



Weaving the Scenery of Growth: *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker* Special Exhibition

2025.11.29 Sat. - 2026.1.11 Sun.

Weiwuying Crown Hall 3F



WEI WUYING

衛武營 國家藝術文化中心
國家表演藝術中心 National Performing Arts Center

About the Exhibition

The Ballet Concert: *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker* is a three-year project initiated by the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying) in 2023, aimed at invigorating the future of the ballet scene in Taiwan.

This project brings together top talents from diverse fields. Choreographer and playwright YEH Ming-hwa drew upon the essence of *The Nutcracker* fairy tale and merged it with the growth trajectory of Taiwanese children, illustrating a girl's challenges and transformation through key life stages, from her school years to stepping into the world as a young adult. CHOU Shu-yi serves as the Production Consultant, assisting the dancers with physical development and performance. The music retains the original score by Pyotr TCHAIKOVSKY, conducted by CHANG Yin-fang, who leads the live orchestra to infuse the dance with rich and nuanced auditory layers. Furthermore, the ballet costumes in the production were developed through collaboration between National Culture and Arts Award winner LIN Ching-ju (serving as Artistic and Costume Production Consultant) and students from the Department of Theatrical Design & Technology at Taipei National University of the Arts. This initiative integrated ballet costume design and production into the curriculum, guiding students to create the garments entirely by hand.

The year 2025 marks the final chapter of this three-year project. With the questions, "How can more people witness Weiwuying's commitment to deepening the roots of ballet in Taiwan?" and "How can we extend the festive Christmas atmosphere beyond the concert hall?" in mind, Weiwuying has specially curated a six-week exhibition. Beyond showcasing the intricate process of costume making and the gorgeous costume models, the exhibition utilizes engaging multimedia, vivid graphics, and fun interactive installations to invite all audiences into the story and details behind the production of *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker*.

Organizer: National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying)

Curation and Design: Brighttext

Supporting Partners: Taipei National University of the Arts, Department of Theatrical Design and Technology

