Audience Guide

The NUTCRACKER

Photo by Duane Rieder; Created by PBT's Department of Education and Community Engagement

Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, Pittsburgh

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PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE

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Join us for PBT CONNECTS Programs at the theater!

Refer to the season schedule to see which programs are offered at each performance

Opening Night Preview

This program is a great opportunity to hear from choreographers, creatives and dance makers involved in the production. Get an introduction, as well as background and context for what you're about to see on stage.

Artist Q & A

Chat with PBT's artists about their roles in the performance, preparing for a ballet, working with choreographers and more. Directly after the performance

Tea with the A.D.

Grab your tea – or your favorite drink – at the bar and join Artistic Director Adam W. McKinney for an informal conversation before the performance.

Family Workshop

It's always easier for kids to appreciate and understand a performance and the art form with a little preparation! Join us for a story time and more fun. Registration required; please visit our production pages to sign up.

Curtain Up!

This is a truly special opportunity to watch the last few minutes of company class on stage. After class is over we'll get a quick overview of the production and take your questions.

Synopsis

Act1

It is Christmas Eve in the early years of the 20th century at the Stahlbaum home in Shadyside. On the street outside, Godfather Drosselmeyer and his Nephew unload mysterious packages from their carriage. The guests begin to arrive. Drosselmeyer introduces them to his Nephew, who wears a mask because of a curse cast upon him by the evil Rat King.

In her bedroom, Marie, the Stahlbaum's daughter, is reading Kaufmann's Book of Christmas Storiesfor Boys and Girls. Mr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum enter and present her with two special gifts —a beautiful scarf and a pair of pointe shoes — which signify that Marie is growing up. Marie admires her new self in the mirror and envisions her dreams.

Back on the street, Drosselmeyer and his Nephew finish their preparations for the party. Drosselmeyer tells of the Rat King's 400-year curse on his Nephew, a prince. Then Drosselmeyer unveils the Nutcracker, revealing its role in this night of magic.

The party is underway, and the guests exchange gifts, trim the tree and dance. Drosselmeyer's magic tricks delight the children, but he has even bigger mysteries in store for Marie. He introduces her to his Nephew and, as Drosselmeyer had hoped, Marie sees the goodness within him. Next he gives her the Nutcracker, which she adores. The party concludes with Drosselmeyer's magical pièce-de-résistance, a trick that makes the Nephew disappear, leaving the toy Nutcracker in his place. Marie becomes upset that she can't find the Nephew and runs upstairs. The guests say their goodbyes and the family retires for the night. Drosselmeyer reappears in a swirl of his cape to set the stage for the magic to come.

As midnight approaches, Marie steals downstairs to find her beloved Nutcracker. But Marie is not alone; mice and human-sized rats threaten her from every side. Overcome, she faints. When she comes to, she finds herself and the whole house under a spell. Everything is growing, even the Nutcracker, who becomes life-sized. The mice and rats return to terrify her, but the Nutcracker rallies the toy soldiers and storybook characters to rescue Marie. As the battle reaches its peak, Marie strikes the Rat King with her shoe and the Nutcracker

Lft: Corey Bourbonniere, Amanda Cochrane. Middle: Luca Sbrizzi and Artists of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School. Right: Amanda Cochrane; Yoshiaki Nakano. Photos by Rich Sofranko.

is is able to defeat him.

The Snow Queen and King appear. Marie's bravery and compassion reveal the Nutcracker is Drosselmeyer's Nephew, the Prince! He declares his love to Marie. The Prince invites Marie on a journey through the glittering snowy forest to the Land of Enchantment. Guided by the Snow King and Queen, they set off on a magical sleigh ride.

ACT 2

Drosselmeyer welcomes Marie and the Prince to the Land of Enchantment. The Sugar Plum Fairy, the vision of Marie's dreams, and her Cavalier greet the travelers. The Prince relates the tale of the battle, telling how Marie saved his life by helping to defeat the Rat King. In gratitude, the Sugar Plum Fairy presents Marie with a beautiful

tiara. Marie expresses her appreciation in a dance with the Flowers. The grand festival begins. Beautiful dances express the spirit of joy, jubilation and harmony found in the Land of Enchantment. The visit culminates with a grand pas de deux danced by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.

