

# The Christmas Classic: A Nutcracker Suite



by  
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You may be sick to death of Christmas carols already, but the music of the Nutcracker Suite never gets old. The tale of a little girl's slumber under the Christmas tree transforms her favorite gift—a nutcracker painted as a soldier—into a guide through the toyland of Russian dolls, Chinese dancers and then through the whirl of snowflakes to the Snow Queen in the Land of Sweets.

South Coast residents are fortunate to have two versions of the Nutcracker to choose from: the New England Nutcracker, an adaptation by Rebecca Waskiel-Marchesseault, artistic director of the New Bedford Ballet, and the original Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite performed by the Spindle City Ballet Company of Fall River.

**New Bedford Youth Ballet**

In the New England version, the little girl is Mary, the daughter of whaling captain Ephraim Williams who returns home Christmas Eve from a long voyage. Herman Melville visits the family, and Captain Williams entertains them all with dancing animals brought from afar.



However, the story stays true to Tchaikovsky's original path: Mary receives the nutcracker and takes a voyage of her own through the dreamworld of toy soldiers battling mice, dancing sweets, and graceful snowflakes.

The cast of 65 local children and teens do ten performances between December 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> at the New Bedford Community Theater. The performance is shortened to about one hour, making it easier for very young children to sit through. Matinee and evening performances will be held at the Theater at 2343 Purchase Street, New Bedford.

In a goodwill trifecta, the New Bedford Youth Ballet also does three performances in one day: at 10 a.m. for P.A.C.E. Headstart and the Schwartz Center; then moves on to St. Luke's Hospital at noon for a second performance; and then on to Hasbro Children's Hospital in Providence at 3 p.m. for a third show.

"Everyone's pretty exhausted at the end of the day," said artistic director Rebecca Waskiel-Marchesseault at the Youth Ballet. "But it's worth it. The kids love to see the costumes." And while it's difficult to be in the hospital over the holidays, it's a nice break for the patients, families and hospital staff who come to watch, she said.

### **New England Nutcracker Cast:**

- Mary Williams Emma York

- Captain Williams: Anya Krause
- Herman Melville: Tatiana Alves
- Nutcracker Prince: Brooke Spencer
- Snow Queen: Kathryn Sebastiao
- Sugar Plum Fairy: Rhiley Sylvia

## **Spindle City Ballet Company**

Spindle City Ballet Company performs Tchaikovsky's classical Nutcracker Suite, replete with magical Uncle Drosselmeyer and a full array of dancing toys and sweets. Spindle City holds to the original story: Clara receives a nutcracker soldier from her magical Uncle Drosselmeyer; her bratty brother tries to steal it; she then goes back downstairs after everyone is asleep to make sure the nutcracker is safe. After falling asleep under the Christmas tree, she awakens to the battle of toy soldiers and mice and then is guided by the victorious Nutcracker Prince through toyland to the land of sweets.

"People often tell me, 'It's right here. I'm not going to Boston or New York anymore, [to see the Nutcracker ballet]' " said Lisa Bibeau, founder of Spindle City Ballet Company. She started the troupe in 1995 when she discovered that a former Dance Academy student was driving two hours to rehearse for nine hours once a week on a Sunday. "It was her only professional performing opportunity," said Ms. Bibeau.

Every year Spindle City adds something new to the choreography. This year look for the Chinese dragon with the Chinese dancers.

And, for an extra treat, Spindle City offers "An Evening with the Staulbaulms" on Saturday evening, December 17th. Beginning with a reception before the ballet, the evening includes a Grand Buffet at the end of the performance with the Staulbaums, Clara's family, of course. The cast joins their guests in costume at the end of the performance.

Performances are held at the Margaret L. Jackson Auditorium on

the Bristol Community College campus at 777 Elsbree Street in Fall River.

### **Spindle City Ballet Cast:**

- Clara: Megan Alberto
- Herr Drosselmeyer: Eddie Camara
- Nutcracker Prince: Shane Sarrell
- Snow King: Shane Sarrell
- Snow Queen: Brooke diFrancesco

### **Where, When, and How to Get Tickets:**

#### **New England Nutcracker**

- Matinees at 1:30 and 3 p.m on December 10, 11, 17, & 18.
- Evening performances on Friday, December 16 at 6:30 and 8 PM
- Tickets: \$10 for adults, \$5 for children, students and seniors
- Available online at: [www.newbedfordballet.org](http://www.newbedfordballet.org)

#### **Spindle City Ballet Company**

- Matinees at 2 p.m. on December 17 & 18
- Evening performance on Saturday, December 17 at 7 p.m.
- Evening with The Staulbaums, Saturday, December 17 at 6 p.m.
- Tickets: \$15-25 for adults; \$12 – 20 for seniors; and \$8-15 for children under 13.
- *Evening with Staulbaulms* tickets (additional): \$25 for adults, \$20 for children under 13.
- Available online at: [www.spindlecitlyballet.org](http://www.spindlecitlyballet.org)