

Lancaster Performing Arts Center
Season 2010-2011

Arts
for Youth

NUTCRACKER



A Teacher's Guide to
Antelope Valley Ballet's "Nutcracker"

education through the arts

Introduction

Dear Educator,

As you make plans for your students to attend an upcoming presentation of the Arts for Youth program at the Lancaster Performing Arts Center, we invite you to prepare your students by using this guide to assure that from beginning to end; the experience is both memorable and educationally enriching.

The material in this guide is for you the teacher, and will assist you in preparing your students before the day of the event, and extending the educational value to beyond the walls of the theatre. We provide activity and/or discussion ideas, and other resources that will help to prepare your students to better understand and enjoy what they are about to see, and to help them connect what they see on stage to their studies. We also encourage you to discuss important aspects of the artistic experience, including audience etiquette.

We hope that your students find their imagination comes alive as lights shine, curtains open, and applause rings through Lancaster Performing Arts Center. As importantly, we hope that this Curriculum Guide helps you to bring the arts alive in your classroom!

Thank you for helping us to make a difference in the lives of our Antelope Valley youth.

Arts for Youth Program
Lancaster Performing Arts Center, City of Lancaster

Message from the Artistic Director

Welcome! We are so excited to have you consider joining us for The Nutcracker on Dec. 9 - 12, 2010 at the Lancaster Performing Arts Center. This study guide has been created to assist you in classroom activities that relate to The Nutcracker. It is designed for preschool through middle school age children, so please pick out the items that seem to best fit your students! Hopefully, this study guide will give you ideas and resources to create other activities as well. This story lends itself to a number of wonderful holiday activities. I have enjoyed putting it together for you!

Kathleen Burnett,
Artistic Director
Antelope Valley Ballet
(661) 722 - 9702 AV Ballet phone number
(661) 802 - 9189 Artistic Director's Line

For questions or comments regarding this study guide or the performances, please send an email to avballet@verizon.net. We would love to get feedback on how we can assist you and support you in the education of the students in the Antelope Valley.



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Arts for Youth is the title for K-12 educational programs at Lancaster Performing Arts Center



Nutcracker

Pre-performance

Overview of the California Content Standards for Public Schools

Our Arts for Youth program addresses and supports California Content Standards for K-12 education.

- **Physical Education: Gr 1, 4** Students demonstrate knowledge of physical fitness concepts, principles, and strategies to improve health and performance.
- **Physical Education: Gr 2, 4.5** Explain how the intensity and duration of exercise, as well as nutritional choices, affect fuel use during physical activity.
- **Physical Education: Gr 3, 1.1** Chase, flee, and move away from others in a constantly changing environment.
- **Physical Education: Gr 4, 4.17** Explain the effect of regular, sustained physical activity on the body's ability to consume calories and burn fat for energy.
- **Physical Education: Gr 7, 1.3** Combine manipulative, locomotor, and non-locomotor skills into movement patterns.
- **Physical Education: Gr 7, 4.4** Explain the effects of physical activity on heart rate during exercise, during the recovery phase, and while the body is at rest.
- **VPA-Dance: Proficient/Advanced**
 - **2.0 Creative Expression**
 - **Development of Partner and Group Skills: 2.6** Collaborate with peers in the development of choreography in groups.
 - **3.0 Historical and Cultural Context**
 - **Development of Dance: 3.2** Analyze the role dancers and choreographer play in the interpretation of dances in various historical and cultural settings.

LESSON PLAN IDEA: Looking at the dances demonstrated. Discuss with your students the differences in how the performers store and release energy with their bodies.

Overview of California Content Standards (Cont.)

LESSON PLAN IDEA: Instruct students that dance is both a visual and a physical activity. Students must learn to see and do in order to dance; to observe how the body makes straight lines, curves and other shapes. Instruct students to watch and listen closely in order to observe and repeat an action. Discover and create movement patterns that express information about the basic systems, organs and processes of the human body. Work alone, in pairs, and/or in small groups to make movement choices that communicate scientific concepts in creative movement.

