

presents  
Pacific Symphony's Family Musical Mornings



## ***THE NUTCRACKER FOR KIDS!***

Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025 @ 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

Today, we celebrate the holiday season together with a beloved classic designed especially for young audiences! *The Nutcracker for Kids!* is a narrated adaptation of Tchaikovsky's timeless ballet, featuring dazzling dancers from the American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School. Journey with Clara to the Land of Sweets as she meets the mischievous Mouse King, the heroic Nutcracker, and the enchanting Sugar Plum Fairy—all set to one of the most famous and festive scores ever written. This joyful, engaging performance brings the magic of ballet to life and is the perfect way to introduce children to the wonder of the holiday season!

**Lobby Activities:** Enjoy special activities for kids in the concert hall lobbies related to the theme of the concert, such as crafts, games, an instrument petting zoo, and more. Activities take place from 9 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. for 10 a.m. concertgoers, and from 12:15 p.m. – 1 p.m. for 11:30 a.m. concertgoers.

Pacific Symphony is a proud  
Resident Company of



# **THE NUTCRACKER FOR KIDS!**

**FM** Farmers & Merchants Bank®  
*California's Strongest, since 1907.*  
Member FDIC • FMB.com

Presents Pacific Symphony Family Musical Mornings

Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025 @ 10 a.m.  
Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025 @ 11:30 a.m.

Pola Benke, conductor  
American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School at  
Seegerstrom Center for the Arts  
Susan Brooker, artistic director  
David Stoneman, narrator  
Pacific Symphony



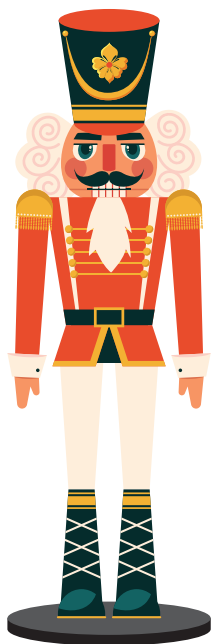
Performance at the Seegerstrom Center for the Arts  
Renée and Henry Seegerstrom Concert Hall

# PROGRAM

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY  
(1840-1893)

## The Nutcracker, Op. 71

Overture  
The Christmas Tree  
March  
Gallop of the Children and Entrance of the Parents  
Arrival of Drosselmeyer  
Scene and Grandfather Dance  
Clara and the Nutcracker  
The Battle  
The Kingdom of Sweets  
Clara and the Nutcracker Prince  
Divertissement:  
    Chocolate (Spanish Dance)  
    Tea (Chinese Dance)  
    Dance of the Reed Flutes  
    Trepak (Russian Dance)  
    Mother Ginger and the Clowns  
Waltz of the Flowers  
Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy  
Apotheosis



# WELCOME TO NUTCRACKER FOR KIDS!

Dear Friends,

I'm delighted to share this **holiday favorite** with you and the incredible **Pacific Symphony**.

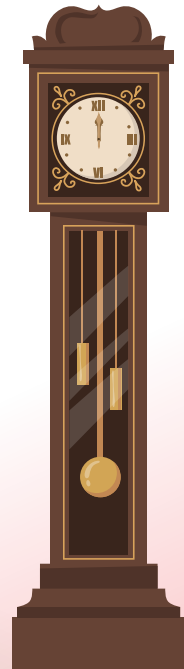
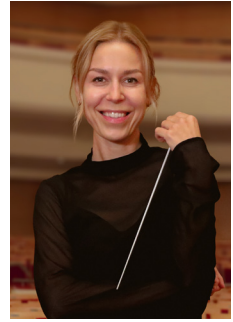
**Tchaikovsky's music** brings a world of imagination to life, from marching **toy soldiers** to **twirling snowflakes** and **dancing sugar plum fairies**.

We're also thrilled to have the talented dancers from the **American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School** joining us on stage, adding movement, charm, and a little extra magic to the story.

Thank you for being here and celebrating this **holiday tradition** with us. Be sure to join us later this season for *Peter and the Wolf* in February and Mozart's *The Magic Flute: Opera for Kids!* in May, crafted just for us with the help of Leopold—our favorite puppet!

Wishing you magical holidays filled with joy, love, and music!

