

THE NUTCRACKER STUDY GUIDE

BALLET IDAHO



BIA
BALLET IDAHO ACADEMY



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WELCOME TO BALLET IDAHO

We are delighted to share the joy of dance and the expressive power of ballet with you and your family. Ballet Idaho performances are a wonderful way to expose children to the transformative power of creativity through the performing arts.

We invite you to explore the magical world of *The Nutcracker*. This Study Guide includes resources to prepare children for the performance. We encourage you to use the Ballet Idaho Study Guide before and after the performance to explore movement and dance, learn about ballet, and discover what happens behind the scenes of a ballet production.

We hope the Ballet Idaho Study Guide, combined with the performance of *The Nutcracker*, sparks conversation and reflection, inspires creative expression, and fosters an appreciation and understanding of dance as an art form. Enjoy the performance!

ABOUT BALLET IDAHO

Ballet Idaho offers a full season of performances, an Academy of dance, and extensive educational outreach programs for students in Boise, the Treasure Valley, and throughout Idaho.

Our mission at Ballet Idaho is to promote classical and contemporary ballet by encouraging artists to greatness and inspiring the public to value the performing arts. We enrich our community through quality performances, disciplined training, dance outreach, and education.

We are committed to strengthening our community by providing accessible and diverse arts programming for schools and children throughout Boise and the extended Treasure Valley.

Ballet Idaho has been performing in Idaho since 1972. Currently it has an artistic staff of 26 dancers, a professional teaching staff of 15, a professional costume designer, a production staff of three, and an administrative staff of 12. Up to 40 musicians from the Boise Philharmonic and two pianists provide musical accompaniment for Ballet Idaho's performances, rehearsals and classes depending on the production or project.

Ballet Idaho offers a full season of 22 performances from November through May. We offer an Academy of dance, training students in classic ballet and extensive educational outreach programs for students throughout Idaho. As the only professional ballet company in Idaho, Montana or Wyoming, Ballet Idaho provides important artistic opportunities and experiences that greatly enrich the creative vitality of the Idaho community.

Ballet Idaho served a total audience of 23,871 this past year and our educational outreach programs served over 15,000 students during the academic year.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Ballet Idaho Academy: Our Academy offers professional training in ballet and other dance forms with year-round open enrollment. Classes are held in five state-of-the-art studios at Esther Simplot Performing Arts Academy in Downtown Boise. During the summertime, Ballet Idaho Academy offers summer camps, summer ballet, maintenance classes, and a summer intensive.

Youth Ensemble School Performances: Led by Ensemble Director, Sarah Powell academy students tour local schools and community venues with a selection of dances and a lecture demonstration. The production is designed with interactive elements and its aim is to engage and educate the audience on dance history and performance.

Learning Through Dance: A ten-week Artist-in-Residence outreach program for third-grade classrooms in Boise, and the Treasure Valley with a unique curriculum developed by Ballet Idaho.

By Special Invitation: Our program provides an opportunity for individuals represented by local organizations from a wide array of socio/economic/ethnic backgrounds to attend a full production of Ballet Idaho's mainstage performances, free of charge.

ABOUT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PETER ANASTOS

Peter Anastos has choreographed more than 100 stage works for the finest national and regional ballet companies in the United States as well as for modern dance companies, theater, film, and television. He has also choreographed in Europe, Asia,



and Latin America and his ballets are performed worldwide. Mr. Anastos enjoys a longstanding collaboration with Mikhail Baryshnikov and their projects include American Ballet Theater's *Cinderella*, CBS Television's *Baryshnikov in Hollywood* (Emmy Award nomination) and the photography book, *The Swan Prince* for Bantam Books.

Mr. Anastos has the rare honor of receiving two Guggenheim Foundation Fellowships in Choreography and four Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts.

