



## Backstage magic at the ‘Nutcracker’



Morgan Buchanan dances amid 100 pounds of glorious special-effects snow.

(Colorado Ballet photo by Mike Watson)

When I think of the word “Christmas,” I imagine a little girl, some mice, a sugarplum fairy, some tin soldiers, the evil mouse king, and the beloved wooden nutcracker.

Perhaps you’ve seen the ballet, but have you ever paused to think about how much effort it takes to put on “The Nutcracker,” with all of the special effects?

Colorado Ballet, under the supervision of Artistic Director Gil Boggs, pays attention to a lot of details, from costumes and props to special effects.

When you see the grandfather clock from the audience, you won’t see the person hidden inside (which makes me think of *Kenny Baker inside of R2-D2*) who lifts the owl’s wings and lights the eyes in time with chim-

ing coming from the live orchestra in the pit below.

When you see the explosion and the nutcracker gains life, you don’t see the certified pyrotechnician who loads the gunpowder and presses the button at every show to detonate it, KABOOM!

You never see all the work that goes into making the magic, which is how magic works.

Of course, since this is a live performance and anything could happen, you might also see a bear (actually a costumed dancer) falling into the orchestra pit, which happened during an opening night a few years ago.

But you might not see the quick action that sometimes saves the day: Another time, it was almost Mother Ginger’s turn, as Mr. Boggs told me:

“A couple of years ago in a performance, somehow (*the people steering her*) lost the dotted line, and Mother Ginger turned toward the audience, and was headed for the orchestra pit.

“Drosselmeyer just happened to appear in the scene and help her off the stage the right way.”

Most nights, of course, all these intricate pieces come together perfectly and the show comes off gloriously.

One of the most memorable effects in “the Nutcracker” is the “snow,” which actually consists of small pieces of paper dropped from a slotted sheet overhead by pulling ropes backstage.

Colorado Ballet uses about 100 pounds of snow per performance.

On closing night, they make sure to release every last scrap of snow in a blizzard, making it hard to see the dancers.

However, once the first act is over, the crew and dancers’ kids are allowed to come on stage and play in the snow behind the curtains for a few minutes before the stage gets cleaned up.

If Colorado Ballet’s Nutcracker is in your holiday plans – and I highly recommend it should be – remember that Gil Boggs and company worked hard to transform anything you see, and everything you don’t, into a Christmas classic.

“The Nutcracker” is running now through December 27th at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House. Tickets start at \$30 and are available at the DCPA box office or online at [ColoradoBallet.org](http://ColoradoBallet.org).



By Leslie Wilburn, 14, a CK Reporter from Denver

## A novel of (sort of) manly adventures!

Looking for near-death adventures? Hmmm, then Stanley Slater is your man!

In “My Near-Death Experiences (99% True!)” by Allison Decamp, the one and the only Stanley Slater, now 11, practically twelve, has to go to a lumber camp, full of manly-men, his cousin Geri and his Grandma. And you do not want to live with them for two months.

Right off the bat Stan hears about the crazy, deathly manly-man adventure of the River Drive.

Rolling on unstable logs in a swollen river with a good chance of injury?

Well, duh, Stan wants to go.

But now he’s stuck with a flower apron, Geri, and Grandma.

Can’t they see? He’s a man!

But he’s not in the hard-core woods, yet.

According to rumors, his new manly friend, Peter, is a killer. So suspicious eyes glare at him.

And Stinky Pete is now his name. Stan doesn’t trust him, not one bit.

As if Stinky Pete and flower aprons weren’t enough for his manly reputation, he’s stuck with 99.9% evil Granny and 99.9% evil Geri.

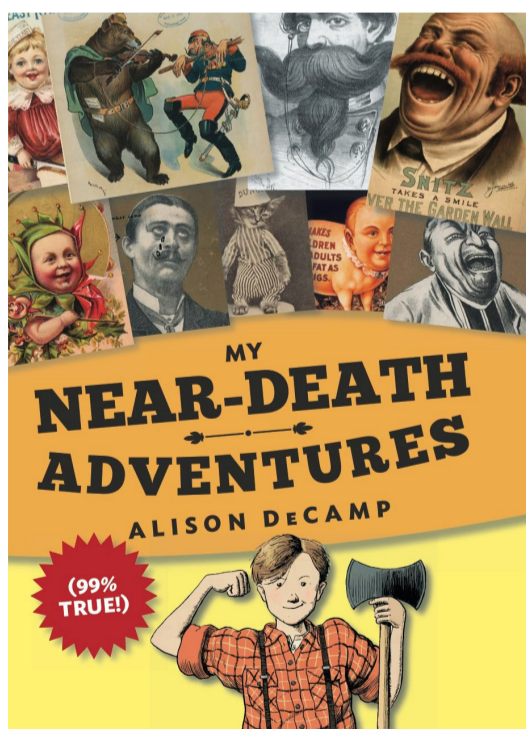
With trouble-making Cousin Geri in his life it gets hard.

