We’re delighted to share the joy of dance with you. SF Ballet’s Nutcracker performance and Let’s Dance Family Workshops are a wonderful way to celebrate the holidays while experiencing the transformative power of creativity through the performing arts.

Our Nutcracker Family Guide includes activity pages and materials for guided discussions that challenge children to think deeply and critically about the performance and the artistic process. We encourage families to use this education guide before and after the performance to familiarize children with ballet as an art form and with SF Ballet’s Nutcracker.

Symbols are used throughout this guide to direct families to key concepts that ask children to think creatively about the arts.

- indicates an activity or discussion question
- indicates a key concept about dance or the artistic process
- indicates a key concept about music for ballet
- indicates a look behind the scenes

We hope the Let’s Dance Family Workshop and Family Guide, combined with a performance of Nutcracker, sparks conversation and reflection, inspires creative expression, and fosters an appreciation and understanding of dance. To learn more about SF Ballet, visit us online at www.sfballet.org.

Get the FREE SF Ballet Nutcracker Storybook App! Designed for children ages 6–10 and their families, this richly illustrated storybook app features interactive animations and fun facts, photos, and videos about dance, music and SF Ballet’s very special production of the holiday classic. A companion micro-site features more in-depth information about dance, ballet, SF Ballet, and Nutcracker. www.sfballet.org/nutcrackerstorybook

We look forward to seeing you at Nutcracker!

Parents may send activity pages and letters to:
San Francisco Ballet
Attn: Youth Education Programs
455 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
education@sfballet.org
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td><strong>SECTION 01</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td><strong>SECTION 02</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td><strong>SECTION 03</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td><strong>SECTION 04</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>SECTION 05</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><strong>SECTION 06</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>SECTION 07</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>SECTION 08</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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THE STORY OF NUTCRACKER

SECTION 01

SETTING
Christmas Eve Party at the Stahlbaum household in San Francisco, California

TIME
December 24, 1915

Act I

Prologue
On a foggy Christmas Eve in 1915, Drosselmeyer puts the finishing touches on a magical nutcracker. It’s his gift for the Stahlbaum family, who have invited him to join their holiday festivities. Customers drop by his shop for last-minute Christmas gifts, and Drosselmeyer shows them toys and clocks.

Later that evening, outside of the Stahlbaums’ house, the street bustles with preparations for the holidays. Drosselmeyer arrives with his beautifully wrapped gift.

Christmas Eve Party Scene
In the Stahlbaums’ sitting room, the family merrily trims the tree. Clara, Fritz, and their friends come downstairs to see, for the very first time, electric lights glowing on their Christmas tree! The children jump with glee. As they play with new Christmas toys, Dr. Stahlbaum invites the guests to dance. Clara joins the adults, dancing with her father.

Drosselmeyer, known as “Uncle Drosselmeyer” to the Stahlbaums, warmly greets the family and entertains the families with magic. The children are delighted by an acrobatic jack-in-the-box and a beautiful, life-sized ballerina.

Uncle Drosselmeyer then opens his gift and presents the nutcracker to Clara. Captivated, she dances with the magical doll. Fritz is envious. He mischievously pulls the nutcracker from his sister’s hands, breaking it.

Drosselmeyer carefully bandages the doll and returns it to Clara, who plays with it gently. The Stahlbaum grandparents begin their annual holiday dance, and all join in.

As the hour grows late, guests drift home and the Stahlbaums head upstairs to bed.
The Battle Scene

Too excited to sleep, Clara returns to the darkened sitting room in search of her nutcracker doll. As the clock strikes midnight, she falls asleep on the sofa with her treasured nutcracker in her arms.

As Clara dreams, she relives memories of the evening. Deep within her dream, Uncle Drosselmeyer appears and mends the nutcracker doll. As Clara wakens into her dream, her house begins to expand around her. Drosselmeyer makes the Christmas tree grow wondrously large over now tiny Clara.

Giant mice appear, frightening her. The nutcracker doll comes to life to defend Clara. He summons an army of toy soldiers from the cupboard and a fierce battle ensues.

The ferocious King of the Mice challenges the Nutcracker to a duel. Clara’s quick thinking helps the Nutcracker defeat the King of the Mice.

After the battle, the Nutcracker collapses. Heartbroken, Clara begs Uncle Drosselmeyer for help. Magically, he transforms the Nutcracker into a dashing Prince. The Prince thanks Clara for saving him, and together they embark on an enchanting journey through the Land of Snow.