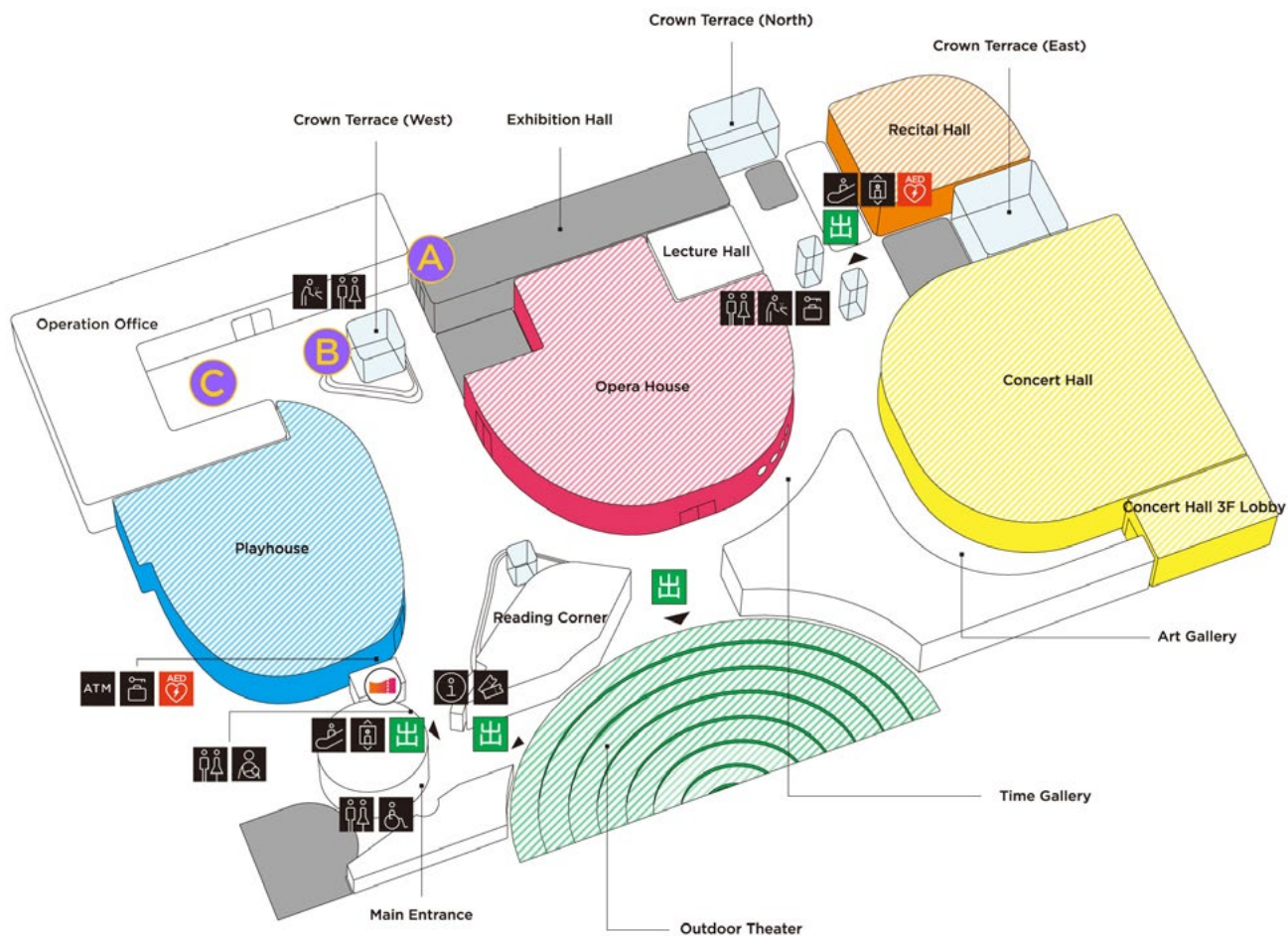
Exhibition Consultant: LIN Ching-ju

Special thanks to choreographer YEH Ming-hwa, along with all the artists, dancers, and staff involved in this project.

Exhibition Guide

The exhibition design echoes the dance's narrative, unfolding across three interconnected zones that present the creative dialogue among the choreographer, dancers, and costume design team.

3F CROWN HALL



Adventure Studio: Drawing inspiration from the making of ballet costumes, this area reveals the moment when dreams first begin to take shape.



Courage Stage: Craftsmanship and dance come together, reflecting the refinement of both skill and emotion.



Growing Tree: Looking back on this three-year creative journey through sketches, videos, and traces of artistic development, this space documents every courageous step of growth.



Adventure Studio

For The Ballet Concert: *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker*, National Award for Arts recipient LIN Ching-ju led students from the Department of Theatrical Design & Technology at Taipei National University of the Arts in crafting each costume by hand, carrying forward and revitalizing the art of ballet costume making among a new generation.

Over the past three years, the team has gone through countless revisions and adjustments, continuously refining both their process and the results, gradually bringing their creations from classroom practice to the national stage. For the students, this was not only a lesson in craftsmanship but also an adventure in creativity.



Courage Stage

A ballet costume is more than a garment for performance; it is a vessel carrying the dancer's dreams. From the first sketch on the designer's table to the stitching in the studio and the shifting lights on stage, each costume undergoes a transformation from stillness to motion.

The dancers come from diverse backgrounds. Some return after years of study abroad, while others constantly juggle academics and dance. When they don their costumes, ballet becomes their shared language. Through movement, their bodies speak, and dance becomes an extension of their belief.

In the story, the girl finds courage through her journey of growth. In reality, the convergence of craftsmanship and dance on stage also ignites a dialogue, revealing the refining of both skill and emotion.



Growing Tree

The Ballet Concert: *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker* weaves in the growth journey of Taiwanese children while also symbolizing the evolution of ballet itself. Through this project, Weiwuying has built a bridge between creation and education, selecting the timeless ballet *The Nutcracker* as a platform to bring together talents from diverse fields, invigorate Taiwan's ballet scene, and cultivate invaluable creative experiences. From the cautious first steps of the inaugural year, through the challenges and perseverance of the second, to the innovation and breakthroughs of the third, every drop of sweat during rehearsals and every stitch sewn with care have become nourishment that allows dreams to take root and grow into a flourishing tree.

Interview with Dancers of The Ballet Concert: *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker*

*This section corresponds to the Courage Stage exhibit.

Over the past three years, 34 dancers have participated in *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker*. From auditions and training to rehearsals and performances, every step has been demanding. In Taiwan, ballet is often the first art many children learn. Yet, due to the limits of the local industry, few can focus solely on ballet. How do these young dancers perceive ballet? And how do they manage to complete such a professional performance within a tight schedule? This interview offers a glimpse into their dedication and diverse experiences.

Interviewees: SHIUE Ren-kai, CHENG Tzu-tung, LEE Ting-yu, LIN Chia-chun, HSU Wen-hsuan, CHEN Ting-yu

Q : Is pointe work (spinning on tiptoe) considered a very difficult technique for ballet dancers? Is it easy to get injured?