Geri, of course, has to cause some trouble and tip an outhouse with someone in it. And who gets in trouble?

Stan.

Yet again.

Now, with Granny, one horrible word and your ear is going to be pinched, and it hurts.



Even at his bad-mouthed, manly (*not really*) attempts to be a man, he’s yelled at or almost pinched to death.

Stan’s dad is roaming the wide country. Stan’s beautiful mama is getting crushed on at the camp.

River Drive? His dad? His sweet mama? His evil Granny who has fingers like a crab’s? Geri and her doctor-y ways? A vinegar pie? It’s all in the book.

This book was interesting because of its story, its humor, and all the twists and the action, and is a fun read.

Pictures are sometimes included, and it’s all back in the 1800’s which is a nice setting.

This book was so intriguing and, what’s the word?

Phenomenal.

I totally recommend it.



By Abby Greiner, 10, a CK Reporter from Golden

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# Yoshi gets tangled up in a Wii bit of trouble

Great balls of Yarn! All of Yoshi's friends have been turned into yarn by the evil wizard Kamek.

Join him as he collects his friends and defeats the wizard once and for all!

The new Wii game, "Yoshi's Woolly World," starts at Craft Island.

It has been a perfect day until Kamek shows up and turns all of the Yoshis into balls of yarn and takes them away.

Luckily, two of the Yoshis jump into the bushes in time and then tear a rip in the bag, so Kamek drops parts of their friends all over the closest island.

The Yoshis head off to collect their friends, save the others from becoming part of a giant sweater, and return them safely to Craft Island.

This game is special because of its design.

The whole thing is just like any other 2-D landscape game, except for the fact that almost everything either is made out of yarn or relates to it.

I also like the amount of fun put into it.

There are lots of different things you can do.

For instance, at the beginning of each level, you can buy a badge that helps you out, and you buy it using the jewels you collect throughout the game.

Another fun thing is that when you collect all five balls of yarn for each level, it makes a new Yoshi, such as the Flower Yoshi, and then you can even use that one to play!



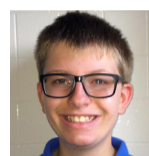
The only complaint I have about this game is the controls.

You can play it on the Wii U or the Wii controllers, and it has many controls that can be very confusing.

Throughout the game, though, it gives you shortcuts and instructions that make it less confusing.

I would rate this a five out of five stars.

This is a great game that anyone can enjoy, and I can't wait for the sequel.



By Tripp Ceyssens, 13, a CK Reporter from Littleton

# Dance company is a true wonder



Photo/Amanda Tipton

Wonderbound is a non-profit dance company lead by Garrett Ammon and Dawn Fay, a husband and wife team.

The name "Wonderbound" might seem strange, but there is method to their madness.

As Ammon explained, "wonder is for the state of awe that they want the audience to feel and bound has three meanings, one is leaping and bounding across the stage, another is bound on a journey, and Wonderbound is bound to the community and each other."

Wonderbound's logo is a red rabbit. Both the color and the animal have meaning.

The rabbit has legends about it in many different societies, but usually is a part of the magical world, powerful, yet mischievous.

Also, the rabbit is found in Colorado which ties into community.

The red color is significant to Wonderbound because it appears on both the American and Colorado flag.

Wonderbound works to make art and dance available and accessible to everyone in our community.

Therefore, they provide in-school programs

that bring dance to thirty at-risk elementary schools each year. They perform these special programs at schools and even get the children to dance with the performers.

Wonderbound has an open door policy to their creative world.

The Wonderbound studio has floor to ceiling clear garage doors that are opened when the weather is nice so people can observe the process of their work.

Even when the garage doors are closed, the artistic doors are open to anyone who wants to come in and sit on the couches to watch their dance, something I highly recommend.

In Wonderbound's most recent performance, Hidden Constellation, the dancers were elegant and graceful.

The flips and lifts the dancers did showed the trust they have with each other.

The Wonderbound dancers are a widely diverse group ten of dancers, five women and five men.

The dances are humorous, inspirational, and unique.

There are abrupt changes in pace and types of dancing. One doesn't know what to expect;

the choreography goes from slow and serious to fast and furious.

