

Black Diamond Ballet's
NUTCRACKER
Presented for Schools



EDUCATION GUIDE
Aligned with the California State Standards

Compiled and created for
BLACK DIAMOND BALLET

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



BLACK DIAMOND BALLETT

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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 the **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.



CORRELATION TO CALIFORNIA STATE STANDARDS

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS: DANCE CONTENT STANDARDS

1.0 Artistic Perception

Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Dance

Black Diamond Ballet's (BDB) production of *The Nutcracker* presents ballet to young people in a way that will have an enduring impact on their lives. BDB presents a high quality full production that connects learning in the arts to movement and music. BDB performances provide opportunities for students to learn about ballet and classical music, and to observe dance movement in ballet. Performers and the Artistic Director use lecture and demonstration models to share dance techniques with students, and encourage students to observe and listen for these components within the program.

2.0 Creative Expression

Creating, Performing, and Participating in Dance

To introduce the featured ballet, educators are given 3 pre-performance lesson plans where students practice various ballet techniques shared with within the lessons. At the performance, dancers perform on stage and showcase how they convey the story and express feelings through movement. Students learn a sequence of movements from the production and then perform the sequence again with the music in their post-performance lesson plan.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Dance

Students are introduced to classical ballet movement through BDB'S varied repertoire. The *Nutcracker* includes music by Russian composer Peter Tchaikovsky and elements of Russian folk dance. Pre-performance lesson plans include an introduction to the country of origin, the original literature, and how the traditions being represented in the performance relate to the student's contemporary world. Students are encouraged to compare and contrast differences between their own dance traditions and those they are learning about.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Responding to, Analyzing, and Making Judgments About Works of Dance

Pre-visit background information is available this study guide and includes a composer biography, an introduction to basic ballet movements, dance vocabulary, and a review of theater etiquette. As students come into the theatre, they will see the stage curtains open and dancers warming up before they are in costume and without sets or stage lighting. They will also see some of the set pieces being moved onto the stage before the curtain closes. A post performance question and answer lesson plan gives students an opportunity to ask questions and discuss what they have seen.

5.0 Connections, Relationship, Applications

Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Dance to Learning in Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers

Students are exposed to high quality production values at BDB's student performance. These include music, lighting, set design, costumes and special effects. The Artistic Director makes a point to discuss the fact that the music is specific for production. Though some productions use a live orchestra, BDB works with music engineers to produce recorded music for *The Nutcracker*. Students also learn that costumes, sets and lighting are specifically designed for each production, and often made in-house by highly skilled designers and artisans.

California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

The *Nutcracker's* activities provide avenues of extension to enhance the students' live ballet experience. The Pre and Post Lessons & Activities outlined in *The Nutcracker Guide for Teachers* align with the California Common Core State Standards and the California Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards in Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts. These activities provide teachers with instructional ideas for adaptation to their own classrooms. Each activity has a Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard identified that connects the overarching content literacy expectations. The activities alone are not designed to fully encompass all aspects of learning outlined in the various standards but provide a value added benefit for student learning.

