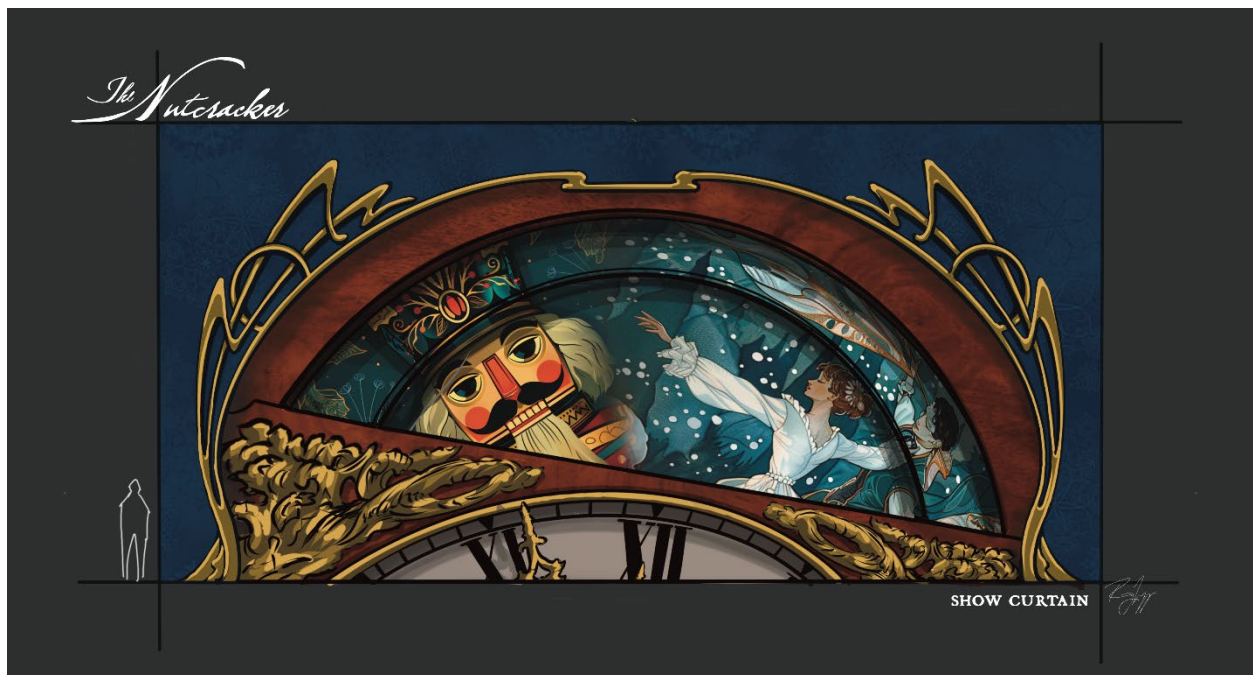


DAYTON PERFORMING ARTS ALLIANCE

DAYTON DAYTON DAYTON
Ballet Opera Philharmonic

The Nutcracker



Dayton Ballet
Brandon Ragland, Artistic Director

December 13, 2024

DAYTON
Ballet

Dear Educator,

This informational packet has been prepared to help enhance your students' experience of *The Nutcracker*, which will be performed by the Dayton Ballet at the Schuster Center on December 13.

It contains:

- Background on the Dayton Ballet and with its Artistic Director
- An overview of *The Nutcracker*, its history and composer
- Details on what's new and different about our production of this ballet
- Answers to questions your students may have about the world of dance
- Information on theatre etiquette

There also are an assortment of **activities designed around Ohio's Core Curriculum Standards** that should help your students derive even more knowledge and pleasure from this performance.

We encourage you to discuss the experience with your students after they return to school. This will help them process what they have seen and retain stronger memories. There are exercises included here to support that activity, too. If you would like to share any feedback or outcomes from those exercises, we would love to see them!

We look forward to hosting you and your class in the coming month. If you have any questions in the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me or my staff.



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About the Dayton Ballet

Founded in 1937, the Dayton Ballet is the second oldest regional ballet company in the United States. It was founded by Josephine (Jo) Schwarz, a pioneer of the American regional ballet movement of the mid-20th century, and her sister Hermene.

Dayton Ballet typically performs four works each season, about 40 performances in total. These range from familiar traditional ballets, such as *The Nutcracker*, to new and innovative works.