Christmas Day dawns on the street outside the Stahlbaum home. Drosselmeyer and his Nephew make their way to their carriage, stopping to reflect on the night's wondrous events. Drosselmeyer rejoices that the 400-year curse has been broken.

Marie awakens in her bedroom, wondering at the amazing adventures she's had. Was it all a dream? She finds her scarf. Can it be? She rushes to the mirror and there, ever faithful, is her Nutcracker Prince.

Top left: Luca Sbrizzi (The Nutcracker); Ruslan Mukhambetkaliev (Rat King). Top right: Amanda Cochrane; Yoshiaki Nakano. Bottom left: Diana Yohe; Lucius Kirst. Bottom right: Hannah Carter; Alejandro Diaz. Photos also feature Artists of PBT School. Photos by Rich Sofranko.

About the Ballet

Original sketch for the set of *The Nutcracker*, Act II, 1892

The Nutcracker ballet was created in 1892 in Russia, which at the time was ruled by a Czar. In the capitol, St. Petersburg, the famous Imperial Theatre School and the Mariinsky Theater were supported by the royal family. Respect for art and music was a highly regarded czarist tradition.

The Imperial Theater regularly created music, opera and ballet programs for the entertainment of the Czar. The Theater's director, I. A. Vsevolozhsky, decided to create a ballet based on ***The Nutcracker and the Mouse King***. Written in 1816 by German Romantic author E.T.A. Hoffmann, the story was rather dark and was widely known in Russia. It had been adapted in 1844 by French author Alexandre Dumas (author of ***The Three Musketeers***), whose version is a simpler, lighter and less frightening story. Marius Petipa, the ballet master at the Imperial School, was given the task of translating the story into ballet. Because he didn't read German, he wasn't familiar with Hoffmann's book and instead used Dumas' revision (***Histoire d'un casse-noisette)*** as the basis for the ballet.

Vsevolozhsky contracted with Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky to create the score. Petipa and Tchaikovsky had worked together on the very successful 1890 ballet ***The Sleeping Beauty***. Petipa gave Tchaikovsky detailed musical notes, even down to the number of bars and the tempo.

When Petipa became ill, his assistant, Lev Ivanov, took over the project. There is still debate as to how much of the choreography was created by each.

The Nutcracker premiered at the Mariinsky Theatre in December 1892, along with Tchaikovsky's opera, ***Iolanta***, which was performed first. (In France it was common to present a ballet following an opera; Russia sometimes adopted this French tradition.) The audience and critical reaction to the ballet was mixed. Critics generally liked the "snow" scene but were annoyed with—among other things—the prominence of children in the ballet, the deviation from the original Hoffmann tale, and the fact that the showcase for the ballerina (the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy") didn't occur until almost midnight (due to ***Iolanthe*** being staged first). The score was much better-received, and was recognized by most critics for its beauty and inspirational melodies.

The ballet wasn't particularly popular in Russia and was performed only sporadically and in

shortened versions for several decades. It was first performed in Great Britain in 1934 and was brought to the United States in 1944 (first performed by San Francisco Opera Ballet). George Balanchine's 1954 version for New York City Ballet popularized the ballet, and it soon became a Christmas holiday tradition in the U.S. Today, hundreds of versions of the ballet are performed every year.

Did you Know? Hoffmann's The Nutcracker and the Mouse King

- E.T.A. Hoffmann was a Romantic-era author whose stories rebelled against rationalism (the dominant movement of his time was the Enlightenment, which emphasized rational thinking). Writers and artists like Hoffmann stressed a return to nature, to imagination, and creativity.
- Hoffmann's Marie feels constrained by her family's rituals and regulations. The family name, Stahlbaum ("steel tree") reflects her feeling of restriction. Dumas changed the family name to Silberhaus ("silver house")—a gentler image. (PBT uses Stahlbaum.)
- Hoffmann's name for the uncle, Drosselmeyer, loosely translated means "one who stirs things up." "The Story of the Hard Nut" is a story within Hoffmann's ***Nutcracker*** that explains how the nephew became disfigured and was turned into a nutcracker. This is generally not included in ballet versions of the story. (Contemporary choreographer Mark Morris created a ***Nutcracker*** ballet set in the 1960s and called it "The Hard Nut.")
- In Germany during Hoffmann's time, nutcrackers were carved in the image of local officials to poke fun at them.
- One of Hoffmann's other stories, ***The Sandman***, is the basis for the renowned 19th century ballet, ***Coppelia.***

I Thought her Name was Clara!

