

BALLET KALAMAZOO®

KALAMAZOO YOUTH BALLET · 2026 PRODUCTION

Nutcracker Kalamazoo

AUDITIONS · WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26 · PERFORMANCES · DECEMBER 5 & 6, 2026

COMSTOCK COMMUNITY AUDITORIUM



A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Before your dancer steps into the room

This spring, as we closed the curtain on *Rapunzel*, we shared a promise with you: that Before Nutcracker season arrived, every family would have the full picture of the process, the commitment, and the honor of what it means to be part of this production.

This packet is that promise kept.

Nutcracker Kalamazoo is our flagship production. It is performed with a professional technical crew, full theatrical lighting and sound design, and the highest production values we offer. It is not a recital; it is a professional-caliber production featuring your children, and it is by audition. Not every dancer who auditions will be cast, and no two dancers walk the same path through it. That is by design: learning to prepare, to audition, and to bring artistry to the role you are given is part of what we teach.

Please read this packet together as a family before audition day.

Everything you need to decide and everything your dancer needs to feel ready is inside.

Amy Russell

FOUNDER & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, BALLET KALAMAZOO

Your dancer's time slot

Auditions are organized by enrolled level your dancer attends the time slot for the level they are enrolled in this fall, regardless of age. Please arrive 15 minutes early, dressed in level uniform with hair in a secure bun. Parents are welcome in the lobby; the studio is for dancers and faculty only.

TIME	LEVEL	NOTES
5:00 – 5:25 pm	 Sunshine	
5:30– 5:55 pm	 Sky Blue	
6:00– 6:30 pm	 Lilac	
6:35 – 7:10pm	 Teal  Royal	
7:15 – 8:30 pm	  Ruby · Noire	<i>Pointe shoes required for pointe dancers; includes contemporary movement.</i>

Dancers audition with their enrolled level; this keeps the process consistent and fair for every family. If you are unsure of your dancer's fall level placement, please reach out before August 26.

THE PRODUCTION

The world of our Nutcracker

Nutcracker Kalamazoo is our own telling of the beloved story with Hattie at its heart, a battle at midnight, a snow-covered forest, and a Land of Sweets flavored unmistakably like home. These are the characters who bring it to life. Every dancer cast in this production becomes part of this world.

Nutcracker Kalamazoo

an original production of the Kalamazoo Youth Ballet

ACT I

The Party

Hattie	our heroine
Edward	her brother
Hattie's Friends	the party girls
Party Scene Children	guests of the evening
Little Sisters	hand in hand with a big sister
Harlequin · Columbine · Moor Doll	the magical dolls

The Battle at Midnight

Mouse Queen	the villain herself
Big Mice	her fearsome army
Baby Mice	tiny and mischievous
Toy Soldiers	defenders of the nursery

The Snow Forest

Snow Queen	sovereign of winter
Snowflakes	the corps of the storm
Snow Angels	gentle spirits of the snow
White-Tailed Deer	a contemporary vision of the Michigan woods

ACT 2
The Land of Sweets

Sugar Plum Fairy	<i>the crown of the ballet</i>
Dew Drop Fairy	<i>queen of the flowers</i>
Dew Drop Fairy Attendants	<i>her court</i>
Waltz of the Flowers	<i>the garden in bloom</i>
Blue Moon Ice Cream	<i>a Kalamazoo original</i>
Lollipops	<i>bright and quick</i>
Monarch Butterflies	<i>grace on the wing</i>
Candy Canes	<i>peppermint precision</i>
Donuts	<i>bold and full of fire</i>
Gingerbread Bakers	<i>fresh from Mother Ginger's oven</i>
Doves	<i>messengers of the Sweets</i>

All roles are cast at the Director's discretion following auditions. Dancers audition with their enrolled level; principal and soloist roles are danced en pointe by members of the Kalamazoo Youth Ballet.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The commitment behind the curtain

Because Nutcracker is an auditioned production, not every student at Ballet Kalamazoo takes part; therefore, rehearsals cannot be built into regular class time. Nutcracker rehearsals are held on Saturday afternoons, entirely separate from and in addition to your dancer's weekly classes. This has always been how our productions are built, and we share it here before auditions so that it is an agreement, never a surprise.

When your dancer accepts a role, your family is committing to the full production calendar below, including tech week and dress rehearsal, which are where the performance itself is built and are not optional.

Nutcracker Kalamazoo 2026 — Production Calendar

Auditions	Wednesday, August 26
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Casting announced	August 30th
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Saturday rehearsals begin	September 12 th - weekly, Saturday afternoons
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Final rehearsal period attendance required for participation	November 21 st - No rehearsal on November 28 th due to Thanksgiving
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Tech week & dress rehearsal	November 30th-December 4th
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Performances	December 5 & 6, 2026
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Please review this calendar as a family *before* your dancer auditions. Accepting a role means honoring it in full.

A SEASON BUILT ON CHOICE

Two stages. Every dancer.

This year, we reshaped our season so that every family can choose the level of commitment that fits their dancer's life right now and so that every single Ballet Kalamazoo dancer is guaranteed a stage.