Land of Snow

As snow falls, snowflakes begin to dance. The King and Queen of the Snow send Clara and the Prince off to their next adventure in a beautiful sleigh.
Act II

The Crystal Palace

In the garden of a Crystal Palace, ladybugs, dragonflies, and butterflies dance. The Sugar Plum Fairy welcomes Clara and the Prince and asks them to tell her about the adventure that brought them to her world. The Prince recounts his battle with the Mouse King and describes Clara’s bravery. The Sugar Plum Fairy commands a festival of dancing to honor her guests.

The celebration beings with Spanish dancers moving their fancy long dresses to the sound of castanets. Arabian dancers emerge from a gigantic magic lamp. A Chinese dancer jumps high in the air, followed by a line of dancers carrying a Chinese Dragon in spiral patterns across the stage. French mirliton dancers twirl long, beautiful, pink ribbons creating patterns in the sky. Three Russian dancers burst out of three fabergé eggs jumping high in the air and touching their heels. The famous Madame Du Cirque is full of many surprises – including a dance bear! To culminate the celebration, the Sugar Plum Fairy waltzes with her colorful court of flowers, dazzling Clara and the Prince.

As the festivities draw to a close, the Sugar Plum Fairy and Uncle Drosselmeyer grant Clara her greatest Christmas wish, transforming her into a beautiful ballerina so she can dance with her Prince.

Christmas Morning at the Stahlbaums’

Clara awakens, still smiling from her joyous dream. It is Christmas morning, and the nutcracker is safe in her arms.

THE END
 SECTION 02
BEHIND THE CURTAIN

The Creative Team

Think about all the things you see onstage in addition to the dancers: sets, costumes, makeup, hair and wigs, lighting, and projections. Together, all of the elements designed for each individual ballet help tell the story, convey a mood or feeling, and/or suggest the setting and time. Putting together a full-length ballet requires the collaboration of a large team of creative people that you will never see on stage. Here’s a list of the creative team for Nutcracker and what each role entails:

Composer: Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
The composer is a writer of music. The music used for ballet includes the whole spectrum of classical music by famous composers and brand-new music created specifically for a new ballet.

Choreographer: Helgi Tomasson
A choreographer is a person who creates phrases of dance steps to communicate an idea, express an emotion, or tell a story. The choreographer decides the order of the dance steps, how many people will perform each section of the ballet, and when the dancers enter and exit the stage.

Scenic Design: Michael Yeargan
Scenic designers are responsible for creating the world of the ballet through sets and props to help communicate the story and convey the mood or feeling to the audience. Sets can be large painted backdrops to look like a forest, side curtains that prevent the audience from seeing backstage, walls and platforms that create a town square, or even huge pieces of furniture like the giant fireplace in Nutcracker. Sometimes set pieces can even move, like the sofa in Clara’s living room.

Costume Design: Martin Pakledinaz
Costume designers are responsible for conveying the characters though the clothes, shoes, and even wigs that dancers wear. Ballet costumes range from simple leotards or pants and T-shirts to elaborate, colorful tutus. A ballet like Nutcracker or The Sleeping Beauty, with a very large cast of dancers, has hundreds of costumes. Costumes help the audience understand something about the characters, for example King of the Mice and the Nutcracker have special masks. Costumes also help us see the dancing. Classical, short, flat tutus reveal the dancer’s legs, so the audience can clearly see the difficult steps and artistry.

Lighting Design: James F. Ingalls
Lighting can tell the audience what to look at (imagine a dark stage with one dancer in a spotlight) or help convey the feeling of a scene (bright, clear lighting seems happy; darker scenes convey drama or sadness). Some lighting instruments focus on one part of the stage, while others move—follow spots keep the light on a moving dancer, and remote-controlled instruments create special effects. Colored sheets of material called gels, which come in hundreds of colors, are placed on the front of a lighting instrument to color the light.

Projection Design: Wendall K. Harrington
Some ballets use projections to enhance the scenery and lighting. The projected images might be very noticeable or quite minimal. Some are still images and some of them move. SF Ballet uses projections of real images of San Francisco in Act I of Nutcracker.
About Nutcracker: Did You Know?

Ballet dancers wear special ballet shoes when they take a ballet class, rehearse for a performance, or perform onstage. Men, women, and children wear ballet slippers made out of canvas or leather. When girls are old enough and strong enough to dance on the tips of their toes, known as dancing on pointe, female ballet dancers start wearing pointe shoes. Pointe shoes are hardened around the toes and have a flat surface on the tips, allowing dancers to turn and stand on pointe. Ribbons and elastics tied around the ankles keep the pointe shoes firmly secured to a dancer’s feet. Dancing on pointe is difficult and requires years of practice and a lot of strength in their muscles.

