

The Loudoun Ballet Company
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Nutcracker Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

This page of *Frequently Asked Questions*, or FAQs, has been prepared for those who are new to the Nutcracker (veterans may find it useful, too!) to help demystify what will happen during the rehearsals and the shows. In reading this over, it sounds like a lot of *don'ts* and *can'ts* and *may nots*. However, most of the restrictive comments are directed at protecting the property of the county school and the company's investment in costumes and props.

We need to be respectful of the opportunity to use the school facilities, as we are their guests.

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Coming and Going

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When do we arrive?

You should be *ready to perform* at the time on the schedule, except for shows and dress rehearsals which have a specific arrival time.

What if I am running late for a show or dress rehearsal?

You need to call Chris Casuccio at 703-771-8177.

What if I feel sick on a show day?

If you think you may be sick, you need to call Chris Casuccio at 703-771-8177. If you become sick after arriving for a show, you may be "quarantined" until you feel better. If you have a fever you will probably be sent home. As you decide whether you or your child should stay home, please take into consideration the possible effect of spreading an illness amongst the 190 performers and their families just before the winter holidays.

What if it snows?

If the school facilities are shut down due to snow, you should receive a phone call and/or email. It will be posted on the website as soon as possible.

When do I have to check in?

Check in *as soon as you arrive* for each rehearsal or show. Please do this yourself, or have a parent check you in. You may not check in for someone else.

What is the procedure for opposite cast members (Ex. Cast A at a Cast B show)?

You are expected to arrive at check-in time for all rehearsals and performances. You may be able to leave a performance if you have specific permission from the Producer (Chris Casuccio) or the Cast Manager (Kim Fulham). Be prepared to leave a telephone number where you can be reached during the show.

Do I have to stay for curtain call?

Yes. Curtain call is part of your performance.

Do we really have to stay until 10:30 pm for the final stage rehearsals?

This is a tough question because it involves predicting the future. If all goes well, it is possible that rehearsal will end early. There is a greater possibility of early dismissal when everyone arrives early, ready to perform at the scheduled start time. Often the youngest performers are released early and you should listen for announcements. Watch the Cast Manager (Kim Fulham) for dismissal information.

How will I know when I may leave?

Midweek stage rehearsals: listen for announcements specific to your role.

Matinee performances: Cast members should stay in designated areas to sign autographs, however this is not mandatory. After matinee shows, you must be present and checked in 1-1/2 hours before the start of the evening performance (this means you may not have time to leave on Sunday).

Evening performances: no autographs. Please clean up your waiting area and take all your possessions with you. Sunday night, please stay for the Cast Party.

Do I have to stay to sign autographs after matinees?

It is requested that you report to the offstage area designated for signing autographs, but it is not mandatory. Principal performers should remain, however.

How do I find my child after the performances?

After matinees, most young performers want to get and sign autographs in the offstage area designated for meeting the audience. Before the performance you should pick a special place to rendezvous so you can find each other. After evening shows performers will return to their dressing areas.

Costumes

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What if my costume gets dirty?

Before trying any kind of cleaning, call your costume set coordinator. Their name and phone number can be found on the paper you received and signed when you got the costume. If they cannot be found, like during a performance, ask a staff member for help.

When do I put on my costume?

You may not arrive or depart in costume. The costumes are strictly to be worn at the performance site. This includes headpieces, outerwear, and accessories.

Where do I change clothes?

The girls will have a dressing room constructed within the cafeteria. The boys may dress in the boy's waiting room. The men's bathroom nearby can be used by the boys, but they should defer to professional dancers and adult cast members.

How do I return my costume?

You will return your costume to the costume set coordinator after the last performance. Please be patient – some coordinators have more than one group to manage. Make a note of any problems you find and let the coordinator know.

Food

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Where may we eat?

There will be designated eating tables in the cafeteria during performances; that is the only place anyone should have open food in the cafeteria. Any food found on tables assigned to groups or near costumes may be taken away and/or thrown out, particularly colored beverages. Boys may have a dry snack in the hallway outside their waiting area, but will have to come to the cafeteria for meals.

Do I have to take off my costume to eat?

Costumes and food do not mix! Please wear a cover-up over your costume or, better yet, remove your costume when eating or drinking. A large men's button-down shirt worn backwards works well as a cover-up.

If the school custodian is there, why do I have to clean up after myself?

The school custodians are not being paid to clean up food messes in the cafeteria; that is the responsibility of the Nutcracker staff and participants. The custodians are hired to handle emergency situations, turn on and off school lighting, and lock and unlock the facility. Please help the Nutcracker staff and clean up after yourself.

Can I bring food into the auditorium?

