

DANCE THE STORY: THE NUTCRACKER AND THE 1904 WORLD'S FAIR

Teacher Handbook 2025-2026

Know-Before-You-Go [Page 2](#)

**Show Description and
Curricular Connections** [Page 3](#)

Performers and Composers [Page 4](#)

Vocabulary and Outline [Page 6](#)

Classroom Activities [Page 9](#)

Postcards without Borders [Page 15](#)

About the Sheldon [Page 18](#)

Know-Before-You-Go 2025-2026

Buses and Parking Book your bus to arrive at The Sheldon 20 minutes before showtime, and to leave The Sheldon 1 hour after show time. We recommend your bus approaches from Spring Avenue. Staff will be waiting to help your bus park in the appropriate place and give further instructions. Please stay on the bus until you have those instructions. Buses park for free on the street in front of The Sheldon and in the lot. Cars park for free in the West Lot, on the right side of The Sheldon if you are facing the steps. Cars park on the perimeter to allow buses space on the interior of the lot.

Tickets & Payment Physical tickets will not be sent, but the seats reflected on your invoice will be reserved together, and you will be seated by ushers in the concert hall when you arrive. Your payment is due 30 days before the show. Payment online with a credit card is the preferred method, but your school can also send a check. Please contact the Director of Education if you have unusual circumstances. A Ticketing and Payment Policies Document is included with your invoice.

Concert Manners Please coach your students in good concert manners before coming to The Sheldon Concert Hall. Good audiences love to listen to music and show their appreciation with applause, usually at the end of an entire piece and occasionally after a good solo by one of the musicians. Food and drink are prohibited in The Sheldon Concert Hall. Any device that makes noise is a distraction for both the performers on stage and your fellow audience members and should be put away. No photos or video are allowed during the performance. Restrooms are on the same level as the concert hall near the Art Galleries. Please encourage students to use restrooms at school or to use Sheldon restrooms before the concert begins. If a student does need to use the restroom during the performance, the best time to get up is between musical numbers.

Art Galleries The Sheldon Galleries will have on view the exhibition *We Each Hold Stories* from November 7, 2025 – May 2, 2026. *We Each Hold Stories* features 16 established and emerging Indigenous American artists co-curated by Tom Jones of the Ho-Chunk Nation and Paula Lincoln, The Sheldon Gallery Director. The work in the exhibition explores themes of personal experience, family, history, and current social issues. The artists reimagine their Native identity through storytelling, addressing land, community, and human behavior with a focus on healing and connection between past and present.

You are invited to contact The Sheldon and add a 30-minute visit to the galleries after the concert when you attend a Sheldon Education Program. Tours are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and we can accommodate 40 students at one time, 3rd grade and older. Groups with 80 students can be divided into two consecutive tours, totaling 60 minutes. Groups of more than 80 students exceed our capacity.

Health + Safety Please visit our website for the most up-to-date information on health and safety measures. To communicate the need for accessible seating, please indicate so on your reservation form. The Sheldon staff can direct you toward elevators. We recommend students that might have sensory or stimulation issues bring their own noise-cancelling headphones, but if you are surprised by a need for them, we have some in the box office.

Show Description and Curricular Connections

About the Show

Dance the Story: The Nutcracker and the 1904 World's Fair teaches students how dance and music come together to tell a story and uses Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Ballet*, adapted to be set at the 1904 World's Fair to illustrate the story. The cast involves the students in frequent engagement opportunities.

Recommended Resources

Ballet 314 full-length performance of The Nutcracker
[Streaming Link](#)

Password/Ticket: B314_Nutcracker23A

Missouri History Museum on 1904 World's Fair
<https://mohistory.org/legacy-exhibits/Fair/WF/HTML/Educators/page3.html>

The Arts as Culture, History, and Connectors from National Core Arts Standards on Artistic Literacy

Philosophical Foundations

Throughout history the arts have provided essential means for individuals to express their ideas, experiences, feelings and deepest beliefs. Each discipline shares common goals, but approaches them through distinct media and techniques. Understanding artwork provides insights into individuals' own and others' cultures and societies, while also providing opportunities to access and express, and integrate meaning across a variety of content areas.

Lifelong Goals

Artistically literate citizens know and understand artwork from varied historical periods and cultures, and actively seek and appreciate diverse forms and genres of artwork of enduring quality and significance. They also seek to understand relationships between the arts and cultivate habits of searching for and identifying patterns, relationships between the arts, and other knowledge.

The Sheldon's Goal

We provide access to age-appropriate concert experiences that engage and inspire the student audience to pursue artistic literacy and all the benefits it offers.

