

Holiday Shows Your Family Won't Want to Miss

By Gemma Alexander

While little kids dream of a white Christmas, parents dread the icy roads. But whatever your wishes, there's no controlling the weather. Snow or no, you can guarantee your family makes magical memories by establishing a holiday arts tradition. The "Nutcracker" ballet is a delightful classic, but if your family is nontraditional or doesn't celebrate Christmas, the holiday season is still filled with all-ages performances that are sure to delight. The weather outside may be frightful, but this year, we say, let it *show*!

Note: Performances with regular adult ticket prices of \$15 or less are marked **bargain**, while those with minimum prices of \$40 or more are marked **splurge**.

The Nutcrackers

[‘George Balanchine’s The Nutcracker’](#)

Pacific Northwest Ballet's staging of George Balanchine's 1952 "The Nutcracker" melds the classic choreography with fanciful sets designed by Ian Falconer, creator of the kids' book character Olivia the Pig. Throughout the run, PNB hosts special holiday events for families, ranging from free mini dance lessons in the lobby to the extravagant Box Sweets (a \$2,000 private box for seven, filled with gifts and snacks!).

Nov. 29–Dec. 28. \$27–\$189. McCaw Hall, Seattle.



The Hard Nut

[‘The Hard Nut’](#)

"The Hard Nut," performed by the Mark Morris Dance Group, is "The Nutcracker" like you've never seen it before. Mark Morris' retro-modern reimagining of the classic is still based on E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King," but places the story in the late 20th century. Tchaikovsky's complete original score is performed by a live orchestra. This retelling may be irreverent, but it preserves the sweet holiday spirit of the original.

Dec. 6 –Dec. 15. \$35–\$90. Paramount Theatre, Seattle.

[‘The Nutcracker’](#)

Splurge: Evergreen City Ballet offers both the traditional, full-length "Nutcracker" production and select one-hour shows beloved by families with very small children at each of three venues: **Meydenbauer Center, Auburn Performing Arts Center and Renton Ikea Performing Arts Center.**

Dec. 6 –Dec. 22. \$40–\$45.

[‘Nutcracker Sweets’](#)

For the 15th year in a row, ARC Dance brings the magic of "The Nutcracker" alive for families in its hour-long version of the classic ballet specifically designed to appeal to young audiences. Ballard performances of "Nutcracker Sweets" have sold out nearly every year; Shorewood performances may be easier to snag. "Nutcracker Sweets" showcases ARC School of Ballet students along with members of the professional company.

Dec. 13–21. \$18–\$43. Venues in Seattle and Shoreline.

[‘The Nutcracker & The Tale of the Hard Nut’](#)

Unique among Puget Sound–area productions, Tacoma City Ballet presents the original Russian version of “The Nutcracker” alongside “The Tale of the Hard Nut,” the obscure backstory of the magical Krakatuk nut. Performances are accompanied by the Tacoma City Ballet Orchestra. This year, the production returns to the newly remodeled historic Pantages Theater.

Dec. 13–15. \$25–\$85. Pantages Theater, Tacoma.

[‘The Nutcracker’](#)

Olympic Ballet Theatre presents its annual, full-length performance of the holiday favorite, accompanied with live music from the Cascade Youth Symphony Orchestras.

Dec. 13–23. \$24–\$48. Venues in Everett and Edmonds.

[‘The Nutcracker’](#)

International Ballet Theatre stages the Eastside’s biggest production of the cherished ballet in traditional Russian style, with elaborate sets and costumes from Ukraine; highlights include Arabian dancers and a fierce battle scene.

Dec. 13–23. \$25–\$53. Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue.

[‘The Nutcracker’](#)

A South Sound tradition for over 30 years, Ballet Northwest’s “The Nutcracker” presents recently revamped sets and costumes and a company of more than 200 dancers, including guest artists from Dance Theater of Harlem and Ballet West of Salt Lake City. This season marks the company’s 50th year.

Dec. 13–22. \$14–\$35. Washington Center, Olympia.

[‘The Nutcracker’](#) (purchase tickets [here](#))

Emerald Ballet Theatre’s annual all-matinee production of “The Nutcracker” features gorgeous sets and costumes, and a combination of talented professional and youth performers. It is one of a handful of local “Nutcracker” productions performed with live music, courtesy of the Emerald Ballet Theatre Orchestra and its conductor, David Waltman. Bonus: Its Bothell location offers ample parking.

Dec. 7–15. \$38–\$43. Northshore Performing Arts Center, Bothell.

