

Preshow theatre etiquette to discuss with your class before coming:

1. When you enter the majestic Fox theatre, you've entered a magical space. From the very first step through its beautiful front doors until you exit, you will want to keep your eyes and ears open. To do this best, your mouths are in the listening position (closed:)
2. As you follow your usher *quietly* through the lobby, notice the beautiful mirrors, chandeliers, stairway and 'gilded' woodwork.
3. When you enter the 'house' (where the seats are) you will enter the most beautiful and elegant space of the Fox Theatre. Take time to notice everything! Look up, look down, look to both sides, look forward, look back. Around 9:45 a.m., dancers will "warm up" on stage.
4. Once your group is seated in the theatre, everyone is expected to stay in their seats. Quiet conversation with your seat partner is allowed before the show, but with *theatre* voices -we call them 3" voices (voices that can only be heard 3"away).
5. No food or drinks are allowed in the theatre.

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And now a word about ballet: **Ballet** (pronounced **Bal•lay**). Ballet is a French word referring to a theatrical dance performance, or, to the disciplined study of classical dance.

Even though Ballet is a French word referring to a form of dance traced as far back as the 1400's in the French royal court, today it is a universal language understood by audiences and dancers worldwide.

Prairie Nutcracker is a ballet. This means that it is a story danced in costumes to music on a stage with lights and scenery. No words are necessary to understand the story. To the audience, the dancers seem to float across stage as if from a magical world. To a dancer, this effortless effect comes from years and years of hard training.

Here are a few questions often asked of a dancer:

- **When should you begin ballet lessons?** Not until age 7 or 8. Before that muscles are too soft and starting too young can harm tender muscles.
- **How long does training take?** From 7 to 10 years, much like the study of piano.
- **Do you need any special equipment?** You need patience, determination, self-discipline, ballet shoes, leotard and tights. Girls, after 4 or 5 years of training, might graduate onto 'pointe' shoes, only if their ankles and backs are strong enough.
- **What can you do with a dance training?** You can of course become a professional dancer, or a ballet teacher, or a choreographer (one who makes up dances), or a dance administrator to a ballet company, or a physical therapist, or a costume designer, a light technician, a set designer, or even an art critic, but most certainly you will become a more knowledgeable audience member.
- **What are the benefits of a ballet training?** Besides a graceful body with more elongated and elastic muscles, one develops a quick mind and greater memory skills; because ballet is a blend of the artistic and athletic sciences, one is exposed to the French language, to classical music, to history and literature, while achieving control over their instrument, the body. Ballet builds an appreciation for the arts, develops self-discipline, grace, beauty, proper posture and *provides a 'passport' through cultural doors world wide*. The benefits of ballet include such a wide variety of skills that one naturally becomes a more productive and sharing citizen.
- **What does 'professional dancer' mean ?** Someone who earns a living by dancing. In professional ballet, a man is called a 'danseur', a woman is called a 'ballerina'.

Informance Preparation Info

Cast dancers will be on stage in costume dancing **portions** of *Prairie Nutcracker*.

Some of the dance pieces you will see from *Prairie Nutcracker* story will be:

“Snow” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Snow”]

“Flames” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Spanish”]

“Tribal Maidens” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Arabian”]

“Deer & Antelope” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Tarantella”]

“Enlisted Men” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Russian”]

“Women at Work” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Flutes”]

“Prairie Games” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Chinese”]

“Schoolhouse” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Sugar Plum Fairy”]

“Waltz of the Prairie Flowers” [adapted from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* “Waltz of the Flowers”]

In addition, we will be telling the children what a ‘story & musical ADAPTATION’ means. We will also provide several behind-the-scene glimpses, i.e. the people and equipment backstage. Some of the theatre and backstage words they will learn will be: ACT I, INTERMISSION, ACT II, BALLET, FLY BAR, SPOT, LEG, WING, PLACES, FRONT CURTAIN, MID CURTAIN, BACKDROP, CYCLORAMA, UPSTAGE, DOWNSTAGE, CENTER STAGE, STAGE LEFT, STAGE RIGHT, ON DECK, ENTRANCE, EXIT, CURTAIN CALL.

