

PENNSYLVANIA BALLET

ROY KAISER
The Ruth and A. Morris Williams, Jr.
Artistic Director

MICHAEL SCOLAMIERO
Executive Director

August 19, 2011

To prospective 2011 Nutcracker cast members and their parents:

On behalf of Pennsylvania Ballet, I am pleased to invite all eligible students to audition for this year's production of *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*; which will run at the Academy of Music from December 10 – 31, 2011.

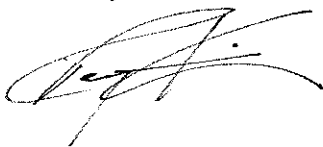
The attached materials outline audition requirements and answer some of the most frequently asked questions about the Nutcracker experience. Although a role in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* requires a significant sacrifice of time and energy from students and parents, the experience can be very rewarding for those who are able to make the commitment. If you have questions after reading the enclosed materials, please contact Michael Sheridan, Assistant to the Artistic Director at Pennsylvania Ballet. You can reach him at 215.551.7000 ext. 1306.

I want to alert you to three important requirements for students who wish to be considered for roles in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*. **1. No student will be permitted to audition unless she/he has obtained a "Special Performance Permit" BEFORE THE AUDITION. (Please see the parent handbook for instructions on obtaining this permit) 2. All students auditioning for the first time will be required to present a copy of their birth certificate when their permit application is reviewed by Michael Sheridan. 3. A "Nutcracker Release and Parental Guarantee" signed by both students and parents must be returned to the Ballet BEFORE THE AUDITION.**

Parents of students auditioning for the first time are required to attend a Q and A Session with the Artistic Staff on Saturday, September 10, 2011 from 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. at Pennsylvania Ballet, 3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129. Parents must check the hotline to make sure that their child has successfully met all the pre-audition requirements before the audition date.

A list of deadlines which all aspiring Nutcracker cast members must meet is provided on the reverse of this letter. Please transfer these deadlines to all your calendars! I look forward to seeing many of you at the auditions on Saturday, September 24, 2011.

Sincerely,



Roy Kaiser
Artistic Director

PRE-AUDITION DEADLINES

**Saturday, Sept. 10
10 - 10:30 a.m. or
11:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

**Permit "Applications" Reviewed/collected.
PENNSYLVANIA BALLET
3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129**

**Saturday, Sept. 10
10:30 - 11:30 a.m.**

**Nutcracker Question/Answer Session
PENNSYLVANIA BALLET
3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129**

**Parents of students auditioning for *George Balanchine's*
The Nutcracker for the first time are required to attend.**

**Monday, Sept. 12
3:30 - 6 p.m.**

**Permit "Applications" Reviewed/collected.
PENNSYLVANIA BALLET
3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129**

**Wednesday, Sept. 14
3:30 - 6 p.m.**

**Permit "Applications" Reviewed/collected.
PENNSYLVANIA BALLET
3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129**

**LAST DAY to hand in correct and complete "Applications,"
"Nutcracker Audition Forms" and "Nutcracker Release and
Parental Guarantee".**

**Saturday, Sept. 24
12 - 5 p.m.**

**A U D I T I O N S
PENNSYLVANIA BALLET
3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129**

**Sunday, October 2
1 - 3 p.m.**

**FIRST ANGEL REHEARSAL
PENNSYLVANIA BALLET
3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129**

October 8 - 9

**FIRST REHEARSALS FOR PARTY SCENE,
SOLDIERS, HOOPS AND POLLYS
PENNSYLVANIA BALLET
3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129**

BEFORE YOU AUDITION

George Balanchine's The Nutcracker is an annual Pennsylvania Ballet production which uses approximately 130 student performers. **Pennsylvania Ballet is entirely responsible for the audition, rehearsal, and performance schedules, and all policies and procedures associated with *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*.** Student cast members and their parents are asked to direct ALL questions about *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* to Michael Sheridan, Assistant to the Artistic Director at Pennsylvania Ballet.

PLEASE NOTE: The dates for Nutcracker performances this year are **December 10, 2011 thru December 31, 2011.**

George Balanchine's The Nutcracker is a professional production which will make professional demands on the children who perform in it. Please audition only if you feel that you and your family can make the necessary commitments--for example:

- ~ **a willingness to accept any role offered, even if it is not the one you were hoping for;**
- ~ **mandatory rehearsals every weekend starting in October; several weekday afternoon and/or evening rehearsals in late November and December;**
- ~ **attendance at all performances for your cast (usually one each day);**
- ~ **a willingness to substitute for your alternate should she/he become ill during the run.**

The Ballet does its utmost to schedule rehearsals, costume fittings and other activities during non-school hours and to give about a week's notice of such activities. However, please be prepared for:

- ~ **as many as three early afternoon rehearsals during the second week of December;**
- ~ **last-minute changes and additions to the rehearsal schedule.**

We encourage prospective new "Nutcrackerers" to talk with parents who have participated in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* previously. Although a role in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* can be "the experience of a lifetime" for many children, it can also be too stressful for some younger children and for families who live far from Center City. Please carefully consider your child's personality and your family's flexibility before auditioning.