Eating in the auditorium is strictly prohibited. During stage rehearsals, when we do not have the cafeteria, you may eat in the foyer or outer hallways, but please do not leave food items on the floor unattended. Always clean up after yourself or others in your group.

Will there be time to go out to eat between shows?

On show days you'll have about 60 minutes to go out to get a bite before having to check in for the next show. It may seem like a long time, but after driving and waiting for food, it will go quickly. Parents may want to pack a cooler with dinner and plan to eat in the cafeteria.

Make-up

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Who applies makeup?

Each role has a specialized makeup design and all performers are asked to comply with the specifications. Makeup is generally applied by the parents and they will be given guidelines for colors for eyeliner, blush, and lipstick. Please arrive at the performance site with a clean face and a sharpened eyeliner pencil. For more detailed information, please refer to the Nutcracker website's Make-up Guidelines page.

How do I wear my hair?

All female dancers wear their hair in a classical bun except for a special few roles (Coffee Solo, Adult party guests, and Baby party guests). The bangs must be off the face and secured, and a hairnet is required. No shiny clips may be used to hold the hair back. Please use hair pins and lots of gel or hairspray. Hairpins are better than bobby pins because they do not fall out as easily.

What personal adornments are not allowed?

You may *not* wear

- Glitter spray on the hair or body
- Fingernail polish, including clear
- Jewelry, including earrings & rings -- please remove jewelry and leave it at home
- Hair decorations, unless specified for your role

Waiting

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Why do I have to check in 1-1/2 hours before the show?

This is indeed a long time to sit and wait, but it allows for a more relaxed pace before the show. There are 190 performers who need to go through the process of getting ready, and doing that at a hurried pace is difficult. If it takes 5 minutes for each person to get their makeup on that would be over 15 man-hours, if done one at a time! Of course, they are not done one by one, but it is still a big job and there is inevitably some panic near the start of the show.

- 90 minutes before start: checking in, getting settled. You will have time to run home to get part of your costume if it has been forgotten! We have time to prepare an understudy if you are not 100% well.
- 60 minutes before start: dressing, getting makeup, checking hair
- 40 minutes before start: last call for restroom, final preparation
- 20 minutes before start: to prevent the waiting audience from seeing you in costume, you may not leave cafeteria unless called to perform
- 15 minutes before start: Act I performers who start on stage depart
- 15 minutes before start: Act I performers not called to stage yet finish makeup
- 0 minutes before start: Act II performers start makeup

How will I know what to do when?

The cast manager will make frequent announcements to get you ready to appear on stage.

What will I do while I wait to go on stage?

You can entertain yourself with games, videos, and drawing – whatever you bring with you to keep busy. The videos you bring should be **G rated only**. It may be possible to get a live feed of the performance into the waiting areas, but this is not confirmed yet. If you bring games with lots of parts, or decks of cards, please try to get all the pieces back in the box! These little things always end up in the lost and found.

Finally, markers and paints ruin costumes, no matter how careful you are. Please leave them at home.

Who do I call or email with questions?

You can contact Chris Casuccio, producer, at 703-771-8177.

Where should I park on show days?

Participants and parents should park in the outer areas of the parking lots. Although this may be inconvenient, it permits the patrons to have the best parking spots. If not for the patrons, there would be no show, so they should be treated to the better parking places. There is additional parking behind the school.

Can a performer come into the audience to watch the show?

Unlike a recital, performers should not join the audience before or after their appearance on stage. Please do not purchase a ticket for this purpose.

Any cast member who has another family member in the cast should contact Chris Casuccio; you may be able to enter the back of the auditorium to see them perform. Please understand that this is not a promise, and may not work out at all.

What happens when I go to stage rehearsals?

After checking-in in the foyer, you'll find your group's seating area in the auditorium and you'll wait to be called to the stage from there (there will be a sign taped to the end of the row). Act I dancers will be on the right of the auditorium, facing the stage, and Act II on the left (closer to the entrance of the auditorium). Return to your section after rehearsing.

Dismissals will be announced, and possibly posted, too. Please do not leave without verifying that your group is dismissed.

For the last two *dress* rehearsals, you will find your group's table in the cafeteria (assuming we get to use the cafeteria). You will be called to the stage by the cast manager from there.

Why do I have to come to opposite cast rehearsals?

Cast specific rehearsals indicate which cast has the primary focus for that rehearsal. If you have "AB" or "full" casting you must attend all of your group's rehearsals, even when they are designated Cast A or Cast B. If you are in Cast A, you must attend all opposite cast, or Cast B, rehearsals, and vice versa. Here are a few reasons why:

- You may have to stand in for your counterpart if they are absent or become ill
- If changes are made in the dance, you need to be present to learn them
- You learn more about the dance by watching than by staying home
- You may get a chance to run through the dance in your casting, if time permits

Who is allowed to go backstage?

