

THE DEGNAN BALLET CENTER AT THE WILKES UNIVERSITY CONSERVATORY PRESENTS



# The Nutcracker

2024



FRIDAY, DEC. 20 AT 7 PM  
SATURDAY, DEC. 21 AT 7 PM  
SUNDAY, DEC. 22 AT 2 PM

DOROTHY DICKSON DARTE CENTER  
AT WILKES UNIVERSITY



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THE DEGNAN BALLET CENTER AT THE WILKES UNIVERSITY CONSERVATORY PRESENTS

# The Nutcracker 2024



WITH GUEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST TJ FIRNENO, KELLY GREVERA & YASIR JONES AND STUDENTS FROM THE DEGNAN BALLET CENTER AND WILKES UNIVERSITY

Music by ..... Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Choreography (after Lev Ivanov): ..... Peter Degnan & Kristin Degnan-Boonin

Staging: ..... Alison Carlsson  
TJ Firneno  
Karla Kovatch  
Sarah Polansky  
Brianna Schunk  
Adrienne Zulkoski

Technical Direction & Set Coordination: ..... Alexander "Lee" Corcoran-Michaels

Assistant Technical Direction: ..... Spencer Shotto

Lighting Design: ..... Vandy Scoates

Stage Manager: ..... Giuseppina "Peanut" Corcoran-Michaels

Crew Members: ..... Evan Cole  
Caleb Gething  
Madeline Rex

Costume Design and Construction: ..... Kristin Degnan-Boonin  
Mary Ruth Burke  
Sharon Firneno  
Deborah Potsko  
Brianna Schunk

Costume Management: ..... Alison Carlsson  
Kim Danelutt  
Lauren Mace  
Rhonda Turrell

DOROTHY DICKSON DARTE CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS WILKES UNIVERSITY  
7 P.M. FRIDAY & SATURDAY; 2 P.M. SUNDAY DECEMBER 20 – 22, 2024

# STORY OF THE BALLET

## ACT I, SCENE I

The curtain rises on a street in a little German town of the 19th century. Guests are hurrying to the home of Dr. Stahlbaum, the mayor, for a Christmas party. Klara and Fritz, the mayor's children, are excitedly waiting for the party to begin. Among the guests is the eccentric Uncle Drosselmeier. He gives the children toys, and provides a marionette theater for their entertainment. With his apparently magical powers, he animates life-size dolls, i.e., a Pierrot clown, etc. Klara's special present from her uncle is a very unusual nutcracker. As Fritz attempts to steal it, the nutcracker is damaged. Much to Klara's relief, Uncle Drosselmeier is able to mend the broken toy. The party ends with the traditional grandfather dance. The guests depart, Klara and Fritz are put to bed, and quiet settles over the house.

## SCENE 2

Too excited to sleep, Klara creeps back into the parlor to see if her beloved nutcracker is safe. Cradling the doll, she falls asleep under the Christmas tree and has a fantastic dream in which giant mice threaten her. Suddenly, the Christmas tree begins to grow, the nutcracker toy becomes the life-sized Enchanted Nutcracker, and the other enchanted toys begin to move. In the battle between the soldiers and the mice, the Mouse King almost overpowers the soldiers and threatens the brave Enchanted Nutcracker. To save the Nutcracker, Klara throws her shoe at the Mouse King to weaken his power. After the defeat of the mice, the Enchanted Nutcracker turns into a handsome prince who takes Klara on a fabulous journey.

## SCENE 3

Continuing their journey, the Enchanted Nutcracker and Klara enter the Snow Forest, where they encounter an elegant Snow Queen and her court of swirling Snowflakes.

## ACT II

Continuing their journey, Klara and the Nutcracker Prince arrive at a majestic castle in the Land of Sweets. They are greeted by a band of winsome angels and the Sugar Plum Fairy who, in turn, introduces them to visitors from Spain, Arabia, Russia, China, and Germany. After telling these new friends of their adventures, and especially about the furious battle with the giant mice, Klara and her companion are entertained by a series of ethnic dances. The festivities continue with the beautiful Waltz of the Flowers with the Dew Drop Fairy. As morning approaches, everyone joins in a final dance. Bidding wistful farewell to her new friends in the enchanted land, Klara is returned home, perhaps wondering if her adventure really happened or was merely part of a fabulous dream.