For the Broadway stage he choreographed *I Hate Hamlet* and *Where She Danced*, based on the life of Isadora Duncan. Other major theatre credits include *33 Variations* (Arena Stage, Washington, D.C.) and *Chess* (National Company). He has choreographed several television specials and two Hollywood films, *Addams Family* and *Addams Family Values*, both for Paramount Pictures. He was choreographer-in-residence for the Santa Fe Opera and Sundance Theatre Festival, part of Robert Redford's Sundance Institute in Utah.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE: PREPARE FOR THE PERFORMANCE

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

Listen to the music

- Clap when the conductor enters
- Watch the conductor and musicians
- 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

- Say "Bravo!" when you see something on stage that is very exciting. Bravo is an Italian word that means "great job!"
- 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
- Use the restroom before the performance
- Turn off phones and cameras. Absolutely 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

Think about how the artists used movement, music, costumes, and sets to communicate a story, idea, or feeling to the audience. Talk with a friend, classmate, teacher, or family member about your favorite part of the performance.

EXPLORING MOVEMENT, DANCE, AND BALLET

MOVEMENT

How can movement alone tell a story? Think about this: you can often tell a lot about how people are feeling just by looking at them. Their emotions, and sometimes their thoughts, show on their faces and in how they move. There are many ways people can communicate without words.

Movement is one way to communicate and express yourself. Try communicating without words. Use facial expressions and body movement to communicate that you are feeling excited, nervous, or surprised. Did you change the expression on your face for each emotion? How did you use your hands to show your emotions and thoughts? Did you move your shoulders and arms? Did you stand very still, or did you jump or skip? Dance is a way to express yourself! In ballet, dancers don't use their voices to tell the story to the audience. Instead, ballet dancers move their bodies to show how a character is feeling or to communicate a story or idea to the audience.

DANCE

Dance is a special way of moving, usually to music. As far as historians know, dance is as old as humans are; it has always been a way for communities and groups of people to tell stories and pass values and ideals from one generation to another. Today we see dance in traditions like coming-of-age ceremonies (such as a bar mitzvah or quinceañera), celebrations (weddings and parties), and festivals (such as Carnival and Lunar New Year). There are many different kinds of

dance from all over the world. Some dances are performed on a stage for an audience while others are forms of social dances (line dancing or salsa). Often dances have set steps that everyone in a culture or community knows, but sometimes dance can be an individual form of self-expression.

BALLET'S BEGINNINGS

Ballet is a form of dance that began hundreds of years ago in the royal courts of Italy and France. Formal group dances from the royal courts developed into the art form we know now after King Louis XIV (the "Sun King") of France established the first ballet school, the Académie Royale de Danse, in Paris in 1662. Because this happened in France, French became the "official" language of ballet. To this day, all of the steps in ballet still have French names, so you can take a ballet class anywhere in the world and know exactly what to do.

Can you name three different genres or styles of dance? Maybe a style of dance that you have seen on a stage, in a movie, or at a community festival? Think about the dance steps, costumes, and music. Is this a social dance that requires a group of people, or can it be performed as a solo or duet? What makes these genres similar or different? A few examples of different dance styles to think about are: ballet, jazz, hip hop, tap, and modern. There are also many different styles of folk dances and cultural dances from around the world.

A dancer's body is his/her instrument for expression and it must be fine tuned to meet the demands of the codified steps and movements. A unique element to ballet training is the use of turnout. Ballet requires a dancer to turn out from the hips, calves and ankles to increase movement range and efficiency, and beauty.

BALLET TERMS

What does it mean to be a **professional ballet dancer**?

How many years do you think it takes to become a professional ballet dancer? Just as professional athletes must train for years before they can join a professional sports team, most ballet



Ballet Idaho Academy student dancer as Clara, dancing with a professional dancer

dancers train for at least 10 years before they are ready to join a ballet company. Sometimes you will see kids your age in a ballet, like Clara in *The Nutcracker*. These young dancers are still students in training at Ballet Idaho Academy.

THE LANGUAGE OF BALLET

When you take a ballet class, the ballet teacher will use words in French to describe the 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.

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.