Content standards adopted by the California State Board of Education. For more information, visit:

<http://www.lpac.org/arts-for-youth.cfm>

Theatre Etiquette

- **Arrive on time**

Plan for possible delays in travel and parking. Please arrive 30 minutes prior to show time.

- **Students: Leave recording devices of any kind at home or in your backpack at school**

Video or audio recording and photography, including camera phones, are often prohibited by law and may disrupt the performance. They are not permitted and are considered very rude to the others around you.

- **Teachers: Turn off or silence all personal electronics**

Beeps, clicks, tones and buzzes and light pollution emanated by personal electronics such as watches, pagers, Bluetooth devices, cell phones, etc. interrupt the performance and spoil the theatre experience.

- **Observe the instructions of ushers**

The ushers are present to offer assistance, ensure rules are observed and provide guidance in the case of an emergency evacuation. Please show them consideration. You will be asked to exit to the left of the theatre at the end of the performance.

- **Be respectful**

While entering and exiting the theatre: Put your hands in your pockets or behind your back. Talk very quietly. Once seated: Do not talk. Keep your feet on the ground. Put your hands in your lap or fold your arms.

Theatre Etiquette (Cont.)

- **Abstain from eating or drinking inside the theatre**

Crackling wrappers and containers and food messes in the auditorium are unwelcome. Food, candy, gum and drinks should never be brought inside the theatre.

- **Avoid talking, waving and shouting during the performance**

Laughing and applauding are encouraged at appropriate times. Shouting to actors/friends is disrespectful to others. Save personal conversation for after the show.

If you must talk, please whisper very quietly.

- **Do not exit the auditorium during the performance except in the case of emergency**

If you must leave, please wait for an appropriate break in the performance. Teachers, please arrive early enough to escort students to the restroom prior to the start of the show.

- **Do not get onto the stage or place items on the edge of the stage**

To ensure the safety and security of performers and audiences, this behavior is strictly prohibited unless expressly permitted by a performer or staff member.

- **Dispose of garbage in proper receptacles**

Help preserve a pleasant environment by depositing all debris in appropriate receptacles.

- **Extend common courtesy and respect to your fellow audience members**

Civility creates a comfortable and welcoming theatre experience for all.

- **Bring very small children only to age-appropriate performances**

Small children easily become restless at programs intended for older children, and may cause distractions.

Be a Theatre Critic

During the performance watch for:

- Facial expressions and actions
- Costumes
- Props
- Music and sound effects
- Vivid stories and word pictures



What's Important to Know?

About Nutcracker Ballet

The Nutcracker was originally performed at the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia on December 5, 1892. Inspired by E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *The Nutcracker and The Mouse King*, the ballet featured the music of Pyotr Tchaikovsky and the choreography of Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa. The music of *The Nutcracker* is highly celebrated and still used today. At the time of its composition, the recently-invented musical instrument called the celesta was featured in the ballet's orchestra. Listen for it in the Sugar Plum Fairy's dance! Ivanov, Petipa and Tchaikovsky also worked together on the famous ballets *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*. The Nutcracker did not become a holiday tradition, however, until the famous choreographer named George Balanchine created his version for the New York City Ballet in 1954. The NYCB has presented it every year since, making it the holiday tradition it is today. Most ballet companies in the United States have their own version of *The Nutcracker* which they present every year.

About Tchaikovsky

The memorable melodies, strong colors and uninhibited emotionalism of Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky have long made him one of the most popular of all composers. His music may be best suited to the idealized fairy tale world of the classic ballet, and this colorful and dramatic spirit pervades much of his music, including the great symphonies. Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky was born to a middle class family in Votkinsk, Russia in 1840. Like Schumann, a composer who had a strong influence on him, Tchaikovsky dutifully studied law before following his true calling by entering the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied from 1863 to 1865. Tchaikovsky, along with Brahms, is probably the most performed of the late 19th century composers.