Performers



Ballet 314



Rachel Bodi

Ballet 314 executive director



Robert Poe

Ballet 314 artistic director



Steve Neale

pianist

Rachel Bodi and Robert Poe co-founded Ballet 314 in 2019 which provides enriching professional ballet experiences to the St. Louis community. They partner with many St. Louis organizations including the St. Louis Public Library and the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. Through founding Ballet 314, Rachel and Robert aspire to continue fostering a deeper sense of community both within the organization and in the arts community as a whole, and to continue to provide accessible, inclusive, and diverse arts education programming.

Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Rachel Bodi began her professional career in 2008, and has enjoyed performing in St. Louis for the past 10 years. Prior to founding Ballet 314 in 2019 alongside Robert Poe, she enjoyed careers with Missouri Ballet Theatre (2011-2017), Common Thread Contemporary Ballet (2018), Nashville Ballet 2 (2008-2011) and as a guest artist with Texture Contemporary Ballet (2011, 2012).

A native of Aiken, South Carolina, Robert Poe has enjoyed a professional dancing career since 2004. For almost 17 years, he has performed with Columbia City Ballet, Cedar Lake II, Nashville Ballet, and the Nashville Opera before coming to St. Louis to dance with Missouri Ballet Theatre. In 2011, he became a founding member of The Big Muddy Dance Company and spent 9 seasons rehearsing, performing and choreographing with the company before leaving to flourish his own non-profit dance organization, Ballet 314.

Steve Neale is an award-winning composer, conductor and pianist. With a degree in Film Scoring from the Berklee College of Music, Steve has written and produced music for film, video games, and live theater around the country. Steve has a robust performing and teaching career in the St. Louis area and beyond.

Featured Composer

Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky



Romantic composer Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Vyatka, Russia and is recognized among the greatest composers in history, his music having international impact to this day. Because of his success, the second half of the 19th century is regarded the “golden age of Russian music.” Although Tchaikovsky showed impressive musical talent from a young age, his parents urged him to follow in his father’s footsteps working in civil service. Tchaikovsky attended law school and worked at the Ministry of Justice for four years. However, his passion remained in music and theatre, and he enrolled in the St. Petersburg Conservatory at 21 years of age as a composition student. In 1863, at age 23, Tchaikovsky moved to Moscow to teach at the Moscow Conservatory. During these years he composed many of his early works, some of which gained him great popularity including his Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, his Symphony No. 3 in D Major, and his ballet *Swan Lake*. In 1878, Tchaikovsky resigned from his teaching position to devote himself fully to composing. Tchaikovsky’s body of work consists of 169 pieces, including symphonies, operas, ballets, concertos, cantatas and songs. Of all his music he is most celebrated for his ballets *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and *The Nutcracker* (1892). Having attended St. Petersburg Conservatory, his composition style uniquely blends traditional Russian sounds with his Western classical training. Tchaikovsky gained inspiration from Mozart, Richard Wagner, and Italian opera. In a journal, Tchaikovsky wrote, speaking of Mozart, “thanks to him, I learned what music was.”

Dance The Story: The Nutcracker Vocabulary

apotheosis- Another word for the climax of the story- the highest point in the action.

author- Person who writes a story

characters- Who/whom a story is about

choreographer- Person who makes up the steps (choreography) for a ballet.

climax- The pivotal moment in a story

composer- Person who writes music

conclusion- The ending or resolution of a story

crescendo- A gradual increase in volume in a section of music

falling action- The actions of the story after the climax that lead to the story's conclusion.

fiction- A story that is written about setting, characters, and plot that are not real/imaginary.

finale- The end of a ballet or musical performance

flashback- In a story, going to a scene that takes place before the present time.

historical fiction- A story that takes place in a real time in history, but its characters and plot are made up.

illustrator- The person who draws or creates the images or pictures in a story.

march- In music, the rhythm of a march is an even measure 2/4 or 4/4 time, with an accented 1st beat to mimic the action of marching.

moral (of a story)- The lesson that a reader can learn from a story.

non-fiction- A story that is written about a true, real-life setting, characters, and plot.

pantomime- Gestures that tell a story with no words

plot- What happens in a story, the action

rhythm- The beat of the music

rising action- The events leading to the climax of a story

score- The written form of a musical composition

setting- The time/place where a story takes place

staccato- Musical term used to indicate playing short, detached notes

tempo- The speed of the music

timbre- The sound quality of a musical instrument

theme- A central topic/idea/phrase that can appear as a part of a story, musical work, or dance.