BY AUDITION

KYB Productions

Nutcracker Kalamazoo (December 5 & 6) and *Beauty and the Beast* (May 22 & 23), both at Comstock Community Auditorium, are full-scale theatrical productions with Saturday rehearsals, tech weeks, and professional production values. *Beauty and the Beast* auditions will be held in February and follow this same process: level-based time slots, casting at the Director's discretion, and the full commitment calendar published before auditions. A significant commitment, and a profound one.

EVERY ENROLLED DANCER · JUNE 12, 2027

Year-End School Showcase

At the Cori Terry Theatre, in a morning/matinee time frame, every dancer in our school performs. No audition, no extra rehearsals, no added commitment. Prepared entirely within regular classes and presented as a true demonstration of the year's training.

THE 2026-27 PERFORMANCE SEASON AT A GLANCE

Aug 26	Nutcracker Kalamazoo auditions — by level, at the studio
Dec 5-6	Nutcracker Kalamazoo — Comstock Community Auditorium
Feb 7	KAL Dance ~ Constellations — a Kalamazoo Youth Ballet company performance
February	Beauty and the Beast auditions — same process, date announced this winter
May 22-23	Beauty and the Beast — Comstock Community Auditorium
June 12	Year-End School Showcase — Cori Terry Theatre, morning/matinee · every enrolled dancer

There is no wrong choice here. Some seasons are Nutcracker seasons; some are not, and a dancer who sits out auditions this year loses nothing. February brings a second audition opportunity, and the Showcase guarantees that every dancer, on every track, ends the year on stage.

What it costs, and why

Participation fees help cover the costs that bring Nutcracker Kalamazoo to life: costume rental from Ballet Kalamazoo's professional collection, additional rehearsal staffing, theatre rental, production sets, professional guest artists, and our professional tech crew. These rehearsals take place outside of regular class time and are not included in monthly tuition.

Fees reflect each role's rehearsal schedule and time on stage. A role that rehearses from September through December and spends half an hour on stage carries a fuller commitment - and a fuller fee - than a role with one short, treasured scene. Every dancer pays one fee, based on the largest role they are cast in.

COMMITMENT TIER	ROLES	FEE
Cameo	Little Sisters, Baby Mice, Toy Soldiers, Snow Angels - one short scene, limited rehearsal schedule	\$95
Ensemble	Gingerbread Bakers, Candy Canes, Donuts, Dew Drop Fairy Attendants, Doves - a featured dance plus the arrival in the Land of the Sweets and the finale	\$150
Extended	Party Scene/Lead and Supporting Roles: the fullest rehearsal commitment in the school cast	\$185

Dancers cast in more than one role pay the fee for their largest role, plus a \$30 costume rental for each additional costume. Families with two or more cast dancers receive 10% off their total. Payment plans are gladly arranged - just ask. Fees are due after casting is announced and are invoiced through your Jackrabbit account.

Kalamazoo Youth Ballet company members' production fees are billed separately through the company and are not listed here.

Good questions, honest answers

Will my dancer get a new role this year?

Roles are assigned by readiness and by the needs of the production, not by rotation. Dancing a role for a second year is common in professional companies and is often the year a dancer truly shines in it. As dancers advance through our levels, new parts of the ballet open to them; that progression is the reward of training.

Can Supplemental Track dancers audition?

Yes, every enrolled Ballet Kalamazoo dancer is welcome to audition. Casting reflects training hours, rehearsal availability, and readiness at the Director's discretion. Cast dancers who are not KYB company members pay a per-production participation fee, announced with casting. The rehearsal commitment is the same for every member of the cast.

What if we can't make every Saturday?

Please let us know of conflicts at auditions; casting decisions take rehearsal availability into account. Attendance during the final rehearsal weeks is required for participation. Not every dancer will be needed each week in the beginning as we build out the show.

A tentative schedule will be provided before the auditions to consider.

What should my dancer wear to auditions?

Level uniform leotard, pink tights, and ballet shoes, with hair in a secure bun. Royal, Ruby, and Noire dancers on pointe should bring pointe shoes.

If you have any questions this packet doesn't answer, please reach out *before* audition day. We are happy to talk through the process, the commitment, or whether this is the right season for your dancer. Once we are in the audition room, our focus is entirely on your dancers.

We cannot wait to see them there.

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Nutcracker Kalamazoo 2026 · Family distribution · August 2026

Sample Rehearsal Schedule

Based on our 2025 production, so your family can see the true shape of the commitment *before* your dancer auditions.

How to read this: the actual 2026 schedule, with your dancer's name listed under every rehearsal block, just like last year, will be published after casting is announced on August 30. Dancers attend only the blocks where their role is called, not the full afternoon. Times below are representative of last season and will shift with this year's casting and staging needs.