In the dances, there weren't too many props, only chairs, and the audience could really focus on the strength and skill of the dancers, while, throughout the performance, the dancers made eye contact with the audience.

They also had emotion that was plain as day to see on their faces.

However, I would caution parents about taking elementary school children to the performances, since some of the dances were slightly intimate.

The timing the dancers had with the music was impeccable, and the local musicians played on the stage which made the audience feel connected to the entire performance.

For the second year in a row, Wonderbound presents "Winter" with Jesse Manley and His Band for their next performance.

Wonderbound Artistic Director, Garrett Ammon, created this darkly magical fable, and Jesse Manley set the original score of music.

"Winter" is a rare performance that involves all five senses.

Four of the audience's senses are taken in during the performance: sight, smell, touch, and hearing, and the last sense -- taste -- is incorporated with appetizers or desserts provided before "Winter."

Because of this dark fable theme, "Winter" is much more somber than "Hidden Constellation," so it may not be appropriate for younger audiences.

Wonderbound will be presenting "Winter" starting tonight and running through December 17.

For more information about Wonderbound and upcoming events, visit their official site at [www.wonderbound.com](http://www.wonderbound.com).



By Margaret Vogelpohl, 14, a CK Reporter from Cherry Hills Village

# Little champion and her dad win the battle together



Last year, football fans' hearts were captured by the story of Leah Still, a five-year-old whose father, Devon, played for the Cincinnati Bengals.

In 2014, when he found out that Leah had cancer, Devon Still decided there was only one contest that really mattered to him: Hers.

"Sports is not more important than me being there while my daughter is fighting for her life," he said, and admitted he couldn't concentrate on both her battle and his football career.

But instead of cutting him then, the Bengals let him stay on the team long enough so that he would have health coverage for her treatment.

Her story inspired many in the NFL and around the country to give to the Still Strong Foundation and support research into children's cancer.

Good news came last week, when Devon Still sent out this Instagram message: "Just got the phone call that her scans showed NED (no evidence of disease)!" photos/Still Strong Foundation



# Everything you need to know about monsters



“**M**onster Hunters Unlimited: Man-Monsters and Animal Horrors” by John Gatehouse and Dave Windett is a monster encyclopedia

for kids.

There are two categories of monsters described in this book.

The first, which has 14 creatures, is the Man-Monster category. Man-Monsters are “vicious human-animal hybrid creatures that combine body parts to create a flesh-eating, blood-guzzling, freak show supreme.”

This category includes creatures such as the Manticore, Ogres, Bigfoot, and Were-Beasts.

The second category is Animal Horrors, which are “legendary vicious varmints and mammalian monstrosities.”

This category also has 14 creatures, including the Great Naked Bear, Hellhounds, the Mongolian Death Worm, and the Jersey Devil.

For each creature there is information such as location, appearance, strength, weakness, powers, fear factor, history, and diet, plus color drawings of each creature.

For example, my favorite creature, Koschei the Deathless, lives in a frozen wasteland, can be killed by finding the egg he was born in and boiling it and giving it to him as food, and seeks out young women (*preferably the wife of a hero*) to kidnap, torture, and kill.

His fear is factor of 99.9 out of 100, with 100 being the scariest creature in the world.

There is a fact file at the end that gives you short facts about 12 additional creatures that were not covered in depth in the book.

This part is interesting because it is different from the rest of the book.

I loved this book even though it is a bit on the gruesome side. I recommend it for kids over 10 years of age. It was pretty easy to read (*only 128 pages long*), though you need to understand that it is like an encyclopedia and not a story.

That’s nice because you can jump around the book if you’d like.

This book is #3 of a series, and I intend to read the others.

The first book in the series is called “The Undead and Water Beasts,” the second is “Demons and Elementals.”



By Ben Vanourek, 10, a CK Reporter from Littleton

## African tweeters ask #WhatWouldMagufuliDo?

Last month, we reported on the joy among young people in Tanzania over the election of Dr. John Magufuli as president.

His promises to fix many of the country’s problems, including wasteful spending and dishonest public officials, were welcomed by young voters who want more jobs and good education.

Magufuli is a former chemistry teacher, and part of his campaign included making K-12 education free throughout the country.

He got off to a strong start by cancelling Independence Day celebrations. “It is so shameful that we are spending huge amounts of money to celebrate 54 years of independence when our people are dying of cholera,” he said.



