

**NEW
Production!**
Keith Michael's
the
nutcracker

The Nutcracker

How the Ballet Came To Be...

E.T.A Hoffmann's fairy tale, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, was first transformed into magic by composer Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky and choreographer Marius Petipa, in Russia, in 1892. It was the third and last ballet composed and choreographed by the team of Tchaikovsky and Petipa. Their other collaborations were *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*. As a choreographer, Petipa knew how to tell a story and make hearts dance. Tchaikovsky composed memorable, beautiful music that elevated ballet music to a serious orchestral form equal to that of a symphony.

In the 119 years since the first performance of the ballet, there have been many different versions, running the gamut of theatrical entertainment. Many choreographers have created their own versions.

Keith Michael's previous production of *The Nutcracker* was presented annually by New York Theatre Ballet for 26 years – 1985-2010.



The Artists and Designers of NYTB's Nutcracker

Choreography: Keith Michael
Music: Peter Tchaikovsky
Costume Design: Sylvia Taalsohn Nolan
Scenery Design and Painting: Gillian Bradshaw-Smith
Lighting Design: Ted Sullivan
Properties Design and Construction: Herbert Kuhn
Scenery Construction: Tim Zay

featuring New York Theatre Ballet & Children of Ballet School NY,
(the official training academy of NYTB)
Diana Byer, Artistic Director

Preparing your Students...

A few weeks before the performance read the story (or review the synopsis) with your students so they can easily follow the plot.

Try not to schedule other activities on the same day as the theater event. Show students that the arts are a special and important part of their lives. Leave the rest of the day quiet so students can discuss the performance with you. Make it something special and exciting and important.

Some children are afraid when the theater lights go out right before the performance begins. Prepare students for this and let them know it's just for a second or two and that when the lights go back on they'll be transported to a wonderful magical world.

Once the performance begins children should be courteous to their fellow audience members and not talk during the show. They will have lots of time to talk about it when the show ends. Let them know they can respond to parts they like by clapping even if it's in the middle of the show. They don't have to wait until the end to clap.

After the Show

After the show help students write a review and send it to the company. The children can draw pictures of their favorite dancers and send it to them.

For young children 3 – 6

Bring a stuffed animal or favorite doll so they can share the experience with their make believe friend. A small intimate production is sometimes best. It's easier to relate to the characters than in a big theater where they are sitting far away from the action.

NYTB's *Nutcracker* is held annually at Florence Gould Hall 55 East 59th Street.

Visit www.nytb.org for information.

Reading List

For Children:

The Nutcracker

E.T. A. Hoffman, author

Maurice Sendack, Illustrator

Crown Publisher/060961049

Ages 8 & up

For Adults:

Nutcracker Nation

Jennifer Fisher, Author

Yale University Press/
0300097468



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STATE STREET.

The Story

The clock is ticking.

It is Christmas Eve 1907 in a grand house on a grand street in a grand city. We are looking in on The Stahlbaum's elaborate Art Nouveau mantelpiece – a mantel clock, a ceramic Christmas tree, a framed photograph – all illuminated with the new-fangled glow of electric bulbs shaded by Tiffany glass!

The clock strikes. Godfather Drosselmeyer's Nephew, Nathaniel, an enchanted young man, is tidying up before the evening festivities. He fantasizes, "When will I return as Crown Prince to my beloved magical land? Maybe tonight. But, in the meantime..." Sigh. The clock has stopped and must be wound. Drosselmeyer, the Clockmaker, is discovered blissfully dreaming inside its gears and flywheels, as are his Tick Tock "Keepers of the Clock". With a few turns of the clock's key, the cogs once again whirr, and time once again whizzes on its merry way.

On the mantel, the photograph of Dr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum and their daughter Marie comes to life. Drosselmeyer's Nephew is the newcomer to this intimate Christmas Eve party, and Marie blushes at the introduction. Somehow, when Drosselmeyer arrives, amazing things happen. The Christmas Tree lights on its own. Behind a small door, one of Drosselmeyer's creations, a delightfully droll wooden nutcracker man, mysteriously mesmerizes Marie. And when Drosselmeyer's Nephew and Marie chance to bump into each other during a round dance, the nutcracker flies from Marie's hands into the safety of his arms. The connection is made.

