

# Rivard Report

## Your Holiday Guide to The Nutcracker

[Tami Kegley](#) on November 29, 2015



Thanksgiving is in the rear-view mirror, but the approaching lights, trees and shopping crowds are a sign of the holidays. Yes, it's Christmastime in the city. This also means "The Nutcracker" is upon us. The ballet, inspired by E.T.A. Hoffman's fairy tale, was first choreographed by Marius Petipa and scored by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The ballet was a flop when it debuted to Russian audiences in 1892, but George Balanchine's choreography for the 1954 version at The New York City Ballet made "The Nutcracker" a holiday classic. More than a century later, the ballet remains relevant for dancers, companies and families throughout America.

The Nutcracker is not only a tradition in 2015, it is also good for business. If a ballet company does only one fully-staged performance a year, you can bet your bottom dollar that it will be The Nutcracker. According to experts in the field, this production can be counted on to rake in 40% or more of a ballet company's annual operating expenses.

"It translates so well to children as well as drawing ticket buyers," said Ballet San Antonio interim Executive Director Steven Bull. "In fact, we have three active casts of children involved in the production – 187 kids. It's amazing."

And when it comes to classical music, most every American is certainly familiar with the score. How can anyone raised on a steady diet of Walt Disney avoid it since he used the entire score in the 1940 classic "[Fantasia](#)?"



Children's corps de ballet, Ballet San Antonio. Courtesy Photo.

Perhaps the most inclusive of all ballets, there are roles and opportunities to perform for every age range or level of skill. Most professional dancers can still remember when they first stepped on stage as a mouse in the Rat King's army or a tumbling tyke emerging from Mother Ginger's skirts.

On that note, here's your guide to finding twirling flowers, merriment, and sugarplum fun in San Antonio this December.

## **Ballet San Antonio**



Ballet San Antonio rehearses "The Nutcracker" in the studio. Photo by Tami Kegley

First out of the gate is [Ballet San Antonio](#) with nine performances spanning two weekends at the [Tobin Center for the Performing Arts](#), Dec 4 – 13, 2015. This is San Antonio’s premiere professional company, and audiences have appreciated the caliber of performance that this company has put forth over the past several years. This is the only local Nutcracker performance featuring live music. Audiences can hear [San Antonio Symphony](#) perform the beloved Tchaikovsky, led by Associate Conductor Akiko Fujimoto.

This is a milestone year for the company, with former Artistic Director Mayra Worthen (currently director of [Ballet Latino](#) here in San Antonio) returning to set her version of the ballet on the company. “I am looking forward to celebrating Ballet San Antonio’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an amazing group of artists, as we present this year’s updated Nutcracker production,” said Worthen.

“She (Worthen) has been very generous in sharing her talent with us this season, and it’s her baby,” Bull said.

Starting at just \$29, tickets can be purchased online at [www.tobincenter.org](http://www.tobincenter.org), in person at The Tobin Center box office (100 Auditorium Circle, 78205) or via phone at 210-223-8624. [Season packages](#) for Ballet San Antonio are still available and include tickets to The Nutcracker. Audiences will also have the opportunity to shop The Nutcracker Market Boutique at each and every performance.

## **San Antonio Metropolitan Ballet**



A scene from ARTS SA’s production of “The Nutcracker.” Photo by Greg Harrison

[The San Antonio Metropolitan Ballet](#) (SAMB) will collaborate with [Mejia Ballet International](#) to present four performances of “The Nutcracker,” between Dec. 18-20, at the [Lila Cockrell Theater](#). This production will be choreographed and directed by company founder Paul Mejia. His is a well-recognized name in ballet, best-known for his early career associations with George Balanchine and the New York City Ballet. In fact, he found himself the focus of the legend’s ire when he married fellow dancer and Balanchine muse Suzanne Farrell in 1969. Such is the stuff of romantic ballet lore.

These days, he is an *eminence grise* of the ballet world, passing on his wisdom to young dancers and training the next generation in the tradition of Balanchine. Mejia is the perfect fit for SAMB, a pre-professional company that gives young dancers the opportunity to work with real-world professionals in real-world circumstances.

According to the company website, “We look forward to continuing our efforts in bringing extraordinary guest artists, groundbreaking choreography and family friendly programming to the San Antonio community.”

Award-winning Russian dancers [Olga Pavlova, Yevgeni Anfinogenov, Marina Goshko and Andrey Prikhodko](#) will come to San Antonio as the principal dancers, giving the company and its young dancers the experience of professional polish and drive.

Starting at \$44 (value tickets at \$29 are sold out), tickets can be purchased online at [www.artssa.org](http://www.artssa.org) or by phone at 210-226-2891.

## Moscow Ballet



The Great Russian Nutcracker, Moscow Ballet. Courtesy photo.

The Moscow Ballet will return once again with their [Great Russian Nutcracker](#), which will show for three performances at [The Majestic Theater](#), Dec 27-28, 2015.

The international touring company is 40 strong and comprised of award-winning principals and corps de ballet. The Moscow Ballet version varies a bit from the traditional staging, with a tribute to world peace.

According to the company website, “The Dove of Peace (in which two dancers become one bird with a 20-foot wingspan) escorts Masha and the Prince to the Land of Peace and Harmony where ambassadors from Hispanic, African, Russian, Asian, and European heritages entertain and offer symbolic gifts in the form of playful silk puppets.”

In addition to dazzling physical prowess, the production includes 200 hand-embellished costumes designed by Shakespearean expert Arthur Oliver and created in St. Petersburg’s oldest theatrical costume shop.

Tickets start at \$32 and can be purchased online via [www.nutcracker.com](http://www.nutcracker.com) or at The Majestic Theater box office, 226 E. Houston Street, 78205. When purchasing online enter the code JOY for additional savings.

When it comes to “The Nutcracker,” there is something for everyone and every schedule this season. If you are new to the art of ballet this is a great opportunity for sweet discovery.

*\*Top Image: The Snowflake pas de deux. Moscow Ballet. Courtesy Photo.*