In the original story, Hoffmann's heroine is named Marie, and Clara was the name of her favorite doll. In 1892 choreographer Marius Petipa used the Dumas version of the ***Nutcracker*** story to create the ballet. Marie's name was changed to Clara for the ballet.

Today most versions of the ballet and many storybooks use Petipa's ballet as the basis of the story, and they also use the name Clara for the heroine. When Artistic Director Terrence Orr created PBT's ***Nutcracker*** in 2002, he wanted to more closely link his version to the original story by Hoffmann, and returned the character's name to Marie. But Clara is in the ballet too! - watch for Marie playing with Clara (her favorite doll) in her bedroom at the beginning of Act I; Clara also comes to life in the battle scene and dances with her best friend, Marie.

Artist: Alexandra Kochis; photo: Rich Sofranko

Important Dates for The Nutcracker Ballet

1776—E.T.A. Hoffmann, German Romantic author, is born

1816—Hoffmann writes the story ***The Nutcracker and the Mouse King (Nussknacker und Mausekönig)***

1818—Marius Petipa, French ballet dancer and choreographer, and ***The Nutcracker's*** original librettist and choreographer, is born

1840—Tchaikovsky is born

1844—Alexandre Dumas writes an adaptation of Hoffmann's novel: ***The Nutcracker (Histoire d'un casse-noisette),*** which will form the basis of the ballet

1892—***The Nutcracker*** ballet premieres in December at the Imperial Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia. Original choreography by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov

1893—Tchaikovsky dies

1944—The San Francisco Opera Ballet presents the first full-length production of ***The Nutcracker*** in the United States

1954—New York City Ballet choreographer George Balanchine creates his famous version of ***The Nutcracker***

2002—Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr creates PBT's version of ***The Nutcracker***, with an enhanced storyline, new choreography, and a Pittsburgh theme

The Music

A Quick Introduction to the Music of The Nutcracker

"Some of the tunes are so famous you forget that someone had to write them."

- Sir Simon Rattle

Take a few minutes to reintroduce yourself to Tchaikovsky's glorious ***Nutcracker*** score with this video featuring Sir Simon Rattle, principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, and take a deep dive with The Music of the Season: Tchaikovsky's ***The Nutcracker***, a video with PBT Principal Pianist and Music Administrator, Yoland Collin.

The Composer: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votinsk, Russia on May 7, 1840. He was a precocious child who could read French and German at the age of six, and at age seven was writing verses in French. He began taking piano lessons when he was seven years old. He showed an ultra-sensitivity to music and had a delicate musical ear. In 1850 his well-to-do, middle-class family moved to St. Petersburg where he attended school. He was mildly interested in music and at age 14 began attempting composition. He studied at the School of Jurisprudence, graduated in 1859, and started work as a clerk. At age 21 he began to study music seriously. He attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he was a stellar student and in 1866 he moved to Moscow to be a harmony teacher for the Moscow Conservatory. He led a quiet life there, teaching and composing.

Painting of Tchaikovsky by Nikolay Kuznetso, 1893

In 1877, a wealthy widow started to subsidize Tchaikovsky, a relationship that lasted fourteen years. There was one strange condition to the widow's financial support—they were never to meet. With this financial independence, he was able to resign from the Conservatory in 1878.

Ballet music during Tchaikovsky's time was largely considered unimaginative. The music world was astonished when Tchaikovsky, a great composer, was willing to "stoop so low" when he wrote ***Swan Lake*** in 1877. But he showed an unprecedented mastery of the art - creating vivid orchestrations, effective themes and melodies that flawlessly matched physical movements.* He went on to compose two more full-length ballets that would become enduring masterworks of the genre: ***The Sleeping Beauty*** and ***The Nutcracker***.