Did You Know …

- On Christmas Eve, 1944, the War Memorial Opera House lights dimmed and audiences witnessed San Francisco Ballet give the American premiere of a full production of Nutcracker.
- Since its founding 85 years ago, SF Ballet has staged five different productions of Nutcracker.
- Our current production, which debuted in 2004, is by far our most elaborate, with more than 200 costumes. Our 1944 Nutcracker was considerably less ambitious: the costume budget was $1,000 and dancers fashioned soldier uniforms out of used red velvet stage curtains.
- In SF Ballet’s Nutcracker, Clara embarks on a journey inspired by the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition.
- For our current production of Nutcracker, it took the SF Ballet Costume Shop more than 400 hours to create five Snow Queen tutus for different ballerinas.
- Act II opens in a scene inspired by San Francisco’s Conservatory of Flowers. Built in 1879, the Conservatory is the oldest wood and glass greenhouse in the United States, a spectacular living museum of rare tropical plants.
- For this Nutcracker, Helgi Tomasson made an important revision to the traditional story. Rather than watching the final dance (typically performed by the Sugar Plum Fairy), Clara is magically transformed into a princess and dances the “Grand Pas de Deux” with her Prince.
When you take a ballet class, the ballet teacher will use words in French to describe the steps and movements. Ballet schools and dance companies all over the world use the same words in French to describe ballet steps because the first ballet school was established more than 350 years ago in France by King Louis the XIV. You can take a ballet class anywhere in the world – Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America – and you will know what the steps are because the teacher will use the French terms like plié, tendu, and arabesque.

Dance steps are similar to words in a sentence. It takes a lot of words to tell a story. It also takes a lot of dance steps or moves to create a ballet. When you are watching a dance performance, try to recognize some of the dance steps, positions, and vocabulary terms included in this section.
Plié [plee-AY]: to bend.

Demi-plié: half-bending of the knees, heels stay on the floor.

Grand plié: full bending of the knees (knees should bend until the thighs are horizontal).

Port de bras [pawr deh brah]: movement of the arms.

Tendu [tahn-DEW]: to point or stretch the foot to the front, side, or back.

Relevé [rehl-eh-VAY]: to rise to the balls of the feet (or tips of the toes in pointe shoes).

Jeté [zhuh-TAY]: to leap from one foot to the other in which the front working leg appears to have been thrown into the air. A jeté can be performed in different directions. In a grand jeté, both legs are fully extended.

Arabesque [a-ra-BESK]: a position of the body supported on one leg with the other leg extended behind, forming a right angle (or higher), with the arms held in various harmonious positions creating a long line from fingertips to toes.

Pirouette [peer-WET]: to whirl or turn; a rotation of the body on one foot.

Fish dive: a partnering move in which the ballerina is held low to the ground with her back arched and her legs in fifth position or crossed, so that it looks like she’s diving toward the floor.

Pas de deux [pah duh DUH]: a dance for two people, traditionally a ballerina and a premier danseur.

Corps de ballet [core duh ba-LAY]: a group of dancers who work together as an ensemble; they form a background for the ballerina and her partner in a classical ballet and are the backbone of any ballet company.
DURING THE PERFORMANCE: AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Audience Etiquette: Prepare Your Family for the Performance

It takes a lot of people to put on a ballet production. Some of the roles include the choreographer, composer, dancers, designers, crew, conductor, and musicians. All of the people involved in the production work very hard to create a beautiful performance. There’s one more important role. The audience!

A live performance is a very exciting experience for the audience as well as the performers. The audience should pay close attention to what is happening on stage and participate and applaud at appropriate times. What are some of the differences between going to the theater to see a live performance and watching a video or going to a movie? What makes a good audience member?

During the Performance

Watch the dancers carefully.
- Look for familiar ballet steps, impressive jumps, and exciting partnering lifts.
- Consider how the dancers are using movement to express themselves or tell a story.
- Think about how the costumes and sets help tell the audience something about the story, idea, or mood of the ballet.

Listen to the music.
- Clap when the conductor enters.
- Listen for your favorite instruments.
- Think about how the music and the choreography work together.

Clap when you see something you really like.
- During a ballet performance, the audience usually claps at the end of a scene or ballet, but the audience can also clap after a difficult sequence of turns, exciting jumps, or when a dancer lifts another dancer high in the air.
- Applaud when the performance is over. This tells the dancers, orchestra, and crew that you appreciate their hard work. Give a standing ovation if you really enjoyed the performance.