The Dayton Ballet performs in the historic 1,139-seat Victoria Theatre [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Theatre_\(Dayton,_Ohio\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Theatre_(Dayton,_Ohio)) and the 2,200-seat Schuster Performing Arts Center, both in downtown Dayton, Ohio. There are 20 dancers in the professional company, and 7 in the Studio Company. Dayton Ballet also operates the Dayton Ballet School, which has over 250 students, 23 of which are in the School Ensemble. It is the oldest ballet school in Dayton and one of the oldest in the United States. Participants in the Dayton Ballet School Ensemble are chosen by audition only.

About our Artistic Director

Brandon Ragland received early training in Birmingham, AL, and graduated from Butler University with a B.S. in Dance Arts Administration. After graduation, he joined the Alabama Ballet, performing numerous classical and neoclassical works by choreographers such as Roger Van Fleteren, George Balanchine, Christopher Bruce, and Septime Webre. He joined the Louisville Ballet in 2010, where he spent 13 years as a leading artist and performed featured roles in classical, neoclassical, and contemporary works by choreographers such as Alun Jones, George Balanchine, Adam Hougland, Val Caniparoli, Ma Cong, Lucas Jervies, Stanton Welch, Ronald Hynd, and Tim Harbour.



Brandon Ragland

Q. Why did you come to Dayton? What attracted you to our city?

Brandon: I always wanted to be Artistic Director of a ballet company, so I was drawn by this opportunity. It feels like the range of jobs I've had up to this point – as a dancer, in education and administration – have led me to this point.

Dayton has a vibrant arts community, plus it's close to large cities with a great artistic scene, like Chicago and Cleveland. I love the idea that Dayton's performing arts are collaborative. It's great that we have two beautiful theatres to work in, and that our rehearsal space is just steps away from those theatres.

The community in general has been very warm and welcoming, just like my hometown of Birmingham, Alabama. The cost of living here is affordable, too.

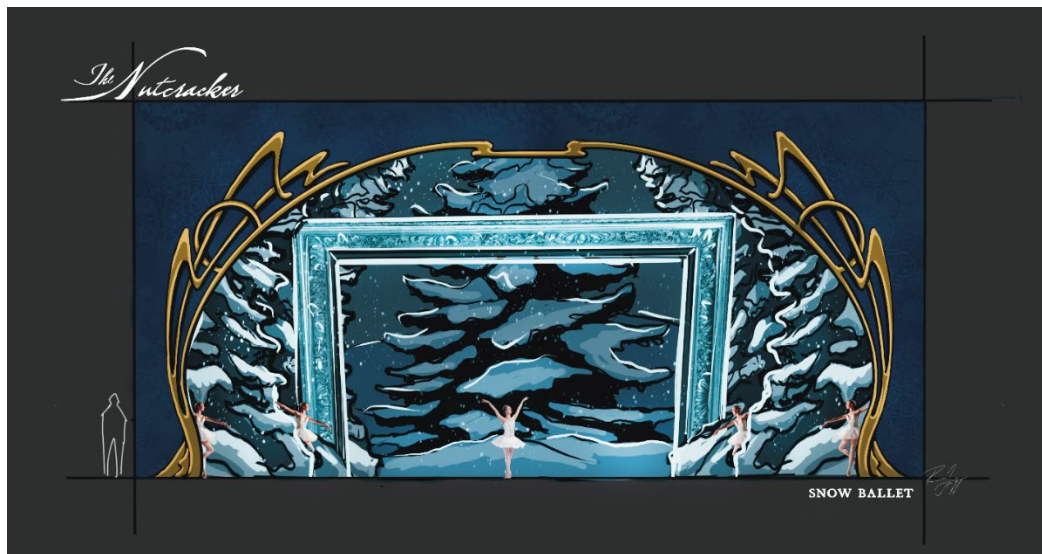
Q. What attracted you to the world of dance as a young person?

Brandon: I saw a lot of children's theatre there when I was young. I started pretty late for a dancer: I was fifteen years old. Girls start training earlier to build up the strength they need to dance *en pointe* (where all their body weight is supported on the tips of their toes.)

About *The Nutcracker*

What is *The Nutcracker*?

The Nutcracker is a two-act classical ballet composed in 1892 by Pyotr (Peter) Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The first complete performance outside of Russia took place in England in 1934. Nowadays it is widely performed throughout the U.S. In fact, major American ballet companies generate around 40% of their annual ticket revenues from performances of this ballet.



