

Ballet Pixelle Presents

The Nut

2014-2015



A Slightly Abridged Retelling of the Nutcracker



BALLET PIXELLE

The Nut

- our version of the essence of The Nutcracker -
based on the story by E.T.A. Hoffmann

Choreography and Animations

Inarra Saarinen

Music

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Performed by

Alexander Vedernikov and

Orchestra of the Ballet Theatre, Moscow

Dancers

Aiyana Tripsa

Amelie Dibou

Deyna Broek

EmmaLee Streeter

Jaicya Sung

Luci Yokosuka

Nark Chaffe

Patros Zifer

Shy Jackson

Tik Merlin

Crew

Ballet Mistress

Amelie Dibou

Assistant

Patros Zifer

Set Design

Leko Littlebird

Scripting & Set Management

Tik Merlin

Theatre Build, Roadie, & Playbills

Espresso Saarinen

Costume Mistress

Blanche duBois

Sound Engineer

Willis Rossini

House Manager

JoshR Woodrunner

PR / Media Liaison

JoshR Woodrunner

Machinimatographer

Charlie Navarathna

Photographer

ActionJackson86 ("Jack")

Web Manager

Aiyana Tripsa

Director

Inarra Saarinen

This production is dedicated to the memory of Inarra's Mother and Brother.

BALLET PIXELLE

The Nut

our version of The Nutcracker

ACT I - Clara's Bedroom, Christmas Eve

Scene 1 - Clara's Home, Christmas Eve'

Drosselmeyer, Clara's Grandfather, brings two dolls to put under the Christmas tree. First he watches the dolls dance.

Scene 2 - Clara's Bedroom

Clara plays and dances with the Nutcracker doll she was given for Christmas.

Scene 3 - Clara's Enchanted Bedroom

Suddenly the Nutcracker doll grows taller and becomes a real Prince! Clara transforms into a Princess and they dance a marvelous pas de deux.

ACT II - A Mystical Castle

Clara finds her Nutcracker has actually become the Prince of her dreams, and she has become his Princess. She dances with joy, and then the mysterious dancers in their magical castle appear. Arabian dancers soar. A Russian man stomps out a dance. A Chinese Empress or Chinese man step lightly and lively. A Spanish Señorita or Señor dance with olé. Russian Gigogne dolls roll unnest. Even snowflakes and flowers are dancing!

ACT III - Clara's Bedroom, Christmas Morning

The characters of her dream dance through Clara's sleep. She awakens to find she is no longer a Princess, and the Prince is again a Nutcracker doll. Was it a dream? Her imagination? Or was it really a magical castle? She knows that whether it was real or not, she will have this night forever.

~ Inarra Saarinen

BALLET PIXELLE COMPANY

Winter 2014-2015

Dancers

Aiyana Tripsa - Florida, USA
Amelie Dibou - Washington, DC, USA
Deyna Broek - California, USA
EmmaLee Streeter - New York, USA
Hiroko Kimono - Tokyo, Japan
Jaicya Sung - Toronto, Canada
Luci Yokosuka - Osaka, Japan
Nark Chaffe - Vancouver, Canada
Patros Zifer - Toronto, Canada
Shy Jackson - Arizona, USA
Tik Merlin - Lisbon, Portugal
Tinka Bondar - Pennsylvania, USA
Vivienne Darcy - Colorado, USA

Crew

ActionJackson86 - Texas, USA
Anaid Daviau - Second Life
Blanche DuBois - Colorado, USA
Calia Cachin - Hawai'i, USA
Charlie Navarathna - Second Life
Espresso Saarinen - Tokyo, Japan
Gershom Wycliffe - Michigan, USA
Inarra Saarinen - Tokyo, Japan
JoshR Woodrunner - Toronto, Canada
Solary Clary - Tokyo, Japan
Taff Nouvelle - England
Willis Rossini - Washington, DC, USA





Inarra Saarinen
artistic director-choreographer

Ms. Saarinen is the founder and artistic director of Ballet Pixelle (formerly Second Life Ballet). She is also a First Life dancer and choreographer for stage, film, and video. She is interested in exploring the unique capabilities and intersection of movement in virtual and physical space and blended realities, and investigating and developing an aesthetic and vocabulary of virtual dance -- whether it be by tiger, dragon, bird, or human.