It is not necessary, but your children might enjoy knowing the simple story of the traditional *Nutcracker* beforehand. If they don’t, we will be telling this traditional German tale along with our original Kansas prairie adaptation.

Our adaptation is set in 1869, in Kansas, on Christmas Eve at a military fort, or post. We hope the children will discover that although Christmas ‘way back then’ was quite simple, the children’s excitement and joy were much the same as they are today. We also hope that *Prairie Nutcracker* will be a spring board to your Kansas studies this January!

The composer and arranger of *Prairie Nutcracker*’s glorious score is Rick Kuethe from Boston, Massachusetts. His original adaptation was written in the fall of 2002 just for our story. Maybe some of your students will be able to join us on stage during pieces we’ve set aside for audience participation—please have in mind 1 or 2 students who are good listeners and would be eager and obedient participants.

So, bring open eyes and ears (and listening mouths) as we bring the art of ballet alive accompanied by the classical music of **Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky** along with **Rick Kuethe**’s whimsical adaptation. We will also take a peek into literature, history and Kansas when it was first being settled. We’ll even touch on both German and American Christmas customs at that period.

Looking forward to welcoming you into the world of theatre!

“*Prairie Nutcracker*®”

A refreshing & original adaptation of a holiday tradition

co-produced by

Prairie Nutcracker Foundation, Inc. , Hutchinson, Kansas

By the Bus School Informance: Friday, Dec. 11, 10:00-11:15 a.m.
By the Bus School Informance: Free by calling Betsie Andrews, 620-663-2649

Showtimes: Fri. & Sat., Dec. 11 & 12 @ 7:30 p.m. • Sun., Dec. 13 @ 3 p.m.
Fox Theatre, 18 East 1st, Hutchinson, Kansas, 67501
For Show Tickets: \$20-\$10, Visit: Fox Box Office, 18 E 1st or call 620-663-1981
Tkts also online: www.prairienutcracker.com

Once upon a time in Germany on Christmas Eve....so begins the traditional Nutcracker.

This year's Prairie Nutcracker, based on the original Nutcracker tale by ETA Hoffman, was conceived locally by the staff of ArtisTree in the spring of 2000. The inspiring music of Tchaikovsky remains, freshly arranged by Boston composer, Rick Kuethe. A fine Christmas Eve party still opens the story, not in Germany, but in the heartland of Kansas. Magical moments still happen: toys come to life, snowflakes dance, a fanciful and entertaining Kingdom ruled by a lovely hostess still welcomes a little girl. That popular German Christmas ornament, the Nutcracker, is now a toy frontier soldier. And the Sugar Plum Fairy, the hostess of that lovely Kingdom, is now a prairie doll.

Prairie Nutcracker is a moving tribute to the local prairie spirit still surviving on these plains. A spirit as pure, simple and honest as the prairieland settled by Kansas' hard working and selfless pioneers.

Our story begins Christmas Eve 1869, somewhere between a Kansas railroad station and a western fort. Young Lieutenant MacGuffie, his wife, and daughter, Laura, have just arrived from Boston to fulfill his Fort West post.

Filled with warnings from her Eastern friends, little Laura arrives clinging to her mother and clutching her fancy Boston doll. Laura is not at all sure about her father's promotion, as it means facing the unknown-and her fears. Could her family really be leaving the elegant trimmings back East for these plains with their harsh winds, prairie fires, Indians, coyotes, hard work, and loneliness?

The new arrivals are greeted by the wife of Fort West's Commanding Officer and their oldest daughter. The MacGuffies are then whisked away to prepare for their welcome at the Officer's Christmas Eve post party soon to begin.

Final preparations convert the largest space on the post, the hospital barracks, to a party room decorated with patriotic decorations, as was the popular Christmas decor of the day. As was also customary, the Commanding Officer's family bestows a favorite Christmas gift to each officer's child, a luscious, delicious apple!

Retiring early, Laura is tucked into her new post bed. The Commander's oldest daughter presents Laura with a prairie doll which years ago had welcomed and comforted her, for she, too, had once arrived from the East. Little Laura still clings to her Boston doll, but not for long...

Finally, little Laura awakes from her dream on the Open Prairie eager to face the new day. Was it really just a dream, or had Laura truly experienced the comforting peace of the prairie?