**The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 152-3

A Nutcracker Innovation: The Celesta

For ***The Nutcracker,*** Tchaikovsky created a number of musical effects using unusual instruments - including a toy trumpet, cuckoo and nightingale whistles, and a rattle that produced the sounds of a nutcracker cracking nuts. But perhaps the most exciting musical innovation was the use of the celesta (che-LEH-stah), an instrument invented in Paris in 1886. Tchaikovsky had used it in his symphonic poem ***The Voyevoda*** in 1891, but it was still relatively unknown as he composed ***The Nutcracker***. He knew it would be perfect for musically representing the Sugar Plum Fairy and wanted to keep its use a secret from critics and other composers. He wouldn't even allow it to be used in rehearsals until the final one just before the performance. Tchaikovsky's instincts were correct—the celesta was a sensation.

Instead of hitting strings as in a piano, the celesta's keys/hammers hit small steel plates creating high, clear, delicate tones. Its sound is ***celestial*** (where the name comes from) and conjures feelings of wonder and magic. In the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy," Tchaikovsky uses the celesta to help create the magical, alternate reality of Act 2 of the ballet.

Explore the sound of the celesta!

Many composers have used the celesta to create magical or mysterious effects. Listen to:

- "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy"
- "Hedwig's Theme" from the ***Harry Potter*** movie series, by John Williams
- "Won't You Be My Neighbor" (Theme song for ***Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*** television show), by Fred Rogers
- "Neptune, the Mystic," (starting at 2:17) from ***The Planets***, an orchestral suite by Gustav Holst

Did You Know? Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker

- Tchaikovsky didn't particularly want to create a ballet based on the story of ***The Nutcracker***. He worried whether it was suitable for balletandgenerally felt uninspiredat the beginningofthe project. He did become "more attuned to the task" as time went on.
- The original ballet is only 85 minutes long, much shorter than Tchaikovsky's other ballets, ***Swan Lake*** (approximately 2 hours) and ***The Sleeping Beauty*** (almost 4 hours).
- Tchaikovsky felt that ***The Nutcracker*** was "infinitely poorer" than his music for ***The Sleeping Beauty.***
- Tchaikovsky's sister died during the time he was composing ***The Nutcracker***. Scholars have suggested that music for "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" was an expression of Tchaikovsky's grief, noting its descending octaves and funereal rhythm, contrasting with the "heavenly" sound of the celesta.
- Tchaikovsky based the Arabian Dance on a Georgian (Russian) lullaby.
- Tchaikovsky died at age 53, eleven months after the premiere of ***The Nutcracker***.
- In 1960 jazz greats Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn (who grew up in Pittsburgh) created a jazz version of ***The Nutcracker Suite*** (a shortened version of the ballet's music that Tchaikovsky produced prior to the ballet's premiere).

Cast List and Setting for PBT's The Nutcracker

ACT I
Marie Stahlbaum
Drosselmeyer
His Nephew
Mrs. Stahlbaum
Dr. Stahlbaum
Fritz, Marie's brother
Grandmother
Grandfather
Mr. and Mrs. Grandview
Mr. and Mrs. Heinz
Mr. and Mrs. Kaufmann
Aunt Hortense
Aunt Gertrude
General
Mr.McTavish
Young McTavish
Harlequin
Columbina
Pirate
The Nutcracker
Rat King
Rats
Snow Queen
Snow King
Snowflakes
ACT II
The Prince
Flowers
Elegance
Joy
Elegance
Exuberance
Harmony
Delight
Sugar Plum Fairy
Sugar Plum Cavalier

Overview of the Setting

In Pittsburgh in the early years of the 20th century, on Christmas Eve

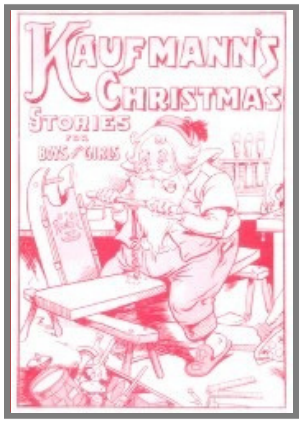
Act 1, Scene 1: The Stahlbaum's home—the F.W. McKee house in Shadyside
Act 1, Scene 2: A Snowy Forest—the view from Mt. Washington
Act 2, Scene 1: The Land of Enchantment—inspired by Pittsburgh's historic amusement parks and carousels.

