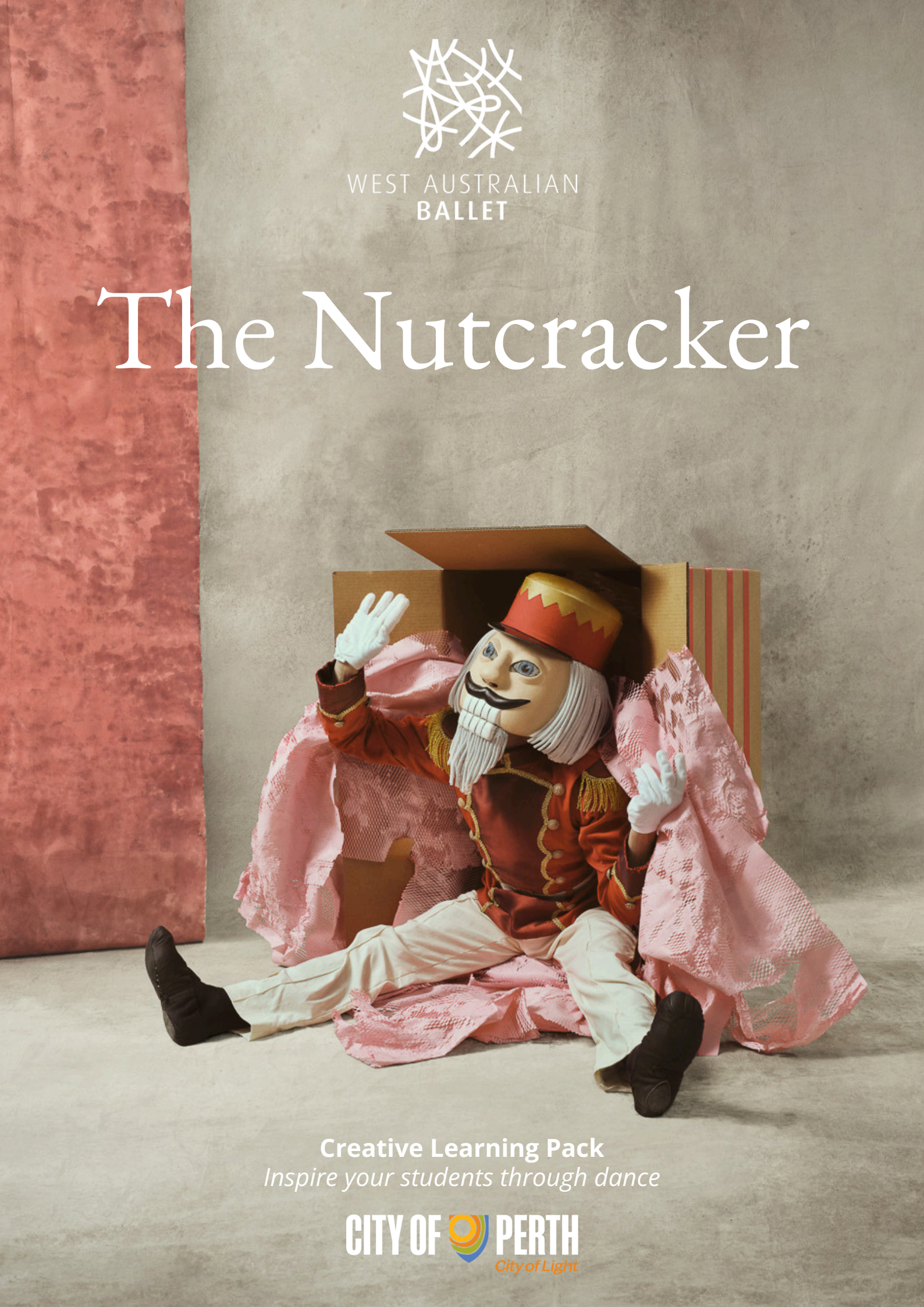
WEST AUSTRALIAN
BALLET

The Nutcracker



Creative Learning Pack

Inspire your students through dance

CITY OF PERTH
City of Light

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WEST AUSTRALIAN
BALLET

134 Whatley Crescent,
Whadjuk Noongar Boodja
Maylands, WA 6051
T (08) 9214 0707
info@waballet.com.au
waballet.com.au

WELCOME

We are so excited to have you join us at one of West Australian Ballet's incredible School Matinee performances of 2026.

