



Nutcracker Teacher's Guide

Introduction

This teacher's guide is intended to serve as an introductory set of guidelines and a framework for classes to experience and enjoy the *Nutcracker* ballet at the Paramount Theatre. This excursion will provide unlimited educational opportunities for your students. When planning your trip, consider three general and connected components to frame your educational view. These are: 1) the *Nutcracker* ballet, 2) the symphony orchestra music provided by members of the Oakland East Bay Symphony under Conductor Michael Morgan, and 3) the history and architecture of the Paramount Theatre. Begin by aligning your grade level or subject area of focus to the California Content Standards for both academic planning and trip justification for your school district. Go to the California Department of Education website (www.cde.gov), then to the Curriculum & Instruction page. Find the Content Standards for your grade level. Most applicable will be the English Language Arts, History-Social Science, and the Visual and Performing Arts standards for dance, music, theater, and visual arts.

Next, we have provided a framework for identifying some of the elements of your outing so that you may prepare your students in advance. By doing this, you may find that they will become more aware of the details of the experience which may allow them to appreciate and enjoy the ballet to a greater degree. The following framework of topics are intended to be a starting place for further teacher or student research. A few key resources have been listed for you to explore. The specific elements may also be used to guide you through the state content standards for alignment. After identifying some basic elements, you might consider introducing them before attending the ballet. For example, you could have your students read and review the enclosed Story of the Nutcracker, and the Paramount Theatre Etiquette brochure prior to attending. If you have additional time, use the concepts below to guide your continued exploration of the *Nutcracker* ballet. You will notice that some of the following concepts have no comments. These are also intended for you to research independently. We sincerely hope that this guide will provide you and your students with a glimpse toward furthering your journey and exploration into the magic of the Nutcracker!

Preparing Students for the Trip

Nutcracker Content Elements to Explore

4. Ballet

- Oakland Ballet Company
Visit the website at www.OaklandBallet.org
- History of Nutcracker ballet
- Equipment
 - Pointe Shoes
 - Ballet Slippers

5. Nutcracker

- Story
Discover the many story variations of the Nutcracker.
- Nutcracker Story from the ballet program
Reading the enclosed Oakland Ballet story in class will also save time at the theater. You and your students will be ready to enjoy the building and the performance!
- E.T.A. Hoffmann Story
Explore the original 1816 Nutcracker story by Hoffmann. Look for *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*.
- Nutcracker Geography
- Sets
- Costumes
- Props
There are many props in the ballet to notice. You could bring in a Nutcracker for your students to see in class.
- History of Nutcracker Ballets: World and US
- Nutcracker Foods and Drinks
Your students will probably enjoy tasting some of these Nutcracker delights! The following dances appear in order during Act II.
 - Spanish Chocolate
 - Arabian Coffee
 - Chinese Tea
 - Russian Licorice
 - French Bon Bons
 - Gingersnaps
 - Sugar Plums

3. Oakland East Bay Symphony

Oakland Ballet Company's presentation of *Nutcracker* features the live music of the members of the Oakland East Bay Symphony. The Paramount's orchestra pit will be lowered for the performance. This will

be an excellent opportunity for your students to see the musicians. If your seats are on the orchestra level, your students can observe them before the performance or during intermission. If your seats are in the balcony, you will be treated to a view of both the orchestra and the dancers. Learn more by visiting the Oakland East Bay Symphony website at www.oeps.org.

4. Nutcracker Music

The entire symphony could be played for your students before attending the ballet. During this time, connections could be made with the story so the children anticipate each dance. Look for *The Nutcracker Op. 71 Ballet* in two acts by Tchaikovsky.

5. Symphony Orchestra and Instruments

When listening to the music in class, instruments can be pointed out and discussed. Pictures of the instruments can be shown.

6. Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Learn about the composer through biography.

7. Paramount Theatre: Architecture/Art/Oakland History

By learning more about the Paramount Theatre, you and your students will not only appreciate the setting to a greater degree, but through this awareness help to preserve this magnificent work of art for future generations. National Register of Historic Places in 1973, California Registered Historic Landmark in 1976, U.S. National Historic Landmark in 1977

- Art Deco

Grass, flowers, leaves, and vines

Look for this repeating theme at the Paramount.

- Theater tour

To prepare for your trip, consider taking the Paramount Theatre tour. It is offered on the first and third Saturdays of the month at 10:00 A.M. For an additional resource, the book, [The Oakland Paramount](#), text by Susannah Harris Stone is available for purchase on the tour. Learn more by visiting the Theatre website at www.paramounttheatre.com. Find "Theatre History," and "Theatre Tours."

Recommended Procedures and Guidelines at the Paramount Theater

Etiquette Preparation

Kindly review the enclosed Paramount Theatre handout. Please also teach and remind your students to keep their feet from touching the seat in front of them. Not only is the vibration and sound a distraction to others, but students should be encouraged to care for and help preserve the splendors of the Paramount Theatre for future patrons. Please remind students to refrain from talking and whispering during the performance including the overture. This creates a distraction to those who are trying to listen to the music. Cell phones should be turned to silent or off.

Student Safety

If on a field trip as a class, we recommend that each child wear a discreet name tag fastened to their school clothing and not to their outer garment. By doing this, the tag will remain with the child even if they remove their jacket and misplace it. The tag should include the student's first and last name, school, school phone number, and teacher's name. Teachers should bring a student roster with emergency phone numbers.

Please also remember to provide adult supervision of your students at all times and to count your students periodically. Because of the large crowds and pedestrian traffic in the hall areas, we recommend that you move your students through the theater in a single or double line formation. By doing this, hallway space will be conserved. This will allow for a more efficient flow of traffic, and spaces can be shared without blocking passages. Not only will your students be in a configuration that will be easier to count, but the entire audience will be seated more efficiently, reducing the chances of delay.

Organizing lunch

Please help us preserve the theater by being mindful that food, drinks, candy, and gum are not permitted in the Paramount. We realize that organizing lunch may be a challenge, especially if it is raining. You might consider having your students eat an early or late lunch, combined with a hearty snack before or after entering the theater. Backpacks are not permitted in the theater.

After the trip

1. Writing

- Journals
- Thank you letters

Since your tickets were provided courtesy of the Oakland Ballet Company and generous grants from the Chevron, Bank of America, Clorox Foundation, and Oakland Cultural Arts Funding Program, thank you letters may be forwarded to:

Oakland Ballet Company
2201 Broadway Suite 206
Oakland, CA 94612

Please help teach and remind your students that because they have received a gift, courteous conduct and thank you notes are reasonable expectations. Thank you for attending our production. We hope it will inspire your students to continue exploring the art of ballet in the future!