A good audience member will...
- Watch the performance quietly.
- Remain seated during the performance. Do not put your feet on the seats or kick the seat in front of you. If you are sitting in the first-floor orchestra section, you can ask an usher before the performance starts for a booster seat.
- Use the restroom before the performance.
- Turn off phones and cameras. No phone calls, texting, photos, or videos are allowed during the performance.
- Wait for intermission or after the performance to enjoy food, candy, or chewing gum in the lobby.

After the Performance

Talk with a parent, sibling, friend, classmate, or family member about the performance.

Suggested Discussion Questions
- What was your favorite part of the ballet? Why?
- Who was your favorite character or dancer? Why?
- Was there a part of the ballet that surprised you? Why?
- How was the experience of seeing a ballet onstage different from watching dance on television or video?
- What do you think a ballet dancer needs to do to prepare for a performance?
- What other styles or genres of dance do you like? How are these styles different and similar to ballet?
SECTION 06
VISIT THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA HOUSE

Visit the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House

You are going to watch San Francisco Ballet perform in the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House. Similar to how the Golden State Warriors play at Oracle Arena and the SF Giants play at AT&T Park, the Opera House is SF Ballet’s home court.

Take a virtual tour of the Opera House!
tour.lcp360.com/nocache/sfwm3/OH/index.html

Image 1: War Memorial Opera House. View from the stage.
Image 2: War Memorial Opera House. View from Van Ness Avenue.
Image 3: War Memorial Opera House. View of the stage and orchestra pit from the audience.
Image 4: War Memorial Opera House. View of the stage and backstage area. The ballerina is waiting for her entrance. She is standing behind the lighting equipment and wings.
A tradition of innovation flows through the history of San Francisco Ballet. Long recognized for pushing boundaries in dance, SF Ballet has always built upon strong classical roots, while continually exploring and redefining where the art form is headed. The San Francisco Opera Ballet was founded in 1933, and, in 1942, the ballet officially separated from the opera and was renamed San Francisco Ballet. Headed by brothers Willam, Lew, and Harold Christensen from the late 1930s until the 1970s, the Company staged the first full-length U.S. productions of Swan Lake (1940) and Nutcracker (1944). In 1973, Michael Smuin was appointed associate artistic director. When Helgi Tomasson (pictured at right) became artistic director in 1985, it marked the beginning of a new era. Among his many works, Helgi has staged acclaimed full-length productions of Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, Romeo & Juliet, Giselle, and Nutcracker.

Watch a video of SF Ballet at www.sfballet.org/season
San Francisco Ballet Orchestra is internationally recognized as one of the top ballet orchestras in the world. Since its 1975 performance debut with SF Ballet’s Nutcracker under Music Director Denis de Coteau, the Orchestra’s home has been the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House. With a core group of about 50 members, increased to 65 or more players for certain productions, the Orchestra’s performance season includes the annual production of Nutcracker and a winter/spring repertory season. The Orchestra’s repertory ranges from such classics as Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake and Adolphe Adam’s Giselle to abstract works and contemporary symphonic pieces, some of them written for SF Ballet.

Learn more about the SF Ballet Orchestra at www.sf ballet.org/artists/orchestra/brass
San Francisco Ballet School is America’s oldest professional training academy. Overseen by Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson and Director Patrick Armand (pictured at left), the School attracts students from around the world, training approximately 700 young dancers annually. In addition to filling the ranks of SF Ballet, graduates have joined distinguished ballet companies throughout the world. More than 60 percent of the professional dancers in SF Ballet received training in our School.

Take a ballet class! Learn more about ballet classes at San Francisco Ballet School.
www.sfballet.org/school
Let's Dance Activity Pages

We encourage children and families to discover the joy and wonder of dance by taking a ballet class, watching a performance, and drawing or writing about dance. We recommend using the Family Guide to help children explore movement, learn about dance, and discover the joy of ballet. Use these activity pages before or after the Let's Dance Family Workshop or a performance to connect, enjoy, and reflect on the dance experience.

To learn more about SF Ballet, visit us online at www.sfballet.org or visit the San Francisco Ballet YouTube page.

Get the FREE SF Ballet Nutcracker Storybook App! Designed for children ages 6–10 and their families, this richly illustrated storybook app features interactive animations and fun facts, photos, and videos about dance, music and SF Ballet’s very special production of the holiday classic. A companion microsite features more in-depth information about dance, ballet, SF Ballet, and Nutcracker. www.sfballet.org/nutcrackerstorybook

Parents may send activity pages and letters to:

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455 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
education@sfballet.org
Imagine you are a ballet dancer performing onstage. Think about the dancers, costumes, and sets needed for this performance. Are there other dancers onstage with you? What do the costumes look like? Are there sets and props to help tell the story to the audience? What kind of music is playing? Write and draw about it.