Children in Ballet: Although children are not in every ballet, Ballet Idaho's Artistic Director uses about 100 children in his choreography of *The Nutcracker*. In Act 1 they first play party children, then later represent soldiers and mice in the Battle Scene.

Choreography: In ballet, the dancers perform steps that a choreographer creates to communicate a story or idea to the audience. Sometimes the steps go along with the music, at the same rhythm and speed, or tempo. Steps in ballet can be done in many different ways (soft or sharp, fast or slow, sudden or sustained) and they can be traditional, drawn from the hundreds of years of ballet history, or newly invented.

Composer: One who writes the music.

Corps de ballet: 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.

Diagonals: Dancers often move in a diagonal on the stage so they are not flat to the front. This creates a sense of depth for the audience, which is aesthetically pleasing.

Entrances and Exits: During the course of a ballet, dancers often enter and exit the stage at various times and places, which makes a dynamic impact.

Gesture: Movement of a body part or combination of parts, with an emphasis on the expressive aspects of the movement.

Jeté: A 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.



Grand Jeté

Pas de deux: A “step of two” is a dance duet in which two dancers, typically a male and a female, perform ballet steps together. In Act I, Clara and her Nutcracker dance a pas de deux.

Pantomime: The art of telling a story through gesture, expressing a mood or an emotion or describing an action without words.

Pirouette: To whirl or turn; a rotation of the body on one foot.

Pointe Shoes: Shoes traditionally worn by female dancers that enable them to dance on

the tips of their toes. Pointe shoes were originally created to help elevate the ballerina even more, in order to add to the ethereal quality on stage. The area covering the toe is made of layers of fabric glued together in the shape of a box covered in satin and hardened. The sole is made of hard leather to prevent



Pointe Shoes

the shoe from breaking when bent.

To keep the shoes on tightly, the dancers sew satin ribbons and elastic to the sides and tie the ribbons securely around their ankles. For a professional dancer, a pair of pointe shoes may only last a couple of performances!

Principal Dancer: A principal dancer (often shortened to principal) is a dancer at the highest rank within a professional dance company, particularly a ballet company. A principal may be male or female. They are usually the star of the ballet.

Representation of Nature: In the Land of Snow in Act 1 the dancers represent snowflakes. Their costumes are classical white tutus with hints of pale blue that shimmer under the lights. The dancers move elegantly with fluttering hands to represent snowflakes. When there are several on stage, they represent a snowstorm.

Solo: When a dancer takes center stage and performs alone. There are three doll solos in Act 1 during the Party Scene: The Ballerina, The Mouse King and The Nutcracker.

When you are watching a ballet, listen carefully to the orchestra and notice how the dance steps match the music. What instruments do you hear? Is the tempo fast or slow? How does the music make you feel? Does the music make you want to jump, hop, or turn? How does the music and the choreography work together to tell the story? Think about these questions when you are watching a dance performance.

CONVERSATION WITH PRINCIPAL DANCER ELIZABETH BARRETO

What got you started in dance?

My mother is a dance teacher, so I grew up in the dance studio. I began taking ballet classes when I was 3 years old.

What is your favorite role to have danced?

My favorite role is Princess Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty*. I performed it several times as a student, but I performed it for the first time as a professional dancer in April,

2016, with Ballet Idaho. It was a dream come true and I loved every minute on stage.

Why do you dance?

Barreto: I dance because it makes me feel alive. It's part of who I am. I'm drawn to the challenge of striving for perfection in every movement, while finding ways to express my feelings at the same time. It never gets old or boring because there is always something to improve.

What else do you enjoy doing?

When I'm not dancing, I enjoy going on long walks with my dog, Charlie, and baking delicious treats. I also sew and design dance clothing.



If you were the Artistic Director, what ballets would you present?

If I were in charge of choosing a few ballets for the company to perform, these are some of my favorites: *Giselle*, *La Bayadere*, Jerome Robbins' *The Concert*, George Balanchine's *Stars and Stripes*, and anything by William Forsythe.

