



The story of The Nutcracker

Prologue

A Street Outside Dr. Drosselmeyer's Workshop

It is Christmas Eve... the lamp lighter, the Christmas tree seller and the chestnut vendor are selling their wares along the main street of a quaint European village. Families, children, and townspeople hurry along the busy thoroughfare. In the midst of the holiday bustle, we catch a glimpse of Dr. Drosselmeyer in his workshop, adjusting mechanical dolls to take to a Christmas party.



Act I, Scene 1

The Christmas Party at the Stahlbaum's Home

Servants and delivery boys pass in and out of the stately home as the Stahlbaum children, Fritz and Clara, eagerly anticipate the festivities of the annual Christmas party. At last the guests begin to arrive full of good cheer. Holiday greetings abound. The Christmas tree is unveiled and the dancing begins. Suddenly, the eccentric Dr. Drosselmeyer



arrives with wonderful gifts: mechanical dancing dolls, which entertain and amaze both children and adults alike.

Dr. Drosselmeyer has a special gift for Clara: a wooden Nutcracker and, in a fit of jealousy, Fritz breaks its jaw. The doctor bandages the Nutcracker with his handkerchief and, after a full and lively evening, the party comes to an end. Close to midnight, Clara leaves her sleepless bed and returns to the parlor in search of her Nutcracker. Unable to find him, she soon falls asleep and enters the magical world of dreams.



Act I, Scene 2

The Transformation and Battle

The mysterious Dr. Drosselmeyer with the toy Nutcracker, attracting mischievous mice. Waking Clara, magically turns the Nutcracker into life-sized warrior and commands the Christmas tree and the rest of the room to grow bigger and bigger. Clara now finds herself surrounded by life-sized



Christmas toys and her beloved Nutcracker, who now has a regiment of toy soldiers to fight the vicious mice, who scurry from the walls. A fierce battle ensues. The excited mice are on the verge of victory when Clara intervenes by throwing her shoe at the Mouse King. Distracted, he turns from his adversary and the Nutcracker dispatches him with his sword. Impressed by Clara's act of bravery, Dr. Drosselmeyer transforms the Nutcracker into a handsome prince.



Act I, Scene 3

Journey Through the Snowflake Forest

In gratitude, the Nutcracker Prince leads Clara on a journey to the Kingdom of the Sweets, passing first through the beautiful Snowflake Forest. In the midst of a blizzard of dancing snowflakes, the majestic Snow Queen and King appear in a sleigh drawn by tiny reindeer. With royal courtesy, they welcome Clara and the Nutcracker Prince and escort them through their frosty domain.

INTERMISSION



Act II

The Kingdom of the Sweets

Clara and the Nutcracker pass through gossamer clouds and a company of angels as they approach the Palace of Sweets. Once again they receive a royal welcome, this time from the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. The Nutcracker tells of his fierce battle with the mice and the Sugar Plum Fairy rewards Clara for her bravery. The colorful

residents of the kingdom are introduced to the visitors and the royal entertainment begins. First comes Chocolate from Spain, dancing a lively Bolero. The soft undulating strains that accompany Coffee from Arabia are followed by bubbling Tea from China and the sprightly Candy Canes. Marzipan Shepherdesses dance to the enchanting sound of reed flutes as Peppermints from Russia perform a lively Trepak. From France comes Mother Ginger with a skirt full of Ginger Bread Children. All of the beautiful Flowers from the kingdom gather for a waltz to honor Clara. The Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier crown the festivities with a Grand Pas de Deux.

All dreams must come to an end, and, at last, it is time for Clara to depart. To bid farewell to their guests, each group of dancers return to wave good-bye as Clara sails for home in a beautiful hot air balloon.

Tchaikovsky and the Music

Tchaikovsky's score for *The Nutcracker* is undoubtedly the most popular and familiar music ever written for the ballet stage. *The Nutcracker* was the last in a series of brilliant works by Tchaikovsky that defined the great classical era of ballet. Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Votkinsk, Russia on May 7, 1840. Like many composers of his generation, his family expected him to complete a formal education. Consequently, Tchaikovsky graduated from law school in 1859 before embarking on a career in music. Despite periods of deep depression, he was remarkably productive as a composer. His works include ten operas, six symphonies, three piano concerti, a violin concerto, incidental music for various plays and operas as well as three of the most famous classical ballets in the world: *Swan Lake* (1875), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), and of course, *The Nutcracker* (1892). Tchaikovsky died of cholera in St. Petersburg on November 6, 1893 leaving a legacy of music beloved the world over.