These performances are specifically designed to provide students with an immersive learning experience, diving into the world of dance and live performance. We can't wait to share our hard work with you all!

In 2026, we are able to offer four school matinee performances aimed to inspire students from Kindergarten to Year 12. These include *Genesis*, *Macbeth*, and due to overwhelming demand, two performances of *The Nutcracker* to close out the school year.

Each performance offers something truly unique for young audiences to experience and learn alongside.

Accompanied by a curriculum aligned Creative Learning Pack, School Matinee performances provide educators and students further insights into dance as an art form.

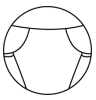
Assisting with creating lesson plans and activities, as well as performance adjacent classroom exercises, our Creative Learning Pack is a valuable resource for students and teachers alike. These activities are suitable for both primary and secondary students.

All can be customised and adapted to suit individual needs.

Symbols are used throughout the pack to direct you to key information, performance specific details and activities.

 Indicates key information

 Indicates an activity

 Indicates information about the show

We are delighted to share the joy of dance with you and look forward to welcoming you to West Australian Ballet's 2026 School Matinee performances.

Sincerely,
Natasha McCann
Head of Education & Community Engagement

WEST AUSTRALIAN BALLET

West Australian Ballet is the state's flagship ballet company and Australia's oldest continuous ballet company. Established in 1952 by Madame Kira Bousloff, West Australian Ballet presents up to 50 performances annually across Western Australia, reaching a total audience of over 100,000 people.

The company offers an extensive program of dance works throughout the year, with five major seasons in Perth, regional touring throughout the state, public classes, and extensive education and community learning opportunities.

West Australian Ballet is the only state dance company that has an official partnership with its state symphony orchestra; the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.

The West Australian Ballet Centre has been our home since 2012, and is situated on the historical site of the former Blind Institute in Maylands. The history of the building site dates back to 1897 when the Victorian Institute and the Industrial School for the Blind was developed as part of the 60th year celebration of Queen Victoria's reign.

Leanne Stojmenov joined West Australian Ballet's Artistic Management Team as Rehearsal Director in 2024, before her appointment as the company's Artistic Director from 2026.

2026 is the company's 74th year in operation as we continue "to enrich lives through dance".



West Australian Ballet Centre

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

West Australian Ballet's
THE NUTCRACKER

School Matinee

Performed with the magnificent West Australian Philharmonic Orchestra

Wednesday 25 November 2026

Wednesday 2 December 2026

12 noon, His Majesty's Theatre, 825 Hay Street, Perth.

Estimated running time

2 hours including one 20min interval (times subject to change)

Program Credits

Choreography

Jayne Smeulders, Sandy Delasalle-Scannella & Aurélien Scannella

Composer

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky



Set and Costume Designers

Charles Cusick Smith & Phil R. Daniels

Lighting Designer

Jon Buswell

Principal Conductor

Jessica Gethin

Trigger Warning: All live theatre generally contains elements that may have a diverse effect on some people. This includes (but is not limited to) loud music, bright and changing lighting effects, and dramatic surprises. In Act 1 a loud bang can be heard during the battle between the King Rat and The Nutcracker Soldiers. The Rat King is killed by the Nutcracker Prince at the end of their battle, this is represented in a very theatrical way, rather than graphically. It's always wise to talk these elements through with your students to prepare them for these aspects.

YOUR TRIP TO THE THEATRE

His Majesty's Theatre, 827- 905
Hay Street Perth WA.

We are so excited to welcome you and your students to the theatre for this performance. Read on for helpful hints on how you and your students can best enjoy your trip.



- **Traveling by bus:** There are designated bus bays located on the corner of King St and St Georges Terrace that have been reserved for a safe drop off and pick up. It is a short walk from the theatre and students do not need to cross any roads(see map pictured).

*Please do not instruct your bus driver to drop you off on King Street or Hay Street as there is high potential for this to cause traffic complications.

- **Travelling by car:** Parking is available at His Majesty's Car park, entrance on Murray Street.

- **Travelling by public transport:** Buses travel directly into the city terminating at Perth Busport. The closest train stations are Perth Underground Station or Esplanade.

