

Sky Arts announces Christmas specials including Nutcracker: Backstage with English National Ballet

This Christmas, Sky Arts goes behind the curtain with English National Ballet and their world premiere of a brand new production of *Nutcracker*. Having performed a version of the festive ballet every year since it was founded, this year sees the Company take a fresh approach, and the pressure is on to wow audiences more than ever before.

This new series, **Nutcracker: Backstage with English National Ballet** unpacks what it takes to re-invent a globally renowned classic, seen through the eyes of all the key departments involved. Join the Company's own Artistic Director and Choreographer, Aaron S. Watkin, and Olivier Award-winning Choreographer, Arielle Smith, as well Designer, Dick Bird, the principal dancers, musicians, Music Director and costumiers as they unpack their craft and prepare to stage this iconic ballet. Two documentaries follow the meticulous preparations and the all-important rehearsals which build to the opening night. Audiences can then tune in to the full performance of *Nutcracker*, captured in all its magic at the London Coliseum.

English National Ballet's Artistic Director and joint Choreographer of *Nutcracker*, Aaron S. Watkin, said: "*Nutcracker holds a special place in English National Ballet's history and in the hearts of our audiences. In 1950, we were one of the first UK companies to introduce the production into our repertoire and we have performed a version every year since. It's wonderful to be able to open up the world of ballet as we work to bring new magic and wonder to this much-loved piece, offering real insight into what happens behind-the-scenes as a new production makes its way to the stage.*"

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

For further information, please contact Alice Lawley, Head of Press and Communications, on alice.lawley@ballet.org.uk or 07946541703

Nutcracker: Backstage with English National Ballet (2x60, 1x120)

TX: Weekly from 9 December

Nutcracker: Backstage with English National Ballet is produced by Cornerstone Studios. Beren Money serves as Executive Producer, with Maureen MacPhee as Director of Production. The Commissioning Editor for Sky is Benedetta Pinelli.

English National Ballet is a National Portfolio Organisation supported by Arts Council England. Ballymore is Principal Building Partner of English National Ballet.

About English National Ballet

English National Ballet has a long and distinguished history. Founded in 1950 as London Festival Ballet by the great English dancers Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin, it has been at the forefront of ballet's growth and evolution ever since.

English National Ballet brings world class ballet to the widest possible audience through performances across the UK and on eminent international stages; its distinguished orchestra, English National Ballet Philharmonic; its digital platforms Ballet on Demand and BalletActive; being a UK leader in creative learning and engagement practice, building innovative partnerships to deliver flagship programmes such as Dance for Parkinson's; and

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through talent development initiatives including Ballet Futures which looks to create a more diverse and inclusive future for the artform.

English National Ballet continues to add ground-breaking new works to its repertoire whilst celebrating the tradition of great classical ballet, gaining acclaim for artistic excellence and creativity. 2019 saw the Company enter a new chapter in its history with a move to a purpose-built state-of-the-art home in east London, allowing a renewed commitment to creativity, ambition, and connection to more people, near and far, than ever before.

About Sky Arts

Sky Arts exists to bring more art to more people across the UK. In 2020, with the creative industries under serious threat, we threw open our doors to make the channel free for everyone to watch. We've redoubled our mission to increase access to the arts and we're committed to getting everyone involved. The fact is, we need the arts like never before, and Sky Arts brings them straight to your living room.