“I wanted to buy some extra armband then I asked myself #WhatWouldMagufuliDo” - @awesomesiqness

Instead, he suggested, Tanzanians could celebrate their nation’s freedom by getting together and having clean-up days in their neighborhoods.

Unsanitary conditions are a large part of how cholera spreads.

And that wasn’t the only con-



“I was about to go get me a new toothpaste, but then I asked myself, #WhatWouldMagufuliDo ...” - @iWateba

cern he showed for health: When the new president unexpectedly showed up at a hospital and found broken equipment and patients lying on the floor, he immediately fired the hospital’s director and its board members. Money that would have been spent on celebrations at the start of the new government was used instead to buy beds, wheelchairs, sheets and blankets for the hospital. Government officials have also been told to stop taking trips overseas and to hold meetings on-line instead of traveling to each other’s towns. Magufuli said the savings would allow Tanzania to build 400 km of badly-needed paved roads. And, when six public officials showed up late for a meeting, they got to spend a week in jail. After that, they started getting to work early. Magufuli’s motto is “Work, and nothing else,” and young Tanzanians are so pleased with his war on government waste that they have created a Twitter hashtag “#WhatWouldMagufuliDo,” that they use when posting funny suggestions for ways of saving money.

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#WhatWouldMagufuliDo



## Sudoku

	2				
	4			6	5
5			4		
2				1	
3		1		2	
					3

Rules: Every row across, every column down and each of the six smaller boxes must contain numerals 1,2,3,4,5 and 6, one time and one time only. The solution to this week’s puzzle is on Page 4.



## Brainteaser

Actress AnnaSophia Robb, an Arapahoe High School graduate, turns 22 today, so all our answers this week will begin with the letter “R.”

1. Last name of the husband and wife who created “Curious George.”
2. Bucharest is the capital of this European nation.
3. African hound known for the strip of backwards-growing hair on its spine
4. “The Nutcracker” ballet takes place in this country.
5. The unpleasant cat who stars in a series of books by Jack Gantos
6. Steamboat Springs is the seat of this county in northwestern Colorado.
7. The answer you get when you subtract one number from another
8. Hawks, eagles, owls and vultures are this type of bird.
9. The princess in the tower in a well-known Grimm Brothers story
10. When you buy something, you should get this piece of paper to prove that you paid for it.

(answers on Page Four)

## British children will be looking to the sky for ISSanta’s sleigh

Children in the United Kingdom are being encouraged to look for Santa’s sleigh as it flies overhead on Christmas Eve.

Parents will have a little help with the project, since newspapers have published directions on how to find apps to track the International Space Station, which will pass over Britain just before dinner time.

That might make it a little hard to spot, except that Britain is so far north that the sun will have set at 3:54 that day, leaving plenty of time for the skies to darken before the ISS -- or Santa’s sleigh -- passes by.

It’s also helpful that the bright, fast-moving object, the third-brightest in the sky, will be high in the skies over the United Kingdom.

If you’d like to find some apps to help keep track of the International Space Station, go to [ColoradoNIE.com](http://ColoradoNIE.com) and look for the links to articles about this story.

But, of course, kids in Colorado know the truth about Santa Claus: The way you keep track of him on Christmas Eve is by going to <http://www.noradsanta.org>, because NORAD has been tracking the Jolly Old Elf from Cheyenne Mountain for 60 years.



# Beyond These Four Pages!

## Hot Links to Cool Sites!

NASA's Space Place

<http://tinyurl.com/ckspace>

NIE Special Report

<http://tinyurl.com/ckniereport>

Headline Geography

<http://tinyurl.com/ckgeography>

Pulse of the Planet

<http://tinyurl.com/ckpulseplanet>

## How to become a NextGen Reporter!

<http://tinyurl.com/colokidsreporter>



### To read the sources for these stories

Tracking Santa's Sleigh

Leah Still's recovery

What would Magufuli do?

go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/ckstorylinks>

## Sudoku Solution

6	2	5	3	4	1
1	4	3	2	6	5
5	1	6	4	3	2
2	3	4	5	1	6
3	5	1	6	2	4
4	6	2	1	5	3

## Brainteaser Solution



(see Page Three)

10 right - Wow!

7 right - Great!

5 right - Good

3 right - See you next time!

1. Rey
2. Romania
3. Rhodesian ridgeback
4. Russia
5. Rotten Ralph
6. Rouff
7. remainder
8. raptors
9. Rapunzel
10. receipt

# Tales of the Ancient World

## THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN

Phoebus, who drives the Chariot of the Sun across the skies each day, does not get many mortal guests at his rich palace in India. But when the young man came in the great doors, he knew at once who it was.

