



STEPS DANCE CENTER PRESENTS

THE NUTCRACKER

DECEMBER 13TH 2025 - 6:00 PM - BENET ACADEMY

DEDICATION

FROM THE CHOREOGRAPHER

This year's production of *The Nutcracker* is lovingly dedicated to all who believe in the magic of ballet—its beauty, its discipline, its storytelling, and its power to touch the human spirit in ways words often cannot.

To the dancers who choose this path of grace, purpose, and poise: your devotion is a rare gift. Ballet asks everything of you—your time, your patience, your vulnerability—and in return, it offers a place where movement becomes meaning and stories take flight without a single spoken word. Those who discover a true passion for ballet carry within them a light that deserves to be nurtured, protected, and celebrated.

To the families, teachers, and friends who support these young artists: thank you for honoring this long-standing art form that transcends generations and connects us to a legacy of discipline, elegance, and wonder. Your belief in the value of the arts enriches not only their journey, but the human experience itself.

May this performance remind us all of the timeless truth that ballet—at its core—is a gift of heart, history, and hope. May its magic continue to inspire every dancer who steps into the studio, every audience member who sits in the dark, and every dreamer who dares to believe in the beauty of possibility.

BALLET COMPANY
DIRECTOR

ASHLEY KACIUBA



WELCOME & GRATITUDE

Welcome to our 2025 production of The Nutcracker. This year is especially meaningful, as it marks the very first full-length Nutcracker at Steps Dance Center—a dream I've carried with me since I was a young dancer. Growing up, I was fortunate to perform in The Nutcracker under the direction of Kenneth von Heidecke. He created a magical world—one filled with beauty, discipline, possibility, and artistry—that shaped my life in ways I'm still grateful for. The opportunities he gave me, the standard of excellence he upheld, and the memories he helped create all influenced the artist and choreographer I am today.

To now bring this beloved ballet to the dancers at Steps Dance Center, watching them step into that same magic with their joy, dedication, and heart, has been one of the greatest privileges of my career. Thank you for supporting their artistry and for being part of this landmark moment for the studio. My hope is that tonight's performance fills you with wonder, warmth, and the same inspiration that The Nutcracker first sparked in me so many years ago.





FULL SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Scene 1 — The Christmas Party

At the Stahlbaum home, friends and family gather for a festive Christmas Eve celebration. Clara and Fritz eagerly await presents. Mysterious godfather Drosselmeyer arrives with magical surprises, including a special Nutcracker for Clara.

Scene 2 — The Battle

After the party, Clara falls asleep holding her Nutcracker. At midnight, the room transforms. The Christmas tree grows, mice appear, and a battle erupts between the Mouse King and the Nutcracker, who comes to life. With Clara's help, the Nutcracker defeats the Mouse King.

Scene 3 — The Snow Forest

The Nutcracker Prince leads Clara through a beautiful snowy forest, where the Snow Queen and swirling snowflakes dance in celebration before sending them onward to the Land of Sweets.

• INTERMISSION •

ACT II

Scene 1 — The Kingdom of Sweets

Clara and the Prince are welcomed by the Sugar Plum Fairy. In their honor, dancers from around the world perform delightful sweets-inspired variations including Spanish Chocolate, Arabian Coffee, Chinese Tea, Russian Trepak, and others.

Scene 2 — The Grand Pas de Deux & Finale

The Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier perform a majestic pas de deux. A joyful finale brings the festivities to a close before Clara's magical adventure gently fades into her dreams.

CASTING

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

ACT I

Clara	Maeve McAnelly
Fritz	Owen Hunt
Frau Stahlbaum	Neomi Heinen
Herr Stahlbaum	Jack Anderson
Maid	Finley Harmon
Party Parents	Jaiden Bloch, Emmerson Huang, Alyssa Kang, Sedonah Licht, Grayson McKenna, Hannah Tran
Party Children	Brighton Blankenburg, Lauren Dickinson, Selena He, Avery Huang, Emi Mikami-Tagle, Parker Sutter-Sheehan
Drosselmeyer	Matt Pospeshil
Dolls	Aoife Nugent, Taylor Page, Emmie Plitt
Lead Mice	Delainey Krzmarzick, Olivia Woods
Mice	Ava Desuno, Miray Gonzalez, Jasmine Lin, Mina Mikami-Tagle, Chelsea Ojeiwa, Grace Ojeiwa, Waverly Roush, Cayla Yang
Mouse Queen	Jiya Patel
Nutcracker	Andrés Gomez Castillo
Lead Soldier	Nixi Maxwell
Soldiers	Ava Blake, Lauren Bottomley, Vanessa Costales-Roman, Lucy Egan, Olivia Garvey, Avery McEttrick, Ella Mezmar, Ava Pung, Kaylee Ruge, Nakshatra Sudhakar, Brynn Stoudt, Emery Wassmer
Snow Queen	Penelope Faber
Snow King	Andrés Gomez Castillo
Snowflakes	Jaiden Bloch, Neomi Heinen, Emmerson Huang, Alyssa Kang, Makenna Kiely, Sedonah Licht, Victoria McDougal, Aoife Nugent, Taylor Page, Jiya Patel, Emmie Plitt, Hannah Tran