Christmas Carols and Nights Before Christmas

[‘A Christmas Carol’](#)

ACT’s annual production of Gregory A. Falls’ adaptation of Charles Dickens’ classic holiday tale has proven too scary for some kids. But for 44 years, the theater’s take on the curmudgeonly businessman and his spectral guides has thrilled bolder children and their families. Consider the age and sensitivity of your child before you enjoy this journey to understanding the true meaning of Christmas and life.

Nov. 29–Dec. 28. \$27–\$129. Ages 5 and older. ACT – A Contemporary Theatre, Seattle.



A Christmas Carol at Pantages Theater

[‘A Christmas Carol’](#)

The South End’s “A Christmas Carol” has only two performances, so act quickly to see Scott Severance’s new adaptation of the classic story with 26 classic Christmas carols woven throughout.

Dec. 21. \$19–\$69. Ages 5 and older. *Pantages Theater, Tacoma.*

[‘Christmas Carol Junior’](#)

Bargain: SecondStory’s adaptation is presented as story time at the North Pole. Mrs. Claus and zany North Pole elves bring the story of the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge to life, substituting scary ghosts with play-acting elves.

Dec. 8–22. \$10. Ages 5–12 with families (Sunday shows are all-ages, with half-price toddler tickets). *SecondStory Repertory, Redmond.*

[‘Ebenezer’s Christmas Carol’](#)

Bargain: Stone Soup offers kid-focused theater in one act at a bargain price. But there are only three performances of this family-friendly “Christmas Carol,” so be sure to buy tickets early.

Dec. 12–14. \$12. *Stone Soup Theatre, Seattle.*

[‘Twas the Night ...’](#)

Belly laughs are in order for Studio East’s annual multiple-POV (that’s point of view) presentation of the classic Christmas Eve poem. See the story through the eyes of runaway mice, hungry cats, “hoofing” reindeer and the man in red himself.

Nov. 30–Dec. 22. \$20. Ages 5 and older. *Studio East Mainstage Theater, Kirkland.*

[‘The Five Ghosts of Ebenezer Scrooge’](#)

The Auburn Community Players give Scrooge’s classic redemption tale a twist. In this version, old Ebenezer is visited by his old partner Marley, as well as Christmases Past, Present and Future — but this time there is one more haunting. Who is the extra ghost? Come and see.

Dec. 13–Dec. 22. \$14–\$22. *Auburn Ave Theater, Auburn.*

Holiday Theater

[‘The Best Christmas Pageant Ever’](#)

Based on the hilarious and irreverent book of the same title, “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” finds a couple struggling to put on a church Christmas pageant challenged by the casting of the biggest troublemakers in town. Mayhem and fun collide with the spirit of Christmas in this all-ages production.

Nov. 29–Dec. 23. \$21–\$27. Lakewood Playhouse, Lakewood.



Miracle on 34th Street

[‘Miracle on 34th Street’](#)

Seattle Musical Theatre is producing the Broadway version of the 1947 film starring a young Natalie Wood, “Miracle on 34th Street.” A healthy dose of New York–style cynicism (believing in Santa Claus is good for business) makes this one of the holiday’s least saccharine classics. But songs such as “It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas” and a little girl’s dream coming true at the end will give you all the holiday feels anyway.

Dec. 19–29. Pricing TBA. Magnuson Park, Seattle.

[‘A Christmas Story’](#)

See the beloved Christmas story about BB-gun-coveting Ralphie as a musical. Songs titled “Ralphie to the Rescue!”, “Up on Santa’s Lap” and the inevitable “You’ll Shoot Your Eye Out!” add a new dimension. Weapons may not be standard gifts for children anymore, but everything else about the story is still (hilariously) relatable.

Nov. 29–Dec. 22. \$25–\$28. Wade James Theater, Edmonds.

[‘A Charlie Brown Christmas’](#)

Bargain: It wouldn’t be the holiday season without everyone’s favorite story of the true spirit of Christmas. The stage adaptation captures all of the sweet and relatable elements of the classic 1965 film adaptation, including the memorable music of Vince Guaraldi, cherished holiday carols performed by the Peanuts gang, and the spindly Christmas tree that “just needs a little love.”

Dec. 14–Dec. 24. \$10. *Tacoma Musical Playhouse, Tacoma.*

[‘The Flight Before Xmas’](#)

A delayed flight may not seem like a setup for discovering Christmas cheer — more like a recipe for holiday anarchy — but the motley crew of sequestered travelers in Maggie Lee’s heartwarming comedy “The Flight Before Xmas” find fellowship in their common dilemma.