The party ends. Marie and Nathaniel coyly say goodnight.

In the quiet house, Marie sneaks back into the darkened livingroom and drifts off to sleep enamored of her new nutcracker. But she is not alone. Shadows scurry along the mantelpiece. A band of mice have come scavenging for holiday cookie crumbs. The room soon shudders as Queen Mouserinks bursts in, grabbing for the potentially tasty nutcracker. Marie bravely protects the mustachioed little man, and this spark of love frees the Nutcracker Prince from within the nut-cracking wood! Now the Nutcracker Prince (a remarkable look-alike of Nathaniel!) protects Marie. The Queen and the Prince snatch the hands from the Clock – minutes and hours clash in the air. Marie tangles Queen Mouserinks in her own tail, giving Nutcracker the split-second chance to "dispatch" her.

Nutcracker pledges his devotion to Marie for saving his life. The mantel clock, already freed of its hands, freezes over with glistening icicles. With time stopped, the midnight livingroom fades away. Nutcracker and Marie thrill to their fantastic journey through the Land of Snow and onward to Nutcracker's delectable Land of Sweets.

Nutcracker's kingdom rejoices in his return and celebrates Marie's valor. The tale of the Great Battle is told through pageantry.

Nutcracker is the Crown Prince, but the undisputed rulers of the Land of Sweets are The Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier (they remind Marie of her Mother and Father dressing for a grand ball). A surprise cornucopia of entertainments have been prepared for Nutcracker and Marie – and, indeed, surprises they are!

The Flowers themselves invite Marie and Nutcracker to join in the festive dance. Finally, The Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier transport Marie to that wondrous neverland reached only just before waking from a delightful dream.

Even wonderful journeys must end. It is Christmas morning. Marie awakes. Can she possibly have traveled to all of those delicious places while she slept? It WAS real. Wasn't it?

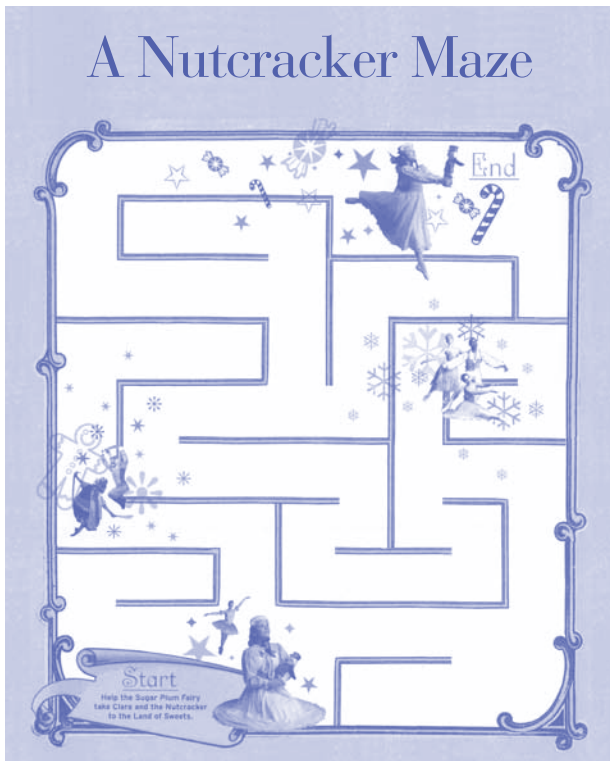
The Design

The Nutcracker is set in the style of Art Nouveau circa, 1907, featuring innovative choreography by long-time NYTB choreographer, Keith Michael. The enchanting sets are designed by Gillian Bradshaw-Smith and the vibrant costumes are by Sylvia Nolan (Resident Costume Designer of the Metropolitan Opera). The cast includes both children and adults. From clockwork imps to a luminous owl that flies above the audience, this production bursts with energy and excitement and continues New York Theatre Ballet's 26-year tradition of family-friendly performances.



ACT II drawing by Gillian Bradshaw-Smith

A Nutcracker Maze



Activity illustrations by Lauren Redniss

Of these six nutcrackers, only two are a pair.
Take a close look and try to tell where.