The Pittsburgh Connection

These Pittsburgh elements make PBT's ***The Nutcracker*** a uniquely local experience.

The Clock • At the top of the proscenium (the arch between the stage and the audience) is a large clock with the Nutcracker's face at the center. This clock was inspired by the famous Kaufmann's Clock on the corner of Kaufmann's Department Store at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Smithfield Street in downtown Pittsburgh. Meeting under Kaufmann's clock was a Pittsburgh tradition for many years. Though the building is no longer a department store the clock is still there!

The Opening Showdrop • The first image you see in the ballet is a rendering of the F.W. McKee mansion, a large, stately home that was on Fifth Avenue in the Shadyside section of Pittsburgh. McKee was an attorney whose father founded one of the pioneer glass-manufacturing firms in Pittsburgh, McKee and Brothers. The McKees also owned a large estate in Butler County where Mr. McKee founded the town of West Winfield. When he and his family left the home on Fifth Avenue, it is thought that it may have passed down through his sister's family. The home was torn down to make way for apartment buildings.



Kaufmann's Christmas Stories for Boys and Girls • Early in the 20th century, Kaufmann's Department Store commissioned this Christmas storybook. During planning for ***The Nutcracker***, a PBT board member found a copy of the book, believed to have been published between 1904-1906. Mr. Orr incorporated it into several scenes: Marie reads the book at the beginning of the ballet; it appears under the Christmas tree with the other gifts at the party; the storybook grows as the whole room becomes larger than life; and Drosselmeyer "turns the pages" as the magical story unfolds. In the battle scene, characters literally come out of the book to help the Nutcracker fight the Rat King.

The Party Guests • Although the Stahlbaum family name is taken directly from the E.T.A. Hoffmann tale, Mr. Orr invited some Pittsburgh guests to the party. Significant families in Pittsburgh history are represented by Mr. and Mrs. Kaufmann, Mr. and Mrs. Heinz, and Mr. and Mrs. Grandview (named for the avenue on Mt. Washington). With his kilt and traditional Scottish dance, Mr. McTavish represents the famous Scottish Pittsburgher, Andrew Carnegie.

The Journey through the Snowy Forest • One of the most beautiful vistas in Western Pennsylvania is the view from Mt. Washington's Grandview Avenue. Looking down on the Point and the downtown area, you can see the three rivers and many of the bridges that cross them. The backdrop behind the snow scene is an artistic rendering of this vista. It's pictured as it might have looked at the time in which the ballet is set, around the turn of the 20th century.

Artwork for both showdrops on this page by designer Zack Brown.

The Choreography

While many productionsof ***The Nutcracker*** follow the same basic story and general choreography, each version is a unique creation of the choreographer who stages it. Watch for these elements in PBT's ballet.

Marie and the Nephew

In many productions of ***The Nutcracker,*** Marie is cast as a child. Mr. Orr conceived of her and the Nephew/Prince as teenagers, which allowed him to cast adult Company dancers as believable characters in the roles. He created more advanced, complex choreography for them than is present in many other productions, and developed a romantic relationship between the two.

Drosselmeyer

Drosselmeyer traditionally sets the stage for events in the story and creates visual magic to delight the audience. In PBT's version, he also drives the storyline. Mr. Orr gave the character substantial dance choreography—not always the case in other ballet versions—including a ***pas de trois*** (dance for three) with Marie and the Prince, when Drosselmeyer ushers them to the Snow Forest and then on to the Land of Enchantment.

The Party Scene and Battle

These scenes offer challenges to a choreographer. Watch for these elements in the ballet to see how they are handled choreographically:

- a very large cast on stage all at once covering a wide range of ages and levels of ability
- many young children
- costumes that may limit movement
- animals and toys whose choreography should reflect their characters

Snow Scene

Mr. Orr took his inspiration for the snow scene from a real snow scene at his former country home in Connecticut. Looking out on the snow-covered hills from his deck he would watch how the wind swirled the snowflakes, always in circular patterns. Watch for the circles in shapes and steps in the choreography here.

Delight

This scene is a showcaseforyoung dancers. Filled with whimsy and acrobatic movements, it'salively take on the amusement park theme in Act II.