Q. Where and when did you first see *The Nutcracker*?

Brandon: I wasn't exposed to *The Nutcracker* until after I began dancing as a teenager. It was the first full ballet that I saw, but I was older.

Q. Is there a part of *The Nutcracker* that you like best?

Brandon: I love that *Nutcracker's* story takes place at holiday time and involves a family hosting a party. Thanksgiving and Christmas are special times of the year for me. But my very favorite scene in the ballet comes at the end of Act One, when Clara and the prince head off in the sleigh to the Land of Snow.

What I look forward to most in this year's performance is seeing our young guests' reactions to the show.

What is the story about? When does it take place?

Here is a [clickable video link from Study.com](#) that explains the *Nutcracker* story. You must register as a teacher to view the entire program: [Nutcracker Lesson](#)

The Dayton Ballet's new storyline is as follows:

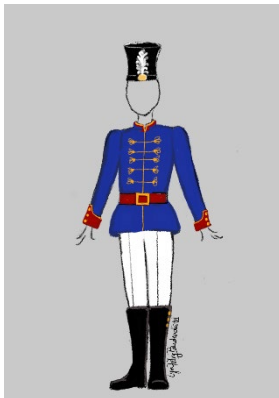
As the Curtain comes up, we see Drosselmeyer working in his Toy Store in Downtown Dayton, OH. Clara, along with her father, Mayor Staulbaum, and her brother, Fritz, arrive at the store for Christmas shopping. Clara is entranced by the Nutcracker that Drosselmeyer is building but leaves the store with a beautiful doll. After the children leave, Mayor Staulbaum returns to the store to instruct Drosselmeyer to pack up toys, gifts, and the Nutcracker and asks him to join them at their Christmas Party that evening.

At the house, Mrs. Staulbaum, the Cook, and Maids are busy setting up for the Christmas Party placing final touches and gifts under the tree. The families begin to arrive, and the Children rush to the tree to look at the gifts. Everyone dances and has a wonderful time.

Drosselmeyer arrives with special gifts for the children and Clara's family. Some gifts you'll see include a toy airplane (the Wright flyer), a toy cash register, and other toy versions of things invented in or unique to Dayton. Drosselmeyer performs magic, too. He attracts everyone's attention by showing off two life-size dolls who each take a turn dancing.

Afterwards, he presents Clara with the beautiful Nutcracker from the shop. Fritz is very jealous and tries to break the Nutcracker Doll. Clara is upset, but Drosselmeyer mends the doll for her.

After the party, the family goes to bed to get ready for Christmas morning. Clara sneaks back to where the party had been to make sure that the nutcracker is still safe. Little mice explore the leftovers of the party, causing trouble. Clara wakes, gets scared and hides. The clock strikes midnight. Drosselmeyer comes back into the house and strange things begin to happen. Everything (the Christmas Tree, Fireplace, and Presents) in the house grows tall, including the Nutcracker doll.



After Drosselmeyer leaves, the room fills again with an army of rats. They are led by the Rat King, who is as big as a man. The Nutcracker leads an army of toy soldiers against the army of rats, but the rats are no match for them. When the Nutcracker and his army can no longer go on, they use Clara's courage and the nutcracker's bravery to emerge victorious defeating the Rat King.

As a reward, Drosselmeyer turns the Nutcracker doll into a prince. He then leads a magically older Clara and the Nutcracker into a snowy enchanted forest where snowflakes live and are led by the beautiful Snow King and Queen.

This is the end of Act I and where the abridged version of the Nutcracker ends.

In Dayton Ballet's new version of the Nutcracker the traditional Land of Sweets is reimagined to offer a unique perspective on time and history, so in Act II Clara and the Nutcracker enter the Land of Time, a magical realm where history unfolds through dance. We will see The Sugar Plum Fairy, her Cavalier, angels and clouds awaiting the arrival of Clara and the Nutcracker Prince. After hearing about Clara's adventures with the Rat King, the Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier ask Clara and the Nutcracker Prince to be their guests at a celebration, a divertissement. Court Jesters,

Pirates, Porcelain Dolls, Mother Time, Dew Drop, and others reward Clara with beautiful dances representing their time in history. A dazzling array of dances unfolds, showcasing the beauty and diversity of different time periods.

At the end of the celebration Drosselmeyer comes to take Clara home. When the enchantment fades, Clara awakens on Christmas morning, returning to her younger self and unsure if her adventure was a dream or a gift from Drosselmeyer's Christmas magic.

