

The Nutcracker Fantasy

About the Composer:

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votinsk, Russia on May 7, 1840. A very bright child, he was able to read Russian, French, and German by the time he was six years old. He hated physical exercise, did not like to wash and didn't care about how he looked or what he wore.

He showed such a strong interest in music for a young child that his governess worried about him. If he could not find a piano to try out the music he made up, he would use his fingers to tap out his tunes on the windowpanes of his house. One time while he was doing this, he tapped so hard that he broke the glass of the window and cut himself very badly.

Peter began taking piano lessons when he was six years old. After attending boarding school he studied law and mathematics and worked as a clerk working the Ministry of Justice. After just four years he quit his job and enrolled as a full time student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. He studied music theory, composition, flute, piano, and organ.

Tchaikovsky was a nervous, unhappy man all his life, yet his beautiful music made him the most popular of all the Russian composers. He wrote the music for the three most famous ballets of all time, *Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*.

In his lifetime, he also wrote nine operas, six symphonies, four concertos, three string quartets, and numerous songs, suites, and overtures. One of his most famous pieces is the "1812" Overture, which uses cannons and church bells. Because it sounds so grand, it is often chosen to accompany fireworks at 4th of July celebrations.



Tchaikovsky was only 53 when he died in St. Petersburg, in 1893. He had just completed his sixth symphony, which he felt was the greatest piece of music he had ever created.

Who Created the Nutcracker Ballet?

In 1944, the San Francisco Ballet became the first company to present the full-length *Nutcracker* in the United States. Director William Christensen was dedicated to introducing American audiences to the classics and felt that this Russian ballet, with its Christmas theme, would do nicely to fill in the week between Christmas and New Year's Day when the Opera House was unoccupied. Since Christensen had never seen the entire ballet performed, he relied on detailed stage directions that were written in the score and the recollections of two dancers, George Balanchine and Alexandra Danilove, who had performed the ballet in Russia.

The community's reaction to *Nutcracker* was beyond Christensen's wildest dreams. He hadn't viewed the ballet as an annual tradition, but it quickly became one. Unlike a painting or a piece of sculpture — which are static — dance changes over time. Nowhere is this more true than with *Nutcracker*.

The Story of The Nutcracker

By E. T. A. Hoffman

It is Christmas Eve long ago, at the home of the Stahlbaum family. Everyone is excited for the arrival of the mysterious Drosselmeyer, the famous toy and clock maker.

All eyes turn toward the door when Uncle Drosselmeyer arrives. He brings with him very unique creations from his workshop to entertain the guests, and special present for Clara, a Nutcracker doll.

Clara's brother Fritz is jealous of her present and accidentally breaks it. After the party, Clara sneaks down to find her Nutcracker doll. Suddenly the Christmas tree and all the toys under it grow to gigantic proportions.

The mice fight with the toy soldiers. The Nutcracker doll becomes a Prince and defends Clara from the Mouse King.

Winning the battle, the Nutcracker Prince then invites Clara through the snow-covered lands to the Kingdom where the Sugar Plum Fairy reigns.

Drosselmeyer accompanies the Prince and Clara to the kingdom. All the characters dance from their visiting guest. Spanish, Arabian, Chinese, and Russian dancers are followed by fragrant flowers led in a lovely waltz by the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Finally Clara's dearest wish is granted and she dances with her Prince. Suddenly, Clara awakens, to find the Nutcracker safe in her arms. This has been Christmas dream she will always cherish.

Who's Who In The Nutcracker

Draw a line connecting the accomplishment to the person's name

He wrote the story of *Nutcracker*

Fritz

He wrote the music

Uncle Drosselmeyer

They presented the first U. S. *Nutcracker*

Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky

He dances with Clara at the end

E. T. A. Hoffman

He broke the Nutcracker

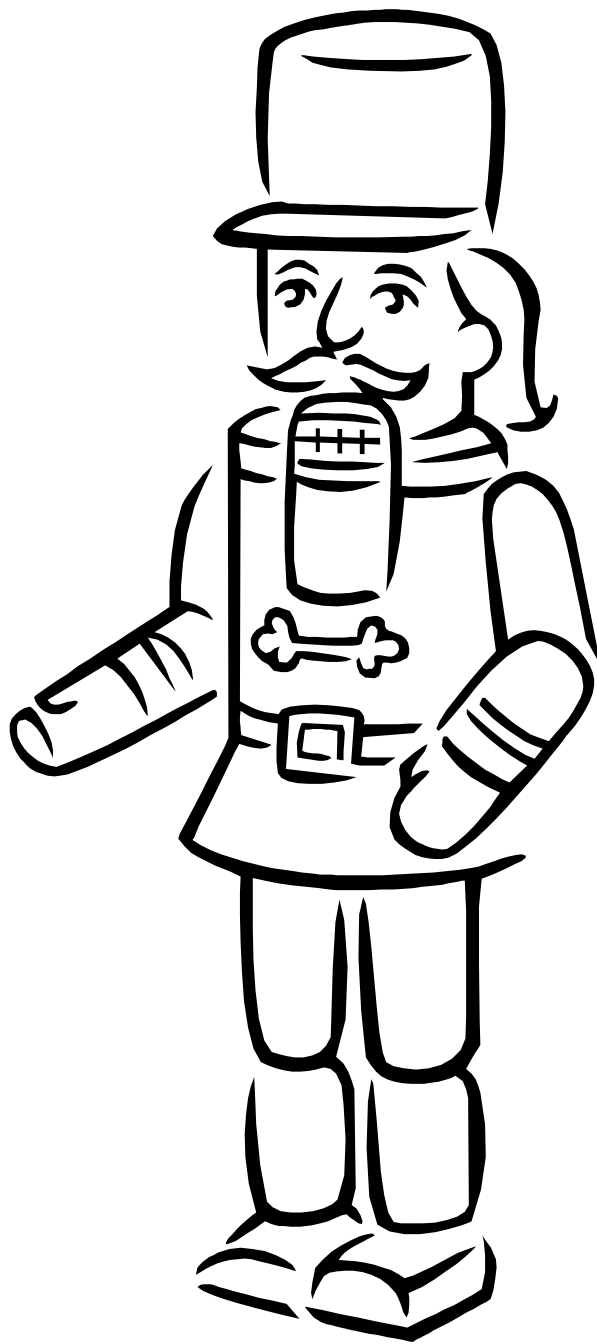
San Francisco Ballet

He brought the toys to the party

The Nutcracker Prince



Color the Ballerina



Color the Nutcracker

Nutcracker Word Search

CHRISTMAS

CLARA

DOLL

DROSSELMEYER

FAIRY

FLOWERS

FRITZ

HOFFMAN

KING

MICE

MOUSE

NUTCRACKER

PLUM

PRINCE

SNOW

SUGAR

TCHAIKOVSKY

TREE

F	E	N	I	N	R	C	E	V	W	V	W	V	P	R
F	A	S	M	K	E	I	J	Z	M	K	O	P	I	B
H	L	I	U	F	Y	C	E	S	I	G	N	X	A	Q
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L	V	U	E	W	A	B	A	O	Q	S	W	T	C	L