CASTING

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

ACT II

Sugar Plum Fairy
Cavalier
Dew Drop
Angels

Aoife Nugent
Andrés Gomez Castillo
Emmie Plitt
Finley Harmon, Anika Jadhav,
Parker Sutter-Sheehan
Penelope Faber
Kelly Anderson, Lauren Dickinson,
Delainey Krzmarzick, Olivia
Woods

Arabian Principal
Arabian
Chinese Principal
Chinese

Emmerson Huang
Selena He, Avery Huang
Jiya Patel
Brighton Blankenburg, Emi
Mikami-Tagle, Parker Sutter-
Sheehan

Reed Flutes

Jaiden Bloch, Sedonah Licht,
Taylor Page

Italian

Kelly Anderson, Penelope Faber,
Finley Harmon, Neomi Heinen,
Anika Jadhav, Alyssa Kang,
McKenna Kiely, Victoria
McDougal, Hannah Tran

Russian Principal
Russian

Sedonah Licht
Lauren Dickinson, Nixi Maxwell,
Emi Mikami-Tagle, Parker Sutter-
Sheehan

Waltz of the Flowers

Brighton Blankenburg, Selena He,
Avery Huang, Delainey
Krzmarzick, Nixi Maxwell, Olivia
Woods

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This would not be possible without the following:

Artistic Team

- Director / Choreographer - Ashley Kaciuba
- Rehearsal Assistant - Lilia Ambler Castillo
 - I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Lilia, whose presence has been an invaluable gift throughout this journey. Her passion for ballet mirrors my own, and her excitement, dedication, and heart have lifted this production in countless ways. She shows up with purpose, gives her time and talent generously, and pours her whole self into this project just as I do. Without her, this Nutcracker would not be possible. Having such a beautiful soul, dancer, and collaborator by my side has been refreshing, inspiring, and deeply meaningful. Thank you, Lilia, for believing in this dream—and for helping me bring it to life. ~*Ashley Kaciuba*
- Costume Designer - Samantha Sharp
- Set / Props Team - Alex Cooper

Volunteers

- Parent volunteers - Erin Gidley, Laura Heinen, Tracee Huang, Anna Ruge, Joanne Schaeffer, Michelle Woods

Community Partners

- Venue staff - Benet Academy & Kelsey Lauren Peceniak

MUSIC CREDITS

All music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Selections from The Nutcracker, Op. 71
Performed/Recorded by The Los Angeles Philharmonic



THANK YOU

HEARTFELT APPRECIATION

Special Thanks to...

Our families

Thank you to the families whose support makes this production possible. Your encouragement, patience, and unwavering belief in your dancers allow them to grow, explore, and shine. From driving to rehearsals to helping with costumes, hair, and the countless details between, your dedication is felt in every step on this stage. We are deeply grateful for the village behind each dancer.

Our faculty

To the incredible ballet faculty at Steps —thank you for upholding strong technique, nurturing artistry, and instilling in our dancers a true love for ballet. Your passion, discipline, and commitment to providing high-caliber training are the backbone of our program. Because of you, students not only learn the steps but also discover confidence, beauty, and purpose in their dancing.

Our students

To our dancers: thank you for your commitment, your focus, your energy, and your hearts. Ballet demands discipline, resilience, and courage, and you show up time and time again ready to work—and ready to dream. Your dedication brings this story to life, and we are so proud of your growth and artistry.

STUDIO SPOTLIGHT

COMPANY INFORMATION



Steps Dance Center was founded with a simple but powerful vision: to create a welcoming, inspiring place where dancers of all ages could train, grow, and discover the joy of movement. What began as a single studio with a handful of classes has grown over the years into a thriving, multi-studio center known for its high-quality instruction, strong sense of community, and deep commitment to the art of dance.

From its earliest days, Steps set out to offer more than technique. The studio has always been rooted in values—discipline, confidence, creativity, respect, and a love for performing. As the student body grew, so did the opportunities: expanded class offerings, competitive and performance companies, community appearances, special events, and productions that allow dancers to experience the magic of the stage.

Throughout its history, Steps Dance Center has remained dedicated to nurturing dancers at every level, from tiny beginners to advanced pre-professional students. The faculty brings a wide range of expertise in ballet, jazz, tap, lyrical, contemporary, hip hop, and acro, creating an environment where students can explore their passions while building strong foundational technique.

Today, Steps Dance Center continues to be a place where lifelong friendships are formed, dreams are encouraged, and dancers learn to carry themselves with confidence—both in the studio and far beyond it. With each passing year, the studio's legacy grows, shaped by the students who train here, the teachers who guide them, and the families who support them. Steps remains committed to its mission: to inspire excellence, celebrate artistry, and help every dancer take meaningful steps toward their fullest potential.