How long is the ballet? Are we seeing the whole thing?

The Nutcracker is a full-length ballet with two acts that usually runs over 2 hours. Dayton Ballet's student performance of *The Nutcracker* will be the entire first act. It will last less than an hour. We cannot perform the entire ballet due to school time restrictions.

How often does Dayton Ballet change the staging and choreography for *The Nutcracker*?

It is typical for a ballet company to change its approach to *The Nutcracker* about every 10 years. The most recent version of the ballet seen in 2023 had been performed for the previous 12 years.



How is this *Nutcracker* different from the previous one?

Act Two is usually the “Land of Sweets,” featuring the Sugar Plum Fairy and four dances with international themes: Chinese (tea), Arabian (coffee), Spanish (chocolate) and Russian. In our new production, we have changed Act Two to the “Land of Time.” The different dances are based on different points in time in Clara’s mind. For example, the Arabian music is now “Timeless Scent” (a perfume bottle), and the Russian music is “Time on the High Seas” with pirates. Court jesters perform during the Spanish music and Clara will dance a solo to the Chinese music.

What will the sets and costumes look like in this new production?

The timeframe of Act One is early 1900s; the set and costumes will have an Art Nouveau style. The first scene is in Drosselmeyer’s toy and magic shop.

Act Two has more of a “steam punk” look, a style that mixes elements of the romantic Victorian era with 19th-century industrial steam-powered machinery. In addition to the set, the stage will use projections of photos from downtown Dayton during the early 1900s.

Artistic Director Brandon Ragland worked with scenic designer Ray Zupp, who is from Dayton but now lives in Florida, to design the new sets.

The costumes for this version of *The Nutcracker* are all brand new, as well. They were designed by our Wardrobe Supervisor, Lyn Baudendistel. There are over 100 costumes used in this production.

About the Music

Who is the composer?



[Source: Biography.com]

Pyotr (Peter) Ilyich Tchaikovsky [pronounced chai-KOFF-ski] was a famous Russian composer born in Votkinsk, about 800 miles east of Moscow, in 1840. He died in St. Petersburg in 1893.

Tchaikovsky's most popular compositions include music for the ballets *Swan Lake* (1877), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1889) and *The Nutcracker* (1892). These works were popular in their day and remain essential parts of the classical ballet repertoire in the present. Tchaikovsky also wrote symphonies and other works that are also regularly performed by orchestras around the world. Many consider him the most famous Russian music composer of all time.

Who plays the music for the dancers?



We are lucky to have the full Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of conductor Neal Gittleman (shown at left), performing the music for our production.

There will be 62 orchestra members in the pit to play all the musical parts needed in this ballet's score.



Q. What do you like most about Tchaikovsky's music? Is it easy or difficult to dance to?

Brandon: Tchaikovsky wrote some of my favorite music to dance to. It has a sense of story and movement within the music itself because it was specially written to be a ballet.

About Ballet

What is a ballet?

Ballet is a theatrical art form that combines dance, music, and scenery to convey a story, theme, or emotion. It originated during the Italian Renaissance in the 15th century and later grew in popularity in France and Russia.

For more than a century, Russian ballet has been esteemed as the pinnacle of this art form. American ballet came into its own in the years following World War II. Today there are highly regarded ballet companies in New York City, San Francisco, Houston, Boston, Chicago...and Dayton!

Is ballet hard to learn? Does it hurt to dance on your toes like that?



Ballet takes many years of lessons and rigorous practice to perform at a professional level. In classical ballet, girls and women often dance on the tips of their toes. This is called dancing *en pointe*, which is French for “on point.”

Pointework can feel uncomfortable at first, because dancing on the tips of our toes is not natural. However, the pain is reduced by wearing properly fitted shoes and using the right amount of padding.

Like training for any sport, it requires hours of physical conditioning to build up the strength and stamina required for sustained performance.

What is choreography?

Choreography is a word that means the sequence of movements that make up a dance. It also means the notation – that is, the way of recording movements so that others can understand and perform them.

The word itself derives from Greek words that mean circular dance (*choreo*) and writing (*graphy*). It was used as early as 1789 in France, but first appeared in the American English dictionary in 1950.

Who is choreographing this production of *The Nutcracker*?

Artistic Director Brandon Ragland choreographed this new version. While Dayton Ballet uses a variety of choreographers throughout its season, it has always been a dream of Brandon's to design and choreograph a unique concept for *The Nutcracker*.