AUDITION INFORMATION

Auditions for the 2011 production of *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* will be held on **Saturday, September 24, 2011** beginning at 12 p.m.

Auditions will be held at PENNSYLVANIA BALLET, 3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129. Auditions last from three to five hours. Parents are not permitted to watch the auditions.

Eligibility

To audition for *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* you must be an officially registered ballet student at the Rock Center for Dance Education, the Metropolitan Ballet Academy, the Dance Academy, the Barbara Sandonato School of Ballet, the Philadelphia Studio Ballet or the Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School. In addition, **Pennsylvania Ballet requires that you must be 8 years old by the day of the audition and in Level 1 or above.**

Please wear regular ballet class attire to the audition.

Prerequisites

Registered ballet students who wish to be considered for a role in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* must ensure that Pennsylvania Ballet receives the following before the audition:

1. **A "SPECIAL PERFORMANCE PERMIT" ISSUED BY THE BUREAU OF LABOR LAW COMPLIANCE.**
(please see the parent handbook for instructions on how to obtain this permit)
2. **A COMPLETED "NUTCRACKER AUDITION FORM"**
3. **A "NUTCRACKER RELEASE AND PARENTAL GUARANTEE" -- SIGNED BY THE STUDENT AND BOTH PARENTS.**
4. **ALL BALLET STUDENTS NEW TO NUTCRACKER ARE REQUIRED TO PRESENT A COPY OF THEIR BIRTH CERTIFICATE**

You will not be permitted to attend the audition, nor will you receive a role in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* if the Ballet does not receive these important documents **BEFORE THE AUDITION.**

All students, particularly Nutcracker veterans, should be aware that no exceptions will be made for students who "forget" or "didn't read about" these audition prerequisites.

Attendance at the audition does not mean that you will receive a role in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker.*

OTHER INFORMATION

Casting Decisions

All casting and performance schedule decisions are made by **Roy Kaiser, Artistic Director**, in consultation with Pennsylvania Ballet's artistic staff. The final cast list and performance schedule are not and cannot be determined until late November. Good seats for many of the performances are still available when the final cast list and performance schedule are posted.

All casting decisions are influenced by the height and appropriate body type of the child being considered for a role and by the child's ability to fit into the costume. (Each Nutcracker costume must be adjusted to fit two, possibly three different children)

Some children will not be selected for a role in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*. If you feel that your child will have difficulty handling this, please reconsider sending her/him to the audition.

Questions?

A "Nutcracker Question and Answer Session" for parents will be held on Saturday, September 10 at 10:30 a.m., at **PENNSYLVANIA BALLET, 3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129**. Roy Kaiser, Artistic Director, Jeffrey Gribler, Ballet Master, and Michael Sheridan, Assistant to the Artistic Director, will be on hand to answer your questions and introduce you to the Nutcracker experience.

Parents of students auditioning for *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* for the first time are required to attend a Question and Answer Session with the Artistic Staff on Saturday, September 10, 2011 from 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Nutcracker Hotline

215.551.7000 ext. 1918

You may call the "Nutcracker Hotline" any time of the day or night for a recorded message which provides up-to-the-minute information about Nutcracker activities.

Attendance at the audition does not mean that you will receive a role in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*.

AT THE AUDITION

On the day of the Nutcracker audition, all ballet students who are eligible i.e. have:

1. turned in a correct "Application for Employment..." by the due date.
2. turned in the "Nutcracker Audition Form" by the due date.
3. turned in the "Student/Parental Release" by the due date.
4. presented a copy of their birth certificate (if they are new to *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*).

will be taken into the studios at **PENNSYLVANIA BALLET, 3502 Scotts Lane, Bldg. 4, Philadelphia, PA 19129** by Michael Sheridan.

Parents are not permitted to watch the audition. There will be chaperones to supervise the students while they are waiting during the audition process. Please remember, do not to bring valuables with you to the audition. **Pennsylvania Ballet** will not be responsible for lost or stolen personal items. The chaperones will be in the studio to help keep order and to make sure that the children are safe. They will not have the time to watch the personal property of all the students at the audition.

