



THE NUTCRACKER:

**a magical tale
in mount vernon**



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Welcome to the BSO Midweeks!

On behalf of today's conductor Austin Chanu, the members of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and the BSO Education Department, we are delighted to welcome you to our 2023-2024 Midweek Concert Series. We are thrilled to have you join us here at the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall.

This year we are celebrating 100 years of Midweek Concerts! The BSO's Midweek Concert Series is not only the longest running education initiative at the BSO, but the first regular educational concert series of any orchestra in the country. Our rich history of educational programming started with the first Midweek Concert on February 16, 1924, and we are pleased to be providing students from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Delaware, Washington, D.C., and beyond with exciting and engaging education concerts to this day.

This Midweek Concert Season, we present four concerts: *Music to Give You Goosebumps*, *The Nutcracker: A Magical Tale in Mount Vernon*, *Jazzing the Symphony*, and *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra*. Each concert incorporates an Arts-Integrated, STEAM-Activated approach to create a relevant, interactive, and interdisciplinary experience.

About This Guide

On the next pages you will find the Teachers' Guide for *The Nutcracker: A Magical Tale in Mount Vernon*, written by a highly skilled group of Maryland educators with specialism in Music, Drama, Science, English/Language Arts, and Visual Arts, led by award-winning curriculum writer and editor, Richard McCready.

At the start of the guide is a "Snapshot" of your concert experience. This will give you a sense of what to expect in the concert, along with some thoughts about the various curricular connections, and music we suggest you listen to in the classroom before the performance.

Beyond the Snapshot pages you will find a variety of activities called "Pirouettes" to signify the various directions that you can explore in order to prepare for this concert. Each Pirouette may be used in any order you wish. We have also highlighted the various cross-curricular links that align with each Pirouette so that you may jump to areas that are of particular interest to you and your students. We hope that your students try at least one activity prior to coming to the concert so they can make the most of their live experience at the Meyerhoff.

Each activity is written to encourage students' natural sense of creativity and exploration. They will be able to read the activity pages or you can read the activities with them. Some of the activities are scientific, some are movement games, some employ and encourage art skills, and some involve storytelling and role-play. You best know your students, their capabilities, and their interests. You should encourage students to try the activities that you feel most appropriate for them and for your classroom. Encourage other teachers in your building to try some of the activities as well.



These guides are designed and intended as a mere starting point for exploration, with the essential piece being the work that is created by the student, for the student. Our ultimate goal is to facilitate a strong connection between the music performed by the BSO and the everyday lives of your students, so that they may continue to take music with them wherever they go.

Please feel free to share your students' work with us at the BSO—we love to see where the ideas from these activities might take your students and all the inspired, arts-integrated work they will produce in the classroom. If you wish to share any materials with us at the BSO, please send them to education@bsomusic.org.

We hope you enjoy this guide, your explorations that are yet to come, the concert experience, and sharing your creative work with us.

Warmly,

Brian Precht
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The Nutcracker: A Magical Tale in Mount Vernon **Concert Program**

Below is the list of pieces that will be performed on *The Nutcracker: A Magical Tale in Mount Vernon* Midweek Concert. Please take a moment to listen to these pieces in advance of the concert on YouTube, Spotify, or iTunes.

All sections from *The Nutcracker* by **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**.

- ❖ Overture miniature
- ❖ Scene XI “Clara and the Prince”
- ❖ “Spanish Dance” (Fanfare/Le chocolat)
- ❖ “Arabian Dance” (Spirits/Le café)
- ❖ “Chinese Dance” (Shimmer/Le thé)
- ❖ “Russian Dance” (Fireworks/Trépak)
- ❖ “Dance of the Reed Flutes” (Naiads/Les Mirlitons)
- ❖ “Waltz of the Flowers”
- ❖ Tarantella (Cavalier Variation)
- ❖ “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy”
- ❖ Coda
- ❖ Final Waltz and Apotheosis



The Nutcracker: A Magical Tale in Mount Vernon **Snapshot for Teachers and Students**

Today's concert features several selections from Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*, one of his most famous works, and one that is synonymous with the Holiday season. Written in 1892, this ballet is based on a short story by E.T.A. Hoffman called *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*. Traditionally set on Christmas Eve, the story of *The Nutcracker* varies from production to production. This version of *The Nutcracker* is set right here in Baltimore!

