

# The Nutcracker

Austin's Holiday Tradition

## Welcome

**Footnotes** is a performance guide published by the Community OutReach and Education (C.O.R.E.) Department of Ballet Austin. We hope this **Footnotes** furthers your enjoyment of our performance, **The Nutcracker**.



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# The Nutcracker

Ballet Austin Academy, the 4th largest in the nation, enrolls more than 1000 students annually.



Ballet Austin II employs 10 young professional dancers, all graduates from Ballet Austin's Summer Intensive Program.

Cover Photo: Dancers Margot Brown and Allen Abrams

Photography by Lucia Uhl

**W**hen people see a ballet they sometimes think only of the dancers on stage. But there are many other people involved in creating ballets. They work together, or **collaborate**, in making the performance. Let's take a closer look at some of the collaborators that work together to bring you *The Nutcracker*.

## The Academy Executive Director — Bill Piner

As Academy Executive Director, Bill Piner runs the business side of the school, such as hiring employees and managing the budget. He also takes care of the **artistic** or **creative** side, which is everything involving dance. This includes working with the Academy Principal, Lynne Short, and the dance teachers to develop the **curriculum**, what the students learn. Bill makes sure each student has a positive experience learning many things in addition to ballet.

He explains, "Every stage of a dancer's training and development is important. We teach students how to think 'outside the box' and create by themselves. This improves self-confidence, self-esteem, and develops creative problem solving skills, in addition to learning ballet."

Bill teaches level Four; these students are 10 to 12 years old and take



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dance classes two to four times per week. He finds this level particularly rewarding as the students show

**"We teach students how to think 'outside the box' and create by themselves."**

great changes in their bodies and in their dance skills during this time.

Bill also enjoys the opportunity to work with the younger students

who perform roles such as mice and angels in *The Nutcracker*. He describes, "While they wait in the wings, the stage lights shine on the children's faces and you can see their excitement. I remember that feeling of being in awe of the whole experience." Watching the children perform, many for the first time, keeps *The Nutcracker* fresh for Bill Piner year after year.

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Ballet Austin Academy students perform alongside the professional dancers. Children play the parts of angels, soldiers, rats, mice, Chinese, Bon Bons, party girls and boys and even the lead roles of Clara and Fritz.



Students audition for *The Nutcracker* each year in early fall.

## The Academy Administrator – Billie Buddenhagen

**B**illie Buddenhagen assists Ballet Austin Academy students with registration and class placement. For *The Nutcracker*, she coordinates the 150 plus, performing students and the 20–25 parent volunteers needed for each performance. This takes an enormous

amount of organization and hard work.

**“The week leading up to production, I simply cannot sleep because I’m so excited.”**

“I have the best role. Getting to know and work with all the children and parents is such fun,” says Billie. Although she has worked with *The Nutcracker* for many seasons, Billie enjoys each one. She explains, “The week leading up to production I simply cannot sleep because I’m so excited.”

Billie’s involvement with Ballet Austin began as the parent of

then fifth grader, Matthew Bledsoe, enrolled in the Academy.

Matthew began training away from home at age 14. He is now a dancer with the Zurich Ballet in Switzerland. Billie sees working with the students and their families as a way to “give back” to the ballet as she knows someone else has done for her son.

Diane Lynette



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Stay tuned for our next issue of *Footnotes* to learn about other collaborators.

# The Nutcracker is about....

Do you know what the snowflakes are made out of?

Tiny pieces of paper dropped from the ceiling.



The performing dolls in the party scene are named Harlequin and Columbine. This comes from the 14th century Italian style of theater, *commedia del' arte*.



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## Act 1

It is Christmas Eve at the Silberhaus home, which is beautifully decorated with lights and a giant Christmas tree. The family prepares for a holiday party while the children, Clara and Fritz, anxiously await the arrival of the guests and the distribution of presents. Finally, the guests arrive and the celebration begins. Clara receives a beautiful doll cradle and her brother Fritz receives a trumpet.