A : Dancers must wear pointe shoes to rise fully onto the tips of the toes. Wearing pointe shoes and using your muscles correctly can help prevent injuries, but blisters and soreness are things we've long gotten used to.

Q : How long does a pair of pointe shoes usually last?

A : It varies for each person. Most of us rotate between three to five pairs at the same time. Depending on how often we train, a pair usually lasts anywhere from one month to half a year.

Q : Does one need to start practicing ballet from a young age?

A : Ballet requires endless repetition of its fundamentals, which is why many dancers begin at four or five years old. Starting young helps build a solid foundation, but not every child can handle the process. Even if you start later, there are now many ways to support stretching and muscle training.

Q : Do ballet dancers have to be very slim? How do you maintain your figure?

A : Most audiences expect to see thin dancers, but body type matters less than having the right muscles and ballet lines. And because the training is so intense, dancers actually eat quite a lot!

Q : What are the differences in focus between female and male ballet dancers?

A : The focus is somewhat different. Female dancers emphasize grace, pointe work, and slower, more controlled movements, while male dancers highlight strength — such as partnering, turns, and jumps.

Q : How does one become a ballet dancer?

A : Many of the dancers in *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker* have been attending specialized dance divisions since childhood and are now continuing their studies in university dance departments. In Taiwan's dance program, students are trained in a variety of genres—folk dance, modern dance, ballet—but the environment here doesn't offer many ballet productions. So we get less training in stage experience, technique, and emotional expression. To be honest, becoming a professional ballet dancer is extremely challenging.

Q : What is the most important quality for a ballet dancer?

A : Self-discipline, perseverance, resilience to pain and fatigue, and never giving up.

And above all, you have to genuinely love ballet. If you love it enough, you can overcome

any disadvantage.

Q : During rehearsals for *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker*, what was the most difficult part? What did you learn from the experience?

A : In our school dance programs, we never learned how to act. *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker* is different from classical ballet. At first, we had no idea how to tell stories with our bodies— like making the Rat King less human, or giving the Nutcracker Prince this air of nobility mixed with a touch of narcissism. So we spent a great deal of time studying the characters, drawing inspiration from daily life, gradually immersing ourselves in different roles, and refining every step, every glance, and even the rhythm of breath. By the second and third years, new breakthroughs and more difficult techniques were required again.

Each year came with many challenges, but the rehearsal process was always filled with joy. Working with choreographer Ming-hwa was deeply inspiring. Compared to how we used to dance, we've become so much freer, and even our body lines transformed. Performing on such a stage is a precious experience, and we really hope to continue dancing ballet in the future.

Q : What should audiences pay attention to while watching the performance?

A : The overall picture is important, but you can also focus on our facial expressions, dramatic gestures, and the articulation of our bodies, particularly the fingertips and toes. Through these details, you can see what story the dancers are telling.

Interview with Costume Designers of The Ballet Concert: *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker*

*This section corresponds to the Courage Stage and Growing Tree exhibits.

LIN Ching-ju, the Artistic and Costume Consultant of *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker*, is a veteran costume designer in Taiwan's theater scene with experience in over a hundred productions. Since the start of the course, she has guided students through practice, design, and working independently with choreographers. She is deeply impressed by their growth over the past three years. How did Professor LIN adjust her teaching to meet new challenges? And how do students at Taipei National University of the Arts view this experience? This interview reveals an inspiring example of teacher–student collaboration.

Interviewees: LIN Ching-ju, TNEH Shi-yun, CHEN Yu-jen, LIU Bi-sheng

Q : When did the costume production for *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker* begin?

A : For the past three years, the ballet costumes in the production have been created under Professor LIN Ching-ju at the Department of Theatrical Design and Technology at the Taipei National University of the Arts. Most of the students who took her course had almost no experience in the craft. They began with intensive classes during summer break, then continued refining their design and technical skills after the semester started, all leading up to having the costumes ready for the stage in December.

Q : Why did students choose to take this course and learn to make ballet costumes?

A : There had never been an opportunity in the department to learn ballet costume design. By taking the class, students could pick up new skills and also gain insights into the professor's professional working methods.

Q : How has the teaching and collaboration process changed over these three years?

A : From the second year onward, students who had taken the course in the first year handle the design work, with the professor focusing mainly on reviewing details and guiding refinements. By the third year, the most experienced students took the lead, presenting their ideas directly to choreographer YEH Ming-hwa. Between the first and second years, besides altering costumes for new dancers, they also refined the costumes to look better on stage. By the third year, with many new characters added, even greater speed and expertise are required.

Q : What was the greatest gain from making the ballet costumes for *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker*?