Born: May 7, 1840 in Votkinsk, Russia
Died: November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

The Story of *The Nutcracker Ballet*

The story unfolds with a Christmas party at the Stahlbaum's home. The excitement begins with the arrival of Mr. Drosselmeyer, the godfather of Clara, who brings presents and amuses the children with mechanical dolls. To Clara he gives a nutcracker in the shape of a toy soldier. The party ends and Clara falls asleep with her toy Nutcracker. As the clock strikes midnight, the Christmas tree grows larger along with the nutcracker, toy soldiers and an army of mice. The Nutcracker and his soldiers battle to defend Clara against the mice and their Mouse King. The Nutcracker turns into a handsome prince who takes Clara on a magical journey. Clara and her Nutcracker Prince travel through the land of snow where they dance among the snowflakes. The Snow Queen guides them to the land of sweets. The Sugar Plum Fairy welcomes Clara and the Nutcracker Prince to the Land of Sweets where dances are performed in Clara's honor. For the grand finale, the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Nutcracker dance a pas de deux. As their dance concludes, so does Clara's adventure and she awakens.



What's Important to Know? (Cont.)

How the Dancers Prepare

Preparations for *The Nutcracker Ballet* begin with auditions at the beginning of September. Dancers rehearse every Saturday and Sunday until the performances in December. Dancers will have practiced more than 125 hours of rehearsal by the time they perform; that is like practicing for five days in a row without stopping to eat or rest! The dancers in the performance are ages five to adult. This year Antelope Valley Ballet has 82 dancers in their production of *The Nutcracker Ballet*!

What is Dance?

Bending, stretching, jumping, and turning, are all activities dancers do; however, dancers work hard and long to transform these everyday movements into the language of dance.

Ballet is distinctive from dance in that it requires a special technique, established almost 500 years ago, involving steps and body movements that are unique to this discipline. The most striking feature of the technique is the turnout of the legs from the hip. This turnout enables ballet dancers to move to either side as well as forward and back with equal ease, giving them command over a full circle of movement. The dancer's turnout from the hips and strong frontal orientation of ballet staging can be traced to the European court tradition that directed the performance toward the sovereign in attendance.

Classical ballet technique and steps create modern ballets in a different way. The dancers wear simple leotards and tights and may dance in bare feet or soft slippers. In ballets where there is no story to follow, the audience's attention is drawn toward the shape and speed of the dancers' movements to the music. Some modern choreographers don't even use music; others may use song or speech to accompany their steps. Alvin Ailey, Twyla Tharp, and William Forsythe are modern choreographers who have used these methods.

Other distinct dance styles include:

Ethnic: Any dance form developed by a particular culture, like African, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, Hawaiian, etc.

Jazz: The truly American dance form. Originated in America, this form combines elements of African, modern, and ballet.

Modern: A dance form which originated around the turn of the century in both Europe and America. Isadora Duncan, known as the "mother of modern dance," began dancing barefoot and without the traditional ballet costumes as a rebellion against the constraints of ballet. Modern dance is based on the feet being parallel from the hips, rather than turned out as they are in ballet.

What's Important to Know? (Cont.)

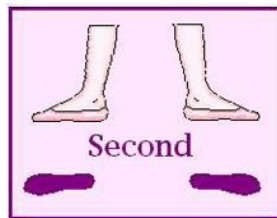
Social: Any dance form that people enjoy when they are gathered together. Ballroom dancing, street dancing, and folk dancing fit into this category.

Tap: Another distinctly American dance form, tap combines elements of jazz dance and borrows from the Irish jig and Dutch clogging.

Practice Ballet Positions

The five positions of the feet in ballet were developed in the 17th century when court ballets were being performed. As ballet continued to develop and progress to a more professional status, the five positions became standardized. They were finally established in 1725 by Rameau and have become the basis of all ballet. Movements begin and end in these positions and they provide a common starting point for ballet all over the world.