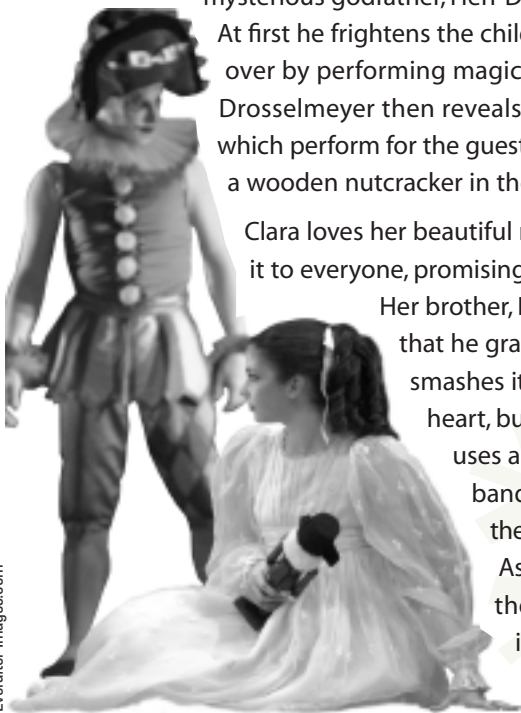
Suddenly, a shadow passes over the room as Clara's mysterious godfather, Herr Drosselmeyer, appears.

At first he frightens the children, but he wins them over by performing magic tricks. Herr Drosselmeyer then reveals two life-size dolls which perform for the guests. He also gives Clara a wooden nutcracker in the shape of a soldier.

Clara loves her beautiful nutcracker and shows it to everyone, promising to cherish it forever.

Her brother, Fritz, gets so jealous that he grabs the nutcracker and smashes it! This breaks Clara's heart, but Herr Drosselmeyer uses a handkerchief as a bandage to repair it and the celebration continues.

As midnight approaches, the guests leave and it seems the evening is over.



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## Everything in the Sugar Plum of sugar



## Begin

Family holiday party at the Silberhaus home. Children receive presents.

Herr Drosselmeyer's magic tricks, dancing dolls appear. Clara receives a nutcracker.



Spanish chocolate dance



The nutcracker is transformed. He leads toy soldiers into battle against the Rat King.



Arabian coffee dance

Clara strikes the Rat King on the head and saves the day!

# The Nutcracker is about....

## the Kingdom of Fairy is made and spice!



Lucia Uhl

Can you figure out how Clara's bed moves?

There is a stagehand, light and scenery operator, under the bed.



Pyotr Tchaikovsky, composer of *The Nutcracker Suite*, worked in the legal field before studying music at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in Russia.



After graduating in 1865, Tchaikovsky taught music theory at the Russian Musical Society. Within five years, he produced his first composition, inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.



In addition to *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky also composed the music for the ballets *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Fritz breaks the nutcracker. Herr Drosselmeyer bandages it with his handkerchief.



After everyone goes to bed, Clara sneaks back into the parlor.

Clara is frightened by mice and rats.



Chinese tea dance

Everyone has gone to bed except for Clara, who sneaks back into the parlor to care for her injured nutcracker. Under cover of night, a pack of mice invade the parlor followed by a pack of rats! This frightens Clara terribly, but Herr Drosselmeyer's magic protects her and the rats retreat. A regiment of toy soldiers appears, led by Clara's nutcracker, who has been transformed into a life-size soldier doll. The nutcracker leads his troops into a fierce battle against the rats. Just when it looks like the nutcracker will win, the Rat King overcomes him. It seems the battle is lost, when suddenly, Clara strikes the Rat King on the head and saves the day! Because of Clara's bravery, the nutcracker is transformed into a handsome prince. The Prince leads Clara into the enchanted Land of Snow where they meet the Snow Queen and King.

### Act 2

The sleigh brings Clara and the Nutcracker Prince to the Land of Sweets. Here the Sugar Plum Fairy presents an assortment of her "sweets" to thank Clara and the Prince. The entertainment includes the Spanish chocolate dance, Arabian coffee dance, Chinese tea dance, Russian dancers, French marzipan dancers, Mother Ginger and her Bon Bons, and the Waltz of the Flowers. The Sugar Plum Fairy then dances a special dance, after which the entire court joins her in a final dance.



Kingdom of the Sugarplum Fairy

## End

Suddenly, as if by magic, Clara awakens to find herself alone in her own home. She wonders if, in fact, her adventure was only a dream. What do you think?

Clara wakes up in her bed. Was it all a dream?

Dancing in the Kingdom of the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Meet the Snow Queen in the Land of Snow.