Top: Alexandra Kochis and Christopher Budzynski, photo by Rich Sofranko. Stephen Hadala as Drosselmeyer, photo by Aimee DiAndrea. The battle scene, with students of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School photo by Rich Sofranko. The "Snow Scene," photo by Aimee DiAndrea. PBT students as the clowns, photo by Rich Sofranko.

Considering Context: The Act 2 "Nationality" Dances

Like many ballet companies, PBT is reviewing the "nationality" dances or divertissements in Act 2 of ***The Nutcracker*** with a desire to be more respectful of all cultures. In the original 1892 ballet the dances were Chocolate (Spanish Dance), Tea (Chinese Dance), Coffee (Arabian Dance) and Trepak (Russian Dance). The dances in PBT's production were choreographed in 2002, and in some cases incorporated costume or choreographic elements meant to honor the cultures represented. While PBT's review is ongoing, this season new names were selected for Act 2 dances to reflect the tone of each piece's choreography itself. Here's a brief look at PBT's current dances, including background on some of the concepts and elements utilized in representing the nationality dances.

Jubilation ("Spanish"): This dance is full of bravado with colorful costumes and brisk movement. The port de bra (carriage of the arms) is both regal and ebullient. Costume designer Zack Brown incorporated some elements of a traditional Spanish bullfighters' costume, including the short, embellished jacket (***chaquetilla)*** and swishing skirts that resemble the muleta, a long red or purple cape used to entice the bull.

Joy ("Chinese"): This dance is based on a ribbon dance, a traditional dance of celebration in Chinese culture, in which ribbons represent dragons, thought to be rulers of the sky and benevolent spirits. Behind the main couple a huge dragon puppet is carried by six dancers, resembling another traditional dance performed at festive celebrations. The dragon head was built in Taiwan and featured at a 2002 ceremony celebrating the 20th anniversary of sister cities Pittsburgh and Wuhan, China. At the celebration the dragon's eyes were colored with red ink by then Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy, awakening the dragon in celebration and to bring prosperity to the community.

Elegance ("Arabian"): Tchaikovsky's music in this dance was based on a Georgian lullaby, and while it has no relationship to a Middle Eastern country or culture, the beautiful and evocative melody inspired choreographer Terrence S. Orr's elegant choreography. The movement is technically demanding, requiring great strength and extremely precise and coordinated partnering. Zack Brown's costumes are gorgeous, though based on a somewhat stereotypical representation of Middle Eastern clothing.

Exuberance ("Russian"): The choreography here is inspired by traditional Russian dances, as well as Ukrainian folk and social dances, which are known for their difficult acrobatic feats (while considered a Russian composer, Tchaikovsky himself had Ukrainian heritage). The exuberance of the movement is palpable in this exciting and extremely athletic dance. The dancers' white, billowy shirts and flowy pants are similar to dress seen in historic Russian and Ukrainian dance photos.

Artists: Colin McCaslin, Tommie O'Hanlon; Jessica McCann; William Moore, Hannah Carter; Masahiro Haneji
Photos: Rich Sofranko, Aimee DiAndria, Rich Sofranko, Rosalie O'Connor

Signature Steps

The choreography of ***The Nutcracker*** is packed with challenging steps and technique. Watch for ***pirouettes*** and ***balancés*** throughout the ballet.

The Snow Queen (Amanda Cochrane) completes a pirouette, 2012, photo by Aimee DiAndrea

PIROUETTE

One of the most familiar ballet terms, ***pirouette*** literally means to "whirl." It is a controlled turn on one leg, with the non-supporting leg turning out or inward toward the supporting leg. The turn usually starts with one or both legs in ***plié*** (bent knee) and then rises to straight leg and onto ***pointe*** (the tip of the toe) for women, or onto ***demi-pointe*** (the ball of the foot) for men. The non-supporting leg can be held in various positions. Pirouettes can be done as a single turn or in multiple rotations. Turning technique includes spotting—when the dancers fixes her gaze on a single spot while turning. The pirouette can take many different forms.