*Aiyana Tripsa
dancer*

Ms. Tripsa says that dance and music are her life's blood. In First Life, she began dance classes at age 5, music at age 7, and theater at age 9. If she's not dancing she is probably listening to music or playing her piano. For the past decade, Ms. Tripsa has been studying Flamenco dance and hopes to bring all that experience to dancing in Second Life. She is nervous and excited and absolutely thrilled to be dancing with Ballet Pixelle because it combines so many of her loves.



Amelie Dibou

animations assistant, ballet mistress, dancer

Ms. Dibou has danced with Ballet Pixelle since its inception and was a member of the original cast. She has premiered in all ballets written for Second Life and serves as the Ballet Mistress. Some of her Costumes, Botanicals & other creations are featured in several Ballets. A dancer and musician in First Life, Amelie loves developing these arts in Second Life.



Deyna Broek
dancer

Ms. Broek is 35 and a California native.
She feels blessed.





*EmmaLee Streeter
apprentice dancer*

*Ms. Streeter found in Second Life's Ballet
Pixelle the opportunity to fulfill her first life
dream of dancing. When not dancing in Second
Life, Ms. Streeter enjoys socializing,
photography, and constantly transforming.*



Hiroko Kimono

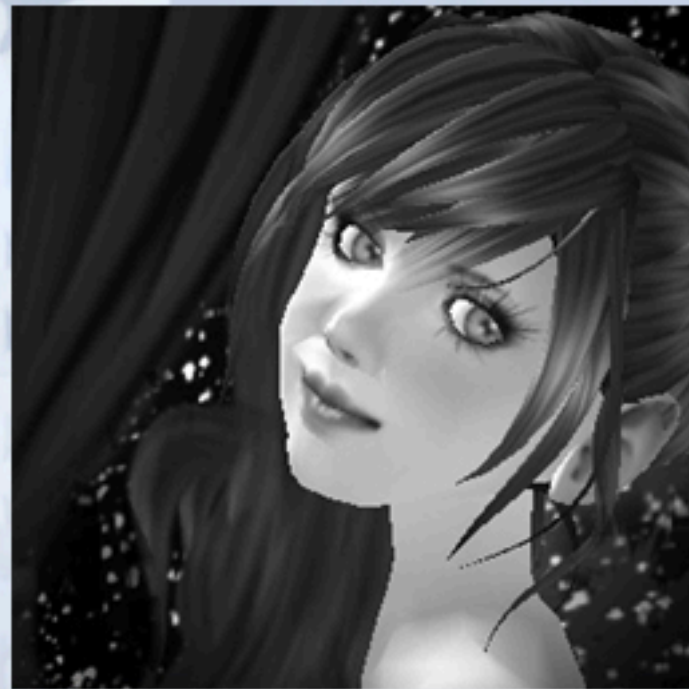
real life physical dancer

Ms. Kimono has danced all her life and is thrilled to be a dancer with Ballet Pixelle and loves dancing with her virtual fellow dancers! She is from the Japan.



*Jaicya Sung
dancer*

Ms. Sung has loved dancing since she was a kid. She is from one of Indian Ocean's islands and now lives in Toronto. Jaicya is in Second Life to fulfill her dream of being a dancer. She is very happy and thrilled to be part of Ballet Pixelle working with awesome people around the world.



Luci Yokosuka
dancer

Ms. Yokosuka is a Balinese gamelan player as well as a manager of the Students' Union of University of Human Arts and Sciences, and a VWBC newscaster.





Nark Chaffe
dancer

Mr Nark Chaffe has recently joined Ballet Pixelle as an apprentice.

*He dances with gravity
cascading down mountain slopes
forcing his mass to accelerate
pounding the rhythm of taiko
to match his heartbeat.*



Patros Zifer
dancer, rehearsal asistant, & MC

Mr. Zifer commenced dancing in First Life about a week after birth. His movement obsession proved such a time consuming challenge to his parents that they put him into gymnastics training at the age of eight. In his mid-teens tumbling begat tendu as he traded the parallel bars for ballet barres and hasn't looked back since...certainly not without a reasonably well-lined "attitude". His very minor professional career ended early by injury but he continues to work in the field as both a dance photographer and as the perennial bad-penny in daily company class. Fifth position will always be home to him. Patros welcomes the opportunity to bourée on in Second Life without the nagging pull of gravity.