Only selected parents with specified assignments will be able to go backstage. It is a very busy and crowded area and there is no room for observers. The only two groups who have official parent participants backstage are the BonBons (2 per show) and Big Angels (3 per show). For other groups, up to two parents can come *to* the stage door with their group to help keep the performers quiet as they wait to go on the stage.

Can my relatives and friends come to the cafeteria before the show?

The cafeteria is crowded and busy and bringing extra people adds to the confusion there. No visitors (e.g. ticket holders) may stay in the Cafeteria within the last 30 minutes before the show. In fact, visitors are discouraged.

Seeing the performers in costumes before the show can spoil the enchantment of the Nutcracker, especially for children. If possible, have your friends and relatives visit after the show.

Where can I look for my lost item?

The Nutcracker starts up a Lost and Found during stage rehearsals. If you have misplaced something valuable it will be held by a staff member – start by asking the cast manager about it. Less valuable items will be put in a box and brought to the venue daily. After the shows are over, the Lost and Found moves to the Loudoun School of Ballet. After a month or so there, useful items are donated to charity.

When is the Cast Party?

The Cast Party is scheduled for Sunday night, following the last performance – as soon as all costumes have been returned. Parents should plan to bring a food item to share. A sign-up sheet will be available soon. Nutcracker will provide paper products and drinks (there will not be chili this year).

Boy Party Guests & Soldiers**Do the boys wait in the same place as the girls?**

No, the boys will have a separate room away from the cafeteria. Boys may enter the cafeteria at any time. Their waiting area is carpeted, so they must go to the cafeteria to eat.

Do the boys really need to wear makeup?

Yes. Boys will have eye liner to emphasize their eyes, and blush to give them a healthy look under the stage lighting. They should bring their own dark brown or black eye liner and some blush. It will be applied by a parent volunteer.

Who will supervise my boy while I'm with the girls in the cafeteria?

Parents are responsible for supervising their children, both boys and girls; the boys (like the girls) do not have staff members as chaperones assigned to keep them in check. Most of the boys will have a costume change between the Party Scene and Fight Scene, and will need assistance from the parents. After they complete the Fight Scene, they will need to be supervised until the show ends. Parents may have to work with other parents to find ways to share supervision duties. There are just a few parent volunteers who have agreed to help supervise the boys – more volunteers are always welcome.

You may bring videos (**only G rated**, please), toys, handheld games, etc. to help them pass the time.

BonBons

Parents will be asked to cut out and prepare the red cheek patches.

BonBons will not be able to access a restroom for about 1 hour so it is imperative that they use the restroom before intermission. Bathrooms are off limits during intermission because they are used by the audience.

Two parents will wait with the BonBons backstage, wearing all black, throughout act II. A schedule will be prepared to clarify who goes backstage for each performance.

Big Angels**Sequence of events:**

- Angels Line up before intermission with hoop skirts on
- A few parents help Angels get into wings/halos in back hallway during intermission
- Trained parents (scheduled in advance) help Angels arrive on stage during intermission when approved by Mrs. Robinson. Angels take positions and receive working candles in positions.
- Angels Perform
- Trained parents help get Angels off stage; collect candles
- Angels get out of wings/halos in hallway; take off hoop skirts in cafeteria

- At curtain call lineup – put hoop skirts back on (no wings or halos), hold hoops in *right* hand

Other parent responsibilities

- Assure there are enough working candles for the show
- Arrange the wings/halos so it is easier to find the right ones when it is time to put them on.

Snowflurries

- A parent should check for the wands before the show. The wands should be on the prop table outside the stage door. If not present, bring it to the attention of the stage crew.
- Six snowflurries from Stage Right line up at the start of the show, the remainder line up after the party scene.
- No wands for curtain call

Little Mice

- The clock mouse reports to the stage at the first call with party guests. The other 11 little mice will be called for later.
- Two parents can wait with the little mice at the stage door to help them stay quiet.
- Little mice do not wear makeup, but parents may put makeup on them for the curtain call; under the stage lights they will look pale without a little blush and lipstick.
- Do not bring mouse heads to the curtain call.

Party Guests

- Pick up your outerwear after curtain call.
- Little Boy Party Guests who are also soldiers may come to curtain call in either costume.

Gift Bearers

These young performers will have to be on the stage for as long as 30 minutes, and will be required to use the restroom just before the intermission. Afterwards, parents will shuttle them (and the Pages) from the stage door back to the cafeteria. These parents will sign up beforehand so it will be clear to everyone who will be doing the escorting.

Adolescent Boy Party Guests

Your offstage role, as an Adolescent Boy Party Guest, is to help move of the sets at specific times during the performance under the direction of the Stage Manager. You will be trained during stage rehearsals.