Snow Queen and King Pas de Deux

At the end of Act I, the Snow King and Queen dance with the Snowflakes in the forest. The Snowflakes perform a series of ***pirouettes enchaînement*** (in a "chain" or linked sequence). The mass of simultaneous pirouettes creates a beautiful, glittery blizzard effect on stage.

Elegance

Watch for the ***finger pirouette*** in this dance: the male partner twirls and supports the ballerina as she holds onto just one of his fingers for balance. This is an example of ***pirouette en dehors***, with the non- supporting leg turning out, away from the supporting leg, and the turn is executed outward.

The Sugar Plum Pas de Deux

Also in Act II, the Sugar Plum Fairy and Sugar Plum Cavalier perform a ***pas de deux*** to the ballet's most famous music, ***Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy.*** Notice the several ***supported pirouettes***, where the Cavalier balances and twirls his partner. The Sugar Plum Fairy performs a series of dazzling ***pirouettes enchainement***, a triumphant sequence for only the most expert of ballerinas.

Danielle Downey, Kaori Ogasawara, Nurlan Abougaliev and PBT artists,2007. Photo by Rich Sofranko.

BALANCÉ

Balancé is a rocking step that is usually executed in three counts. The dancer shifts her weight from one foot to the other in a "down up down" sequence to 3/4 time. The step begins in fifth position plié. Before the first count, one foot extends in a degagé (slightly lifted off the floor) usually to second position. The foot may cross in front or in back. ***Balancé*** is also sometimes called the "waltzing step." Watch for the ***balancé*** step in the party dances, the "Waltz of the Snowflakes," and the "Waltz of the Flowers."

The Costumes

Building costumes for a new ballet production involves inspiration, research, and technical decisions about construction. Zack Brown, Scenic and Costume Designer, and Janet Marie Groom, PBT's Costumier, (a person who makes or builds theatrical costumes) share information about their work on the production.

ZACK BROWN:

Design, fabric, and construction are the important elements. Dance clothes are difficult. Laundering is a major factor because more than one person usually wears each costume, and physical exertion of dance produces much perspiration. These two factors mean that costumes must often be washed or cleaned. It also makes them deteriorate, and then they have to be replaced. Re-makes are done all the time.

Artistic Director Terrence Orr gave me parameters that helped focus my ideas. The size of the budget also has a big influence on the overall color palette and styles for the costumes. Using historical research, my own imagination and talent, conversations with Terrence Orr, and the inspiration of the music with its rich orchestral colors and sweeping melodies, I was able to design the vibrant, colorful, sumptuous costumes you will see.

JANET MARIE GROOM:

Costumes are "built", not made. The reason we say they are "built" is because more is involved than just cutting out a pattern and sewing seams. Fabrics sometimes must be dyed to get just the right shade and to make sure that the various fabric colors match or coordinate perfectly. Sequins and jewels must be sewn on by hand. Sometimes they also have to be dyed to match the fabric. Many layers of tulle have to be cut to make the tutu skirts. The edges are not usually straight but scalloped or pointed. These are all cut by hand. All of these things must be done with the movement of the dancers being the first consideration.
There are 215 costumes for this Nutcracker production.;110 of them were built in Pittsburgh in PBT's costume shop. The rest were built at shops in New York and Washington, D.C.

Each costume is often made of many pieces that have to be carefully stored. The following descriptions are for two of the costumes from Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's production of ***The Nutcracker***. They give some insight into how elaborate these costumes can be.

Toy Soldier

- White pants have gold stripes down the sides. Suspenders that are not seen have a row of buttonholes to allow for adjustment on dancers of different heights.
- Boot tops are attached to the shoes or to a toe sock that goes inside the shoe.
- Elaborate sleeves with hand-sewn welts and large white cuffs are attached to a t-shirt that fastens in the front and is worn under the jacket.
- Buttons are sewn on the jacket, but the chains are attached behind the buttons with elastic.
- The wide belt attaches on the side.
- The hat is held on by a chin strap. Some of the hats are attached to a mask-like face.

Snowflake

- Skirt is separate from the bodice and attached together with button tapes that allow for height adjustment.
- Snowflakes, elaborately decorated with hand-sewn sequins of several kinds, are attached to the bodice.
- Four layers of fabric make up the skirt: white tulle on top, blue sparkle tulle, white with silver sparkles, white tulle with white flocked hearts.
- All the hems of all the tulle layers are cut in points. There are more than 20 snowflake costumes with a total of 10,580 points, and all of them were cut by hand by one person.