Shy Corina Jackson
apprentice dancer

Ms. Jackson's love of ballet started at age 6. Dancing with Ballet Pixelle in Second Life is a dream come true, and she is proud to be a part of it.



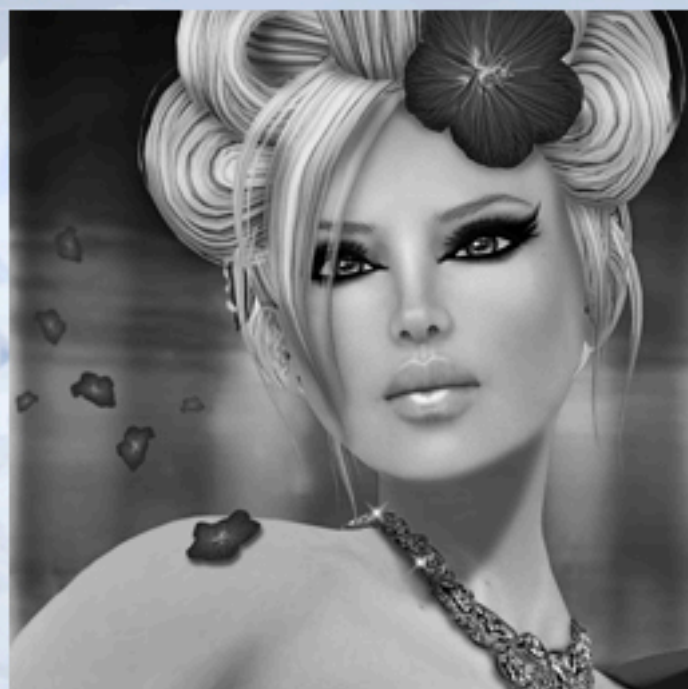
*Tik Merlin
dancer, scripting, & set management*

Mr. Merlin has been with Ballet Pixelle since 2007, enthusiastically embracing multiple artistic and technical roles. As ever, he is passionately learning the art of dancing, still and always mesmerized, amazed... and often dazed.



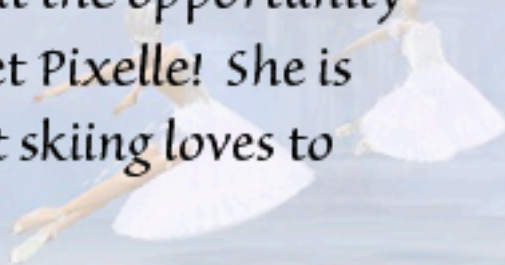
Tinka Bondar
dancer , mc coordinator

Ms. Bondar is from Philadelphia,
USA. She is a lover of the performing
arts along with being a trained figure
skater. Tinka values her friends and
family and loves meeting new people.



Vivienne Darcy
ballet coordinator, ballet mistress, dancer

Ms. Darcy is dancing for joy at the opportunity to don her toe shoes for Ballet Pixelle! She is from Colorado and when not skiing loves to dance!







*ActionJackson86 "Jack"
photographer*

Mr. Jackson is a Second Life artist and photographer for Ballet Pixelle. His wife is the lovely ballerina Shy Jackson. In First Life, he is a retired art educator. BFA UNT, MFA SAIC. He also performs with Texas Radio Theatre Company as announcer, actor, and live sound effects



Anaid Daviau
usher

Ms. Daviau started with Ballet Pixelle as an usher and is now Usher Coordinator. The ushers provide the key technical and courteous interface that allows our audience to enjoy the ballets.



*Blanche DuBois
costume mistress*


Although her origins are shrouded in mystery, the Company has noticed that Ms. DuBois tends to rely upon the kindness of strangers.

What is known is that Blanche has been indentured to Inarra Saarinen, Ballet Pixelle founder and artistic director, as the result of a series of youthful indiscretions. It appears she will be chained to her sewing machine for many productions to come.



*Calia Cachin
financial manager*

Ms. Cachin has been financial manager and stage manager with Ballet Pixelle for some years. She feels a heavy responsibility to the Company in handling all financial transaction in a transparent way. In addition, she calls all of the cues for each performance. Ms. Cachin does not dance since she has very large feet and an inability to count unless it is in Linden dollars. Ms. Cachin is honored to be part of Ballet Pixelle.