- **Arrival Time** Please make sure you arrive at the theatre with enough time to collect your tickets and find your seats. Arriving late and missing the start of a performance will diminish your students understanding of the ballet as well as disrupt others. In addition, most performances are 'lock outs', which means that late audience members will only be allowed in at predetermined times (for example, interval) or not at all.

Theatre Etiquette

1. Make sure you arrive on time. Missing the start of a performance will diminish your understanding of the ballet as well as disrupt others. In addition, most performances are 'lock outs', which means that late audience members will only be allowed in at predetermined times (for example, interval) or not at all.
2. It is very important to turn off all mobile phones and other electronic devices. These are disruptive to the performance and distracting to audience members and performers.
3. When you are moving to your seats, always make sure your front faces the people you are moving past rather than your back. It is much nicer for those seated around you to be greeted by your face rather than your back! During the performance, it is polite to observe the following rules:

- No photography.
- No talking.
- No food or drink.
- Remain seated.
- Please don't put your feet on the seats.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY! Clapping and cheering is the best way to applaud the performance and make the dancers feel special. Make sure you cheer as loudly as you can during the curtain call (at the end of the performance) to give the dancers a big thank you!

THE HISTORY OF BALLET



Ballet as a form of dance began in the royal courts of Italy and France in the 1600s. Formal group dances from the royal courts developed into the art form we now know after *The Sun King*, King Louis XIV of France established the first ballet school, the Académie Royale de Danse, in Paris in 1661.

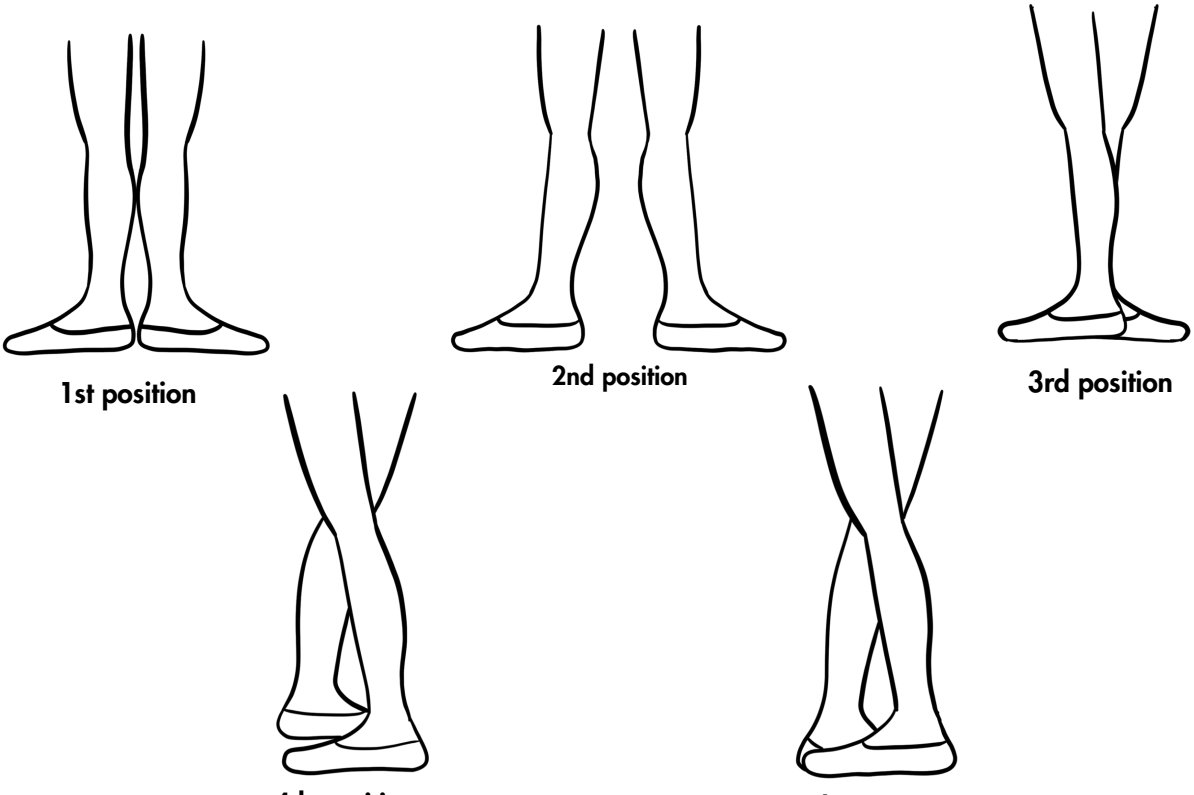
The word ballet originates from the Latin word 'ballare', which means 'to dance'. To this day, all of the steps in ballet have French names, meaning dancers across the globe all speak the same language and can take a ballet class anywhere and understand exactly what to do.