Try to hold some of these positions for ten seconds.



First Position: Stand with heels together, legs and feet turned out, pointing away from the body. Do not let your knees or ankles twist.

Second Position: From first position, slide feet away from each other so they are still turned out but are about shoulder-width apart.

Third Position: Place the heel of one foot against the middle of the other foot, keeping both turned away from your body.

Fourth Ouverte Position: Begin in First Position, then slide one foot a foot's-length in front of the other.

Fourth Croisé Position: Place one foot in front of the other, about a foot's-length apart, with the toes lined up with the heels.

Fifth Position: Place your feet so that the toes of each foot touch the heels of the other.

A Brief History of the Antelope Valley Ballet

The Antelope Valley Ballet was founded in the fall of 1998 by Kathleen Burnett and Lara Arnaiz. The mission statement for AV Ballet is to provide dancers from across the Antelope Valley region with professional quality performance opportunities in a company setting; to provide high quality performances locally and regionally, stimulating interest in and appreciation for dance as a performing art; to be a positive force in the cultural climate of the Antelope Valley and the state of California, interacting with and supporting all the arts.

Since its founding, the Antelope Valley Ballet has produced two to three productions each year at the Lancaster Performing Arts Center in Lancaster, CA. We have always had morning performances for school children, home-schooled children and disabled people. In addition to our productions at LPAC, we also present lecture demonstrations and smaller performances for classrooms and organizations across the Antelope Valley.

Our productions have included *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Fractured Fairy Tales*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Sports*, *Pointe and Shoot*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*.

We are proud to have had our dancers accepted to the finest professional ballet summer programs in the United States including Houston Ballet Academy, School of American Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Texas Ballet Theatre, The Rock, Atlanta Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Anaheim Ballet, Inland Pacific Ballet, and Arizona Ballet. Former dancers have danced professionally with Houston Ballet, Hubbard Street II, North Carolina Dance Theatre, Memphis Ballet, and Complexions Contemporary Dance.

The Antelope Valley Ballet has received grants from Ralph M. Parson's Foundation, Boeing, Deluxe Checks, the LPAC Foundation, and the LA County Arts Commission. We also receive very generous support from individual donors who live here in the Antelope Valley.

Although we do not have a ballet school, the AV Ballet supports the local dance studios. We are fortunate to have had strong support from several of the local dance schools as well. Our future plans include increasing our lecture demonstrations and creating a small group of professional dancers who can perform regionally year round.



Words to Know

Celesta: A keyboard-like instrument invented in 1896 – rods strike metal bars to produce a “tinkling” sound.

Choreography: The art of creating or arranging dances; also, the way in which dance steps are arranged.

Composer: One who writes music.

Pas de deux: A dance for two people, traditionally between a ballerina and the male dancer of the highest ranking.

Rehearse: Practice.

Practice What You Learn!

Use the above words to fill in the blanks below.

1. The show reached its climax during the _____, and the crowd was awe-struck as the two dancers twirled and spun.
2. They would _____ every day until they got it just right, not wanting to disappoint their audience.
3. The ballerina was giving her best because the _____ was so complex she had to focus so that she made no mistakes.
4. Everyone in the dance hall was mesmerized by the ballerinas’ movements and soft magical sound of the _____.
5. Even the _____ plays an important role in the show, if the music is not arranged properly, it can distract the dancers during their performance.

Performance

Play Your Part

You have an important role to play; it wouldn't be a play without you! Your part is to pretend the play is real. Part of this includes accepting certain theatre ways, or conventions:

1. Actors tell the story with words (dialogue), actions (blocking), and songs.
2. Actors may sing songs that tell about the story or their feelings.
3. Actors may speak to the audience.
4. An actor may play several different characters (doubling) by changing their voice, costume or posture.
5. Places are suggested by panels on the set, and by props.