# THE 2024 NUTCRACKER CAST

## ACT I, SCENE I: PARTY SCENE

Klara:	Lily Davis
Fritz:	Addyson Cardillo
Herr Dr. Stahlbaum:	James Dunleavy
Frau Stahlbaum:	Amelia Smicherko
Grandfather:	Carlos Candelario
Grandmother:	Madeline Meier
Drosselmeier:	TJ Firreno
Klara's Friends:	Avery Berry, Sophia Danelutt, Abigail Mace, Mary Jane Michaels
Maids:	Morgan Rich and Cally Williams
Parents:	Emily Buchinski, Kathleen Hughes-Butcher, Michael Butcher, Nina Dunleavy, Anna Ostaltsov, Stephen Youkoski
Pierrot:	Emma Butcher
Ballerina Doll:	Liana Winkler
Marching Dolls:	Emma Kane and Madison Orrson
Younger Children:	Finley Augaitis, Ada Cannavale, Sophia Guesto, Kalina Filak, Della Lyons, Mia Peralta, Rebecca Bond, Nicholas Zulkoski
Older Child:	Ella Dunleavy

## ACT I, SCENE 2: BATTLE SCENE

Enchanted Nutcracker:	Rocco Pugliese
Mouse King:	Morgan Rich
Baby Mouse:	Natalya Filak
Lead Mice:	Stella Guesto, Anna Smagin, Ava Smith, Marina Susko
Mice Corps:	Rebecca Bond, Rose Clark, Everest Dunham, Abigail Gialanella, June Hamill, Adrianna Hawk, Cali Jaques, Emily Mace, Tessa Norakus, Lex Polansky, Layla Polansky, Kristi Steve, Capria Susko, Adele Zulkoski
Sergeant:	Ella Dunleavy
Corporals:	Avery Berry, Emily Buchinski, Krystal Clark, Abigail Mace
Soldiers:	Addyson Cardillo, Charlotte Carlsson, Sloane Dunham, Kensie Haas, Ayla Rowlands, Alexandra Selenski, Sophia Shovlin, Charlie Smith, Charlotte Smith, Alice Stark

## ACT I, SCENE 3: SNOW SCENE

Snow Queen:

Nina Dunleavy

Snowflakes: Corps 1:

Ella Dunleavy, Madison Orrson,  
Brianna Schunk, Marina Susko,  
Rachel Whitenight, Liana Winkler

Snowflakes: Corps 2:

Sophia Danelutt, Stella Guesto,  
Emma Kane, Mary Jane Michaels,  
Anna Smagin, Ava Smith

INTERMISSION (10 MINUTES)

## ACT II: LAND OF THE SWEETS

Angels:

Rebecca Bond, Rose Clark,  
Everest Dunham, Natalya Filak,  
Abigail Gialanella, June Hamill,  
Adriana Hawk, Cali Jaques,  
Emily Mace, Tessa Norakus,  
Layla Polansky, Kristi Steve,  
Capria Susko, Adele Zulkoski

Sugar Plum Fairy:

Kelly Grevera

Her Cavalier:

Yasir Jones



# DIVERTISSEMENTS

Lead Spanish:	Emma Butcher
Corps:	Emma Kane and Liana Winkler
Lead Arabian:	Rachel Whitenight
Corps:	Stella Guesto, Anna Smagin, Ava Smith, Marina Susko
Russian:	Nina Dunleavy
Corps:	Sophia Danelutt, Amelia Smicherko
Lead Chinese:	Madison Orrson
Corps:	Addyson Cardillo, Charlotte Carlsson, Sloane Dunham, Kensie Haas, Ayla Rowlands, Alexandra Selenski, Sophia Shovlin Charlie Smith, Charlotte Smith, Alice Stark
Lead Mirliton:	Ella Dunleavy
Corps:	Avery Berry, Krystal Clark, Abigail Mace, Mary Jane Michaels
Mother Ginger:	Carlos Candelario
Her Children	Natalya Filak, June Hamill, Tessa Norakus, Lex Polansky, Kristie Steve, Capria Susko

# WALTZ OF THE FLOWERS

Dew Drop Fairy:

Brianna Schunk

Flower Leads:

Emma Butcher and Madison Orrson

Corps:

Stella Guesto, Emma Kane,  
Abigail Mace, Mary Jane Michaels,  
Anna Smagin, Ava Smith,  
Marina Susko, Liana Winkler