Ballet is a form of dance that began in the court of King Louis XIV, also known as the "Sun King." The King loved to dance, and he hired dancers to perform for his court. At the age of 18, King Louis established the first school for ballet. The job of a ballet dancer is to tell a story through dancing, instead of using words. This is done by using several different dance steps, as well as through the use of **pantomime**, or using facial expressions and body language instead of speech.

The Nutcracker opens with a "miniature overture." An **overture** is a piece of music meant to open a concert or a larger production, in this case a ballet. Sometimes an overture will include themes from throughout the show, and other times it is a unique piece of music. *The Nutcracker's* "miniature overture" falls into the latter category. This overture only uses high voiced instruments, which makes it sound light, playful, and fluffy, like snow falling from the sky.

The march, also known as the "March of the Toy Soldiers," follows the overture. A **march** is a piece of music with a strong rhythm meant to be marched to. The "March of the Toy Soldiers" plays as the children receive their gifts on Christmas Eve.

After the march, we see a battle! This battle is between the toy soldiers, led by the Nutcracker, and the mice, led by the Rat King. The music is intense and driving as the mice and soldiers duke it out. A big contrast from the previous two selections!

Act two of the ballet features a set of dances that take place in the Land of Sweets. They celebrate with sweet treats from around the world – chocolate from Spain, tea from China, coffee from Arabia, and candy canes from Russia. As the celebration continues, Marzipan shepherds play upon their flutes until the ruler of the Land of Sweets, the Sugar Plum Fairy, performs her own dance. Following this, an extravagant string of flowers perform a charming waltz. As the celebration comes to a close, a final waltz is performed by all of the subjects of the Land of Sweets.



The Nutcracker: A Magical Tale in Mount Vernon **Snapshot for Teachers and Students**

Now that you've read a bit about the original production of *The Nutcracker*, it's time to learn about *The Nutcracker: A Magical Tale in Mount Vernon*! This version of *The Nutcracker* puts a unique Baltimore twist on the original, featuring lots of familiar locations, sights, and scenes for the residents of Baltimore. Read more about it below!

Our story begins in the heart of Mt. Vernon where friends and family meet as they stroll the streets during a frosty December in 2019.

Close friends and family meet at the Blake family home where they come together for their annual holiday party. Presents, dancing and laughter fill their home until the eccentric Aunt Dee arrives with wonderful presents for all of the children. The most special gift of all goes to Grace Blake. It is an unusual doll- a Nutcracker!

After the festivities come to a close, the guests go home for the night and the Blake family settle into their beds. An awakened Grace, longing to see her Nutcracker doll, sneaks into the darkened family room. Mice, scurrying to find food, stumble upon the Nutcracker. They taunt and chase Grace with it until Aunt Dee unexpectedly appears. She transforms the Nutcracker doll into a life-sized soldier doll. Outside the footsteps of the Blake family home, a battle begins between toy soldiers led by the Nutcracker and mice led by a Rat King.

Afraid for the Nutcracker's life, Grace defeats the Rat King by striking him with her shoe. Aunt Dee revives the Nutcracker and transforms him into a real live prince! Aunt Dee and the Nutcracker Prince lead Grace through the falling snow. On their journey, they discover all the magic that surrounds her in her neighborhood.

As the sun rises and the mist fades, Grace and the Nutcracker Prince are greeted by the Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier. Her trusted Emcee guides Grace and the Nutcracker Prince through a dazzling display of culture, creativity, and cuisine.

They encounter the fabulous experience of Restaurante Tio Pepe and the Shimmer of musical notes floating through Mt. Vernon from the Peabody Conservatory and the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. The Egyptian Spirits from the Walters Art Gallery conjure stories from long ago, and exuberant Fireworks from the annual Monument Lighting dazzle the sky. The intriguing Naiad sculpture at Mt. Vernon Park lures them with watery beauty and Candy Canes come to life with amusement and fun. The dancing flowers from the Flower Mart twirl around the sweet and tart Lemon Sticks, and the day is topped off with a delightful dancing treat from the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.