waltz- a dance or song that is played in 3/4 time; in dance, the steps have a 1, 2, 3 rhythm

Show Outline

PARTS OF A STORY

Every story is made up of several parts:

- Characters: Who or whom the story is about
- Setting: Where and/or when the story takes place
- Plot: What happens in the story, the action
 - Beginning (Exposition)
 - Middle (Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action)
 - End (Conclusion)

THE NUTCRACKER BALLET

Written by E.T.A Hoffmann

Composed by Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky

Choreography by Marius Petipa

MEET THE CHARACTERS

There are many characters in the Nutcracker ballet, and in this version students will meet:

TELL THE STORY

Prologue: The beginning, or exposition of the story. The characters and setting are introduced, and the plot begins.

Act 1: World's Fair Flashback: We are now at the rising action of the story, soon there will be a pivotal moment in the story.

Act 1: Clara's Dream: We are given an update to the setting and reach the climax of the story. There is a problem to solve.

Act 2: Dreaming of the World's Fair: We are given an update to the setting, and reach the climax of the story. There is a problem to solve. We are now in the falling action of the story.

Conclusion/Apotheosis: Christmas Morning: The problem has been solved and we get to find out if the characters get their "happily ever after."

The 1904 World's Fair: Did You Know?

The World's Fair was held as a centennial celebration of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. Also known as the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition, nearly 20 million people from throughout the world gathered in St. Louis between April 30-December 1, 1904.

Among the many people who visited, some noteworthy guests include President Theodore Roosevelt and First Lady Alice, Thomas Edison, and John Phillip Sousa, whose band performed on the first day of the fair.

In addition to the 12 “Palaces” which included: The Palace of Fine Arts, Agriculture, and Transportation, visitors to the fair could also visit The Pike. The Pike was home to over 50 concessions-style sights and more fantastical displays.

Some whimsical and famous foods were served and gained popularity, including: cotton candy (known as “fairy floss”), ice cream in waffle cones, hamburgers, iced tea, and many other treats that are common today.

Below you can see a photograph of one of the souvenirs available for fair-goers; a hinged walnut shell with tiny pages depicting the sights of the fair. This is referred to as The World's Fair “In a Nutshell.”



Classroom Activity: Pantomime Your Own Story

LANGUAGE
ARTS

Students will work together to create and tell a unique story as a class inspired by instrumental music. Students will practice using vocabulary terms characters, setting, and plot and pantomime their story as a performance.

1. As a class, identify building blocks of a story (characters, setting, plot) and define each component.
2. Select three instrumental music selections to serve as the soundtrack for the beginning (exposition), middle (rising action), and end (conclusion) of the story.
3. Listen as a class. Discuss the emotion of each piece, asking students how it makes them feel or what action they imagine if it were the soundtrack to a movie.
4. Use the Story Maker worksheet to build the story. As a class, decide the setting, characters, and plot of each part of the story, using the music as a guide. Use the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW questions to prompt discussion. Keep adding details until the story is complete. Remind students that you are building ONE story, so each added detail should support the current story.
5. Assign students to characters to dance or act out the story using only pantomime (body gestures and facial expressions). Perform as a class with the music.

Story Maker Worksheet

Classroom Activity: Step to the Beat!

Students identify music from *The Nutcracker* as a waltz or march and move to the beat accordingly. To indicate a waltz, students take one big step to the side and two little steps in place (then repeated on the other side). To indicate a march, students will step forward for two counts and backwards for two counts. Students compete to identify the correct pulse first, showing their response with their body only. In stepping to the music, students will also identify the tempo of each piece.

Music & Dance

$\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{4}{4}$

A MARCH is in $\frac{2}{4}$ or $\frac{4}{4}$ time which means that the rhythmic pulse is felt in groups of two or four.

Nutcracker Marches

Nutcracker March

Dance of The Reed Pipes

Trepak (Russian Dance)

A WALTZ is in $\frac{3}{4}$ time which means that the rhythmic pulse is felt in groups of three.

