

# **BROWNIE TRY-IT ACTIVITIES FOR *THE NUTCRACKER BALLET***

## **CO-SPONSORED BY BALLET THEATER OF LANCASTER AND DONETSK BALLET OF UKRAINE**

**(BASED ON ACTIVITIES FOUND IN *TRY-ITS FOR BROWNIE GIRL SCOUTS*)**

The Try-It activities suggested below are directly related to seeing a ballet performance. Also in this packet, you will find suggestions for both kinds of activities, as well as ways in which to prepare your scouts for seeing the performance.

### **SECTION 1: PREPARATION FOR SEEING THE BALLET PERFORMANCE**

When seeing a ballet for the first time, some children are surprised that there is no spoken dialogue to “tell” the story. If you think members of your group may be surprised by this, explain that in ballet, the story is told through music, dance, facial expressions and **pantomime**. If the music sounds happy, then the action on stage is happy. If the music sounds scary, then something threatening is happening. Dancers will sometimes use gestures (pantomime) instead of spoken lines. There is a system of gestures, or pantomime, used in ballet to tell part of the story.

#### **ETIQUETTE AT THE BALLET**

Here are some guidelines for **etiquette** (manners or rules for appropriate behavior) at the ballet.

- 1) When you arrive, ushers will guide you to your seats. If you have to step past people already sitting in your row, say "excuse me" and step quickly past to get to your seat. Don't stop in front of someone already sitting or turn around to talk to someone else in your group. Wait until you are seated to converse with other members of your group.
- 2) Once you are seated, keep trips outside the auditorium to a minimum, even if you are seated at the end of a row. Visit the restroom and water fountain before the performance.
- 3) Sometimes, you think you will not be able to see the stage because of a taller person sitting in front of you. The rows of seats are on an incline that slopes up toward the back, and the view of the stage is generally good. An advantage of the pew-type seating at Lancaster Mennonite High School is that you and members of your party can shift around slightly to improve your view of the stage without actually changing seats. If that doesn't work, see if someone (taller than you) in your party will switch seats with you. No matter what, do not stand up to get a better view-you will block the stage for the people seated behind you.
- 4) Talk quietly with people on either side of you until the performance. Don't shout to someone several seats away. Once the lights go down and the music starts, do not continue talking. A darkened theater and the playing of music is your signal to watch for the start of the performance. It is traditional to play an overture before the start of *The Nutcracker*; it will play for a few minutes before you see dancers. Just listen and see if you recognize any of the "melodies."
- 5) Audience reaction is important to performers, so laugh at the funny parts. Once a dancer completes an especially pretty or amazing dance, it's fine to clap for them. Applause is encouraging to performers-it lets them know you are enjoying what they are doing on stage.

6) Do not shout any comments whatsoever to performers on stage.

7) During the performance, please remember that you are in a theater with many other people who also want to see the stage and hear the music. Do not talk during the performance. The other people seated around you want to hear the music without the sound of your voice, even whispering (which is louder than you think), in the background.

8) Please turn off all cell phones and beepers during the performance. If you must "stay connected," please set them to vibrate AND if they should go off during the performance, please exit the auditorium and make sure you are in the lobby before answering or making any calls.

9) No pictures are allowed during the performance. Flash photography is dangerous for dancers while they are performing. No video or tape recording devices are allowed to operate during performances, including camera phones.

## **SECTION 2: TRY-IT ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ATTENDING THE PERFORMANCE**

Note: Page numbers refer to activities listed in *Try-its for Brownie Girl Scouts*.

**Use these suggestions to get started on or help finish up one of the Try-Its below.**

### **Dancercize! Pp. 24-25**

**#2: Dance on Stage:** Watch a dance performance at a theater. What parts of the dance can you imitate?

**#6: A Dance Story:** Use dance to tell a story; use movement to express feelings. Help girls become aware of the use of **pantomime** as a way of "telling the story" during the ballet. Also, see #1 under **Let's Pretend**.

### **Let's Pretend! Pp. 66-67**

**#1 Be A Mime:** See definition of *mime* on p. 66 and try some of activities. Then . .

**#4 Act It Out:** Use the story in *Anne of Green Gables* as the story in this activity.

### **Puppets, Dolls and Plays, pp. 72-74**

**#1: Finger Puppets:** Make finger puppets to represent characters in either "story" ballet, *Anne of Green Gables* or *Coppelia*.

### **Stitch It Together, pp. 76-79**

**#3 A Real Page Turner:** Before sewing books together, have girls draw pictures from the ballet as a keepsake of their trip to the ballet.

### **Her Story, pp. 106-107**

**#3 Create tales:** Have girls retell *Anne of Green Gables*, changing the story to show how Anne might act today.

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