

TACOMA CITY BALLET LIBRARY



25 DAILY NUTCRACKER HISTORY LESSONS



WRITTEN BY
ERIN M. CERAGIOLI

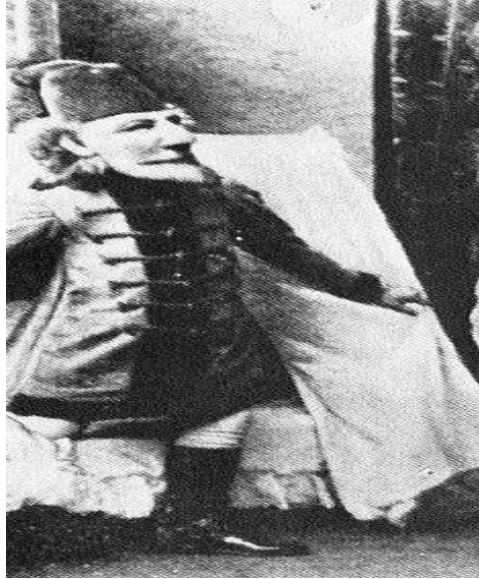
Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 1: THE NUTCRACKER HIMSELF

In 1997, Tacoma City Ballet received a \$75,000 Grant from the E.L. Wiegand Foundation of Reno, Nevada to research and recreate the original and historic Russian *The Nutcracker*. Today, Tacoma City Ballet's *The Nutcracker* bears all of the trappings of this beautiful 1892 Russian production.

The Nutcracker is a ballet with 2 acts and 3 scenes, written and orchestrated by P.I. Tchaikovsky between February 1891 and April 1892. The story was based on a children's fairy tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, and adapted by Alexandre Dumas in *Histoire d'un Casse-Noisette*.

Let's begin with the Nutcracker himself. While he was still a student at the Imperial Ballet School, Sergei Legat (1875-1905) was the very first dancer to perform the role of the Nutcracker. At the age of 17, Legat had received his first major role in M. Petipa's new full-length ballet. Two years later, Legat graduated from the Imperial Ballet School and joined the ranks of the Imperial Ballet. He went on to become one of the greatest ballet dancers in the world.



The Nutcracker (1892)
The Nutcracker



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Nutcracker



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Nutcracker

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 2: THE ILL-STARRED NUTCRACKER

If Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) ever wrote an ill-starred work, it was *The Nutcracker*. Had he known what miseries he would endure while composing this ballet, he would surely have refused the commission. He only agreed to write the ballet because he held Hoffmann's fairy tale, upon which the ballet was to be based, in very high esteem. Regrettably, he found himself very disappointed in the libretto written for the ballet.

There were several problems with *The Nutcracker*. First, Ivan Vsevolozhsky, the Impresario of the Mariinsky Theatre, had agreed to produce the new ballet before he realized that the story did not lend itself well to adaptation for ballet. Second, the details for composition given to Tchaikovsky by Marius Petipa, the librettist and choreographer, changed on a regular basis because Petipa and Vsevolozhsky did not agree. Before departing for St. Petersburg, Tchaikovsky received a letter from Vsevolozhsky saying "I hope to see you in St. Petersburg before your departure for America. I want to pass on to you some ideas for the ballet, which do not fit in with Petipa's scheme. All the solos and variations he devised for the first act, would be of little interest to the public. You need now only to compose great dances, and not for dancers, and all those variations...would only irritate the majority of the audience." Although Tchaikovsky became frustrated and angry at being advised by both Vsevolozhsky and Petipa, he adhered to the essence of Petipa's plan.

When *Nutcracker* rehearsals began on September 29, 1892, things became even more controversial. Petipa changed historic protocol within the structure of the Imperial Ballet when he assigned the leading roles of Clara, Fritz, and the Nutcracker to mere students of the Imperial Ballet Theatre School. Petipa was severely criticized for this choice because while the students were seen as certainly being capable of acting the parts of Clara, Fritz, and the Nutcracker, their lack of classical ballet technical virtuosity forced Petipa to refrain from choreographing dances that would be too difficult for them. The leading roles of the ballet were given to children, while the adult dancers with highly skilled classical ballet technique filled the roles of secondary characters.