What does it take to be a professional ballet dancer?

Dance takes a lot of focus, commitment and discipline. It is a very demanding field. Also, dancers need a high degree of curiosity. Ballet is always evolving, especially now. No American ballet company today relies exclusively on the classics. Instead, they incorporate elements of contemporary modern dance as well. So dancers need a variety of techniques and approaches, as choreographers are always looking for new ways to keep things fresh.

What does having discipline mean?

Naturally, we don't always want to go to ballet practice or a rehearsal. But having discipline means not skipping lessons or practice just because you don't feel like going. It means choosing to attend a rehearsal when maybe you just want to go to a ball game or hang out with your friends. Sacrifices must be made if you want to become a professional dancer. In this way, ballet requires the same level of commitment that you'd find in any professional sport.

Like professional athletes, ballet dancers have shorter careers than in other types of jobs. Engaging in such rigorous activity for sustained periods of time is hard on your body, so ballet dancers usually retire in their early to mid-40s.

COVID was especially hard on the dance world. A lot of dancers retired during COVID because they couldn't keep up with their practice at home, in seclusion, to the level they needed. It also was difficult for young students who missed training in a real studio.



What is it like to be a child performing in *The Nutcracker*?

Here is a video link to an ABC News backstage story about two children performing in New York City Ballet's *Nutcracker*. (4 minutes) [VIDEO LINK](#)

Dayton Ballet has 125 children cast members. The youngest performers in the cast are 6 years old. Some are members of the Dayton Ballet School and others are taking dance lessons from other studios and colleges in our area.



What do you hope kids will get out of experiencing *The Nutcracker*?

Brandon: I'm eager for kids to be exposed to classical dance. For those in the audience, I want to wrap them up in a different world, a place where imagination can be expanded without distractions.

Children and teens are also part of the cast of *The Nutcracker*. Being part of the Dayton Ballet's production is a lot of work, for both the kids and their parents. We realized it's a huge commitment for families. We started rehearsals right after Labor Day to be ready for performances in December, and dancers can only miss two rehearsals. But the payoff is wonderful. The children get to dance onstage alongside professionals, so they can observe them close-up. That's inspiring for young dancers.

Questions for Class Discussions

- **What are some of your family's holiday traditions? (Discuss)**
- **Are there special foods that your family enjoys at holiday time?**
 - **Who makes them?**
 - **Do you get to help?**
- **Did you get a favorite gift last year for the holidays?**
 - **Why was it your favorite?**
- **How many years ago was 1820?**
 - **Who was the president of the U.S. in that year?**
- **The first scene of *The Nutcracker* takes place at a holiday party where the children are playing together. When you gather at a friend's home, what games do you like to play?**

Activities for Your Classroom

Lesson 1: Learn about Nutcrackers

Prompt: Have you ever seen a nutcracker? Used one? Maybe you've shelled nuts using a different way. If so, how?

What is a nutcracker? How does it work?

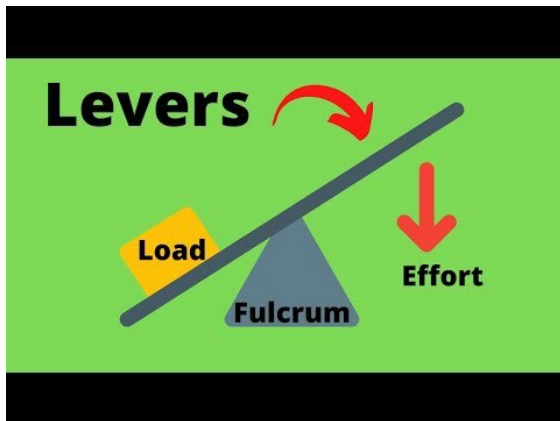
In our ballet, the Nutcracker comes to life as a soldier who fights the Rat King.



A nutcracker is a device used to crack the shells of nuts so they can be eaten. Toy nutcrackers were often designed to look like soldiers. The toy soldier's jaw gapes open, a nut is inserted in its mouth, then a lever is pulled down in the back to close the jaw. That pressure cracks the nut.

Originally, nutcrackers were strictly functional. They were simple machines utilizing a lever to crack the shells of tree nuts (walnuts, pecans, almonds, and hazelnuts) in order to get at the tasty insides. The type of nutcracker we are observing uses a type 2 lever. Levers are a type of simple machine that allows you to multiply your work. This video illustrates a 1st class lever, a 2nd class lever, and a third-class lever. The type of lever depends on the location of the effort, fulcrum, and load.