How to play your part:

A play is different from television or a movie. The actors are right in front of you and can see your reactions, feel your attention, and hear your laughter and applause. Watch and listen carefully to understand the story. The story is told by the actors and comes to life through your imagination.

Post-performance

Discussion Questions

Sample Discussion/Essay Questions for K-3rd grade

1. What was your favorite part of the ballet? (for example: the music, the costumes, the scenery, the movement)
2. Was it hard to follow the story without using words?
3. Do you think it is hard to dance up the tips of your toes?
4. Did you like the ballet?
5. Would like to see another ballet in the future?

Sample Discussion/Essay Questions for 3rd-5th grade

1. What was your favorite part of the ballet? (for example: the music, the costumes, the scenery, the movement)
2. Was it hard to follow the story without using words? Why or Why Not?
3. Pick a character. What emotion did you see in that character?
4. Do you think that ballet is an athletic activity similar to football or gymnastics? Why or why not?
5. What did you feel when you were watching the ballet?

Sample Discussion/Essay Questions for Middle School Students-Adults

1. What was your favorite part of the ballet? (for example: the music, the costumes, the scenery, the movement)
2. Do you think that the scenery and costumes helped you to figure out where the story was taking place and who the characters were? Why or Why Not?
3. Was it hard to follow the story without using words? Why or Why Not?
4. Do you think that ballet is a highly physical activity similar to a sport? Why or Why Not?
5. What is the difference between sport and art?
6. What is art?
7. Suppose that you had been chosen to write a new chapter for The Nutcracker. Decide on a few new characters and give them each a name.
8. Why do you think some writers prefer to write about made-up, fantastical characters and others prefer to write about realistic characters?

Resources

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES for further ideas, resources, and information.

(Contents of links on the World Wide Web change continuously. It is advisable that teachers review all links before introducing them to students.)

AV Ballet's website	http://avballet.wordpress.com/
Lancaster Performing Arts Website	http://www.lpac.org (See the Arts for Youth Page)
Ballet Met	http://www.balletmet.org
Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Nutcracker
History of Nutcrackers	http://www.nutcrackermuseum.com/history.htm
Fun Nutcracker Computer Game	http://www.12days.com/playground/nutcracker/

RECOMMENDED VERSIONS OF THE BOOK (according to age)

Nutcracker Ballet [Paperback]

By Vladimir Bagin

Reading level: Baby-Preschool

Publisher: Scholastic Paperbacks (October 1, 2002)

ISBN-10: 0439081858

Paperback: 32 pages

Language: English

ISBN-13: 978-0439081856

Nutcracker Activity Book (Dover Little Activity Books) [Illustrated] [Paperback]

By Victoria Fremont and Cathy Beylon

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Dover Publications (January 28, 1999)

ISBN-10: 0486404943

Paperback: 64 pages

Language: English

ISBN-13: 978-0486404943

The Story of the Nutcracker Ballet [Paperback]

By Diane Goode

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Random House Books for Young Readers (September 1986)

ISBN-10: 0394881788

Paperback: 32 pages

Language: English

ISBN-13: 978-0394881782

The Nutcracker (Scholastic Junior Classics) [Mass Market Paperback]

By Jane B. Mason (Adapter) and E.T.A. Hoffmann (Author)

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Scholastic Paperbacks (October 1, 2003)

ISBN-10: 043944604X

Mass Market Paperback: 112 pages

Language: English

ISBN-13: 978-0439446044

the original 3D
experience



This study guide for “Nutcracker” was originally created by Antelope Valley Ballet, and was extended or otherwise modified by Lancaster Performing Arts Center Staff.

Other resources consulted:

(Contents of links on the World Wide Web change continuously. It is advisable that teachers review all links before introducing them to students.)

www.avballet.wordpress.com

Lancaster Performing Arts Center

750 W. Lancaster Blvd.
Lancaster, CA 93534

www.LPAC.org
661.723.5950