$\frac{3}{4}$

Nutcracker Waltzes

Chocolate (Spanish Dance)

Coffee (Arabian Dance)

Waltz of The Flowers



Classroom Activity: Solve the Crossword

V B R H Y T H M U N D
R A A E H U G T P U C
T L F M C T X M B X H
G L R C T U A I E F A
N E Y E I T M D G D R
I T E M P O I D I E A
T C S L O R L L N S C
T F O P T K C E N D T
T T F I N A L E I E E
E Q N W R I T I N G R
S T U D E N T U G S R

WORDBANK

beginning
middle
end
setting
plot
character
climax
writing
rhythm
pitch
tempo
score
finale
tutu
ballet
student

Crossword Answer Key

V	B	R	H	Y	T	H	M	U	N	D
R	A	S	E	H	U	G	T	P	U	C
T	L	C	M	C	T	X	M	B	X	H
G	L	O	C	T	U	A	I	E	F	A
G	E	R	E	I	T	M	D	G	D	R
N	T	E	M	P	O	I	D	I	E	A
I	C	S	L	O	R	L	L	N	S	C
T	F	O	P	T	K	C	E	N	D	T
T	T	F	I	N	A	L	E	I	E	E
E	Q	N	W	R	I	T	I	N	G	R
S	T	U	D	E	N	T	U	G	S	R

WORDBANK

beginning
middle
end
setting
plot
character
climax
writing
rhythm
pitch
tempo
score
finale
tutu
ballet
student

Classroom Activity: Draw The Emotion

Dancers use their faces to help tell stories! Draw the expressions on each of the faces to match the emotion.



HAPPY



ANGRY



SAD



SILLY



SCARED



WORRIED

Postcards Without Borders

Allow students to reflect on the performance by writing a postcard to a friend describing what they experienced at The Sheldon. Students can color the front and write a message on the back.
(Please hand deliver- the “stamp” is fake.)

Missouri ELA Standard

Example: 2nd Grade

Writing 2A. Write opinion texts that:

- a. introduce a topic or text being studied, using complete sentences
- b. state an opinion about the topic or text and provide reasons for the opinion
- c. use specific words that are related to the topic and audience
- d. use linking/transition words and phrases to signal event order
- e. provide evidence of a beginning, middle, and concluding statement or section

Writing 2B. Write informative/explanatory texts that:

- a. introduce a topic or text being studied, using complete sentences
- b. use facts and definitions to develop points in generating paragraphs
- c. use specific words that are related to the topic and audience
- d. use linking words and phrases to signal event order
- e. create a concluding statement or paragraph

Please share excellent student work with us!

Email photos to
educationboxoffice@thesheldon.org

Missouri Music Standard

Example: 2nd Grade

Responding.

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

- a. Demonstrate knowledge of musical concepts and how the support creators'/performers' expressive intent.

9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. A. Apply personal and expressive preferences in the evaluation of music for specific purposes.

Connecting.

10. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

- A. Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.



Suggested Nutcracker Prompts

What was your favorite character in the show?

What was your favorite dance in the show?

What are the three parts of every story?

If you made your own ballet, what would it be about?



To:



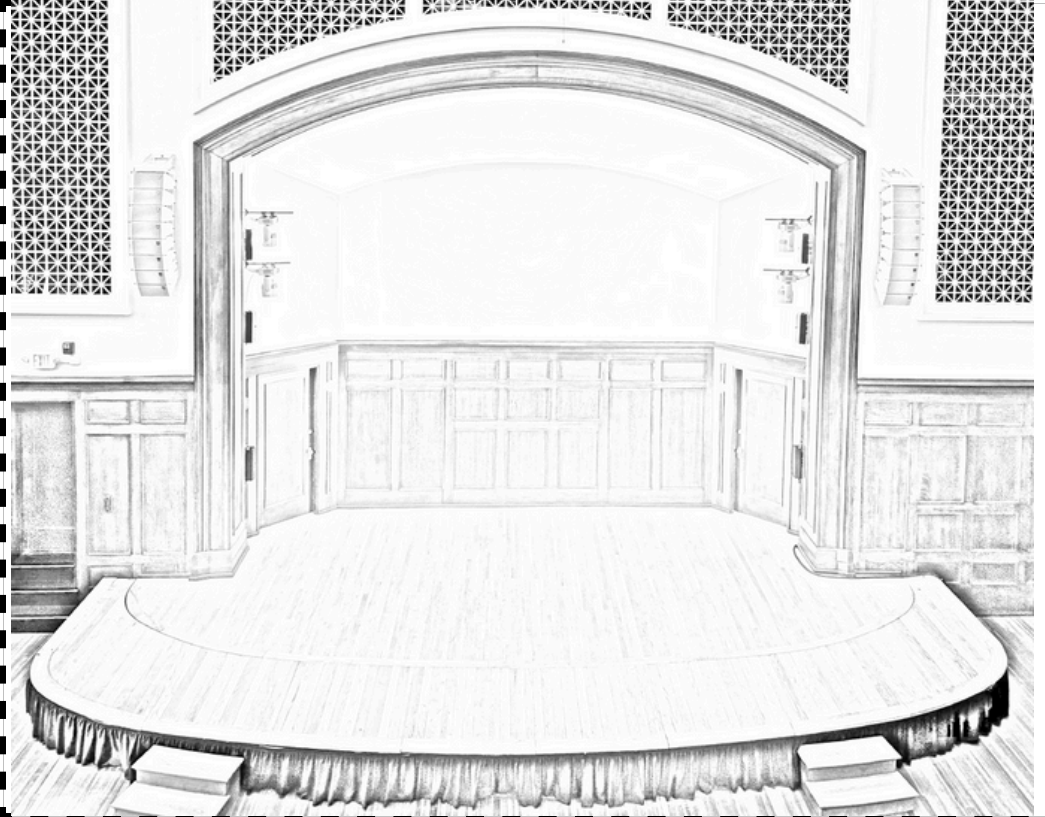
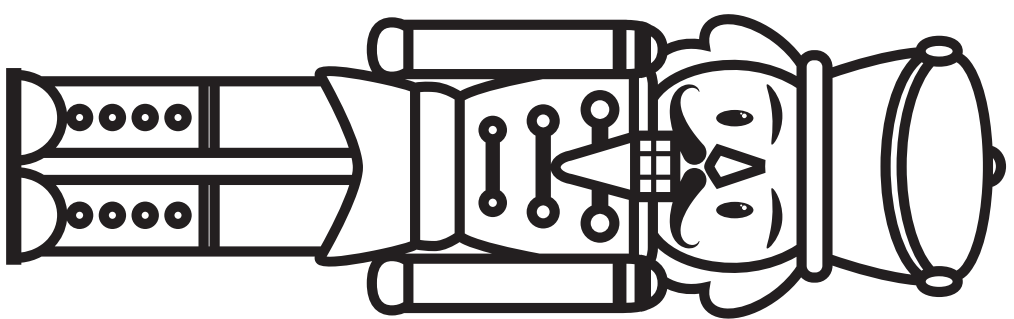
To:



To:



To:



About the Sheldon

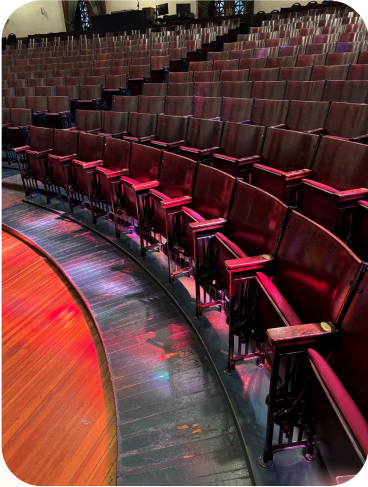


The Sheldon Concert Hall is a historical building that was constructed in 1912 by the famous architect, Louis Spiering. It was originally home to the Ethical Society of St. Louis and is named after Walter Sheldon, founding member of the Ethical Society. It was purchased in 1991, becoming the Sheldon Art Foundation, with the first season presented in 1994. The education programs began in 1999 and continue to inspire young audiences today.



In 1998 The Sheldon Art Galleries were opened in the building next door to the concert hall, joined by a glass bridge. Interestingly, the building used to be a parking garage before it was renovated for the Sheldon galleries and event spaces.

Concert Hall Eye-Spy



Acoustic Materials

The Sheldon is known for having perfect acoustics, which means that sound travels really well – even without amplification! The architect of The Sheldon carefully considered **shape, size, and materials** used in order to make the perfect concert hall. Hard and smooth surfaces **reflect** sound back to the listener and soft surfaces **absorb** sound.

The wood floor beneath your feet acts like the belly of a REALLY large guitar, vibrating with the sounds from stage. What you *cannot* see is that under the floor is open space and a dirt floor. The open space allows the floor to freely vibrate and the dirt floor absorbs the extra vibrations that pass through.



Reappearing patterns

Louis Spiering, architect of The Sheldon, gave the room his own personal touch through this geometric pattern found on the concert hall doors. This pattern is also found elsewhere in the concert hall. See if you can find the pattern when you visit!



Stage extension

If you look closely you will notice a seam where an extension to the original stage was added. The first row of original seats was removed to make room for this stage.

Stained glass windows

When you walk in the concert hall you won't be able to miss the beautiful stain glass windows creating a kaleidoscope of colors! Do you notice the contrasting designs? The windows on opposite sides of the stage were created by different artists at different times.