The shape of the season

Rehearsals run Saturdays, 12:00–4:00pm, from September 12 through late November, usually across both studios at once, a scene rehearses in Studio 1 while another role learns its dance with faculty in Studio 2. Early in the season, rehearsals build the ballet piece by piece, so not every role is called every week; our youngest cast members (Little Sisters, Baby Mice) typically join in October once their scenes are being staged. In November, Saturdays shift toward full-cast staging as the ballet comes together. There is no rehearsal Thanksgiving weekend (November 28), and an occasional Saturday may adjust its times around downtown community events, always with advance notice.

A typical September Saturday

Early season - the ballet in pieces. A dancer here attends only their block.

Studio 1

12:00–12:15

Warm-up (called cast)

12:15–1:30

Opening & Party Scenes — Hattie, Edward, Hattie's Friends, Party Girls & Boys, Dolls

1:30–2:15

Battle Scene — Hattie, Mouse Queen, Big Mice, Soldiers

2:15–4:00

Snow Scene — Snowflakes, Snow Queen

Studio 2

12:15–1:00

Toy Soldiers

1:00–1:45	Snow Angels
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1:45–2:45	Doves
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On other September/October Saturdays, Studio 2 blocks rotate through Gingerbread Bakers, Donuts, Candy Canes, and contemporary pieces, while Studio 1 works soloist variations and Land of the Sweets dances.

A typical November Saturday

Late season - full-cast staging as the ballet comes together.

12:00–1:15	Act I: Party & Battle: Party Scene full cast, Dolls, Hattie, Edward · Toy Soldiers 12:15–1:15 · Little Sisters 12:15–12:45 · Baby Mice 12:45–1:15
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1:15–1:45	Snow Scene: Snowflakes, Snow Queen, Snow Angels, White-Tailed Deer
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1:45–2:30	Doves, then Arrival & Finale with the full Land of the Sweets cast
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2:30–4:00	Land of the Sweets: variations, Flowers, Dew Drop Fairy & Attendants, Sugar Plum
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Production week (Nov 30 – Dec 4)

The week before performances, rehearsals move to weekday evenings and then into the theater.

Based on last season:

Mon & Wed	Evening full-act runs (approx. 6:00–9:00 pm) with our guest artists - older cast; youngest roles not called
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Tue	Young cast evening - a short early-evening call for Little Sisters, Baby Mice, Toy Soldiers, Snow Angels, plus Doves & Gingerbread
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Thu	Load-in & theater rehearsal at Comstock - KYB dancers and parent volunteers hang backdrops, lay stage floor, and decorate, then evening run
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Fri	Mandatory dress rehearsal - full run; arrival times scheduled by role
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Sat & Sun	Performances, December 5 & 6 - arrival times scheduled by role; company dancers stay after the final show to help with strike
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What this typically means for your dancer

ROLE GROUP	TYPICAL SATURDAY CALL	PRODUCTION WEEK
● Little Sisters, Baby Mice	~30 minutes within the afternoon, beginning in October; not called every week	One short early-evening call, plus dress rehearsal and performances
● ● Toy Soldiers, Snow Angels	~45–60 minutes, most Saturdays	One early-evening call, dress rehearsal, performances
● ● Doves, Gingerbread, Candy Canes, Donuts, Attendants	~45–90 minutes; arrival & finale staging adds time in November	One to two evening calls, dress rehearsal, performances
● Party Scene	~60–75 minutes weekly from the very first Saturday	Full Act I evening runs, dress rehearsal, performances
● ● ● KYB Company	Typically the full 12:00–4:00 afternoon	All evening runs, load-in, dress rehearsal, performances, and strike

Every family should plan around the full Saturday window, even if your dancer's call is short; calls can shift as staging develops, and being present when called is what makes the production possible.

Every rehearsal, every dancer

Arrive 10 minutes before your call

Hair in a secure bun

Proper attire: leotard, tights, ballet shoes

Dancer's name written inside ballet slippers

Labeled water bottle with your dancer’s name

Plenty of healthy snacks to keep your dancer fueled

Attendance & Absences

Ballet is an art that requires teamwork. Every formation, every crossing, every step is built around the exact dancers in the room: when one dancer is missing, the choreography cannot be fully set, and every other dancer's rehearsal is diminished. Accepting a role is a promise to your cast. For that reason:

Before casting	Known conflicts are due at auditions. Casting decisions take your family's calendar into account. Tell us everything then, and we will plan around it together.
After casting	Absences must be excused in advance. Illness, family emergencies, and required school events are excused. Social events: birthday parties, sleepovers, and the like are not excused. When your dancer accepted their role, rehearsal became the commitment.
Missed rehearsals	Missing two or more rehearsals may result in a role being reduced or recast, at the Director's discretion. This is not a punishment; it is what the production requires. Choreography set on an absent dancer must be rebuilt, and that is time the rest of the cast cannot spare.
Catching up	An excused absence comes with a responsibility: your dancer must learn everything they missed before the next rehearsal from rehearsal video or by working with a castmate. Rehearsal time cannot be used to reteach material; when your dancer returns, we continue from where the cast is now.
Plan a buffer	Please do not schedule anything directly at the end of your dancer's call time. We do our best to run on time, but occasionally a scene requires more time, and we must complete it before the following week's rehearsal to keep the whole production on schedule. Build breathing room into your afternoon.

