

The Nutcracker

Written by Jiří Zahrádka & Illustrated by Alexandra Hetmerová



I WANT TO UNDERSTAND BALLET The Nutcracker

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B4U PUBLISHING



Suddenly a mysterious figure

wrapped in a dark cloak entered the room. A tense silence fell. The man took off his cloak and, very, very slowly, looked around at all present. "He must be a wizard!" said one of the children, who despite their fear had run up to the newcomer and were staring at him in curiosity. "No, no! It's Mr Drosselmayer, Clara and Fritz's godfather!" said one of the girls at last. "Uncle!" the Councillor's children called out with delight.

Finally they noticed that Mr Drosselmayer had brought three large boxes with him. He unpacked the first box – and hey presto, it was seen to contain a doll of the quick-witted maid Columbine. The second box contained Harlequin, in his brightly-coloured suit. Uncle took a small key from his pocket, wound up the dolls, and to the amazement of all, the dolls danced. "But what is in the third box?" asked the children eagerly. "Wait and see," said Uncle, as he opened it. "Something for the boys at last!" exclaimed Fritz, on seeing a soldier doll peep out of the box. The parents watched the shining eyes of their children with pleasure. Mr Drosselmayer had done it again – they would remember this Christmas Eve for a long time!





Although Uncle handed out

gift after gift, it seemed that he had forgotten about Clara. The little girl tried to hide her disappointment, but Uncle had missed nothing, so he gave her the soldier in a splendid red uniform. Before Clara was able to thank him, the other children began to snigger. "But it's just an ordinary nutcracker!" they cried.



And spiteful Fritz? The young boy tore the soldier nutcracker from Clara's hands, swung it around and... smashed it against the floor. Clara ran to the Nutcracker, carefully bandaged its head and hugged it tight. "Don't be afraid," she whispered to him. Fritz received a stern reprimand from Uncle.



Suddenly Clara woke up;

she was cold. The fire in the hearth had gone out. Sleepily she looked about, trying to figure out where she was and what had happened to the Prince. "Of course! I'm at home, by the Christmas tree!" she exclaimed. She looked questioningly at the Nutcracker, which was lying motionless beside her on the sofa. "Did I only dream that my Nutcracker had turned into a handsome prince? Wasn't

the adventure in the Land of Sweets real either? What a strange dream that was!" she muttered, as she pulled up the blanket to fend off the cold. "Yet everyone knows that wonders can occur on Christmas Night. So maybe the Nutcracker really is an enchanted prince..." The Nutcracker doll smiled at the little girl. "I'll keep all this to myself," she said. "Fritz would be sure to make fun of me..." Holding the Nutcracker in a tight embrace, Clara fell asleep.

WHO THE DANCERS PLAY

Clara – the ballet's main character is Clara, a little girl whose kind heart and courage enable her to free Prince Nutcracker from his curse.



Nutcracker – a prince cursed by an evil sorcerer, whose spell turned him into a nutcracker.



Sugar Plum Fairy

– fairy-tale creature who welcomes Clara to the Land of Sweets. Many famous ballerinas nurse a secret wish to perform this very role.



Mother Ginger and the Polichinelles

– Mother Ginger is a figure with a huge skirt, under which she hides many of her small children. In Russia it used to be possible to buy your favourite sweets in a tin in the shape of Mother Ginger; her skirt, which opened at the bottom, was filled with sweets. Choreographer Petipa had used this motif inventively in an earlier ballet, in which Mother Ginger, played by an old, fat actor, opened her skirt for children dressed as Punchinello clowns (polichinelles) to run out; this was a great success, hence Petipa's decision to use it in The Nutcracker.

Drosselmayer

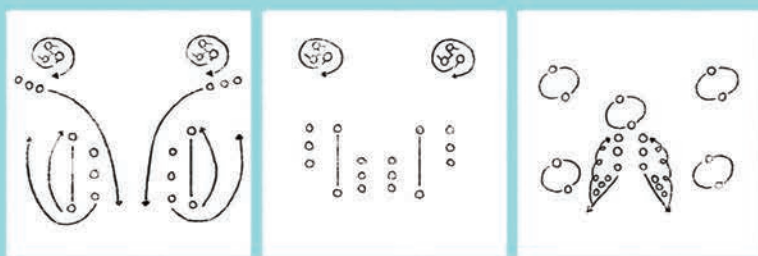
– godfather to Clara and Fritz. He is a kind family friend who always knows how to please the children.



THEATRE GLOSSARY



Score – notation of all parts (instrumental, vocal and choral) of a composition. During a concert or performance the conductor has the score laid open on the lectern in front of him, using it to direct all the music.



Dance notation

– way of writing down dance movement. Before it was invented, choreographers had to rely on memory. There are many dance notation systems.

Bar – short segment of a musical work (the composition is made up of individual bars). The number and length of **beats** in a bar – i.e. the **rhythm** of the music – is indicated at the beginning of the score.

Conductor – person who leads the orchestra and other performers during a concert or performance. Although at first it seems that he is just standing there and throwing his arms about, his job is not an easy one. He determines the speed at which the music is played and the degree of loudness or softness, and he shows the performers when they should begin to play or sing.

Répétiteur – pianist who accompanies singers and dancers during rehearsals, standing in for the entire orchestra



3D
theatre
inside

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Age
7+

Get to know the history and the present of ballet


Would you like to go to see a ballet but you're afraid that you won't understand the story? Or are you a big fan of ballet who wants to learn more about your favourite ballets? Then this book is just what you're looking for. The Nutcracker is a wonderfully illustrated folding book. On one side you can read a fairy tale; on the other, you can learn a lot of interesting things about the history and the present of ballet.

Both-sided
concertina
book



Let yourself
be impressed by
the 3D theatre

Read a fairy tale and discover the rich world of ballet's backstage

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WARNING: CHOKING HAZARD
– Small parts. Not suitable for
children under 36 months.

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