

MINNESOTA DANCE THEATRE

Loyce Houlton's Nutcracker Fantasy

(Frequently Asked Questions)

1. How is *Loyce Houlton's Nutcracker Fantasy* connected to the school?

Loyce Houlton's Nutcracker Fantasy is a professional production of Minnesota Dance Theatre (MDT). Children's roles in the performance are filled by students of the Dance Institute (DI), but **enrollment in the DI does not guarantee participation in the "Nutcracker"**.

2. What levels of students participate?

Students in Levels 2 and up are eligible for consideration.

3. How do you indicate you are interested in participating?

All students (level 2 and above) in the DI will be considered UNLESS you have indicated that you are **not** interested on your registration form.

4. Can you indicate interest in a particular role?

No. Students participating in the "Nutcracker" should be fully committed to participation as an ensemble member in the production regardless of eventual role decisions.

5. When do students find out what part they have?

A list of Nutcracker participants will be posted in mid-October, based on the observations of the artistic staff. Final casting decisions are determined during the rehearsal process to best suit the needs of the production and the students. **The parts students rehearse may not necessarily be the parts they are eventually assigned, but there is intrinsic value in the rehearsal process itself.** This fluid casting process allows students to improve and for the artistic staff to place them in the most appropriate role to serve the needs of the production.

6. How are roles cast?

Casting decisions are made at the discretion of the Artistic Director, in collaboration with teachers from the DI. Auditions are not held, but students are observed extensively in class. Casting decisions are made with considerable thought and care, but are **not** an indication of future professional potential. They are based on myriad factors, among them, technical ability, height, musicality, behavior and stage presence, but also the size and number of specific costumes and the artistic staff's judgment.

7. Are roles ever double cast?

Occasionally. If that happens and there is an issue with previously purchased tickets for a performance in which your child is NOT appearing, the DI staff will assist in changing your tickets.

8. Are there additional expenses involved in being in the production?

MDT provides costumes and makeup for the production, though students provide their own shoes and tights. Additional expenses will include parking downtown during rehearsals and performances.

9. Where is the performance?

At the State Theatre in downtown Minneapolis. Most rehearsals are held at the Hennepin Center for the Arts until tech week. Tech week is the week before the performance, when technical elements such as lighting, costumes, sets and live

music are integrated into the performance. The State Theatre is a union house, and while there, all performers must abide by union rules and regulations. Further details will be in the production book.

10. What is the rehearsal commitment?

In mid-October, a list of student participants in the “Nutcracker” will be posted, and rehearsals will begin. **A mandatory parent meeting will be held for participants in mid-October.** Students in the “Nutcracker” should expect to rehearse every Saturday and Sunday from mid-October through the last performance. Additional rehearsals will be called in the weeks leading up to the performance. The weekend following Thanksgiving is an important rehearsal time, and all student cast members must be present at all rehearsals for which they are called. **You must commit to the rehearsal process if you wish to be considered for the “Nutcracker”.**

11. How do we know when rehearsals are?

Students in the “Nutcracker” should expect to rehearse every Saturday and Sunday afternoon from mid-October through the last performance. Additional rehearsals will be called in the weeks leading up to the performance, with daily rehearsals (some during the school day and in the evening) during “tech week”. Families should check the **Rehearsal Hotline (612-338-0627 Ext. 7)** Friday evenings after 8pm for any changes to the coming weekend’s schedule. During tech week, the hotline will be updated by 8 AM for changes in the current day’s rehearsal. Rehearsals will also be posted on the bulletin board on the 6th floor.

12. How do we get specific information about the production?

There will be a “Nutcracker Handbook” distributed to participants at the orientation meeting in late October. A “Production Book”, detailing the schedule at the State Theatre, will be distributed at Thanksgiving.

13. How are children supervised backstage?

The youngest children are supervised by parent volunteers and their teacher. Older children sign a contract and are expected to behave seriously and professionally backstage.

14. Can we volunteer to help, and in what capacity?

The performance could not happen without the many parent volunteers who support the work of the company. Limited volunteers’ positions are available and assignment is at the discretion of the artistic staff and production manager.

15. Do participants get complimentary tickets to the production?

No, but DI families may purchase tickets at a discount through the MDT/DI Office.

Although every effort is made by the artistic staff to be cognizant of children’s needs, any parent of a student who is selected for a Company production should be prepared for:

- ***inevitable scheduling changes with little notice,***
- ***providing or arranging their own transportation to and from rehearsals or performances,***
- ***late hours in the theatre,***
- ***as well as their child’s individual ability to keep up with their academic and dance class work and their child’s ability to tolerate disappointment should they not get cast or receive the part they want.***

Such are the challenges that accompany the many benefits of the professional rehearsal and performance experience.