Charlie Navarathan
machinimatographer



Espresso Saarinen
builder, roadie

Mr. Saarinen is an over-attenuated computer scientist in First Life, which has given him a small leg up in the various tasks of building, scripting, and general technical work to assist the ballet. He makes the playbill and is the builder of Ballet Pixelle's Theatres.



Gershom Wycliffe
writer

Ms. Wycliffe has been in Second Life almost six years. A polyglot and fan of ballet, music, and fairy tales, she looks forward to her one-hundredth First Life Nutcracker this season!



*JoshR Woodrunner
house manager, pr, & media liaison*

Mr. Woodrunner has been in Second Life for 7 years, and is still finding new and interesting places to see and people to meet. He is looking forward to being on the crew of Ballet Pixelle.



Solary Clary
composer / musician

Ms. Clary was the composer for Shuzenji and for Living Goddess. She is a popular Japanese professional musician, singer, songwriter Sora Izumikawa. Ms. Clary has created music and lyrics for other professional singers, TV programs, commercials and manga songs in First Life. Ms. Clary performs live in Second Life and First Life, and her sweet voice provides cheer and happiness.



Taff Nouvelle
lighting technician

Mr. Nouvelle has been in Second Life for nearly 8 years and works as a scripter, bulder, and landscaper. Taff also advises many musicians on settings and mixes for their sound streams. His first life work has been mainly as a sound engineer on live music festivals, clubs, and theatres and during this time he worked with many lighting techs. Taff says, "hopefully some of that has rubbed off on me."



*Willis Rossini
sound engineer & coordinator*

Mr. Rossini joined Ballet Pixelle in Spring 2007 playing sound for all the productions. He is also the chief sound engineer, editing and signal processing the music to fit the ballet, producing sound effects, and improving the quality of the sound as it is broadcast to Second Life.







The Making of a Ballet in Virtual Space

Inarra Saarinen, Artistic Director

Creating ballet in Second Life is truly an amazing experience -- one that stretches all of us in the Ballet Pixelle Company artistically, technically, and logistically. Dancing original works in the virtual world requires an extraordinary dedication and adherence to highest professional standards. It is not a task for the faint of heart, yet each performance lifts us all to the heights of artistic accomplishment. I had quickly realized the creative and dance possibilities from my first days in Second Life. Now after five years of hard work, a lot of perseverance, and some fabulously talented and committed people we have brought thirteen ballets to audiences in Second Life and three into First Life as well. Each ballet is different from the others, yet they all begin in the same place.

The Goal

My goal from the beginning has been to explore and investigate physical and virtual dance and movement. This has never changed.

So far, we have held an invited presentation of *The Nut* at a New York City dance kinetics workshop where I was interviewed while in Tokyo. We were deemed "charming" by NYC dance critics. We danced our commissioned *Phylogeny* which was shown under a big screen while the Indiana Telematics Ensemble played live in Indiana. We presented and performed *Shuzenji* at the Time - Transcendence - Performance Conference hosted by Monash University in Australia. Recently we performed at the Tokyo Performing Arts Workshop.

The point is threefold: one to blend the realities of physical and virtual space, two to define a new aesthetic for virtual and virtual dance, and three, to create a new vocabulary of virtual / physical dance. We are well on our way.

Now that we have brought Ballet Pixelle into First Life, and First Life to Second Life, we are now bringing First Life dance into Second Life.

How the Ballet Begins

Every ballet begins with an idea. Part of the beauty of writing a story specifically for Ballet Pixelle is that I am able to utilize the unique aspects of Second Life, a three-dimensional virtual world, to bring the story to life. For example, In Olmannen I saw dragon-like creatures appearing in the air, a couple in love spiraling down to earth, sprites flying, and a beautiful woman transforming instantly into an old woman while the man transformed into one of the evil beings. In Windows I saw silhouetted women dancing in the air, teenagers doing slow aerial flips, and a dream sequence where a man and woman transform to their younger selves and the lovers rise up to the air together. In Shuzenji I saw how to dramatize the bonds of everlasting love as a hero murdered in a jealous rage enters the spirit world before our eyes and then returns to dance with his beloved. Once I've written the story and outlined the characters and their relationships, it is time to animate and choreograph. The story is expanded and refined over time as the dance continues to take shape in my head and in rehearsal.