Principal dancers
Elizabeth Barreto and
Andrew Taft

THE HISTORY

The Nutcracker was first premiered on December 17, 1892 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Although the score was composed by the highly regarded Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and the choreography by Lev Ivanov, this first version was not successful. It was based on the 1816 story by E.T.A. Hoffman, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*. The sophisticated St. Petersburg balletomanes (ballet fans) and critics thought the ballet childish and silly with a poor plot and poorly realized. As for the dancing they had to wait until the second act for the prima ballerina (best or top ballerina!)



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

It wasn't until 1954 when the great choreographer George Balanchine presented his version of the *The Nutcracker* in New York City, it became a sensation. It is now the most popular ballet around the world with thousands of productions each year.

THE STORY

ACT 1, SCENE 1

It is Christmas Eve and the Stahlbaum family decorates their splendid living room for their annual party. Their children, Clara and Fritz, rush in all aglow at the prospect of toys, magic and sweets. Soon the family is joined by all their friends and a wonderful party commences. The children perform a dance with Christmas garlands and their parents follow with a Polka.

Suddenly, at the height of the dancing,

Herr Drosselmeyer appears. He is a Russian magician, a conjurer, a doll maker, a mysterious man who at first frightens the children but then enchants them with magic tricks. He surprises the guests with three mechanical dolls who perform for them: A Ballerina Doll, A Mechanical Mouse, and a handsome Nutcracker Doll. Little Clara falls in love with the Nutcracker Soldier and Drosselmeyer kindly rewards her with the doll as a gift. While Clara and her Nutcracker Doll are dancing a pas de deux, the Mechanical Mouse suddenly goes out of control.

There is a terrible scuffle with the Nutcracker Doll, who is suddenly knocked out by the Mouse. He lies broken and lifeless on the floor. As the guests depart the party, Clara mourns her broken doll. Her mother hurries her off to bed. Late into the night Clara creeps quietly back into the living room to console her poor Nutcracker and falls asleep by his side. Midnight strikes and the mysterious Drosselmeyer reappears. He casts a spell over Clara and puts her in a dream like trance.

Her dream turns into a nightmare as Mini Mice begin scurrying all over the living room and Drosselmeyer makes her house disappear while the Christmas tree grows to giant proportions. Clara runs to her Nutcracker and pleads with him to save her. He calls forth his army of Toy Soldiers and a battle rages with the Mice, led by their Mouse King. The Nutcracker is about to be defeated when Clara takes off her slipper and strikes the Mouse King on the shoulder to distract him – just at that moment the Nutcracker runs him through with his sword and the battle is won!

ACT 1, SCENE 2

For helping him win the battle, the Nutcracker offers to take Clara through the Land of Snow on the way to his home, the Kingdom of Sweets. They encounter the Snow Queen and King and their Court who dance the Waltz of the Snowflakes in a wintry scene.

ACT 2

Angels dance at the gates of the Land of the Sweets, followed by a team of Bakers who are working on a cake. Clara enters and is greeted by the Sugar Plum Fairy, who dances a solo. Various confections then

perform their characteristic dances for Clara: Spanish Chocolate, Chinese Tea, Arabian Coffee, Marzipan Shepheresses, Russian Candy Cane, Salt Water Taffy Sailors, and the Dewdrop Fairy and Flowers. The Sugar Plum Fairy and Herr Cavalier then dance a grand pas de deux.

Finally, the entire Court dances together in a spirited finale celebrating Clara's joy and happiness.

The Nutcracker Prince battles with the Rat King



ACTIVITY PAGES

BALLET IDAHO

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 Study Guide to help children explore movement, learn about dance, and discover the joy of ballet. Use these activity pages before or after a performance to connect, enjoy, and reflect on the dance experience.

Parents and teachers may send activity pages and surveys to:

Ballet Idaho
Attn: Student Matinée Programs
501 S 8th Street
Boise ID 83702

To learn more about Ballet Idaho, visit us online at www.BalletIdaho.org or visit the Ballet Idaho Facebook page.