# Understanding *The Nutcracker*

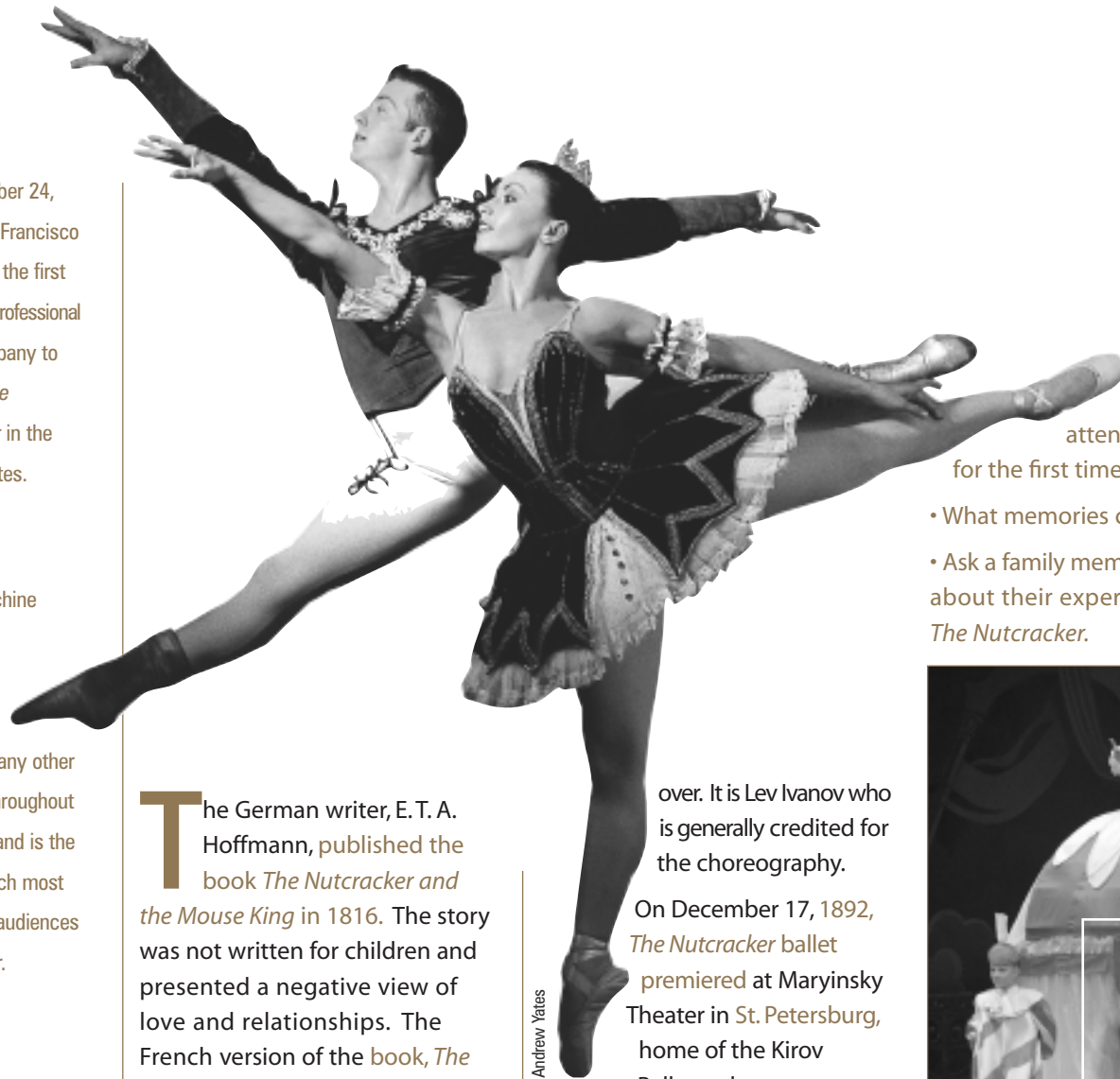
On December 24, 1944, San Francisco Ballet was the first American professional ballet company to premier *The Nutcracker* in the United States.



The Balanchine production of *The Nutcracker* inspired many other versions throughout the world and is the one in which most American audiences are familiar.



The Kirov Ballet version is considered the "original" version of *The Nutcracker* as its music and staging are the closest to the production first created by Ivanov and Tchaikovsky over a century ago.



Andrew Yates

The German writer, E. T. A. Hoffmann, published the book *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* in 1816. The story was not written for children and presented a negative view of love and relationships. The French version of the book, *The Nutcracker of Nuremberg*, written by Alexander Dumas, is most like children's tale we see in the ballets performed today.

In 1890, *The Nutcracker* ballet began as a collaboration between A. Vsevolozhsky, the director of Imperial Theatres in Russia, Marius Petipa, the senior ballet master to the Tsar, and the composer, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Petipa presented Tchaikovsky with a detailed explanation of the type of music he wanted for each dance, including specific rhythms, tempos, and melodies. Petipa then became ill and his assistant, Lev Ivanov, took

over. It is Lev Ivanov who is generally credited for the choreography.

