

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR SUSAN JAFFE  
PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE**

**Contact:** Katie Drozynski  
Media Relations & Content Marketing Manager  
[kdrozynski@pittsburghballet.org](mailto:kdrozynski@pittsburghballet.org)  
O: 412-454-9117 C: 412-352-0028

**Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre Presents “Fireside Nutcracker,” a Virtual “Nutcracker”  
Program Available to Stream this December**

*The online run of “Fireside Nutcracker” also includes a virtual student matinee, an opening night event and a full slate of educational programming.*



*Joseph Parr as The Nutcracker on the set of PBT’s “Fireside Nutcracker” – Photo by Kelly Perkovich*

**PITTSBURGH, PA (Nov. 12, 2020)** – Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (PBT) will bring the magic of “The Nutcracker” to homes around the region and beyond with [“Fireside Nutcracker.”](#) a virtual program based on Terrence S. Orr’s “The Nutcracker.”

“Fireside Nutcracker” adapts the timeless holiday ballet for film, featuring Tchaikovsky’s stunning score, the brilliant ballet of PBT company dancers and classic “Nutcracker” characters, including the addition of the Winter Fairy.

Thanks to generous support from PBT sponsors, the virtual program will be offered for free to the public from Dec. 17 through Dec. 31. PBT's production of "Fireside Nutcracker" is sponsored by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Giant Eagle and Clearview Federal Credit Union.

"Fireside Nutcracker" kicks off with a virtual student matinee sponsored by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield for teachers and students.

On the evening of Dec. 17, PBT will host a special opening night celebration underwritten by UPMC and UPMC Health Plan, sponsored by Carol Hefren Tillotson and Steffie Bozic, with additional support from Hefren-Tillotson, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield and Seton Hill University.

In addition to the virtual production, PBT's education department has created more than a dozen Nutcracker-themed educational programs available to the public for \$5.

This is the first season in PBT's 51-year history that the company has not performed "The Nutcracker" in the theater. Registration for PBT's "Fireside Nutcracker" can be found at [pbt.org/nutcracker](http://pbt.org/nutcracker).

### **The Making of "Fireside Nutcracker"**

To create "Fireside Nutcracker," PBT began adapting Terrence S. Orr's existing "Nutcracker" production for film in the summer of 2020.

"When we started the process of adapting Terrence S. Orr's 'Nutcracker' to be viewed as a film, none of us had ever created a ballet for film before," PBT Artistic Director Susan Jaffe said. "And during these unprecedented times, we had the extra complication of adjusting the choreography to make it safe for our dancers and socially distant where needed."

Adjustments to choreography were made to accommodate safety restrictions like social distancing and masking. Lead couples, like Marie and the Nutcracker, were cast using pairs of cohabitating dancers, to limit close contact between dancers outside of a single household.

Many of "The Nutcracker's" most iconic scenes feature PBT's corps de ballet in close formation. To adhere to social distancing protocols, these scenes were filmed with fewer dancers interacting at once and will be seamlessly stitched together to recreate classic dances for the audience to experience from a new perspective.

Dancers, crew and staff also received regular health screenings and temperature checks for rehearsals and filming.

Alongside a team of producers and videographers from [LOOK Creative Guild](#), PBT artists, crew, staff and 25 PBT School students began filming "Fireside Nutcracker" in October at the award-winning Pittsburgh Playhouse at Point Park University. Party scenes for "Fireside

Nutcracker” were filmed at the historic Hartwood Acres Mansion to capture the feel of Christmas in Pittsburgh at the turn of the century.

“It was a wonderful month-long process of discovery for everyone,” Jaffe said, “and we all felt good about the work. But, the people who shined the most were our dancers and our children who took part in the filming.”

“Fireside Nutcracker’s” unique film format offers viewers a new perspective on ballet. The virtual adaptation of PBT’s “Nutcracker” puts viewers in the center of the action, bringing audiences closer to beloved characters like the Sugar Plum Fairy and the production’s nods to Pittsburgh history. Unlike a traditional ballet performance, “Fireside Nutcracker” will also include narration to guide viewers through the magical land of enchantment.