Gabrielle Thurlow, photo by Aimee DiAndrea, 2012.

More *Nutcracker* designs by Zack Brown

The Rat King

Gingerbread Doll

The Nutcracker

Scenic Design

The complexity of staging a big production such as PBT's ***The Nutcracker*** can be an amazing technical feat! Many things are hidden from view so the audience sees only seamless transitions from one scene to another—flawless and magical. The massive sets and complicated devices used to achieve the delightful visions are sometimes anything but seamless and flawless. Learn the secrets of some of the mechanical and scientific elements of scenery and lighting used to create the enchantment and wonder of ***The Nutcracker***.

Act I – The Stahlbaum Home

Act I begins with the bustling arrival of party guests on the sidewalk in front of the Stahlbaum home. The picture of the home is painted on a scrim, which is a large piece of sheer fabric hung from a pole high above the stage. When the light projects on the scrim from the front, it is opaque and you see what is painted on the scrim. However, when an object behind the scrim is lit, the scrim seems to disappear and that object is seen. Watch at the beginning of Act I when Marie's bedroom appears and the house exteri- or vanishes—a great example of how a scrim and lighting work together.

Photo by Rich Sofranko.

Act II – The Carousel Canopy

Known affectionately by the stagehands as "The Squid," this oc- topus-like mechanical monster operates in a manner similar to an umbrella. Like an umbrella, one pushes the mecha- nism upward, sliding it along the center pole forcing the spokes to open the cover. Then, it's pulled downward along the pole to close it.

Here's the idea! On the left is a normal view of an umbrella. You push upward to open. The inverted umbrella on the right is how the ***Nutcracker*** carousel works—it's as if the wind has blown your umbrella inside-out. The mechanism pushes downward to open and expand the carousel.

Getting to Know PBT's Dancers

Dancing as a profession is a lifelong pursuit, beginning early (sometimes as young as age two) and continuing through many years of rigorous training. Learn more about the careers of PBT's dancers on our website.

Artists: Diana Yohe and Joseph Parr. Photo: Rich Sofranko

Accessibility

We believe dance is for everyone! Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre is committed to including everyone from our greater Pittsburgh community and beyond in the beauty, discipline, and creativity of dance. We strive to make our company, school and art form accessible to talented and committed students and families.

At the Theater

Audio-described Performances Live narration of the performance for patrons with blindness or low vision and for anyone interested in listening to a verbal description of the production. Visit Guest Services before the show for assistance.

Sensory-friendly Performance A special performance for children and adults with ASD and other sensory sensitivities, different abilities and/or special needs.

Wheelchair Accessibility The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts features elevators, accessible restrooms and companion seating (available only on the main floor of the theater). Guide dogs are permitted; please inquire when purchasing tickets. Please inform your ticketing representative when purchasing to take advantage of wheelchair and companion seating.

Braille and Large Print Programs With assistance from the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children Outreach/Braille Project, PBT makes printed Braille programs available at the Benedum Center for patrons who are visually impaired. Large-print programs also will be available. Please see Guest Services at the Benedum Center for a program.

Assistive Listening Devices Assistive listening devices are available at the Benedum Center for Performing Arts for patrons who desire amplification. Neck loops are available. Please see an usher at the Benedum Center when you arrive to obtain an Assistive Listening Device, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

In the Studios - for more information about these programs please contact Erin at ekleinman@pittsburghballet.org

Dance for Parkinson's This program, based on the Dance for PD® program, invites people with Parkinson's, their families, caregivers, and friends, to become participants in the dance process!

Adaptive Dance Themed around classic story ballets, our adaptive dance classes are designed for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders or other sensory sensitivities. We emphasize creative movement principles and simplified ballet technique within a welcoming and structured studio environment.

Bridge Scholarship Program This program aims to expose more children to dance at an early age by funding need-based scholarships for talented and committed students from ages 5-9.

PBT in the Community PBT's education team brings ballet into neighborhoods, schools and community centers in an effort to engage and inspire more people with the mind-body benefits of ballet and movement.