

A Second Grade Performance Study

The Nutcracker

Story Written by E.T.A. Hoffman

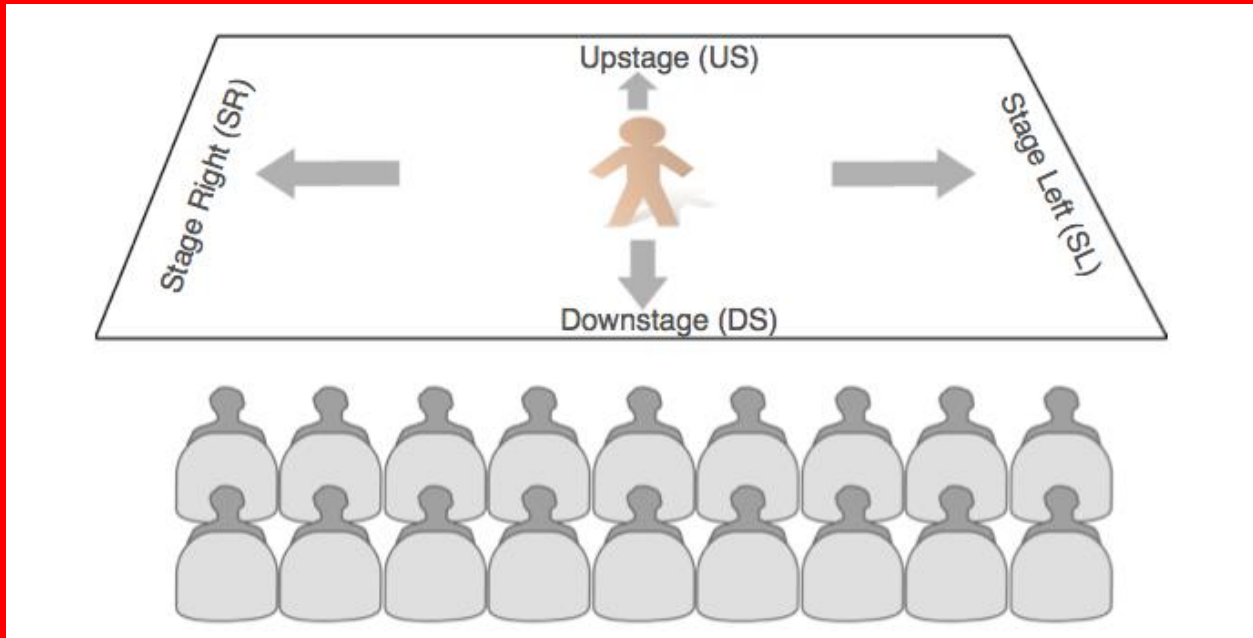
Music Composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Originally Choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov

As part of the music curriculum for December, students dove into a performance study of the Nutcracker! During this unit, we had an opportunity to discover the many different pieces that come together to make a live stage performance a success. Some of the topics discussed were...

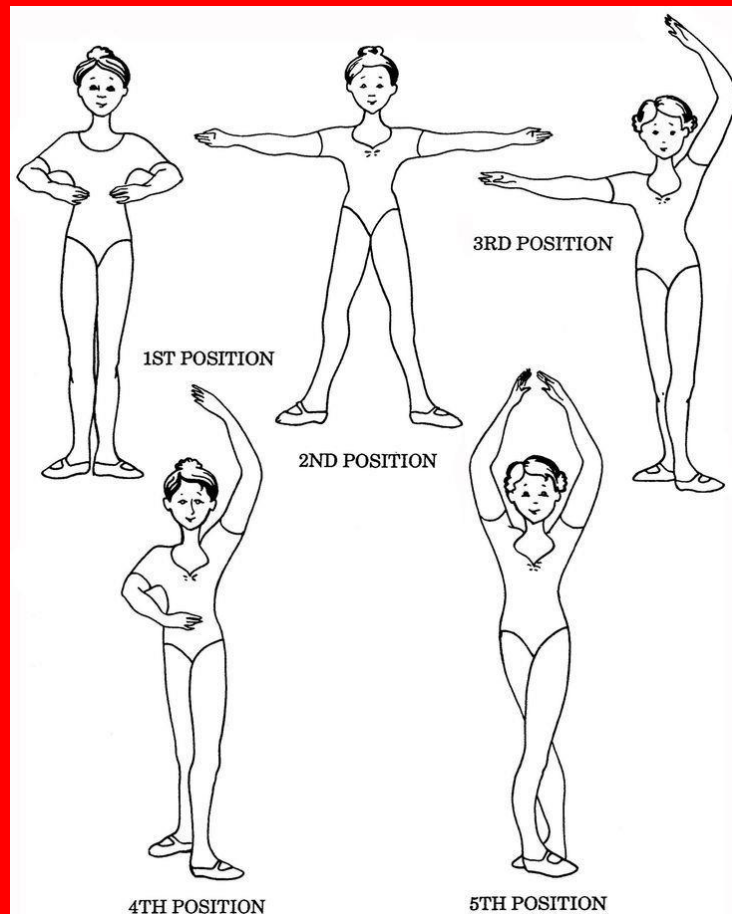
- The history of how the show came together starting back in 1816.
- Musical vocabulary such as; choreography, composer, ballet, stage directions, costume, props, set, pit orchestra, etc.
- The original plot line of the story.
- The theme of the music that you hear throughout the March. (Students performed the theme on xylophones as part of an imagined pit orchestra experience.)
- Costume design and set design for a stage performance. (Students sketched out their ideas for material choices, color choices, and stage scenery for one particular scene of their own creative production of the Nutcracker.)
- Stage lighting and directions. (We labeled the different parts of a stage and learned the difference between upstage and down stage and the history behind it.)
- The first few positions of ballet. (Students were asked to try and balance as we moved our bodies from the first through fifth positions of ballet.)
- Performance reviews. (Students were asked to record their opinions of a professional performance of the Nutcracker shown to them. The recording came from the San Francisco Ballet Company from California.)

Stage Positions



- Moving on stage to the right or left is backwards to the audience!
- When you are moving towards stage right, the audience will view you as being on the left side of the stage! When you move towards the stage left side, the audience will view you as being on the right side of the stage.
- Upstage is in the back of the stage. Downstage is in the front of the stage.
- When theaters were built originally, the stage used to slope down towards the audience so that it was easier for folks watching to see the entire stage. Now, the seats for the audience are sloped so that viewing is easier.
- When someone is standing in the middle of the stage, it is called Centre Stage.
- The wings of the stage are just off to the right and left and is usually a place for folks to wait between scenes. The audience cannot see what is happening in the wings due to curtains that hide the action. Definitely

Ballet Positions, Facts, and Interesting Tidbits!



- Ballet dancers can be male or female.
- There are professional ballet dancers just as there are professional sports athletes
- Groups of ballet dancers are put together in “companies.” Many major cities have their own special ballet companies.
- Many athletes have used ballet techniques to help strengthen parts of their bodies in new and better ways. Balance, agility, and strength are the three things most affected in ballet studies.
- The different kinds of ballet shoes help dancers move and use their bodies in new ways.
- The clothing that ballet dancers wear do not restrict movement in any way. It bends and stretches with the dancers on each and every move.