For behind the scenes photos of the filming of “Fireside Nutcracker,” visit <https://www.pbt.org/gallery/behind-the-scenes-pbts-fireside-nutcracker/>.

### **Fireside Nutcracker: An Opening Night Celebration**

On the evening of Dec. 17, PBT will host a special opening night celebration to kick off the virtual run of “Fireside Nutcracker.” This virtual event will be free to registrants and will be followed by the first public stream of the “Fireside Nutcracker” film.

This opening night celebration will include a welcome from PBT Artistic Director Susan Jaffe, as well as special guests and exciting extras. For more information or to pledge your support for opening night, visit <https://www.pbt.org/support/learn-more/special-events/fireside-nutcracker/>.

This opening night celebration is underwritten by UPMC and UPMC Health Plan, sponsored by Carol Hefren Tillotson and Steffie Bozic, with additional support from Hefren-Tillotson, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Seton Hill University, patrons, friends and supporters.

### **“Fireside Nutcracker” Education Programs’**

Each year, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre hosts in-theater events and community education programs around “The Nutcracker” for children, adults and families. This year, PBT’s education department has doubled their educational offerings and adapted “Fireside Nutcracker” programs to an online format.

PBT is offering over a dozen unique educational programs for audiences to participate in from home for just \$5 each. Programs include:

- Dance the Story – Children ages pre-K to 5th grade are invited to a holiday exploration of dance and movement. Join us to learn basic ballet steps and movement concepts through the storyline and characters of “Nutcracker.” Caregivers are welcome to dance along with us!
- Adaptive Dance the Story – Ballet fans of all ages are invited to a holiday exploration of dance and movement. Join PBT's Adaptive Dance team to learn basic ballet steps and movement concepts through the storyline and characters of “Nutcracker.”

- Happy Hour: Live from Drosselmeyer's Workshop – Gather your friends and family for a holiday dance happy hour. This adults-only program will include “Nutcracker”-themed cocktail recipes, a beginners' ballet/contemporary warm-up and a dance choreographed to the music of the ballet. A list of ingredients will be provided in advance.
- Family Pointe: Holiday Magic Families are invited to this holiday exploration of dance and movement, featuring up-on-your feet movement and a sneak peek into Act I of PBT's The Nutcracker.
- Director's Cut: Susan Jaffe in Conversation with Terrence Orr Join us for a discussion of PBT's production of The Nutcracker and its Pittsburgh inspirations with new Artistic Director Susan Jaffe and the production's creator, Terrence S. Orr.
- And more...

Registration for PBT's education programs can be found on the “Fireside Nutcracker” registration page at [pbt.org/nutcracker](http://pbt.org/nutcracker) under “Enhance Your Experience.”

### **How to Watch “Fireside Nutcracker”**

To register for PBT's “Fireside Nutcracker,” viewers should visit [pbt.org/nutcracker](http://pbt.org/nutcracker). Pre-registration is open now and information about education programs is available on the registration site. Registered participants will receive a link to the recording on Dec. 17, 2020 for instant access to the video, including the opening night celebration.

“Fireside Nutcracker” will be available to watch at [pbt.org](http://pbt.org), on PBT's YouTube channel and via the YouTube app on any connected device.

“I'm looking forward to the final product,” Jaffe said. “It will be a wonderful gift to the community.”

### **About Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre**

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre has been Pittsburgh's premier professional ballet company since 1969. Today, PBT is a nationally recognized ballet company of 30 professional dancers, a training institution for over 1,200 students of all ages, and an incubator for education and accessibility programs in classrooms, libraries and community centers throughout the region. The company performs a wide-ranging repertoire of classical ballets, contemporary masterworks and new commissions in more than 50 performances annually at home and on tour.