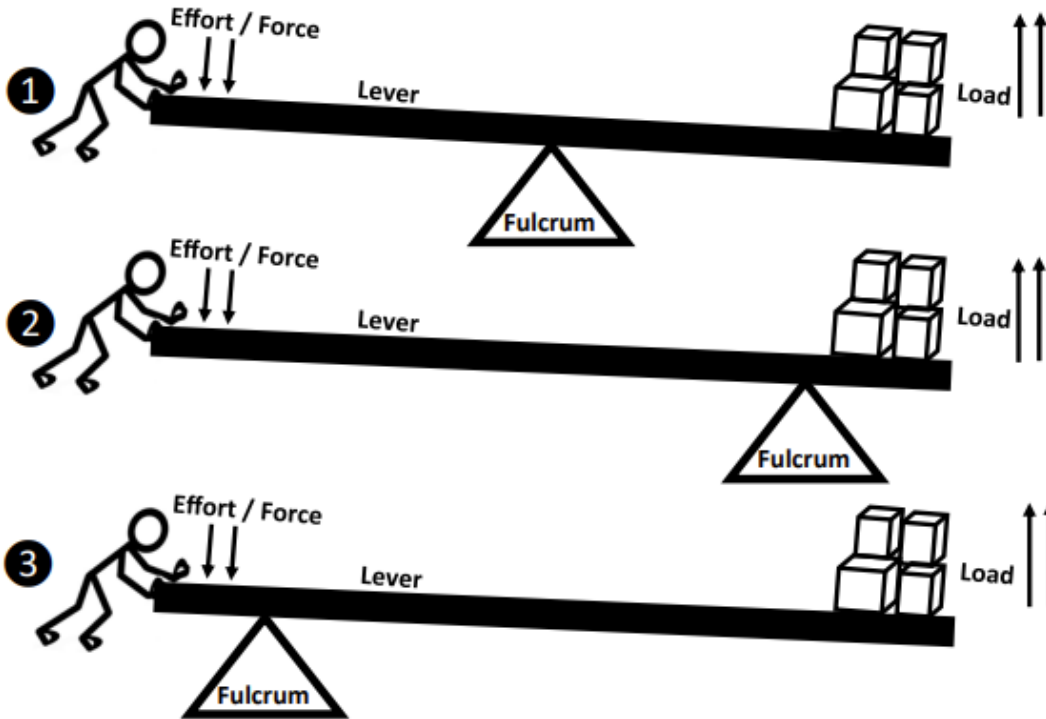
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzljPiPy9nw>



Name: _____

Lever: Try This

Using classroom materials, try this experiment and predict if the force/effort needed is more or less as the fulcrum is moved. Find out if your prediction is true.



Circle a Number:

	My Prediction	Actual
1	1 2 3 4 5 Least Effort Most Effort	1 2 3 4 5 Least Effort Most Effort
2	1 2 3 4 5 Least Effort Most Effort	1 2 3 4 5 Least Effort Most Effort
3	1 2 3 4 5 Least Effort Most Effort	1 2 3 4 5 Least Effort Most Effort



Eventually, people began to experiment making decorative versions of these nutcrackers as human-like figures where the cracking part of the lever resembled teeth. While many companies make these nutcrackers, most no longer have a strong enough lever to crack a nut, so don't try using a decorative "nutcracker" to crack nuts.

Video (2½ minutes)

https://youtu.be/qAL89zqRz8c?si=o_7hTQQKE_sMAHZR



Here's a video that a boy made of his efforts to crack a nut with a decorative nutcracker. It sounds like his sister is worried their handsome nutcracker will be damaged, so don't try it at home with your family's decorative nutcracker!

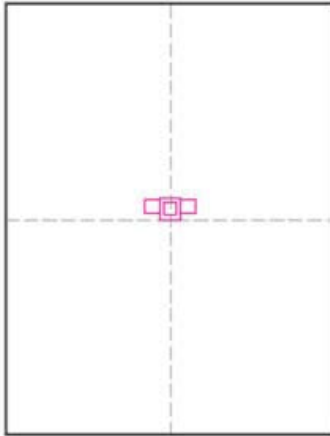
Video (1 minute)

https://youtu.be/jgeKgMwu698?si=fJFGy0Pi78DvdPI_

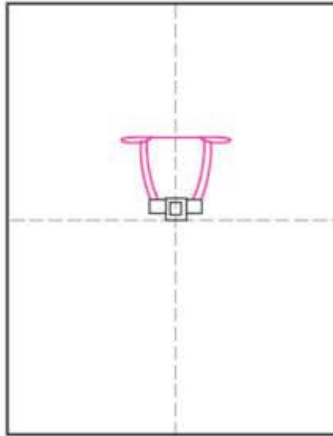
Design and draw your own Nutcracker!