## FINALE

*Corps de Ballet*

## DEGNAN BALLET CENTER'S GUEST ARTIST

### DR. TJ FIRNENO



TJ Firneno is a native of White Haven, Pennsylvania. He began dancing with Ballet Northeast/The Degnan Ballet Center in 1999 and continues to guest artist with the Degnan Ballet Center at the Wilkes Conservatory. Over the past 20+ years, Dr. Firneno has been seen in many supporting roles in Ballet Northeast repertoire including Hillarion in *Giselle* (2011), the Jester in *Cinderella* (2003 & 2008), Beethoven's Seventh (2007 & 2010), Von Rothbart in *Swan Lake* (2009), and Drosselmeier in *The Nutcracker* (2010-present). He has performed lead roles including the title character in *The Nutcracker* (2005 & 2006), *Concerto Brillante* (2006), and, most notably, in *Joplin* (2007 & 2009). Some of

his choreographic works have been seen on the BNE stage including original pieces and adaptations.

Dr. Firneno received his PhD in Quantitative Biology from The University of Texas at Arlington in 2021 and is currently a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Larson Lab at the University of Denver. Dr. Firneno has also continued to pursue his passion in the performing arts frequently acting, directing, designing, and producing for many community and university theaters in Pittsburgh, PA and Dallas/Fort Worth, TX. Though he currently resides in Denver, CO, he splits his time between there and Harrisburg, PA with his husband, Jake, and their three cats.

Dr. Firneno is delighted to be back as a guest artist with The Degnan Ballet Center/Wilkes University Conservatory and would like to send his utmost gratitude to Mary, Sarah, Adrienne, Alison, Karla, Kristin, and the rest of the Wilkes Conservatory for once again having him back. If you'd like to learn more about both his science and performing arts endeavors visit [www.tjfirneno.space](http://www.tjfirneno.space).

## DEGNAN BALLET CENTER'S GUEST ARTIST

### KELLY GREVERA



Kelly Grevera began her training at the David Blight School of Dance in ballet, pointe, tap, jazz, modern, hip hop, and contemporary. To expand her training, she joined the Wilkes Conservatory, where she danced principal roles in *The Nutcracker*, *Cinderella* and *The Little Mermaid*. As a pre-professional, she attended renowned programs such as the Joffrey Ballet School, Commercial Dance Intensive, Camera Theater Jazz, Pace University's Intensive, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, and currently assists at Bold Dance Project and Wyoming Seminary. She toured the East Coast with Artist Simply Human as a company member, where she learned and danced with professionals in the industry. Her most recent performance was opening for Gims at Madison Square Garden.

Now, she attends The Ailey School in New York City to receive her BFA in dance and a BA in digital design and media at Fordham University. She also works with top choreographers at Steps on Broadway and Broadway Dance Center. She is thrilled to come back to Wilkes to dance as a professional!

# DEGNAN BALLET CENTER'S GUEST ARTIST

## YASIR JONES



Yasir Jones, often called Yas, is a third-year Certificate student at The Ailey School. He began dancing at the young age of 7 at the Newark School of the Arts. After graduating from middle school, he attended Arts High School under the guidance of Ronnie Carney and Krystal Hall-Glass. While in high school, Yasir received the Ailey Camp Scholarship to attend The Ailey School's Junior Division program, which quickly became his second home.

Upon graduating high school in 2020, Yasir studied with Karen McDonald in his spare time and attended Johns Hopkins University, pursuing a BFA in Dance. During this time, he had the opportunity to work with notable artists such as Kevin Igea Jeff, Deirdre Dawkins, Kristen Stevenson, and Vincent Thomas with his company VT Dance 2.

After two years, Yasir returned to The Ailey School, where he performed in works choreographed by Branndi Lewis, Ephrat Asherie, Ronald K. Brown, Harrison Guy, Earl Mosley, Dance Theater of Harlem, and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. Yasir continued to deepen his passion for dance, collaborating with Earl Mosley and seizing opportunities to work with Elizabeth Roxas, Merideth Rainey, Josee Hrzic, Tiffanie Carson, and Austin Coats.

In 2023, Yasir was invited to join the Ailey Student Performance Group and is on track to graduate from the Certificate Program in 2025. He is excited for the future and hopes you'll say "Yas!" when you see him perform.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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