A : Our sewing skills became more proficient, and we developed both our pattern-making skills and a keener eye for choosing fabrics. Before, we thought being impressive meant making really intricate designs, but actually just the way fabrics are pieced together can create completely different effects. Another insight was realizing how the audience views the stage — from a distance and under stage lighting, costumes look completely different than in the workshop.

Working with an experienced dancer like Teacher Ming-hwa was also a very special experience. The costumes must not only convey the character's personality while also blending classical and contemporary elements.

Q : What was the biggest challenge for the teacher and the students?

Teacher: Ballet costumes are especially difficult and intricate. After students graduate, they won't have opportunities to continue this kind of work. But for them, this is an incredibly rare experience—to have their work performed on a national stage at such a young age.

Students: The workload was huge, often requiring us to work outside of class hours, and it was very different from what we had learned before. We also had no prior experience collaborating with dancers.

Q : Making the costumes for *Into the Fantasy of Nutcracker* was very demanding. How did you keep going?

A : Every year there were many new techniques to learn, and almost every type of skirt had a different construction method. Our desire to learn more is what kept us taking the course and completing the costumes. Plus, seeing the costumes we designed and made on stage is incredibly rewarding!

Q : Were there any interesting moments during the production process?

Teacher: At first, the students made all the decorations on the costumes incredibly detailed. I told them these wouldn't be visible on stage, but they thought enlarging decorations would look tacky. But when they actually went down to the audience area at Weiwuying, they realized the decorations were way too small and completely invisible! They made adjustments immediately when going back to the university.

Students: We started a social media account just for fun and wrote that we take custom orders. Unexpectedly, someone actually commissioned us to make a costume!

Behind the Scenes: The Birth of the Costume

This section corresponds to the Courage Stage and Growing Tree exhibits.

Are you curious about the process of making ballet costumes? In fact, the costumes for this production were conceived and proposed by student teams enrolled in the course. After evaluation by the core creative team and the instructor, the final designs were modified, produced, and ultimately brought to the stage. The miniature costumes displayed here in the Courage Stage section are the result of that evaluation phase, meticulously produced to scale using official fabrics, accessories, and techniques. It is worth noting that during the fabric selection stage, if suitable materials could not be found, the students even dyed the fabrics themselves!

Let's follow the photographs below to explore the journey of a ballet costume, from classroom theory to the stage.

Costume Design Briefing, Dancer Fittings



Foundation of Production: Pattern Making, Fabric Selection, Tulle Steaming Practice, and Concept Coursework



Design Review & Miniature Model Prototyping



Costume Construction: Cutting, Sewing, Tulle Steaming, and Fastener Application



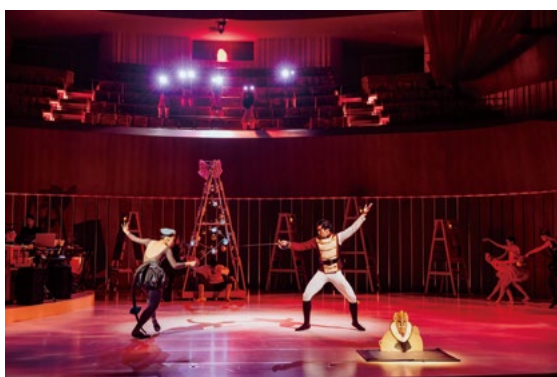
Final Costume Fittings and Adjustments



Tech Week: Costume Alterations, Embellishing, and Wardrobe Management



On Stage



Learn More

The Nutcracker and the Ballet Costume

When ballet costumes are mentioned, the classic white Tutu skirt often comes to mind. However, in the canonical ballet The Nutcracker, the little girl Clara encounters various characters upon arriving in the Kingdom of Sweets. Not only do dances like the Spanish Dance and Arabian Dance take the stage, but their respective costumes also showcase the immense variety of ballet attire.

The Handcrafted Tutu

A single, pure white Tutu skirt requires nearly one hundred hours of painstaking manual labor. The ten or more layers of tulle must each be precisely calculated, pleated, and stitched, followed by repeated professional steaming to achieve the skirt's signature stiff, elegant, pancake shape.

When Costume Designers Meet Tech Week

A costume is never truly finished until it steps onto the stage. Any design that fails to shine under the stage lights, or any slight change in size due to the dancer's shifting physique, requires repeated adjustments. The handiwork of a theatrical costume designer is not just about aesthetics; it is also highly concerned with safety. Furthermore, designers work closely with the wardrobe management team to ensure that the dancers' costumes are maintained in optimal condition at all times.

Visitor Feedback Survey