On December 17, 1892, *The Nutcracker* ballet premiered at Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, home of the Kirov Ballet today.

In 1954, George Balanchine created a new **staging**, the way a production is presented on stage, of *The Nutcracker* for New York City Ballet. Balanchine studied at the Maryinsky school and dancers from the original production coached him.

Today, ballet companies bring originality to the traditional story and interest to adult audiences. For many, attending *The Nutcracker* has become a family tradition spanning generations.

- When did you attend *The Nutcracker* for the first time?
- What memories come to mind?
- Ask a family member or a friend about their experience with *The Nutcracker*.



William Dailey

- In 1962, Ballet Austin premiered *The Nutcracker* in Austin, Texas.
- In 1997, Ballet Austin started the tradition of local celebrities playing the role of Mother Ginger.
- In 1999, Stephen Mills premiered his original version of *The Nutcracker*.

# Spotlight: The Life of BonBons

**F**or many Ballet Austin Academy students, dancing in *The Nutcracker* is an incredible honor and a huge commitment. Anne Daily, one of many past Bon Bons, shares her experience with us.

Bon Bons are students from the Youth and Intermediate levels

William Dailey



William Dailey

of the Academy. They rehearse every Saturday, from September to December for 1 1/2 hours, in addition to their regular dance schedule. They attend costume fittings, pose for special photographs, and have a busy performance schedule. Being a part of *The Nutcracker* cast is the dancers' main focus for almost three months.

Anne describes one of her most memorable experiences, "Mother Ginger's skirt did not open properly, and I did not begin dancing

until after I heard people crying, go Anne!" While waiting in the wings, sides of the stage, she tells herself, "Remember to smile!"

Anne began dancing at around three years of age. She joined the Ballet Austin Academy at 10 years old. She also takes piano classes and participates in drama at her school. "It is challenging to keep up with homework and a busy schedule," Anne explains.

William Dailey



At one point, Anne wanted to stop dancing. With her parents' encouragement, she continued. Anne says, "I am so glad I kept dancing. I love being on stage and performing. I don't think I will ever stop."



Some former Mother Gingers are:

**Mayor Will Wynn**, current mayor of Austin

**Michael Dell**, chairman, Dell

**Ann Richards**, former governor of Texas

**Lance Armstrong**, 7-time winner of the Tour de France

**Evan Smith**, editor, *Texas Monthly Magazine*

**Ray Benson**, Grammy winning singer

**Robert Rodriguez**, movie director and screenwriter

**Lucy Johnson**, daughter of former president Lyndon B. Johnson



# The Audience: the Final Collaborator

## Go online...

For more information about

*The Nutcracker* ballet,

[www.nutcrackerballet.net](http://www.nutcrackerballet.net)

For more information about Tchaikovsky,

[www.geocities.com/vienna/5648](http://www.geocities.com/vienna/5648)

For more information on student activities,

[www.kidsdomain.com](http://www.kidsdomain.com)

[www.nycballet.com](http://www.nycballet.com)

## Watch...

- Baryshnikov's *The Nutcracker*, 1977 film starring Mikhail Baryshnikov.
- *The Nutcracker Prince*, 1990 animated film, starring voices Keifer Sutherland, Megan Follows, and Phyllis Diller.
- George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* – 1993 film of New York City Ballet, starring Darci Kistler, Damien Woetzel, Kyra Nichols, and Macauley Culkin.

## Read...

- *The Illustrated Book of Ballet Stories*, by Barbara Newman, published by Dorling Kindersley, 1997.
- The story of *The Nutcracker Ballet*, by Deborah Hautzig. Illustrated by Diane Goode, published by Random House, 1983.

## Listen to...

*The Nutcracker*, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, 1892



For more information about Ballet Austin's Academy visit [www.balletaustin.org](http://www.balletaustin.org) or call 476-9051.

**T**he Ballet Austin Academy is the official school of Ballet Austin and is committed to providing the highest quality dance instruction to students of all ages, from beginner to professional dancer.

Founded in 1956, the Ballet Austin Academy offers classical ballet, creative movement, modern, jazz, character, and Pilates classes. The Academy has a dual focus, providing recreational instruction as well as intensive instruction for professional track students.

**You, the members of the audience, are the most important collaborator. The dancers appreciate your applause and attention. Please join us in sharing the magic of Ballet Austin's**

# The Nutcracker.

BALLET  
*Austin*

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