Dec. 6–28. \$10–\$30. Ages 7 and older; no babes in arms. *West of Lenin, Seattle.*

[‘The Twelve Days of Christmas’](#)

Bargain: In a show for the whole family performed by local youths, “The Twelve Days of Christmas” features a prince who longs for a new world within his kingdom. He finds a town fallen on hard times and brings it back to life through the power of true love and Christmas joy.

Dec. 6–15. \$15. All ages. *Bellevue Youth Theatre – Crossroads, Bellevue.*

[‘Christmastown: A Holiday Noir’](#)

In this film-noir-inspired holiday mashup, detective Nick Holiday must get to the bottom of a mystery involving a glamorous elf, a used-Christmas-tree salesman, a muckraking reporter, a quick-thinking cab driver and the big man in red himself.

Nov. 29–Dec. 24. \$17–\$34. All ages. *Seattle Public Theater, Seattle.*

[‘Holiday Inn’](#)

Based on the 1942 film of the same title, “Holiday Inn” features dance numbers and laugh-out-loud romantic comedy. But of course, the main draw is Irving Berlin’s songs, including “Blue Skies,” “Easter Parade,” “Steppin’ Out With My Baby,” “Heat Wave” and “White Christmas.”

Dec. 6–22. \$28. Ages 3 and older. *Liberty Theatre, Puyallup.*

[‘Holmes for the Holidays’](#)

If your kids are getting a little older and stories of Santa no longer beguile, rope them into a different kind of holiday show. In “Holmes for the Holidays,” Tacoma Little Theatre presents a glittering whodunit set during the Christmas holidays of 1936, with a closed-door murder mystery that challenges an actor famous for portraying Sherlock Holmes to solve a murder that takes place during his holiday party. Ages 12 and older.

Dec. 6–29. \$20–\$25. *Tacoma Musical Playhouse, Tacoma.*

Comic Romps and Pantos

[‘Nuncrackers’](#)

The “nonsense” Christmas musical “Nuncrackers” stars the nuns you love, Father Virgil and four of Mount Saint Helen’s most talented students. With holiday songs such as “Twelve Days Prior to Christmas” and “It’s Better to Give Than to Receive,” this show is filled with music and irreverent humor that will put you in a holiday mood.

Dec. 6–21. \$21–\$26. All ages. *Renton Civic Theatre, Renton.*

[‘Robin Hood – A Holiday Panto’](#)

In a beloved annual tradition borrowed from England, Centerstage turns a well-known story on its head with English panto twists. Expect corny jokes, pop music sendups and generalized wackiness.

Nov. 30–Dec. 22. \$12–\$35. *Centerstage Theatre, Federal Way.*



[Jack and the Beanstalk](#)

[‘Jack and the Beanstalk’](#)

The Fremont Players and Fremont Philharmonic return with their annual British-style panto production filled with outrageous characters, original songs and jokes aimed both at the kids and over their heads. Expect audience participation, slapstick and more from this wacky fairy tale.

Dec. 7–Jan. 5. \$8–\$16. All ages. Hale’s Ales Palladium, Seattle.

[‘Inspecting Carol’](#)

“Inspecting Carol” is a behind-the-scenes satire centered around a luckless small-town community theater’s annual tacky production of “A Christmas Carol.” This fast-paced, laugh-out-loud farce is a perfect antidote for the holiday blues.

Nov. 29–Dec. 22. \$20–\$25. Phoenix Theatre, Edmonds.

[‘Elf’](#)

The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear, but if you’re not much of a singer, take your family to see the musical adaptation of the beloved contemporary classic Christmas movie “Elf.” Raised at the North Pole, human Buddy travels to NYC to meet his birth father — and rescue him from Santa’s “naughty list.”

Nov. 29–Dec. 22. \$22–\$31. Tacoma Musical Playhouse, Tacoma.

Holiday Music

[‘Sing-Along With Santa’](#)

Bargain: Santa and the Tacoma Musical Playhouse elves will kick off the holiday season with favorite holiday carols, live music and a special story read by St. Nick himself. After the sing-along, children can meet Santa and share with him their holiday wishes.

Dec. 7. \$10. All ages. Tacoma Musical Playhouse, Tacoma.

[‘Seattle Men’s Chorus: ’Tis the Season’](#)

The Seattle Men’s Chorus offers its annual fresh takes on the holiday classics. This year, look forward to a rocking show, with “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree,” “Good King Wenceslas” and “Santa Claus Got Stuck in My Chimney.”

