

NUTCRACKER November, 2020

November 10 - Volunteers arrived at the warehouse and load up got started a little after 3:00 pm. We had Rick and his trailer and Ken's dad's trailer. We arrived at Wa Center before 4:00 pm.

We loaded the Throne and Sleigh into Rick's trailer as well as the plywood box that holds the Bauble Decorations for the Throne. We loaded marley into the other trailer along with Legs and Borders.

The Snow Troughs - it was a little challenging but we got them into the other trailer — they stuck out by more than 3' or so but we determined that we could probably get away with it - you know — legal limitations and stuff.... They went in to the trailer at an angle with the rear end up in the air. These units were "broken" — i.e.: partially disassembled — When fully assembled, they are 30' long. — Note that on Load Out, we did not disassemble them. The aluminum conduit has some "flex" and Cliff was able to bend them enough (in an arc) to fit them into his 27' truck. — Which, take note, he probably won't have available next year. It will be a shorter truck. Also note that one of the Snow Troughs got "bent out of shape" and will certainly need some "straightening" before our next Nutcracker. I'm talking about the conduit... And, also, I think we should dedicate some time and resources to resolving issues with these units. — Roger astutely pointed out that the "Master" pulley at the SR end of the pipe maybe should be a "Fixed" rather than a "Swivel" pulley. I think he might be right. This time around, we had issues with the DS Snow Trough — We couldn't get it to dump snow — the pull line seemed unresponsive. — Yet, when we examined it closely, we couldn't detect any problems.

I think we need to do some of the following — Drill out the holes - in conduit and the joiner piece to allow it to accept larger bolts and nuts - easier to work with... Okay, that's a lot of time spent on Snow — but, hey, Snowing on stage is a major part of the Magic! Let's try to get it right!

FOG - This is another element that contributes to the sense of magic. When it works, it is quite evocative. The Angels seem to float upon air. I've run follow spot for many years for Nutcracker, and, still, I'm a sucker for that scene. It is magical. I know it's all fake, but the intention is not. This time around, we used our one Pea Souper unit. — Chris Gaston at USC, pumping out 20 lbs of dry ice maybe 30 seconds before curtain rise.... and then him and his gear scurrying offstage Left to get out of the picture. The effect was good, though it did not last for very long. But, it set the stage for what followed.

My recommendation for the future - plan on renting, or buy, a second Pea Souper. — Dry Ice Machine. Last year - 2019 — 2 machines gave us the amount of fog we wanted. — And we kept them running for longer into the scene. And, also note that we used no hoses attached to the nozzles of the Pea Soupers.

Okay, on to other matters.....

Cliff showed up at the warehouse around 6:30 pm. Ken and maybe 5 or 6 volunteers met him there and loaded the full size drops — Snow, Snow Cutout, and Kingdom (or Palace) drops. They are stored on PVC pipes which are 23' long. The webbing runs wild past the ends of the pipes so that makes those units somewhere close to but less than 24'. Because Cliff had a 27' truck, everything fit inside.

As far as transport - we lucked out in regard to weather. There was some rain off and on but not enough to worry our pretty little heads about! This was the case for both Load In and Load Out.

#### LOAD IN and MOUNTING

We started down stage with the Proscenium Arch and then proceeded onward - basically hanging whatever we happened to have unrolled. Let's make note of this: The PVC storage tubes are labeled at the ends on the inside of the pipe — the label will say something like "1st Snow Legs" or "1st and 2nd Snow Borders". Note that our procedure, when striking, is to take one set of legs, lay them face to face and then roll them onto the tube. With Borders, we collect 2 borders, fold them in half lengthwise, lay them on top of each other and then roll them onto tubes. — Again — Tubes are Labeled, so store the correct goods on the appropriate tubes!

Because this was a video shoot with no live audience, we were able to store empty tubes in the house in such a way that they did not block doorways. This was quick and easy.

When Cliff arrived, we brought in and hung the 3 full width drops.

Then we laid marley. There was a brand new section of marley that we placed at the position of second down stage of the furthest upstage "cutout" piece. It's "sheen" of newness was something we were concerned about - in terms of noticeable visuals - but I think it worked out okay. NOTE: On Load Out, that piece and the piece just upstage of the downstage cutout piece both went to the Studio - in Rick's trailer, along with costumes on costume racks. — Again, weather was on our side during this transport.

We made some decisions about how much "fixing up" we really needed to do — For example, there is some distress evident on the front end of the Sleigh — nothing that couldn't be fixed with a little hot melt glue — but we decided that because this was going to be a one camera shoot, we thought many anomalies would not "read", so we let it go.

Note that, for this production, we used NO BOTTOM PIPE. Instead of piping, Chris and the gang tabbed the bottom edges of legs and drops to the deck using black gaffers tape. This was effective in preventing swishing of soft goods as dancers swept past them.

Note also: During Load Out, Roger told me that, next year, the full size Snow Drop would have to be "stretched". That means creating mechanisms to clamp onto the drop SR and SL and exert a sideways tension on the entire canvas. This is a challenge but I have seen it done before and am confident that we can come up with something.

Further and hopefully final notes:

The more times I do Nutcracker, the more I discover there are still things to learn!

For example: The "Baubles" that adorn the Throne. — I struggled for some time trying to figure out how those things mounted. The baubles are plastic ornaments mounted on threaded rod. They all seem to spin freely. The sockets they go into are threaded receptacles. I couldn't figure it out. Then, Taylor Dallman - Wa Ctr crew, discovered that the very top "bauble" - the one that looks like a spire - is actually "fixed" — ie: it has a solid connection to the threaded rod... So, what you do is that you hold the unit at the very top, set it into it's receptacle, and begin to turn it so that it finally seats itself. Duh!!

I questioned Ken and Jennifer about how to accomplish this and neither had a clue...

I think that's why detailed notes like this are so important! We do this stuff - beautiful performance — and we want it to be as excellent as it can be. We don't want to spend much time standing around scratching our heads, thinking, How did we do this last time?? It's always a "work in progress" — I get that, and I wouldn't have it otherwise. But, we do get a little better, a little more organized, a little more prepared each time around, yes?