Developing the Choreographic Animations

I began creating Ballet Pixelle movements with different animation software programs and have created the majority of our animations over the course of the eight ballets. I have used Avimator, Qavimator, Poser and others as a starting point in this process. I now have approximately 950 original animations. When choreographing a ballet, I put these animations into gestures, similar to musical phrases in ballet. This way the choreographer, dancers, and composer are able to work in a normal First Life style. These gestures also allow very precise timing between animations (in tenth of seconds but, alas, not counting lag) and compound animations. That is, in a gesture if you do not add a "wait" step the two animations happen at the same time. Each dancer can decide how to activate these gestures, for example by mapping the gestures to function keys or using chat `"/gesture_name"` to activate the phrase. Ballet Pixelle dancers rehearse and time the execution of each gesture in order, with the music and

with other dancers. I have tried working with both off-the-shelf and custom HUDs, but neither of them gave me all of the functionality that I needed. There were added lags in a HUD, for example, even though having buttons might have been convenient for the dancers.

It is important to recognize that there is a significant difference between Ballet Pixelle's animations and the typical dance animations avatars use at clubs in Second Life. Club dances are simply loops of movement the avatar clicks onto and the animations play on their own. In Ballet Pixelle rehearsals and performances each dancer performs his or her own animation in sequence as though dancing on a real stage. And no poseballs!

How the Music is Played

Music is usually composed specifically for Ballet Pixelle's ballets. Sometimes it is played from a recording, sometimes it is played live by the composer and streamed into the Second Life theatre. In Shuzenji the composer wrote lyrics afterward and sang and played live from Tokyo to accompany some performances. And sometimes the orchestra is in First Life playing to a large-screen playing Ballet Pixelle dancing!

Rehearsal is Part of the Creative Process

Once the story begins to fall in place and the animations are written, I can begin to see my visions in the rehearsal process and refine what will work on stage. What a wonderful freedom to be able to choreograph with dancers who have grand jetés that are full splits in the air, perfect "turn-out", and timely forever turns! The virtual world also suggests movements impossible on a traditional stage. Here Nutcracker snowflakes can float and swirl in mid-air without wires. This limitless movement lets me envision and then produce stunning effects of which other choreographers can only dream. Rehearsals take place in almost exactly the same way a First Life rehearsal

does -- except for the "I need you to hover up a bit" kind of directions. Of course, these are real dancers, so there are always the "I thought said you wanted me to come downstage?" kind of discussions. The dancers are definitely not puppets!

Costumes and Sets Play a Role in Ballet Pixelle

For Ballet Pixelle a "costume" is more than a tutu and a wig, it can be the entire look of a character including body shape, gender, size, and skin texture. For some characters we designed and built our own specialized avatars, for others we sought resources outside the Company. Second Life is a user-built community filled with creative people. Ballet Pixelle spends a significant amount of time working with designers of clothing and of avatar body and skin types to find the pieces that work to fulfill the ballet's artistic vision. We negotiate with each designer to make the costumes "transfer ok". In this way, costumes can go out to the dancers and then are transferred back into Ballet Pixelle's wardrobe department. Designers who contribute costumes are acknowledged in the playbill.

Ballet Pixelle sets have character as well. We have a number of extremely creative designers and builders within our Company. I describe my vision for the look and even action of the set pieces and after a lot of hard work and very long hours they deliver pieces that enhance the overall impact of the ballet.

We Quickly Outgrew Our First Theatre

We debuted in our home theatre in Quat. The theatre originally held 20, then 30, then 40 avatars, then we could no longer hold our audience. So we investigated and researched plans for a more efficient, reduced lag, larger theatre. Eventually, we built a theatre hosted by IBM in the their sims. This theatre stretched across two sims -- an audience of up to 80 sat in one while the stage and dancers were in the other, which both allowed for a larger audience and also reduced lag. With IBM moving behind their firewall, we moved back home to Quat and Marunogere, in our own two-sim theater.

