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Fun promotions catch customers' attention during the hectic holiday season

by Chris Koseluk

Holiday Hype

Looking for a way to attract attention to your studio this holiday season? Here are two fun studio promotions that play off seasonal conventions.

Where's Nutty?

José Mateo Ballet Theatre promoted its 2017 holiday performances of *The Nutcracker* by going into hiding—hiding nutcrackers, that is. Through the ballet's Hidden Nutcracker Challenge, one tiny nutcracker was hidden in plain sight somewhere around metropolitan Boston each day for a week. Anyone who found a nutcracker could redeem it for two *Nutcracker* tickets. Hints and photos of the figures in their hiding spots—at a comedy club, beside a Fenway Park ticket window, and elsewhere—were posted on the ballet's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts.

"We got more comments and interaction on our Instagram account with that giveaway than any other posts. It was great to see people get excited," says Lori Manzelli, José Mateo Ballet Theatre director of marketing, sales, and sponsorship, says. "One person posted a photo of the spot where the nutcracker had been—someone else had already snagged it. We were tagged in the photo and that was really cool. Any time you can engage one-on-one with your audience, the better. It's a treat to build relationships that way."

Although all seven nutcrackers

were "found," only two were redeemed. Manzelli says there was no space on the diminutive figures to include information on how to score tickets. Ballet staffers are already exploring ways to address this issue for the 2018 holiday season's challenge.

"I'd love to make the Nutcracker Challenge an annual event," says Manzelli. "I think any time you try something the first time, you realize how you could make it better or more engaging."

Too many tutus? Never!

Traditionally, not many new students walk through studio doors between Thanksgiving and Christmas, so Darci K. Ward, owner/director of Missouri-based DK Dance Productions, decided to think inside the gift box when planning a seasonal promotion last year. Tutus Under the Tree, an idea Ward first heard about from a colleague, was designed to attract new students ages 3 to 6 to the studio. During a promotional period, children were welcome to attend one free trial lesson. Parents who then registered their child for a month-long session of classes set to begin in January received a gift package to place under the Christmas tree.

"In the box was a tutu and a sweet note that said something along the lines of, 'Thank you so much. We're so excited to dance with you. Your magic ballet shoes are on their way.

You'll get them your first day of class,'" Ward says.

The studio promoted Tutus Under the Tree through its website and Facebook page. News about the promotion appeared in local press outlets *AdVantage News* and *RiverBender.com*.

Fifty-three students attended a trial class, with 22 enrolling for January. Ward says that all the new students showed up for their first class in their new tutus, received their ballet shoes, and continued taking classes beyond the initial four-week commitment. In January, despite being too late for the gift, an additional 10 parents enrolled their children in classes.

Ward plans to run the promotion again this Christmas. "We had a pretty good return on it. It's pretty easy for us to do," she says.

In the spirit of the season, Ward's mother offered to wrap the packages because Ward was busy organizing the studio's holiday recital and dealing with a second location that had just opened in November. "My mom is like a master wrapper," says Ward. "She made awesome bows and a cute little package. It took her way less time than it would ever take me to do it." ❧

Chris Koseluk has written for The Hollywood Reporter, Mental Floss, Make-Up Artist Magazine, and Variety.

Photo courtesy José Mateo Ballet Theatre

Photo by Julie Ellerton/Malibu Times