Image Source: https://thegoodlifefrance.com/louis-xiv-the-sun-king/

Ballet Positions

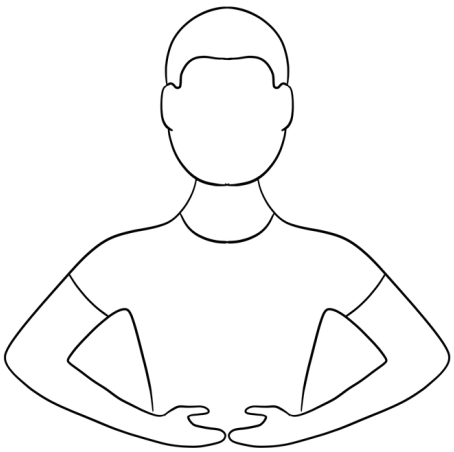
In ballet there are five basic positions of the feet and arms. The positions of the feet originated from fencing positions, and require the dancer to *turn out*, or rotate the entire leg, from the top of the thigh to the toes. If you look at a dancer standing in any of the five positions, you'll see their toes point in opposite directions.

Positions of the feet

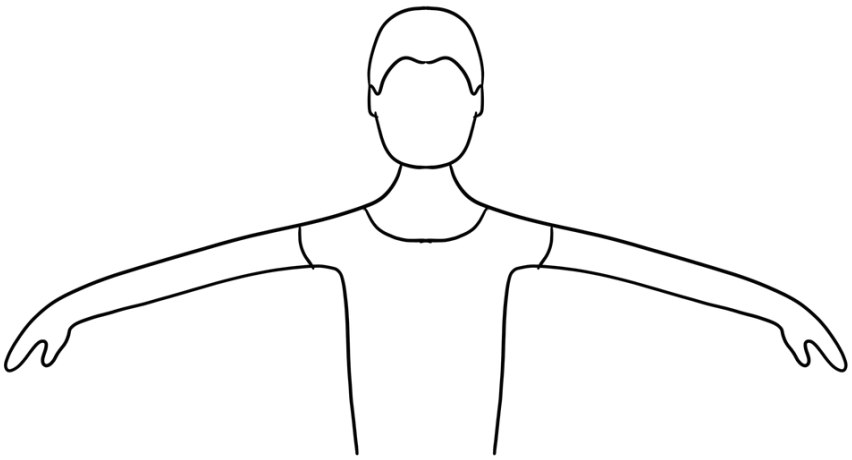


Images drawn by Hayley Pelz

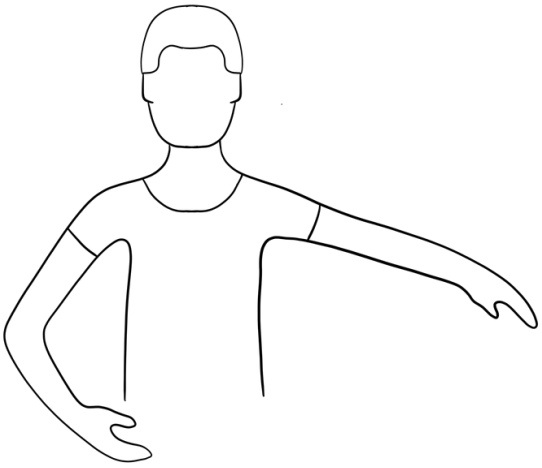
Positions of the arms



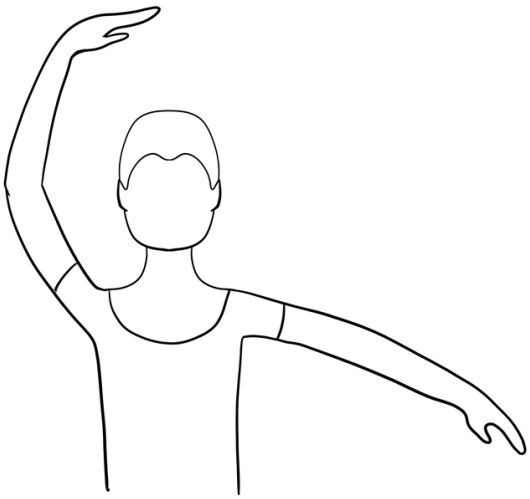
1st position



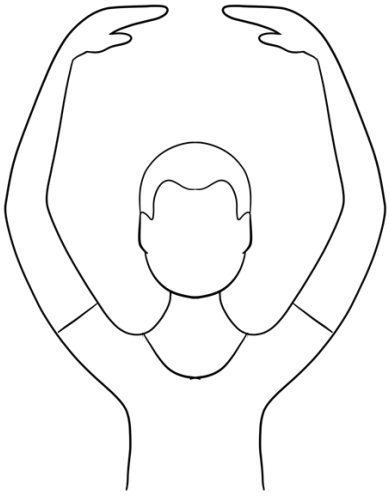
2nd position



3rd position

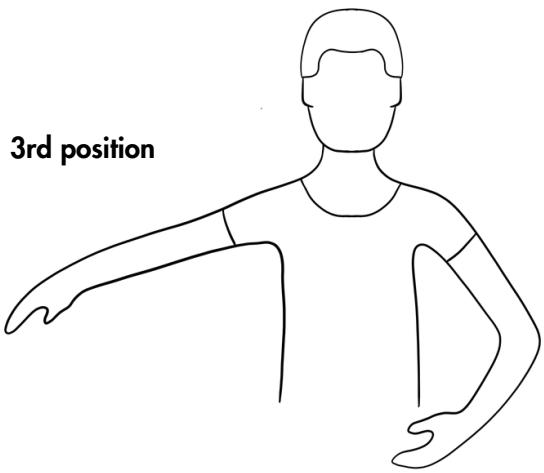


4th position

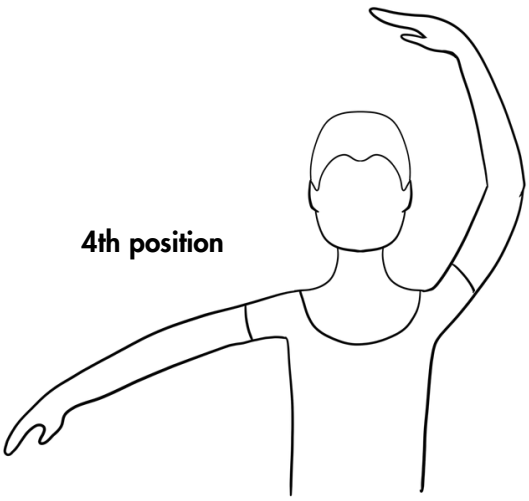


5th position

3rd position



4th position



Images drawn by Hayley Pelz

ACTIVITIES: PRIMARY SCHOOL

Movement Activity: March to the Beat | Year 3— 6

Dance | Making | Ideas (ACADAM001), (ACADAM005), (ACADAM009).
Dance | Making | Skills (ACADAM002), (ACADAM006).

The Nutcracker has iconic march music featured in act one. In many versions of the ballet this is when the children form lines and patterns to collect their Christmas gifts from underneath the tree. March music is identifiable by its 4/4 time signature and is easily counted this way.

Task: Ask your students to clap the rhythm of the march music. Repeat this by stamping the same rhythm or even clapping and stamping at the same time for a real challenge!

Extension Task: Ask students to form small groups and create movement to the rhythm of the march music. Ask them to be specific and regimented with their movements like a marching band.

YouTube Link for Music https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-t-3wfA_uow

Writing Activity: Christmas Across the Globe | Year 4-6

Different countries and cultures celebrate Christmas in many different ways. Our version of ***The Nutcracker*** is set in Europe in the Edwardian Era (late 1800s to early 1900s) and shows a family celebrating a white Christmas with presents and a decorated tree.

Task: Choose two different countries and research different ways Christmas is celebrated. Outcomes can include a PowerPoint presentation to the class, a project or a written essay.