Nutcrackers make for good body drawing practice, as their soldier-like pose makes them easy to see and match from one side to the other. Students can also review body proportions as many tend to draw arms (on nutcrackers or people) a bit short. This Nutcracker can remind them that the hands need to extend down well past the waist and hips. If students make their *own* centered lines on their *own* paper, before drawing, they will have an easy reference to follow. All they need to do is fold their sheet of paper in half both ways and make a crease. Encourage students to add their own details to the Nutcracker after the basic shape is created.

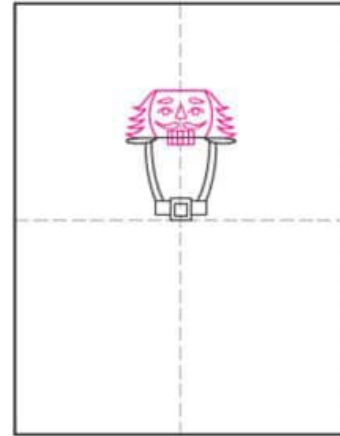
Draw a Nutcracker



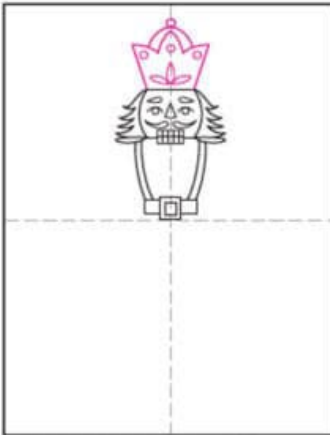
1. Draw a belt.



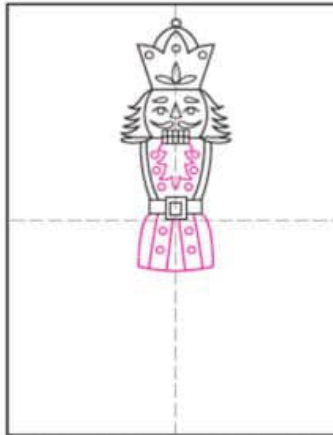
2. Start the jacket above it.



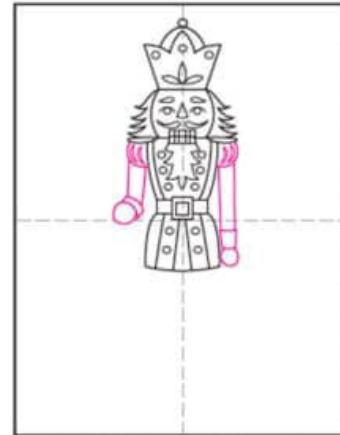
3. Add the head and hair.



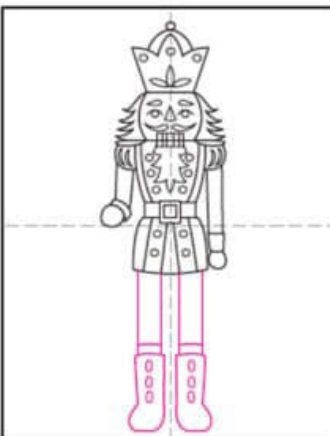
4. Draw a hat on the head.



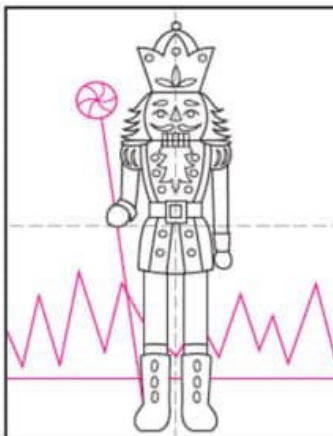
5. Continue the jacket as shown.



6. Draw the arms with sleeves.



7. Add the legs with boots.



8. Draw the cane and background.



9. Trace with a marker and color.

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Lesson 2: Who wrote the story?

