THE HISTORY OF THE NUTCRACKER:

The Story:
The Nutcracker is a story from Germany, written by E. T. A. Hoffman, and was first called The Nutcracker and the Mouse King. Hoffman’s story was turned into a holiday fairy tale by French writer Alexandre Dumas. The fairy tale that we recognize today is the story now used for The Nutcracker Ballet.

The Ballet:
A ballet is a story that is danced to music, with the three main components being dancing, music, and the story. The idea of turning The Nutcracker into a ballet was the idea of a Russian theater director when he wanted to perform the story written by Hoffman. He asked famous Russian Ballet choreographer, Mairus Petipa with assistance with the dancing and then asked Peter Tchaikovsky to compose the music. Together, the three presented the first Nutcracker ballet in December of 1892.

The San Francisco Ballet was the first ballet company in the United States to perform The Nutcracker. Then, in 1954, famous choreographer George Balanchine re-choreographed the ballet when bringing the show to New York and The Nutcracker became a huge success.
THE NUTCRACKER IN SUMMARY:

Act One:

It is Christmas Eve at the Stahlbaum home, and Dr. and Frau Stahlbaum and their children, Clara and Fritz, are welcoming their guests to a holiday party. For the children there are games and gifts, and dancing for everyone. Clara’s beloved godfather, Herr Drosselmeier, introduces her to his young nephew and gives her a wonderful present: a handsome wooden Nutcracker.

After the party, Clara falls asleep on the sofa with her Nutcracker. Suddenly she sits up and realizes something is not right. Out of no where, giant mice scurry into the room, and the Christmas tree starts to grow until it towers over Clara. Everything disappears except for Fritz’s toy soldiers and the Nutcracker, who is now as big as Clara. The nutcracker leads the toy soldiers into battle with the mice, and Clara helps him by throwing her slipper at the fierce Mouse King, who the Nutcracker slays. Now that the Mouse King is dead, an ancient spell has been broken and the Nutcracker is transformed into a handsome prince. As he presents Clara with the Mouse King’s crown, she recognizes him as Drosselmeier’s nephew. The children enter a beautiful forest, where the snowflakes dance a lovely waltz and guide Clara and the Prince towards the Christmas Star.
THE NUTCRACKER IN SUMMARY:

Act Two:
Clara and the Prince arrive at the Land of Sweets and are greeted by the beautiful Sugar Plum Fairy and all the other inhabitants in her realm. The Prince tells the story of the battle with the mice, describing how Clara helped him defeat the Mouse King. Everyone is delighted that the Prince and Clara are safe, and the Sugar Plum Fairy leads them to a glittering thrown, where they enjoy cakes and candies. Everyone dances for the children: Hot Chocolate from Spain, Chinese Tea, Coffee from Arabia, the Candy Canes, the Marzipan Shepherdress, and Mother Ginger with her eight little polichinelles. Then comes the Waltz of the Flowers, with shimmering dewdrop dancing among the lovely blooms, and finally, the Sugar Plum Fairy returns with her Cavalier to perform a majestic dance.

It’s the time for Clara and the Prince to say goodbye. Everyone returns to bid them farewell, and they soar of into a sleigh pulled by reindeer.
CAN YOU MATCH THE BALLET TERMS WITH THEIR MEANINGS?

1. **Prima Ballerina**
   - The last scene at the end of a show, usually containing the entire cast

2. **Choreographer**
   - A special dance shoe constructed with a hardened toe, so that the dancers may rise up on the tip of toes when dancing

3. **Finale**
   - Gestures used to tell a story or express ideas with out words

4. **Intermission**
   - The artist who creates the dance in a ballet

5. **Pas De Deux**
   - A female dancer who has had experience dancing in many roles, alone or with partners. These are some of the best female dancers in the company.

6. **Pointe Shoes**
   - The artist who creates the music for the ballet

7. **Compose**
   - Pause or break between acts of show

8. **Pantomime**
   - Meaning “step in two” in French, this is a dance with two dancing which is typically the male and female couple.
WHAT DO THE DANCER’S WEAR?

**Tutus:** Short skirted ballerina costume, each is handmade and costs $300-$1,000

**Leotards:** A close fitting one-piece garment, that is made of a stretchy material for which is best for dancers to practice

**Pointe Shoes:** Dance shoes, worn by the women, that are hard at the top so dancers are able to rise up to the top of the shoe easily

**Tights:** A one piece garment that is worn on the lower part of the body/legs both men and women, usually worn under a leotard

**Ballet Shoes:** Flat, fitted shoes, that are worn primarily by men and sometimes women, which allow the dancers to dance with ease
DID YOU KNOW? FACTS ABOUT THE SHOW!

• All of the snow in the performance is made of recycled newspaper that is put in to bags and hung from the batons above the stage. The bags have holes in them so when the batons are raise and lowered it snows!

• Every principal ballerina wears a new pair of point shoes in every performance, shoes usually cost around $100-$120 a pair.

• There are 80 light cues (changes in lighting) in this production of The Nutcracker.

• It takes 8 crew people to change the scenery for each scene in The Nutcracker.

• The fog is created with dry ice. It takes 70 lbs. of dry ice per performance, for 7 shows, how many total pounds of dry ice will be used?

• There are more than 160 costumes for this show!

• For more information about ButlerBallet, visit https://www.butler.edu/dance.
POSITIONS OF THE FEET

First Position:

Second Position:

Third Position:

Fourth Position:

Fifth Position:

Get Up and Try!
ButlerBallet, the performance component of the program, is modeled after a professional company. ButlerBallet performs full-length classical ballets because they are the foundation of the department's philosophy and training. Being central to artistic development, students learn historically and technically while performing lengthy 19th century grand ballets such as The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, Coppélia, Cinderella, or Giselle.

The department of dance recognizes that versatility is essential to the work of a professional dancer. ButlerBallet contributes to that training by performing licensed and commissioned choreographic works along with original works by the faculty. Recent masterpieces performed by the ButlerBallet include Nacho Duato’s Por Vos Muero, Paul Taylor’s Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal), George Balanchine’s Serenade and Antony Tudor’s Dark Elegies, and students have experienced the creative process with such masters as James Kudelka and Stephen Mills.
NOW THAT YOU HAVE SEEN THE NUTCRACKER...

- What was your favorite part about the ballet, and why?
- Did you have a favorite character? If yes, who?
- What moves or things did you see on stage that we talked about before the performance?
- Overall did you enjoy The Nutcracker?
- Did you understand the story even though there was no talking or dialogue between characters?
- Would you be interested in seeing another ballet?
- Who wore your favorite costume?
- Is there anything that you would have changed about the ballet?
Thank you for experiencing a live performance with us at the Butler Arts Center! We want to make sure your visit is educational, engaging, and entertaining for you and your students.

For additional information about this matinee performance and upcoming events at the Butler Arts Center, visit [www.butlerartscenter.org](http://www.butlerartscenter.org)

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