Follow this link to help you with your research: **http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/**



Image: Bradbury Photography

ACTIVITIES: PRIMARY SCHOOL

Writing Activity: Write a letter to your favorite dancer

English: Pre-Primary – Year 6

Please send letters to:
Education & Community Engagement Team
West Australian Ballet
134 Whatley Crescent
Maylands WA, 6051

After watching ***The Nutcracker*** write a letter to your favourite dancer or character you have seen on stage. Include an illustration of the performance.

Dear...

My favourite part of the performance was...



The dancing made me feel...

One question I would like to ask is ...

My Picture

ACTIVITIES: SECONDARY SCHOOL

Choreographic Processes and Exploration of Movement | Year 7-10

Responding | Dance Reflecting and Analysing (ACADAR018), (ACADAR025).

Task: After viewing the performance of ***The Nutcracker*** choose a scene in the ballet and consider the dance elements of Body, Energy, Space and Time (BEST). In a whole class or small group discussion/writing activity reflect upon;

Body: What actions were used?
Energy: What kinds of movement qualities did you see? Were the movements sharp, soft, smooth or percussive? Was there flow and connection of movements or was it interrupted and contained?
Space: Which directions did the dancers travel in? What formations were seen? Can you name some shapes you saw the dancers make? eg. twisted, circular, symmetrical, contrasting. Were the pathways curved or angular?
Time: What was the tempo of the music? Did the rhythm feel regular or irregular? Was there stillness? Were there accents placed on the movements?

- Consider how these elements contributed to the formation of the work and its ability to represent the story and meaning of the ballet.

Task: Reflect upon any choreographic devices used. Consider unison, canon, contrast and repetition and how these devices may or may not have been incorporated into the ballet. How were they related to the choreographic intent?



Image: Bradbury Photography

ACTIVITIES: SECONDARY SCHOOL

Writing & Movement Activity: Investigating Characters "Good vs Evil" | Year 9-10

As in ***The Nutcracker***, ballets, film, literature and popular culture frequently present two contrasting characters; one is usually evil and the other a hero.

Task: As a class, brainstorm other ballets, movies, books or traditional stories where you can distinguish these two kinds of characters and list them. Are the characters 100% good or 100% evil?

Extension Task:
Create a series of vignettes (static positions or 'photographs') that embody the contrasting themes of 'good' and 'evil' – create a few of each. Consider body position, tension and facial expression. Work with a partner (with their own set of vignettes) to set an order of each person's positions, holding for a moment in each position and moving (morphing) between each one slowly. Consider how you've staged the positions (photographs) with your partner to create a story within each vignette or across all of them – your use of space can help to tell a story.



Image: Bradbury Photography

ACTIVITIES: SECONDARY SCHOOL

Writing Activity: The Nutcracker – A contemporary adaptation | Year 11-12

The Nutcracker's Sugar Plum Fairy is a curious character, which dance companies and choreographers across the globe have interpreted differently. Typically, the Sugar Plum Fairy isn't seen until Act II when the children journey to the Land of Sweets, but choreographer George Balanchine actually rearranged Tchaikovsky's score to introduce her in Act I. Given she usually appears after more than half of the ballet has already taken place, it's not uncommon to wonder what the relationship between her and the Prince in the famous Act II pas de deux represents? The music of this pas de deux only adds to the uncertainty, from enchanting, rippling harp arpeggios to dramatic ominous crescendos. The New York Times described the music of ***The Nutcracker*** pas de deux as "momentous and solemn" going on to say "There's a tragic quality here — those descending scales, with their emphatic rhythm, keep being repeated — but there's also sublimity, transcendence and even, here and there, aspects of consolatory tenderness".

Task: Follow the link below to a version of ***The Nutcracker*** pas de deux choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, performed by Marion Barbeau and Stéphane Bullion. Pay close attention to the music, movement qualities and emotional involvement, or lack thereof, from the dancers. Use these aspects to justify a response about the relationship between the two characters and the story being told. Respond in your own words with your own conclusions – your interpretation may be different to someone else's.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwSP7fwli5s

Extension Task: After watching West Australian Ballet's version of ***The Nutcracker*** pas de deux, discuss and analyse the similarities and differences between Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's contemporary adaptation and the traditional classical version of the pas de deux. Which version did you prefer and why? Do you think there are more possibilities for traditional classical ballets to be adapted or represented in contemporary versions? What might be some of the benefits or disadvantages of adapting traditionally classical works?