The Nutcracker ballet is based on a story, “The Nutcracker and the Mouse King”, originally written by the German artist, author and musical composer E.T.A. Hoffmann. Born in Prussia (now Russia) in 1776, Hoffmann wrote imaginative and popular stories that have influenced and inspired two ballets, *The Nutcracker* and *Coppélia*, both produced by the Dayton Ballet this season, as well as several operas. Although he studied law and worked for the government, Hoffmann poured his energy into his creative work.

Hoffmann was fascinated by the world of imagination and weird and mysterious fantasies where inanimate objects become real, like the toys in *Toy Story*. In *The Nutcracker*, there are dream sequences where many objects including the nutcracker spring to life.

***The Nutcracker* was written in 1892.**

- How many years ago was 1892?
- Who was president then?

Find Russia on a map.

- Where is its capital?
- How far is its capital (Moscow) from Dayton?

The original Nutcracker takes place in Germany on Christmas Eve in 1820.

- Find Germany on a map.
- Where is its capital?
- How far is its capital (Berlin) from Dayton?

Russia and Germany are both on the continent of Europe.

- Do you know of anyone who has traveled to Europe? (Discuss)

People in America come from many different countries.

The process of traveling from where you were born to a new land is called immigration.

- Do you know where your family came from originally?
- Are there special ways that your family still honors the traditions of that country/those countries today?

Lesson 3: Concert Etiquette

Ohio Standards	4RE: Evaluate audience etiquette associated with various musical performances and settings
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe: Students can describe the difference between attending a live symphony concert, attending a rock concert, and listening to music at home. • Demonstrate: Students can demonstrate appropriate concert manners.
Materials	Concert Manners Sorting Activity
Time	20-25 minutes
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the difference between attending a live symphony orchestra concert, attending a rock concert, and listening to music at home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel when you have to perform or make a presentation in front of a group of people? • Does the audience’s response have an effect on how well you perform? • Concert Manners Sorting Activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partner students in groups of 2 to 4. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have students sort the behaviors into “Appropriate at a Classical Concert” and “Inappropriate at a Classical Concert.” ▪ Discuss their answers as a class and answer any questions they have about attending the Young People’s Concert.
Assessment	Teachers can assess if students can demonstrate appropriate manners at the Young People’s Concert.

Lesson 4: Wrap-Up and Reflection

Ohio Standards	<p>Music 6RE: Develop and apply criteria for critiquing more complex performances of live and recorded music</p> <p>Music 1RE: Justify personal preferences for certain musical pieces, performances, composers and musical genres both orally and in writing</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect: Students can reflect on their concert experience.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper • Construction paper • Crayons • Colored pencils • Writing Reflection Activity
Time	30-40 minutes
Activities	<p>Whole-Class Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the concert as a whole class, listing out students' favorite and least favorite parts of the concert on the board <p>Give students a choice on how they can reflect on the concert (or make up your own choice!):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a letter talking about your favorite parts of the concert. You could write to the Artistic Director, Brandon Ragland, the musicians of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra or the dancers from Dayton Ballet. • Draw a comic showing your favorite part of the ballet. • Write a five line poem about your experience at the concert. <p>Mail or email your students' reflections—we always love to hear what students enjoy about the performance.</p> <p>Mail to: Dayton Performing Arts Alliance Attn. Jaunita Olowe, Vice- President of Learning & Community Engagement 126 N Main Street, Suite 210 Dayton, OH 45402</p> <p>Or email to: education@daytonperformingarts.org</p>
Assessment	Students create reflections on their experience at the performance of the Nutcracker.

Name _____

Class _____

Date _____

Reflection Activity

Imagine life without recorded sound. That means no podcasts, no radio, no TV. The only way to hear music would be to hear it performed live by the musicians at a concert hall. **Describe** life without recorded sound.

Send a thank-you note to the Dayton Performing Arts Alliance cast and crew, thanking them for all the practice that went into preparing the concert for you. Let them know what you liked about your experience.

After the concert, write a short paragraph about the costumes you enjoyed the most. **Describe** why you liked it and how it made you feel seeing it for the first time.

Write a five-line poem according to the following format:

Write	Line 1 = 1 word
A poem,	Line 2 = 2 words
A musical memory,	Line 3 = 3 words
In fifteen words. Remember:	Line 4 = 4 words
Add a word each line.	Line 5 = 5 words

Poetry by the Numbers

_____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____