Pola Benke  
Assistant Conductor



# MEET THE CONDUCTOR



**Pola Benke**

**Assistant Conductor for Pacific Symphony**

**Music Director for Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra**

**Mary E. Moore Family Assistant Conductor Chair**

Pola Benke is Assistant Conductor of the Pacific Symphony and Music Director of the Santa Monica Symphony, where she is quickly establishing herself as one of Southern California's most versatile and dynamic conductors. Her work is distinguished by a precise and expressive podium style, a deep sense of narrative in programming, and an ability to draw vibrant, cohesive performances from orchestras of all levels.

She has previously held assistant conductor posts with the Long Beach Symphony and the Riverside Philharmonic, and her artistic growth has been shaped by mentorships with Neeme Järvi, Sian Edwards, and Paavo Järvi. Internationally, she has appeared at the Järvi Academy in Estonia, Dartington Music Festival in England, and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California, earning recognition for her curiosity, discipline, and musical insight.

Born in Poland, Benke holds Master's degrees in both cello performance and orchestral conducting—a dual path that informs her holistic approach to music-making. With the combined perspective of performer and conductor, she approaches each score with both analytical clarity and a performer's sensitivity.

A firm believer in the orchestra's role as a modern cultural voice, Benke is committed to programming that embraces tradition while welcoming new and diverse perspectives. Whether she is leading a cornerstone symphony or championing a contemporary work, Pola aims to shape performances that are both artistically rigorous and deeply engaging for audiences.

# MEET THE ARTISTS

**David Stoneman, Drosselmeyer (Narrator)**



David Stoneman is known for his work in both classic and modern opera. The California native has sung with opera companies from Santa Barbara to Boston in repertoire ranging from Henry Purcell to Philip Glass and in roles from Figaro to Scarpia. After studying locally (OCC, Chapman, and USC), he spent two decades in Boston and New York singing opera and oratorio. His oratorio repertoire includes works as diverse as the requiems of Mozart, Brahms and Verdi, Stravinsky's *Mass*, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. With the Long Beach Chorale & Chamber Orchestra, he has sung the solos in Vaughan-

Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem*, Haydn's *Creation*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. On the legitimate stage, he has appeared as Flan Kittredge in *Six Degrees of Separation* and as C. K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story*. David is also a Registered Piano Technician.

# MEET THE ARTISTS



## Susan Brooker, Artistic Director



Susan Brooker is a member of the ABT's National Training Curriculum Artistic Board of Examiners and Instructors for the American Ballet Theatre, National Training Curriculum, and guest teacher in the ABT Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School. In 2000 Ms. Brooker was invited to the USA to teach on the faculty of the Hartt School Dance Division, University of Hartford, Connecticut, USA, she became Director of the School of Dance Connecticut in 2001 and Chair of the Dance Department of the Hartt School Community Division in 2004. From 2008 – 2014 she was Director of the BalletMet Dance Academy, Columbus OH.

Ms. Brooker is a Fellow, a Major Examiner of the I.S.T.D., and holds the Enrico Cecchetti Diploma. She taught for many years in Italy as: Director of the Scuola di Danza Hamlyni di De Vita, Lukens, Florence, Italian Examinations Organizer for the I.S.T.D., Honorary President of the Cultural Association, Ateneo Danza, Forli, and Vice President of Danzare Cecchetti, A.N.C.E.C. of which she is still Italian delegate for Cecchetti International Classical Ballet. Ms. Brooker is one of the Festival Artistic Directors for The Ballet Alliance.

Students of Ms. Brooker have won prestigious international dance competitions including the Prix de Lausanne and are dancing with companies in Europe, South America and the United States. Ms. Brooker has taught in schools in the USA, Europe, Canada, and Japan and is a specialist in Ballet Pedagogy and curriculum development.

## The American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School at Segerstrom Center for the Arts



The American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School at Segerstrom Center for the Arts is an expansion of the longtime relationship between the Center and American Ballet Theatre. The school, which opened in September 2015, combines the resources of American Ballet Theatre, America's National Ballet Company®, and Segerstrom Center,

one of the world's leading presenters of dance. It offers unrivaled opportunities for training and nurturing future generations of dancers and dance audiences as well as furthering the development and evolution of dance. Following American Ballet Theatre's National Training Curriculum, students are encouraged to reach their highest potential while building a safe and solid foundation in ballet technique. The school carries the name of Orange County philanthropist William J. Gillespie, who was a board member of ABT since 1999 and an enthusiastic and generous donor to the Center for much of the institution's history.