Image: Bradbury Photography



ACTIVITIES: SECONDARY SCHOOL

Writing a Review | Year 7-12

Responding | Dance Reflecting and Analysing (ACADAR018), (ACADAR025).

With students, analyse a written review and assess its form and content. Select a dance review. A review of West Australian Ballet's ***Macbeth*** has been included overleaf for your use. Read through the review and briefly analyse it. While a review is essentially one person's opinion and therefore subjective, it should also note the following details:

What? The story, look, music, feel, design, content.
Why? What is being communicated and why.
How? Types of movement, arrangement on stage, use of props.
When? Time/date of performance.
Where? Place of performance.
Who? The company, creative staff (choreographer, composer, performers etc) and characters.

TASK: Ask students to write a review of ***The Nutcracker***. Ensure that it includes the above details and a critical analysis of the production. **For additional support on "How to Write a Review" follow the link on our digital resources page and hear Amy Wisemans' tips on effective review writing.**

TASK VARIATIONS:

- **Reviewing in the 21st Century**

Ask the students to write an Instagram review consisting of 140 characters. Students will need to select their words carefully and highlight what affected them the most.

- **The Role of the Reviewer**

For advanced students, lead a discussion about what makes a good review and the role of the reviewer. How do reviews affect the artist, production, audiences and the development of the art form?



Image: Bradbury Photography

Review: Macbeth
West Australian Ballet (co-produced with Royal New Zealand Ballet), His Majesty's Theatre.

Saturday 5 September 2026
Review by Nina Levy



Image: Julio Blanes

Full disclosure: I've been anticipating Alice Topp's take on Macbeth for a year.

When West Australian Ballet announced the co-production of this new work with Royal New Zealand Ballet, I was still buzzing from the impact of Topp's 2025 Butterfly Effect, so the news that another creation was in the works was most welcome.

And Topp has delivered, taking Shakespeare's tragic tale and transporting it into a contemporary setting. The result is clever, compelling and world-class.

Like Butterfly Effect, this contemporary ballet's strength lies in the quality and interplay of each creative element, foreshadowed by the visually arresting opening in which Shakespeare's famous words "Something wicked this way comes" are writ large, hovering ghostlike on a scrim.

That something wicked is not underpinned by the centuries-old misogynist tropes about female power found in Shakespeare's Macbeth. Topp's trio are not witches, but influencers, and reveal the terrifying role that social media can play in shaping private discourse and public outcomes.

Supported by dramaturg Ruth Little, Topp's libretto stays close to the original Shakespearean plotline but places it in the world of 21st century politics. At a time when it often feels like democracy is an illusion, this story of a couple who will stop at nothing to gain power rings painfully true.

Composer Christopher Gordon has made the unusual but effective choice of combining live and recorded music, allowing him to segue across music genres and creating a cinematic score; the live component evocatively performed here by West Australian Symphony Orchestra under conductor Joel Bass.

Our initial encounter with the influencers is one of the work's many highlights. In the first scene, Gordon's haunting choral vocals mix with live cackles and cries from the three influencers. It's an appropriately eerie soundscape as the dancers' wild gestures entangle with one another and stir invisible cauldrons of gossip and speculation. In the casting viewed (one of five) Nikki Blain, Indiana Scott and Adam Alzaim were at once comic and terrifying.

We meet Macbeth – the leader of a political faction – and his allies in a fierce debate with the opposition. The swagger and aggression of each party is all too recognisable, Topp turning the verbal sparring of a political debate into physical rough and tumble that belies the dancers' sombre suits, accompanied by the unbridled energy of Gordon's electric guitar and drum riffs. Jon Buswell's series of pressed-tin-style flats make a suitably steely backdrop for this scene, whilst a second storey is lit rosy as we encounter Lady Macbeth, sensuous in her bathtub.

Highly mobile, Buswell's set is also designed for versatility, carving or opening space as required. Later, his dramatic depiction of a smoking crown that dissolves against Gordon's cacophony of voices makes an electrifying conclusion to Act I.



