

Prima Princessa Presents The Nutcracker

Ballet Guide for Families

This family friendly guide is divided up into sections that can be read in any order according to the interest of one's child. Join the fun and make "Prima Princessa Presents The Nutcracker" one of your family's holiday traditions. Airing on public television stations across the country this holiday season.

Is there a real ballet performance as well as ballet lessons in 'Prima Princessa Presents The Nutcracker'? Yes. Designed to dance along to, this Christmas special features a condensed version of "The Nutcracker" performed by England's Birmingham Royal Ballet as well as ballet step demonstrations featuring students from the School of American Ballet, the official academy of the New York City Ballet.

Where did ballet come from? Ballet is a very graceful style of dance that started out in France over 400 years ago. Back then there was no cable TV, no movies, no CD players, iPods or Radio stations. People entertained themselves by performing for each other, and the most special place of honor to perform was for the King in his court. Way back then, King Louis XIV of France formed the first official classical ballet school and classical ballet company. Soon Ballet and the use of toe-shoes spread throughout the world, becoming very popular in Russia, Italy, Germany, France, England, and eventually in the United States too.

Why are ballet terms in French? There are very specific movements that dancers do in ballet which make it look like ballet. The names for these movements are called ballet terms and they are all in French because ballet started out in France. The original French words are still used to day in dance classes all over the world, no matter what language you speak.

Why do ballerinas dance on their toes? Classical ballet is most known for pointe work, which is when a ballerina goes up on the point of her toes in "toe-shoes." Dancing on her toes in toe-shoes make the ballerina look like she is floating, and flying, effortlessly almost like magic. Dancing in toe-shoes is a very special thing that is only found in Classical ballet and requires years of practice and training. Students have to get permission from their teachers to before the start dancing on pointe or they could injure themselves.

Why don't ballet dancers speak or sing on stage? Ballet is a way of telling a story through movement. Instead of using words dancers use their entire bodies

to express themselves. When they are sad, they move very slowly and sadly to slow and sad music, and when they are happy their entire bodies jump for joy and show happiness to quick moving fun music.

Why do ballerinas wear tutus? Ballerinas wear tutus fluffy skirts that are often sparkly and quite short so the audience can see their leg and footwork easily.

How do I become a ballet dancer? Becoming a ballet dancer takes lots of hard work and training. Children usually start training in ballet starting about 6 or 7 years of age. They attend ballet class once or twice a week. The older they get the more they start going to class until they are taking class everyday. Older students will often tryout for more advanced ballet schools that are run out of ballet companies in cities across the countries. After they graduate from these schools, they audition to dance with a ballet company and soon get to dance all sorts of amazing ballets in front of live audiences.

What is a ballet company? A ballet company is an organization that puts on live ballet performances. In a ballet company there are principal dancers who dance the major roles and then there are corps de ballet dancers who generally dance together in groups as a back ups to the principal dancers.

Where is ballet performed? Classical ballet is performed in a theater on a stage, in front of an audience, with a live orchestra of musicians playing their instruments in the orchestra pit in front of the stage. There is a big curtain in front of the stage. When the ballet starts the curtain opens you see all dancers. What you don't see is the space hidden behind the stage and to the left and right of the stage where more actors props, costumes, and sets are hidden until it is their turn to go on stage.

Where did "The Nutcracker" ballet come from? "The Nutcracker" was first shown at a theater in Russian in 1892. Creating a ballet takes lots of people working together. A famous Russian composer named Peter Tchaikovsky wrote the music to the "The Nutcracker". The choreographers Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov designed the dances in the ballet. The written story or libretto of this ballet is based on the story "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King" by E.T.A. Hoffman. This ballet has two acts and takes place on Christmas Eve. It is one of the most popular ballets today and is shown across the country and the world during the Christmas holiday season.

Can you tell me more about Peter Tchaikovsky? As a boy growing up in Russia during 1800s, Tchaikovsky loved music and excelled at his piano lessons. His parents, however, sent him away to college to study to be a civil servant,

thinking it would be a more stable career than a musician. Eventually, however, Tchaikovsky went back to school for music and then went on to become very famous. His ballets “The Nutcracker”, “Swan Lake” and “The Sleeping Beauty” are still performed around the world today.

Can you tell me the story of the “The Nutcracker” ballet?

The first half of Act I opens with a big festive party on Christmas Eve which is hosted by the parents of a young girl named Clara. At the party Clara’s mysterious Uncle Drosselmeyer gives her a magical nutcracker. Clara is very excited to receive such a wonderful gift. After bedtime when all the guests have gone back home, Clara sneaks back downstairs to visit her nutcracker. She falls asleep by the Christmas tree. Clara dreams her nutcracker comes to life and turns into a handsome prince.

In the second half of Act I, together Clara and the Nutcracker Prince with his army of soldiers battle and defeat an evil Mouse King and his troops. To celebrate the defeat of the Mouse King, Clara and the Nutcracker Prince head off on a magic journey. Their first stop is to meet the Snow Queen who along with her court, dances for Clara and the Nutcracker Prince.

In Act II Clara and the Nutcracker Prince travel to the Land of Sweets and meet the Sugar Plum Fairy. A big celebration is held in honor of Clara, the girl who helped to defeat the evil Mouse King. Many different types of dancers perform for Clara. The ballet ends with Clara waking up back home on Christmas morning to her loving family.

What is theater etiquette? Attending a live theater performance is very exciting. Your ticket, unlike in the movies where you sit wherever you like, tells you what seat you are to sit in. During the performance you need to sit still and not talk so that everyone can concentrate and hear the performance. In the middle of a show there is a short break of about 15 minutes called an intermission during which you can get up and take a break. When the show is over it is time to clap for the cast who comes out on stage.

What is the best way to watch “Prima Princessa Presents The Nutcracker”? When you watch “Prima Princessa Presents The Nutcracker” on public television feel free to get up and dance around. Just make sure to have your parents clear you some space.

Keep on dreaming and keep on dancing! – Prima Princessa Productions