The ABT Gillespie School provides students with the highest quality of classical ballet training through the American Ballet Theatre National Training Curriculum. The ABT Gillespie School is modeled after the program used at the renowned ABT Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School in New York. Classes include classical ballet technique, pointe, men's class, partnering, character, modern, body conditioning and more. All classes are held in the Center's studios that have been used for rehearsals by the world's leading international dance and ballet companies. The dance studios feature professional sprung floors, full length mirrors, ballet barres and modern technology (surround sound systems, virtual class equipment). Each class features live accompaniment by one of the ABT Gillespie School's accomplished pianists.

# SYNOPSIS

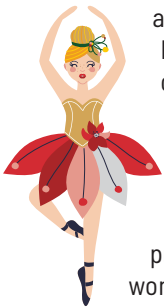
*The Nutcracker* begins in a sitting room as the narrator, Drosselmeyer, looks through a book of old memories. Drosselmeyer begins to tell one of his favorite stories as it comes to life before our eyes!

At a family Christmas party, Drosselmeyer gives a toy nutcracker to Clara, his goddaughter. Clara loves the nutcracker toy and dances with it all evening. When the party guests leave, Clara is too excited to sleep, and she sneaks out of bed to the living room to be with her nutcracker toy.



At midnight, mice begin to fill the living room. Drosselmeyer rescues Clara from the mice and magically brings the nutcracker to life to fight the evil Mouse King. The Nutcracker Prince leads a troop of toy soldiers into battle and defeats the Mouse King.

Tired from the battle, Clara falls asleep and soon awakens in the Land of Sweets, home of the Sugar Plum Fairy. To Clara's surprise, the Nutcracker has been transformed into a Prince! The Sugar Plum Fairy declares a celebration in honor of Clara and the Nutcracker Prince. Residents of the Land of Sweets dance for Clara and present her with gifts, including Spanish chocolate, Chinese tea, and Russian honey cake.



After the celebration, Clara returns home and awakens on Christmas day. As Drosselmeyer's story ends, he begins preparations for the next holiday party and wishes the audience a wonderful holiday season.

# ABOUT TCHAIKOVSKY

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** is one of the most famous Romantic era composers from Russia. He was born in 1840 and began learning piano at the age of five. Although Tchaikovsky studied to be a lawyer, he eventually quit his job at the Ministry of Justice to pursue his love of music. After he went back to school to study music, Tchaikovsky started teaching at what is now the Moscow Conservatory. Although Tchaikovsky wrote all kinds of music, he is best known for his ballets: *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*. While writing *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky heard the **celeste** for the first time and immediately knew he wanted it for the sound of his Sugar Plum Fairy. Despite the 1892 premiere of *The Nutcracker* being very unpopular, *The Nutcracker* is now one of the most beloved and frequently performed ballets in the world.



“ Our collaboration with Pacific Symphony represents a natural and exciting partnership, as we both call Segerstrom Center for the Arts our home. Together, we’re creating unique opportunities for ABT Gillespie School students to perform alongside professional musicians in the production of *The Nutcracker for Kids!* This creative alliance combines ABT’s world-class dance training with the symphony’s exceptional musical artistry, offering our young dancers an invaluable real-world performance experience. Watching our students bring this beloved holiday classic to life while dancing to live orchestral music has been truly magical. This partnership not only enriches our students’ artistic development but also strengthens the cultural fabric of our arts community. ”

—Susan Brooker










# HISTORY OF BALLET

Ballet is a form of dance that is used to tell a **narrative**, or story. Ballet is often performed with music, costumes, and stage scenery. A group of ballet dancers is called a **company**.