"My son!" he called, from the high throne where he sat surrounded by the Hours, the Days, the Seasons and his other servants.

The boy stayed back at the door, holding up his hands to protect his eyes from the bright light. "So it is true!" he said. "You are my father!"

Phoebus smiled and took the great crown of shining rays from his head so Phaethon could come closer. "Of course I am" he said. "Did your mother never tell you about me?"

Phaethon walked up to the throne. "Yes, but the other boys laughed at me and said she made it up. They said it wasn't true."

"And you wanted to prove that it is," his father nodded. "I understand. Well, how can we show them? Ask me for any gift, for any favor, and I swear by the sacred Stygian lake, you shall have it. How's that for proof?"

And the god laughed

Phaethon smiled, too. "I want to drive your chariot for one day!" he said.

At that, Phoebus lost his smile. "Oh, son, please ask for something else," he said. "No mortal can drive that chariot and live. Indeed, I'm the only one of the gods who can drive those horses across the heavens! Even mighty Jupiter himself cannot control my chariot."

"But you promised I could have whatever I wanted," Phaethon said. "You swore by the Stygian lake! You can't break that vow!"

"That is true," Phoebus admitted. "But I didn't think you would ask for something that would kill you! Isn't there anything else I can do for you?"

But nothing he said could persuade Phaethon to make another choice. So as morning came near, Phoebus brought his son out to where the four horses stood stamping the ground impatiently, waiting to take the Chariot of the Sun up across the heavens.

"Now, the first part is very steep," Phoebus warned his son. "Even when they are fresh in the morning, the horses have trouble climbing the first part of the route."

"When you get to the top, hold on tightly and don't look around. Even I get dizzy so high above the Earth and I do this every day!" he cautioned Phaethon.

"Then, when you start back down, you'll have to hold back the horses to keep the chariot from running away with you. In fact, you'll have to hold them back the whole way, because they are very strong. But especially when you are heading back down in the afternoon."

Phoebus brought out the crown and put it on his son's head. "As for steering, you'll see the ruts from my wheels. Follow them carefully! You must avoid the horns of Taurus the bull, and the claws and tail of Scorpio! Watch out, too, for the archer, Sagittarius, and Leo the Lion!"

He paused before he fastened the strap to hold the crown on Phaethon's head. "Are you sure there's nothing else I can do for you that would make you happy? Just say it, whatever it is, and you shall have it!"

But Phaethon was already excited about driving the great horses across the sky, and nothing Phoebus said could make him change his mind.

The god sighed and gave the signal to the grooms who stood at the horses's heads, holding their bridles.

As soon as the horses realized that the strong hand of Phoebus was not on the reins, they began to run. Nothing Phaethon did would hold them back, and they went far off their normal course, the chariot swinging behind them helplessly.

The constellations of the Great Bear and the Little Bear grew hot for the first time ever, and tried to douse themselves in the ocean. And Draco the Dragon, normally slow and stupid with cold, awoke in the warmth and began to rage across the heavens.

Meanwhile, Phaethon was holding the reins in one hand and clinging to the chariot with the other. He didn't know how to make the horses slow down or get back on course, and at last he had to let the reins go completely and hold on with both hands.

Feeling the reins loose on their backs, the horses raced even farther off course. First they went too high, bumping into the stars, then too low, so that the clouds were boiled to nothing and the tops of the mountains caught fire.

They went even lower, and the rivers dried up, the fields and orchards dried up and the cities began to burn.

Sitting on his throne on Olympus, Jupiter saw the destruction and heard the cries of the other gods and goddesses for something to be done.

At last, he sadly stood and reached for a bolt of lightning.

He looked at the frightened boy in the chariot for a moment, but then looked at the burning Earth and sighed. He hurled the lightning bolt, smashing the chariot and sending the pieces into the ocean below, bringing that horrifying, deadly day to a sudden end.

In his palace in the east, Phoebus closed the doors and sat upon his throne, weeping in the darkness. "Too long I have worked every day, driving that chariot across the heavens," he said. "Now let someone else drive it. My son is dead and I never want to drive the Sun again."

For a whole day, there was no light upon the Earth except from the fires that still burned. But Jupiter and the other gods came and spoke quietly to Phoebus, and Vulcan worked to repair the chariot.

And the next morning, when rosy Dawn opened the doors to the heavens, Phoebus raced his chariot across the skies once more, as he has every day since.

retold by Mike Peterson, c. 2005 - illustrated by Dylan Meconis, c. 2005

For a teaching guide, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ckserial>



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