After seeing the wonders all around them, Aunt Dee safely accompanies Grace back home where all is quiet. Grace is forever changed knowing that magic lives all around her every day!



Pirouette One: Make a Snow Sculpture



Create amazing snow sculptures using people as snow! Then let the sculptures melt, transform into flurries, fly around, and come together again for a new sculpture!





Activity

Choose someone who will play the role of the sculptor (leader) in the room. At first the leader can be the teacher or another adult, but it is also fun to have someone else be the leader once everyone knows how to play the game. When the leader says “fly, snow, fly!” everyone else in the room should dance quickly around the room like snowflakes floating through the air in a snowstorm. How lightly and quickly can you move around the space? How much of the floor can your feet touch?

When the leader says “run and freeze!” everyone should run into the center of the room and take a position where you are lightly touching any part of another person, but there is still space between you. Be very still and very quiet. You are a giant frozen blob of ice!

Now the leader will sculpt the ice into a statue. He or she will touch anyone that he wants to move out of the ice blob and say “melt away!” Instantly that person should melt *SLOWLY* to the ground and then pull themselves out of the ice blob and go to the edges of the room. What is left in the center of the room is the ice sculpture!

Whenever the leader is done make the ice sculpture, they say “circle!” Everyone walks around the room in a big wide circle and look at the sculpture in the center from all angles. Think about what this sculpture looks like. Is there a story here? How does it make you feel? If this was a sculpture in a museum, what title would you give it?

Now the leader asks everyone to share their title ideas with the whole room while the people in the ice sculpture *STILL REMAIN FROZEN*. Then the leader says “melt away!” again and the center sculpture *SLOWLY* melts together into a giant puddle in the middle of the room.

Shake it off and do it again!



Variations

1. Have the leader call out a word – an emotion, color, place name, etc. – before saying “run and freeze!” Everyone then should try to freeze in a position that gives the same feeling of that word, and the leader tries to sculpt a giant statue that might have that title.
2. Have the giant finished statue transform or change whenever the leader calls out “transform to _____!” For instance, the leader could construct a “sad” sculpture and then call out “transform to happy!”
3. The Water Cycle: Have the full class melt together into a giant puddle of water, and then have the water turn into gas by becoming hotter and hotter until it is boiling. Now let the water molecules dance around the air, come together to form clouds, and then rain back down to the ground.
4. Try including music as part of the activity! Have your snowflakes fly around the room to music you chose. Stop the music to get the snowflakes to come together, and start it again for the chosen snowflakes to “melt away.” How does the music you choose change how the snowflakes dance?



Curriculum Connections

Fine Arts Standards

❖ Creating

- 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

❖ Performing

- 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

❖ Connecting

- 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Pirouette Two: Moving and Playing in the Snow



FINE ARTS



DANCE



MUSIC



CREATING



RESPONDING



CONNECTING

What do snowflakes look like? What do they sound like? This activity will give you the opportunity to create what snow looks like in movement, as well as what it sounds like using instrumental sounds.





Activity

What does a snowflake look like? What does it look like when it falls? What does it sound like? Does it fall more like how leaves fall, or how rain falls?

Part One: Share with a classmate as you create what you imagine is the *sound* of snow falling. Is it loud or quiet (*forte* or *piano*)? Is it fast or slow (*presto* or *largo*)? Find an instrument that gives your sound of snow. Xylophones/glockenspiels/bells-play pentatonic (may be black bars, may be C/D/E/G/A) sleigh bells/jingle bells, triangles, finger cymbals, guiros/rhythm sticks, sand blocks, brushing hands, sliding feet, tapping chair, etc.

Part Two: Think about how snow *looks* when it falls. How can you move your body to imitate snow? Explore ways you can “move” your snowfall, making it lighter and heavier, more or less snow, smaller or larger snowflakes, etc.