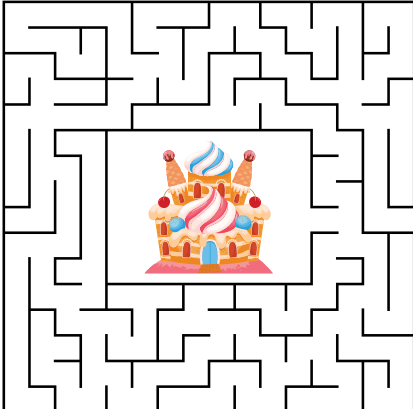
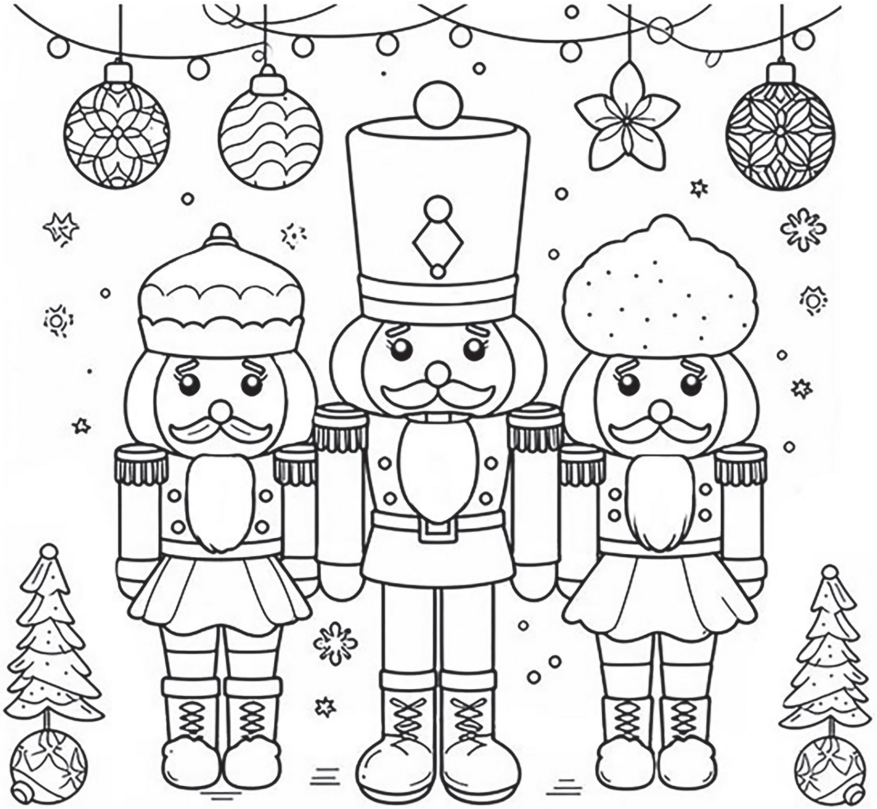
A brief history of ballet:

-  **1480s:** Ballet is first documented during the Italian Renaissance.
-  **1580s:** Ballet is popularized in French courts by Catherine di Medici.
-  **1681:** The first female lead dancer takes the stage.
-  **1697:** Ballet and opera come together to make **opéra-ballet!** Opéra-ballet includes singing, dancing, and orchestral music set to a loose theme.
-  **1750s:** **Ballet d'action**, or ballet centered around a **narrative** without singing, is developed.
-  **1832:** **Pointe**, or dancing on the tips of the toes, is invented. Ballerinas start wearing ballet skirts made from layers of light fabric known as **tutus**.
-  **1892:** *The Nutcracker* is first performed in Russia.

Ballet today, or **contemporary ballet**, has elements of classical ballet and modern dance. Contemporary ballet requires dancers to follow the same rules as classical ballet and can be combined with other dance styles, like jazz dance.



# THE NUTCRACKER





# THE NUTCRACKER WORD SEARCH

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

Ballet  
Candy  
Christmas  
Clara  
Dance  
Dream  
Gifts

King  
Magic  
Mouse  
Music  
Nutcracker  
Orchestra  
Presents

Prince  
Snowflake  
Soldier  
Sugarplum  
Tchaikovsky  
Toy  
Tree



# DISCOVER THE JOY OF MUSIC!

**FM** Farmers & Merchants Bank®  
California's Strongest, since 1907.  
Member FDIC • FMB.com

presents  
Pacific Symphony Family Musical Mornings

Family Musical Mornings are 45-minute concerts perfect for families and designed to inspire a lifelong love of music. Enjoy an engaging multimedia experience featuring the Symphony, singers, actors, and dancers. Share the joy of music and create unforgettable memories. Scan the code to purchase tickets!



## **PETER AND THE WOLF**

Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026  
10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* introduces children to the orchestra in a timeless tale of courage and adventure. With vivid narration, each instrument brings a character to life as young Peter embarks on a daring journey to outsmart the cunning Wolf—an unforgettable first symphonic experience.



## **LEOPOLD & THE MAGIC FLUTE: OPERA FOR KIDS!**

Saturday, May 30, 2026  
10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

Join Leopold, Pacific Symphony's furry puppet friend, for a whimsical journey into Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. This family-friendly adaptation features lively narration, colorful characters, and world-class music—an enchanting introduction to opera filled with laughter, adventure, and timeless melodies.