Nov. 30–Dec. 22. \$25–\$88. Venues in Seattle, Tacoma and Everett.



Great Figgy Pudding Caroling Competition

[Great Figgy Pudding Caroling Competition](#)

Bargain: On the evening of Dec. 6, inject some holiday spirit into your shopping experience courtesy of the Great Figgy Pudding Caroling Competition. Dozens of caroling teams compete to out-sing each other on street corners around Westlake Center in downtown Seattle to raise money for the Pike Place Market Foundation.

All ages. Free.

[‘The Coats Annual Holiday Show’](#)

Splurge: An all-ages Christmas tradition, The Coats’ joyful annual Christmas concerts showcase the quartet’s octave-dancing vocal range, melodious harmonies and catchy musicality.

Dec. 20–22. \$42.50–\$52.50. Benaroya Hall, Seattle.

[‘Magical Strings — A Celtic Yuletide’](#)

Bargain: Three generations of the Boulding family join performers from Tara Academy Irish Dance, fiddler Jocelyn Pettit, Dublin guitarist Colm MacCárthaigh and percussionist Matt Jerrell to present vocals and sing-alongs accompanied by Celtic harp, hammered dulcimer, cello, violin, whistles, accordion and concertina. This is a festive gala of music, dance, storytelling, juggling, a colorfully costumed processional and songs of the season.

Dec. 1–21. \$12–\$32. Venues in Kent, Bellevue, Tacoma, Seattle and beyond.

[‘Christmas in Edmonds’](#)

Bargain: A program of holiday music performed by the 120-voice, 30-piece Mosaic Arts NW Choir & Orchestra kicks off the holidays for your family and benefits Vision House to end child homelessness.

Dec. 7. \$15–\$18. Edmonds Center for the Arts, Edmonds.

[‘The Snowman’](#)

Bargain: Enjoy the classic children’s story about a snowman who comes to life and takes a little boy to the North Pole at this Seattle Symphony Family Concert. Designed for kids ages 6–12, the musical program includes works by Mozart and Vaughan Williams, as well as Howard Blake’s “The Snowman.” Arrive one hour before the performance for preconcert activities, including an instrument petting zoo.

Dec. 14. \$15–\$25. Ages 6–12 with families. Benaroya Hall, Seattle.

[Handel’s ‘Messiah’](#)

The Seattle Symphony, along with its chorale and talented soloists, presents this annual winter solstice tradition of Handel’s “Messiah” with its magnificent “Hallelujah” chorus. This year’s performers include conductor Matthew Halls, soprano Nola Richardson, mezzo-soprano Meg Bragle and tenor Thomas Cooley.

Dec. 20–22. \$26–\$90. Benaroya Hall, Seattle.

[‘Geoffrey Castle’s Celtic Christmas Celebration’](#)

Splurge: “Geoffrey Castle’s Celtic Christmas Celebration” is a Kirkland tradition. Castle plays electric six-string violin, and is joined by special guests the Seattle Irish Dance Company, the All-Star Celtic Night Band, performers from the Seattle Opera and singer-songwriter Dan Connolly.

Dec. 12–13. \$42. Kirkland Performance Center, Kirkland.



"Abe"

Entertainment as Unique as Your Family

[‘Holiday Favorites’](#)

Bargain: If your holidays have a little too much holiday in them, join SIFF for a different kind of winter celebration. Beginning Nov. 29, see some of cinema’s most unusual holiday favorites in SIFF’s cozy theater. “The Muppet Movie Sing-Along” and “Mystery Science Theater 3000: Santa Claus” give just a taste of this eclectic lineup. Keep an eye out as well for

SIFF's long-running holiday traditions of sing-along screenings of "White Christmas" and "Fiddler on the Roof."

Nov. 29–Dec. 31. \$13–\$14. *SIFF Film Center, Seattle.*

'The Christmas Revels'

Bargain: This year's "Revels" presents traditional music, dance and drama from the Balkan Peninsula. Folk traditions and high art combine in an all-ages celebration of the winter solstice.

Dec. 14–18. \$13–\$37.50. *Rialto Theater, Tacoma.*

Kung Pao Xmas: 'Abe'

The Stroum Jewish Community Center presents dinner and a movie on Dec. 25. Dinner, of course, is Chinese food. The movie is "Abe," the story of a 12-year-old Brooklyn boy who cooks to unite his half-Israeli and half-Palestinian family.

Dec. 25. \$30–\$35 dinner and movie/\$11–\$14 film only. *Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island.*