The first students brought into the audition will be those being considered for a dancing role in Act II, the Tea ladies, the Hot Chocolate female corps, the Candy Canes and the Polichinelles. These students will be taught choreography from the ballet by Jeffrey Gribler, Ballet Master for Pennsylvania Ballet. They will then be split into small groups and asked to perform the choreography for Mr. Kaiser. This is the process for casting the dancing roles in Act II.

Students being considered for a role as an Angel in Act II will be brought into the Studio next, and be lined up by height and size, from the tallest to smallest. The Angels are cast by looking for students who will fit the pre-made costumes. There will be dancing involved in the audition.

The next group of students brought into the studio will be those being considered for a role in the Party Scene in Act I. These students will be lined up by height and size, from the tallest to smallest. The Party Scene is cast by looking for students who will fit the pre-made costumes. There will be dancing involved in the audition.

The students being considered for a role in the Battle Scene will be brought into the Studio and lined up by height and size, from the tallest to smallest. The Soldiers will be cast by looking for students who fit the pre-made costumes. There will be dancing involved in the audition.

This a very brief description of what will happen during the audition process.

Pennsylvania Ballet reserves the right to change the order of the audition at any given time. The audition will start at 12 p.m.; all students must arrive on time. Children who are late may miss their group and will not be able to participate in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*.

Attendance at the audition does not mean that you will receive a role in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker*.

Advice from Nutcracker Survivors

1. Rehearsing for and performing in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* necessarily involve a lot of waiting around: Waiting for the other cast to finish rehearsing, waiting for costume fittings, waiting in the dressing room to be called down to the stage. If your child is particularly fidgety, and/or if he/she has a hard time dealing with late nights, you would be well advised **for your child's sake** to delay his/her participation in *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* until next year.
2. YES! Your child must come to all rehearsals and all performances for which he/she is scheduled--even if it means missing birthday parties, trips to the shore, etc. Agreeing to do *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* means you have agreed to make it your #1 commitment through October, November & December until the last performance on December 31, 2011.
3. **CAST MEMBERS AND THEIR PARENTS MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR READING ALL "NUTCRACKER" INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS.** The Ballet will distribute many informational handbooks and flyers during the weeks to come. **WHENEVER A FLYER OR HANDBOOK IS DISTRIBUTED TO CAST MEMBERS, THIS EVENT IS ANNOUNCED ON THE HOTLINE.** Call the Hotline (215.551.7000 ext. 1918) frequently to ensure that you have received all written materials.
4. Although the Company provides a master schedule in September and tries very hard to stick to it--changes are inevitable. You need to remember that in "show biz," last-minute changes are unavoidable. Be prepared to have your child on "stand-by" during the two weeks preceding opening night.
5. Performances are split pretty evenly between Cast A and Cast B. Count on being at the Academy of Music almost every day during the performance run.
6. If your child is scheduled for a matinee, he/she will have to miss an afternoon of school. During an evening performance, it will be 8 or 8:15 p.m. before Party Scene, Soldiers and Mice may leave, 8:30 or 8:45 p.m. before Angels may leave and around 9 p.m. before Pollys and Hoops may leave the theater. (This assumes a 7 p.m. curtain for evening performances.)
7. Families of cast members do not get a discount on tickets. Families of cast members are not allowed backstage--before, during, or after the show, only chaperones are allowed backstage.
8. Nutcracker is expensive. You are responsible for purchasing your child's: shoes, tights, leotards, makeup. You will have to pay for parking if you volunteer to chaperone during a performance. You will have to buy your tickets to the performance and you will invest untold hours in driving your child to rehearsals and performances.
9. A "Nutcracker Handbook" is distributed to all cast members in November. It answers questions related to actual performances and theater rules. (E.g. What kind of makeup does my child wear? What time does my child have to be at the theater? May I watch dress rehearsal?)

10. Mothers (and a few fathers) will have the opportunity to help out in the dressing rooms during the performances. The children are well-chaperoned during every performance; even if you are the parent of the tiniest Angel, you can be confident that she will be supervised at all times.

11. You can count on at least two or three things happening differently from the way you've been told they will happen. (Moral: nothing is for sure and certain in the world of professional ballet.)

12. Is it worth it? Only you can decide. The Company tries to make Nutcracker 'child-friendly'-- but it is, ultimately, a demanding, professional, performance experience. Parents who are happiest with *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker* know that the Company uses far more children than are necessary (or even ideal) for the smooth running of the performance and view their child's participation as a rare privilege with tremendous rewards.