The Nutcracker, 2016

ACTIVITY PAGE - LET'S DANCE

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.

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NAME _____

AGE _____



What is the title of your ballet? _____

Describe what is happening on the stage. Don't leave out the details!

ACTIVITY PAGE - ANALYZE *THE NUTCRACKER*

CHOREOGRAPH YOUR OWN BATTLE OR SNOW QUEEN DANCE

There have been many choreographers of *The Nutcracker* from Ivanov to Balanchine to Peter Anastos. You could even choreograph your own ballet! One popular scene in Act 1 is the battle between The Mouse King and The Nutcracker. Another contrasting dance performed by the Snow Queen follows in the Snow Scene.

How would you imagine the Mouse King and Nutcracker Prince would dance in order to represent a battle? How would this contrast to the Snow Queen's dance in the Land of Snow? Come up with a movement phrase bringing out the different characteristics.

USING MATH SKILLS AS A CHOREOGRAPHER

Choreographers use math all the time, oftentimes without even realizing it. Below are some ways that choreographers may use math in *The Nutcracker*. Perhaps you can help them through their process!

- If there are 16 Snowflakes in the Snow Scene and the choreographer places 4 Snowflakes center stage, how many would he need to place on each side to create a symmetrical scene?
- If a choreographer has 48 counts to fill in the Battle Scene and gives an equal amount of counts to both the Battle Mice and Battle Soldiers, how many counts does each group have to make something up?

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- A choreographer has 64 counts left to complete the Snow Pas De Deux (dance for two). During these 64 counts, he plans to give each dancer 16 counts to dance solo, and then have them dance together. Out of these 64 counts, how many counts will they be dancing together?

WATCH AND LEARN

Watch "Waltz of the Snowflakes" by The Royal Ballet on YouTube. After watching the video clip, describe what you saw:

- Describe the dancers' movements.
- Do the movements convey emotion?
- How does the music make you feel?
- Is the tempo fast or slow?
- How does the music influence the dancers' movements?
- Did you see some of the ballet terminology described earlier?

POST-PERFORMANCE SURVEY
STUDENTS



School _____

Age _____

Is this your first ballet performance? Yes / No

Did you enjoy the performance? Yes / No

How did the dancers communicate during the performance?

Describe what it means to be an attentive audience member.

ACTIVITY PAGE -
DRAW *THE NUTCRACKER*

Draw a picture of your favorite part of the ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

NAME _____

AGE _____



Why is this your favorite part of the performance? How did it make you feel?

POST-PERFORMANCE SURVEY
TEACHERS



School _____ *The Nutcracker*, Thursday December 14, 2017 12:30pm

What are the ages of the children who attended the performance with you? _____

Do you accompany your students to other performing or visual arts programs? Yes / No

If yes, which? Museums / Theater / Symphony / Opera / Other _____

I used the Study Guide in preparing students for the performance. Yes / No

Approximately how much time did you spend on pre- and post-performance discussion and activities with your students? < 1 hour / 1-3 hours / 3-6 hours / > 6 hours

Which section(s) of this Study Guide did you find most useful? _____

Which section(s) of this Study Guide did you find least useful? _____

The volume of information provided in the Study Guide is too much / sufficient / too little.

What other materials or subject matter would help you to prepare children to see the ballet?

Describe any difference you perceive in the usefulness of this material for boys and girls.

How satisfied were you with the overall experience?

Very satisfied / Satisfied / Somewhat Satisfied / Not satisfied.

Please explain. _____

Was this your first live ballet performance? Yes / No

Would you like to see another ballet? Yes / No

What would make the performance a more interesting experience?

Scheduling: What month, day, and performance time is most convenient for your group?

Month	Day of Week	Performance Time
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How could we improve this Study Guide? _____

Please send surveys and activity pages to Ballet Idaho, Attn: Student Matinée Programs
501 S 8th Street, Boise ID 83702. Pick-up may be organized by contacting
scowan@balletidaho.org or 208-343-0556 x231.