Image: Julio Blanes



Image: Julio Blanes

As Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Oscar Valdés and Dayana Hardy Acuña were enthralling in this cast. Topp's choreography for the couple is as complex as their relationship, often angular with lifts that intertwine limbs and bodies. Unshaken by an early wobble, the pair were mesmerising, in both their mastery of the challenging choreography and portrayal of psychological struggles.

There are many other treats here, all beautifully danced in the casting viewed.

Two party scenes have more than a touch of a Baz Luhrmann film about them. At the second, a banquet to celebrate Macbeth's ascension to leadership, Aleisa Jelbart's costumes for the women create gorgeously sculptural black silhouettes against Buswell's red drapes. The rising of Banquo's ghost (a chilling Gakuro Matsui) is thrilling, even though we know it's coming.

A short but striking Act II scene sees Macbeth's colleagues traverse the stage, their arms extended like birds of prey as they come in for the kill.

And though the quote,

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand?"

doesn't feature directly in the work – Topp's use of shivering hand motifs throughout pays subtle and pleasing homage to this line.

Condensing the plot of a five act play into a two act ballet may sound ambitious but the result is utterly thrilling. A must-see.

-Nina Levy

Macbeth continues at His Majesty's Theatre until 19 September 2026.

HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW VIDEO

This video, by Amy Wiseman, details how to write a review of a ballet performance. This is a valuble resource for students to reference and take inspiration from across all *Macbeth* Creative Learning Pack activities.

VIDEO LINK HERE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

West Australian Ballet, has worked closely with Telethon Kids Institute to create a series of online workshops that focus on utilising dance to improve young people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. A wide variety of movement-based workshop exercises are available. Use these videos to explore a range of health and wellbeing topics through dance.

These free classroom resources are available for a range of year groups and cover topics such as nutrition, mindfulness, self-esteem and many more. Simply click on the link below.

DANCE AND WELLBEING RESOURCES



BALLET GLOSSARY

Plié is to bend your knees in a diamond shape.

Port de bras is movement of the arms.

Tendu means to point or stretch the foot to the front, side, or back.

Relevé means to rise to the ball of the feet in a sharp action.

Jeté is a leap from one foot to the other in which the front leg appears to have been thrown into the air.

Arabesque is a position supported on one leg with the other extended behind, forming a right angle (or higher), with long arm lines.

Pirouette is to spin or turn; a rotation of the body on one foot.

Pas de deux is a dance for two people.

Principal Artist is a dancer at the highest rank within a professional company.

Solo & Leading Artists are dancers below a principal who performs most solo and featured roles.

Artists are the ensemble group that forms the backbone of a ballet company.

Choreographer is the creative who creates the movement and designs the ballet.

Choreography is the art of creating dances and organising movement into patterns or shapes.

2027 School Matinee - Booking Form

WEST AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Step 1-Provideyourcontact details

Contact Teachers Name: School:

Phone: Email: Student Year:

Special SeatingRequirements: Purchase Order No:

Step 2- Select your performance(s)

School Matinees	Date/Time	No. of students at $20 each	Subtotal Students	Teachers (10 students = 1 free teacher. Max. 4 adults for every 10 students)		Subtotal Teachers	Group Booking Fee	TOTAL (Students + Teachers + $8.95 Fee)
				Free	Paid $35			
Pre-show Q&A for The Dream & Forgotten Land	Wednesday 19 May – 11am His Majesty's Theatre ($5 per student – limited seats available)		$			$	$0	$
The Dream & Forgotten Land	Wednesday 19 May – 12pm His Majesty's Theatre		$			$	$8.95	$
Genesis	Tuesday 29 June – 12pm Studio Underground, State Theatre Centre of Western Australia		$			$	$8.95	$
Coppelia	Tuesday 14 September – 12pm His Majesty's Theatre		$			$	$8.95	$
The Snow Queen	Wed 24 November – 12pm His Majesty's Theatre		$			$	$8.95	$
Prices includesGST.							**TOTAL**	$

Step 3 – Submit Form

Oncecompleted,pleaseemailto learning@waballet.com.au We will confirm we have received your booking via email and provide you with an invoice.

Created by
Education Manager
Emily Coles
for
2026 season of
The Nutcracker
presented by
West Australian Ballet

CITY OF PERTH
City of Light