls up and falls asleep with him. As the clock strikes midnight, Clara awakes into a dream. She feels herself shrinking as everything around her seems to grow larger, including her precious nutcracker. Alas, the bad comes with the good and the parlor is invaded by the fierce Mouse King. The Nutcracker is magically brought to life and a mighty battle ensues. The Nutcracker, victorious, collapses from exhaustion. When he recovers he is no longer a nutcracker but a handsome prince. A sleigh arrives to transport Clara and her Nutcracker Prince on a magical journey.

They arrive at the Kingdom of the Sweets where they are greeted by the Sugar Plum Fairy. She commands the entertainment to begin. All of the subjects of the Kingdom present themselves to Clara, after which there is a splendid Waltz of the Flowers.

Everyone comes together for a final waltz. At the height of the revelry, Clara's dream begins to fade. She awakens to find her Uncle Drosselmeyer offering her once again his wonderful gift!



## AUDIENCE ETTIQUETTE

As an audience member you should enjoy the performance just as you would any other spectator event. Because a ballet performance is in a controlled environment and involves live performers some courtesies should be practiced.

- Get comfortable in your seat and then sit still. This enables the people around you to see the stage as well. Every time you move the people around also have to adjust their positions to view the performance. This causes unwelcome noise and movement from the audience.
- No loud talking and unnecessary conversation. This also disturbs both your fellow audience members and the dancers and actors on the stage.
- Why you can't take pictures, videos, or use cell phones: The dancers on the stage just see "black" when they look out at the audience because of the bright lights shining in their faces. When a noise or light flashes in the audience it disturbs their focus. This can cause accidents on the stage when dancers are balancing, turning, performing lifts, etc.
- You attend live performances for enjoyment. Enjoy! If something is funny - laugh, if something impresses you or makes you smile - applaud. The performers are there for you. They love to hear your reactions. Be an involved audience member.
- Applause. The best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation for the dancers and actors is to clap your hands. They love applause.
- At the end of a performance, if you think the performers were exceptional and did an extremely good job, you can stand while you clap. This is called a "standing ovation". If a performer gave you an "over the top" performance, you may call out "Bravo". This however should be reserved for truly amazing performers.

Remember the dancers and actors on the stage want you to enjoy their performance. They do it because they love it and they hope that you will too. Have fun, relax, laugh, applaud, whatever your natural reaction is. They want to bring their mysterious, exhilarating, wonderful life on the stage to you! ENJOY.