Real People in a Virtual Ballet

At every step in the process from first thoughts through performance, I am working with wonderful collaborators literally all around the world. We are able to meet in Second Life and work together live, as though we were really in the same geographical time and place. This intercontinental collaboration would be impossible in First Life. Some composers for our ballets live in London, the United States, and Japan. Our theater architects are in Australia and Japan, and our dancers and crew are from Estonia, Canada, the U.S., England, Hawai'i, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Japan. The entire cast and crew are volunteers who are interested in pursuing artistic movement and dance in the virtual world that is Second Life. Each person from the emcee to the lighting and sound technicians and stage manager, put in long hours to assure the performances go as smoothly as possible within the complexity and variability of the Second Life platform. The dancers are also cross-trained in some crew positions. Understanding this commitment is a part of the audition process. Ballet Pixelle dancers are extraordinarily dedicated and are a large part of why the ballet works.

What Next?

From what we have learned over four years, we moved to our long-awaited next step in Degas, where we had Second Life dancers dancing with a machinima, or video, of another Second Life dancer. So there is a new element of time and we can bring Second Life to Second Life and explore what that means. The next step, to bring in First Life dancers into Second Life, was realized in Avatara". A Second Life dancer could finally dance with a Real Life dancer!

In one nine four two we brought in two different kinds of First Life media, photos and video, to juxtapose the physical world and the

virtual world. This allows a stronger impact on our perceptions in Real Life.

In our Summer 2011 work, Archidance, we brought in historical photos and videos of key choreographers and dancers who shaped dance.

In our latest work, we play with the idea of movement is life in a ballet called Immortal Waltz.

In Closing

In closing, this is an exhilarating experience with an absolutely wonderful committed artistic team. We are learning an amazing amount about the limitations and possibilities of virtual and physical dance and how they interact. We look forward to more exploration in the future. Remember, if you have the chance to sit it out or dance, dance.

Join us in dancing into the digital future!





Our sincere thanks to the following designers for their support and assistance in this season's production

The costumes for Clara and the Princess were created and donated by Felicity Overlord, Felicity Emerald Bay (211, 202, 302)

The costume for the Prince was created and donated by Trasgo Beaumont of Le Grenier du Chateau.

The nutcracker avatar and the rugs for the Arabians were created and donated by Tik Merlin of TikNics Tutu (121, 158, 1501)

The tiaras for the Princess were created and donated by Chrissy Ambrose Virtual Impressions, Ekho (137, 128, 24)

The costumes for the Arabians were created and donated by Elvina Ewing Caverna Obscura, Alligator Bayou (18, 56, 25)

The hair for the Arabians was created and donated by Hair by Truth Hawks Truth Hair (151, 20, 27)

The costumes for the Chinese women were created and donated by June Dior
=Barerose= Bare Rose (146, 11, 30)

The hair for the Chinese women was created and donated by Mohsin Paulino
(Ity.) Magical Girls and (Ity.) China <http://tinyurl.com/ltystore>

The costumes for the Spanish ladies were created and donated by Nicky Ree, Nicky Ree, DNR Stylish
Digital Couture Gowns N Dresses Tropical Orchid (228, 126, 30)

The hair for the Spanish ladies was created and donated by Tabata Jewell & Maven Poulter
VANITY HAIR- Main Store - HAIROLOGIE Waterton Way (185, 152, 22)

The costumes for the female Flowers were created and donated by Poly (poledra.behemoth)
Polygon Fashion House Muk (220, 102, 52)

The floating flowers for the female Flowers were created and donated by Fairy (Fairyzette.Sahara)
Les Sucreries de Fairy main shop Sunfield (161, 70, 21)

The costumes for the male Flowers were created and donated by Vivienne Darcy, Miss Darcy! Tutu (121,
158, 1501), and Amelie Dibou of Terpsichore's Delight Port Stewart (32, 199, 403)

The costumes for the Gigognes, the Snowflakes, and all dancers' shoes were created and donated by
Amelie Dibou, Terpsichore's Delight Port Stewart (32, 199, 403)

The body alpha for the Gigognes was created and donated by Wytchwhisper Sadofsky

The skin for the Snowflakes was created and donated by Snow Frosowych
~*By Snow*~ Mainstore @Lionheart Nuka Lionheart Nuka (81, 237, 28)

An Anonymous Donor.

And to you, our audience, for joining us in making magic happen.

We are very grateful for your contributions and appreciate you supporting the arts in the virtual global community!