What is the title of your ballet?

Describe what is happening on the stage. Don’t leave out any details!
Draw a picture of your favorite part of the ballet *Nutcracker*.

Why is this your favorite part of the performance?
After watching the SF Ballet performance, write a letter to SF Ballet. The letter can be to your favorite dancer or character, or to all of the dancers at SF Ballet. Include an illustration of the performance.

Dear __________________________________________

My favorite part of the performance was __________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

The ballet made me feel __________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

I was surprised when __________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

One question I would like to ask about ballet is __________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

*Include an illustration here.*

From,

Name ____________ Age ____________
SF BALLET
Activity Page
Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. In Clara’s dream, the Nutcracker protects her by fighting a duel with the ________.

7. When the children arrive at the party, they’re delighted to see the decorated_______, full of candles, lights and ornaments.

8. Uncle ________ is the toy maker who visits the Stahlbaums and brings Clara the Nutcracker.

10. Among the guests at the festival at the Crystal Palace are colorful_______ dancers in beautiful, sparkly blue costumes.

11. In the Crystal Palace, the ________ holds a festival of dancing in honor of Clara and the Prince.

14. When Clara and the Prince arrive in the Land of Snow, they are greeted by the ________ and the Snow King.

DOWN

1. Uncle Drosselmeyer uses ________ tricks to entertain the party guests.

2. Clara’s brother ________ breaks the nutcracker doll.

3. Uncle Drosselmeyer gives Clara a magical ________ as a Christmas present.

4. Clara falls asleep on the sofa and has a wonderful ________.

5. ________, the daughter of Dr. Stahlbaum, dreams of many adventures with the Nutcracker.

6. The ________ family who hosts the Christmas Party.

9. The toy ________ come out of the cupboard to help the Nutcracker battle the Mouse King.

12. At the end of her dream, Clara is granted her wish: to ________ a pas de deux with her Prince.

13. After the Nutcracker defeats the Mouse King, Uncle Drosselmeyer turns him into a handsome ________.

Answer Key:
Get in the *Nutcracker* spirit! Simply cut out these selfie props (or download more at sfballet.org/sfnutty), attach them to a stick (a pencil will do), and take a selfie. Post to social media and use #SFBNUTTY for a chance to win a prize package including four box seats to opening night of *The Sleeping Beauty* on January 23, 2018. We’ll select a winner in a random drawing from eligible entries and announce the winner in January. Use #SFBNUTTY, #SFBNutcracker, and #SFBallet.
Color and make your own Nutcracker ornaments. Simply color and cut out each ornament, then hang them to decorate for the holidays.
Color and make your own *Nutcracker* ornaments. Simply color and cut out each ornament, then hang them to decorate for the holidays.
Online Resources
Learn more about San Francisco Ballet
www.sfballet.org

San Francisco Ballet Nutcracker
Storybook App. Free during Nutcracker
www.sfballet.org/nutcrackerstorybook

San Francisco Ballet: Nutcracker 2017 Trailer
https://youtu.be/EdsYbSWC7Y8

San Francisco Ballet: Nutcracker Studio to Stage with Principal Dancer Frances Chung
https://youtu.be/i429pfW1a94

SF Ballet in Helgi Tomasson’s Nutcracker, Act 2 Grand Pas de Deux (Ovation TV YouTube)
https://youtu.be/OZoFOQcE6pg

SF Ballet in Helgi Tomasson’s Nutcracker, Chinese Dance (Ovation TV YouTube)
https://youtu.be/OpZ2twy0GaY

SF Ballet in Helgi Tomasson’s Nutcracker, Russian Dance (Ovation TV YouTube)
https://youtu.be/kH6kV9nDmT8

SF Ballet Trailer for World Ballet Day 2017
https://youtu.be/teqo_BjJu0o

SF Ballet 2018 Season Trailer
https://youtu.be/56BblIhxqOE

Virtual tour of the SF War Memorial Opera House
tour.lcp360.com/nocache/sfwm3/OH/index.html

SF Ballet in Helgi Tomasson’s Nutcracker DVD and CD
Nutcracker – San Francisco Ballet: DVD available on Amazon and in the SF Ballet Shop in the War Memorial Opera House.

Tchaikovsky: Nutcracker performed by San Francisco Ballet Orchestra: CD Available on Amazon and in the SF Ballet Shop in the War Memorial Opera House.

Children’s Books about Ballet


Miles, Lisa: Ballet Spectacular: A Young Ballet Lover’s Guide and an Insight into a Magical World. Barron’s Educational Series.


Young, Caroline: First Sticker Book Ballet. EDC Publishing.
San Francisco Ballet
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