Now, divide the class. Have one group play the sounds of snow while the other half moves to the sounds. Switch groups to allow the opportunity to try both activities. Try joining movements with another classmate, or match sounds with another player.

Extension: Play Waltz of the Flowers from The Nutcracker and give the class an opportunity to move or play along, making it their own snowscape.



Curriculum Connections

Fine Arts Standards

❖ Creating

- 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

❖ Responding

- 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

❖ Connecting

- 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Pirouette Three: Snowflakes From Me to Thee



Every snowflake is different. Every person is different. This activity will give you the opportunity to answer questions about yourself (anonymously) and to send an affirmation/a word of encouragement to someone else.



Activity

Materials: piece of white or light color paper, scissors, pen/pencil/marker

Cut out a snowflake. [Here](#) is a link to a snowflake tutorial, and [here](#) is a link to a printable snowflake to print and cut out. Feel free to create more or less detailed snowflakes. This will have information about you, as well as a positive message or affirmation for a classmate, friend, or family member.



SIDE ONE: DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME.

Write the answers any of the following questions on one side of the snowflake (Feel free to add to this list):

1. What is your favorite color?
2. What city, state or country would you like to visit?
3. What is your favorite food?
4. Coolest gift you ever received?
5. What pet(s) do you have?
6. Favorite footwear?
(Boots/slippers/sandals/sneakers...)
7. Favorite song or performing artist?
8. What well-known person would you like to meet?
9. What is your best attribute? Great listener/funny/kind/helpful/teamworker

SIDE TWO: Write a positive message that anyone could appreciate. Examples are:

- You have a great/warm smile
- I like your style
- Your eyes are a cool color
- You are a great friend
- You light up a room

Place the snowflake in a basket or on a box. Choose a snowflake, read both sides, and enjoy the warmth! Have your classmates, friends, or family read them as well. This is also a great way to lift your own spirits!



Curriculum Connections

Fine Arts Standards

❖ **Creating**

- 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

❖ **Connecting**

- 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Resources

❖ **Paper Snowflake Tutorial**

<https://www.firstpalette.com/craft/paper-snowflake.html>

❖ **Printable Paper Snowflake Templates**

<https://www.firstpalette.com/printable/snowflake.html>



Pirouette Four: What is a Nutcracker?



What is a nutcracker? Let's find out about nutcrackers and then make our own piece of nutcracker art.



Nutcrackers are a type of doll. They originated in the late 17th century. They were often given as gifts. Prior to the mid-19th century, they were all functional. Now, many nutcrackers are decorative. You can watch how nutcrackers are made [here](#). Nutcrackers were originally made for cracking nuts. You put a nut in the nutcracker's mouth, push down on a lever, and as if by magic, you have a nut ready to eat.

At some point in time due to the giving of nutcrackers as gifts, it became associated with Christmas and Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker* made them even more popular. While many people use them today as a Christmas decoration, they started as toy soldiers and you can find them dressed in all kinds of ways. Are you ready to make some art? Let's draw a nutcracker and dress it up any way you want to.



Activity

Think of a person you would like to give a gift to. Now brainstorm things that make this person special to you and things that your special person likes. Imagine an outfit that represents the ideas you have come up with. Maybe your nutcracker is a dancer, a fisherman, a fireman, or a teacher, just to name a few. Use these ideas to dress your own nutcracker drawing.

Supplies:

12x18 white drawing paper

Pencil

Eraser

Crayons, markers, or colored pencil

Black Sharpie (suggested)

Directions:

1. Either on your own or following the step-by-step on the next page, using pencil, draw your own nutcracker.
2. With pencil, draw the outfit you would like your nutcracker to be wearing.
3. Outline your nutcracker with black Sharpie.
4. Color your nutcracker with crayons, markers, or colored pencils.





Curriculum Connections

Fine Arts Standards

❖ **Creating**

- 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

❖ **Performing**

- 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

❖ **Connecting**

- 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Resources

❖ **NUTCRACKERS | How It's Made**

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



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