



THE NUTCRACKER AND THE MOUSE KING (Nussknacker und Mausekönig)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

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Logos for this production: **Rising Alternative + Ballet Zürich + Accentus**

Libretto adapted by E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, by way of Alexandre Dumas' adapted story *The Nutcracker*.

Recorded April 2017
From Opernhaus Zürich
Ballet in 2 acts
Approximately 2h15

CREATIVE TEAM

Stage Direction & Choreography	Christian Spuck
Conductor	Paul Connelly
Stage Designer	Rufus Didwizsus
Costumes	Buki Shiff
Lightning	Martin Gebhardt
Chorus Master	Ernst Raffelsberger

ARTISTIC TEAM

Drosselmeier	Dominik Slavkovský
Marie	Michelle Willems
Fritz	Daniel Mulligan
Drosslmeiers Neffe / Nussknacker/ Prinz	William Moore
Clown	Yen Han
Clown	Matthew Knight
Clown (Akkordeon)	Ina Callejas
Prinzessin Pirlipat	Giulia Tonelli
Frau Mauserinks	Mélissa Ligurgo
Mausekönig	Cohen Aitchison-Dugas
Schneekönigin	Elena Vostrotina
Schneekönig	Jan Casier
Zuckerfee	Viktorina Kapitonova
Blumenwalzer Solo	Anna Khamzina
Blumenwalzer Solo	Alexander Jones

Produced by Accentus Music
Chorus and Orchestra of Oper Zürich and Philharmonia Zürich

PRESENTATION

Because of Tchaikovsky's imaginative music, *The Nutcracker* is one of the most popular works of the ballet repertoire, instantly bringing to mind scenes of a splendidly decorated Christmas room, dancing snowflakes and the waltz of the flowers. The plot of *The Nutcracker* is based on a novella by E.T.A. Hoffmann, one of the most famous writers of German Romanticism. While Hoffmann's masterful fairytale virtuously jumps back and forth from a dream to reality, in its adaptation as a ballet libretto by Alexandre Dumas and Marius Petipa, it lost much of its dark romantic fantasy.

Christian Spuck attempts to distance himself from the Dumas/Petipas version in his choreography and puts the literary origin at the heart of his ballet, emphasizing the fantastical nature of the original rather than the delightful Christmas fairytale and bringing back the fairytale of the princess Pirlipat, who turns into a nut monster, as told by E.T.A. Hoffmann. In Rufus Didwizsus' stage setting, the workshop of the godfather Drosselmeier turns into an old revue-theater, where the characters of the ballet come to life. Spuck's choreography plays with the richness of characters in E.T.A. Hoffmann's narrative cosmos, the absurdity and overwrought humor that inhabit them while at the same time looking down into the dark abyss of Romanticism.

SYNOPSIS

Act I

Guests are gathering for a Christmas party at the Stahlbaum home. Among them are Drosselmeyer, godfather to Marie and Fritz, the Stahlbaums' children. He has brought them a wonderful present: a funny Nutcracker. The children wait with impatience for when at long last they will be shown the Christmas tree and the presents. The long-awaited moment comes: the handsomely adorned Christmas tree is presented to the assembled company. Drosselmeyer suddenly appears disguised as a magician: he is not recognized by the children. Their unknown guest's ability to make their toys come alive delights the children but, as everything that is clad in mystery, it involuntarily arouses their fear. In order to calm them down, Drosselmeyer takes off his mask and the children now recognize their beloved godfather. Marie wants to play with the wonderful dolls which have come alive, but they have already been tidied away. To comfort Marie, Drosselmeyer gives her the Nutcracker-Doll. Marie takes a great liking to this awkward, funny creature. Marie's brother Fritz, who is a great tease and very naughty, accidentally breaks the doll. With great tenderness, Marie comforts her injured Nutcracker and rocks it backwards and forwards. Fritz and his friends now put on mouse masks and tease poor Marie. The guests appear from an adjoining room. After the final, ceremonial grossvater dance, they all leave.

The room in which the Christmas tree stands is bathed in moonlight. It looks mysterious and full of magical secrets. Overcoming her fears, Marie has come to the room to visit her 'sick' Nutcracker-Doll. She kisses the doll and rocks it. Drosselmeyer now appears. But instead of her kind godfather, he has turned into a wizard. At a wave of his hand everything around them is transformed: the walls of the room slide back, the Christmas tree starts to grow. And all the toys come alive and grow together with the tree. Suddenly, mice creep out from under the floorboards, led by the Mouse King. The dolls are panic-stricken and thrown into confusion. The Nutcracker's quick wits and bravery save the day: lining up the lead soldiers, he boldly leads them out to do battle with the mice forces. However, the forces are uneven, the advantage is on the side of the evil mice. The Nutcracker is left alone to face the Mouse King and his suite. Marie is out of her mind with worry over the danger that threatens her doll. At this very moment, Drosselmeyer hands her a lighted candle and she throws this at the mice who scurry away helter-skelter. The battle field empties. The only person left here is the Nutcracker who lies without moving on the floor. Marie, together with the dolls, hurries to his rescue. And now a miracle occurs...

Before Marie stands a handsome youth, the Nutcracker-Prince. He walks forward to meet her. The walls of the house disappear. Marie and her friends are standing under a star-studded sky, by a fairy-tale Christmas tree. Snowflakes circle in a magical dance. Marie, and her Nutcracker-Prince, beckon, as if to a

beautiful dream, to the twinkling star at the top of the Christmas tree. They climb into a magic boat and set off for the top of the tree. The dolls follow behind them.

Act II

Marie and the Nutcracker-Prince are sailing in their magic boat through the Christmas tree kingdom. With them are their friends, the dolls. The shining star is getting closer and closer. They are just about to reach the top of the tree when they are suddenly attacked by the mice and the Mouse King who have crept up behind them. Once again, the Nutcracker-Prince goes boldly into battle. Horribly frightened, Marie and the dolls watch the fight. The Nutcracker-Prince vanquishes the enemy. Joyous victory celebrations are underway. The dolls dance, the candles burn even brighter, the Christmas Tree comes alive. The evil mice have been defeated! Marie and the Nutcracker-Prince are radiant with happiness – they have reached the kingdom of their dreams!

But... it appears all this was – just a dream. Christmas Eve is over and with it all wonderful reveries... Marie, still in the thrall of the fabulous dream, is sitting at home by the Christmas tree, with the Nutcracker-doll on her lap.