

*THE NUTCRACKER BALLET*  
EDUCATION GUIDE



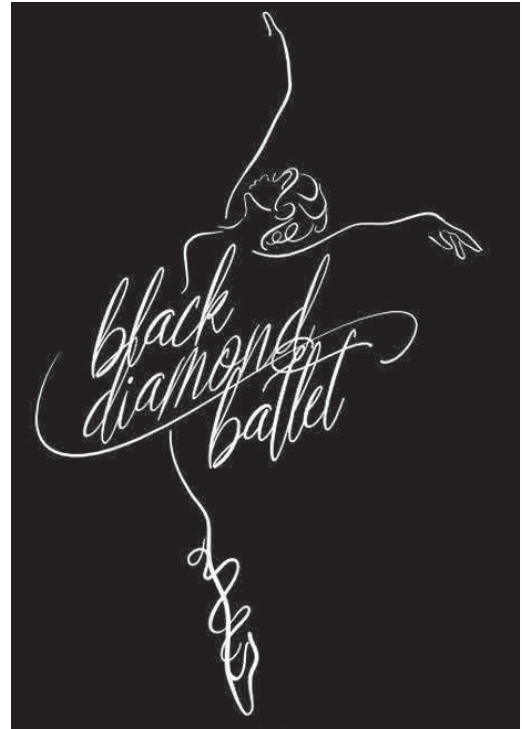
**Black Diamond Ballet's**  
**Production of the**  
*Nutcracker*

**A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS**  
**Aligned with the California State Standards**

Dear Educator,

We understand the value of classroom time, so we thank you for taking the time to enrich your students' experience of the *Nutcracker* ballet! Please enjoy as our dancers breathe life into the classic holiday tale through the beauty of dance, sets, props, and costumes. The production will be 60 minutes and is designed for an audience of all ages. We hope you and your students enjoy both your experience as the audience and the discussions and activities you are able to have in your classroom.

We have included 4 lesson plans to enrich the performance for our student audience. Prior to the performance your students will have a chance to learn about the history and story of the *Nutcracker* as well as learn about the composer and listen to what he created for the *Nutcracker* Ballet.



After attending the performance, you and your students can dig deeper into the story of the *Nutcracker* by using any of our suggested post-performance writing or discussion activities provided. The purpose of this guide is to assist you in preparing your students for Black Diamond Ballet's production of the *Nutcracker* ballet, as well as provide you with several ways in which to integrate the dance experience into your daily academic curriculum.

Creatively Yours,  
Sharon Sobel Idul | Artistic Director  
Black Diamond Ballet

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# CREATING A BALLET

Many different people work together to put on a ballet performance. Together they are called a **ballet company**. The ballet company putting on the *Nutcracker* is called **Black Diamond Ballet**. The entire **cast** of the ballet must attend many practice sessions or **rehearsals** in order to learn the **choreography** or specific movements for their particular character or role.

## The Movement

A **choreographer** chooses the music that he or she feels is appropriate for a new ballet and creates the movements to go with it. *The Nutcracker* ballet uses music created by the composer, Peter Tchaikovsky.



Like other artists, such as musicians, sculptors, and painters, a choreographer uses some basic tools to create a dance. Just as paint is the **medium** or material a painter uses to create a painting, the choreographer takes the dancer's body, the **medium** of the dance, and has it make different kinds of **shapes** (e.g., bent, curved, angular) as it moves through **space** (e.g., size, direction, level) at a certain **tempo** (e.g. fast, slow) and **rhythm** (e.g. a complicated or simple pattern of sound or movement), and with a certain amount of **energy** (e.g., smooth, sharp, light, heavy).

## The Design

The **artistic director** (who is often also the choreographer of the ballet) is responsible for envisioning the look and feel for the entire ballet. The **dancers** execute the choreography. The **musicians** and **conductor** perform the music. The **set designer** thinks up ideas for **scenery** and **props** (short for **properties**) and develops drawings and models depicting how the scenery and props will look. A **lighting designer** develops a lighting scheme that will both create the overall mood envisioned by the artistic director and compliment or highlight the dancers' movements. Electricians, **carpenters**, and **stagehands** build and set up the scenery and lighting. A **costume designer** draws ideas for costumes. A seamstress and wardrobe team sew the costumes so they look like the drawings and keep them in good condition.



# LANGUAGE OF BALLET

*Adapted from SF Ballet Nutcracker Family Guide*

When you take a ballet class, the ballet teacher will use words in French to describe the steps and movements. Ballet schools and dance companies all over the world use the same words in French to describe ballet steps because the first ballet school was established more than 350 years ago in France by King Louis the XIV. You can take a ballet class anywhere in the world – Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America – and you will know what the steps are because the teacher will use the French terms like plié, tendu, and arabesque.

Dance steps are similar to words in a sentence. It takes a lot of words to tell a story. It also takes a lot of dance steps or moves to create a ballet. When you are watching a dance performance, try to recognize some of the dance steps, positions, and vocabulary terms included in this section.

## BASIC BALLET POSITIONS

*Adapted from Inland Pacific Ballet*

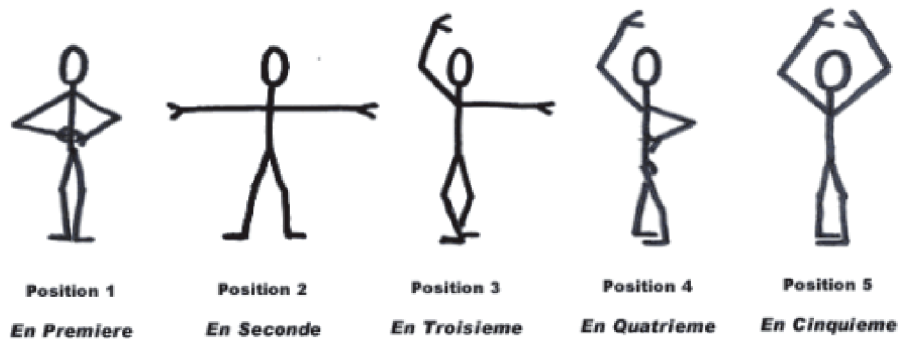
First Position: The balls of the feet are turned out completely. The heels touch each other and the feet face outward, trying to form a straight line.

Second Position: The balls of both feet are turned out completely, with the heels separated by the length of one foot. Similar to the first position, but the feet are spread apart.

Third Position: One foot is in front of the other with the front foot touching the middle of the back foot.

Fourth Position: The feet are placed the same as third position, but one step apart.

Fifth Position: With both feet touching, the toes of each foot reach the heel of the other.



WEBLINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAKfOX0xoLs>