When the ballet premiered on December 18, 1892, the Russian audience was extremely disappointed. The criticism was primarily bleak because this new production certainly did not fulfill the grand expectations that Russian audiences had after seeing Petipa's great theatrical triumph of *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1890. *The Nutcracker* was deemed by critics to lack a storyline which made it impossible for the audience to understand the action. Even the characters had no previous existence within the story, and just seem to appear only when required for a scene. The Russian audience was left wondering: Who was the Nutcracker? His prior existence as an animate being and exactly how and why he accompanied Clara's Godfather Drosselmeyer to the Silberhaus Christmas party was not revealed. *The Nutcracker* had a history that did not begin with the Act I - Party Scene, and that history was absolutely necessary to the audience's understanding of the ballet.

How could Petipa have failed so miserably? The fact that *The Nutcracker* had to share its world premiere with *Iolanta*, Tchaikovsky's last opera, dictated the length of the ballet. Petipa was unable to stage the entire story due to time constraint, and planned to add an additional act to *The Nutcracker* the following year. Most full-length classical ballets always had three acts, and upon its premiere *The Nutcracker* only had two. Unfortunately, Petipa's plan never came to fruition because Tchaikovsky was ill and could not compose additional music. Indeed, Tchaikovsky died in November of 1893. Petipa, deciding that no living composer's music could stand next to the great Tchaikovsky's score, gave up the idea to choreograph the additional act.

While that first Russian audience was left disappointed at the final curtain of *The Nutcracker*, there were still a few critical reviews that praised some aspects of the ballet. The scenery and the costumes were lavish, and we can ponder on one critic's words about what did eventually become the most popular ballet in all the world. "Sets and Costumes...One more beautiful than the last, and they reveal their artist's excellent taste both in elegance and in the combination of colours." Reception was far better for Tchaikovsky's score. Critics called it "astonishingly rich in detailed inspiration" and "from beginning to end, beautiful, melodious, original, and characteristic." However, this was not unanimous, and some critics called the Act I - Party Scene "ponderous," and the *Grand Pas de Deux* "insipid."



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 3: WHY ARE THERE SO MANY VERSIONS OF THE NUTCRACKER BALLET?

Czar Peter the Great (1682-1725), wishing to be viewed as a progressive monarch, imported the rich style of life and dress that was already present in Europe to Russia. Over the next 200 years, the Russian aristocracy became so completely engrossed in this European concept of elegant living and opulent dress that they became world-renowned themselves for their own extravagant revelries and their dazzling, bejeweled attire. Just one of these extravagant revelries might continue for several days and cost an entire year's wages, but the aristocracy felt that maintaining the appearance of wealth was most important. Often, as much as one-half of a family's wealth would be sewn onto a single ball gown to demonstrate their societal position. These gowns were constructed from fabrics woven with gold or silver thread, and decorated with scores of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls.

While the Russian royalty, aristocracy, and capitalist class flourished in luxury, the general populace lived in medieval conditions and suffered from desperate poverty. Russia had been governed by a corrupt, repressive, outdated system for so long that a malignant imbalance had been created, and a deep well filled with hundreds of years of resentment and discontent spilled over. The foreboding revolution was the culmination of a historically long period of oppression.

Marius Petipa had a long and illustrious career as Premier Ballet Master of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theater from 1871 until 1905. He choreographed over fifty ballets, and is credited with creating the libretto for *The Nutcracker*. In 1891, Petipa chose *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale that had been translated into French by Alexander Dumas, upon which to base his next full-length ballet. The St. Petersburg Opera commissioned P.I. Tchaikovsky to compose the musical score for the new ballet, and Petipa presented him with an extremely detailed scenario for *The Nutcracker* that included the rhythm, tempo, and number of measures he desired for each dance.

When Petipa, wishing to emulate Imperial Russia's passion for the great and the grand, instructed that the costumes for the Act I - Party Scene be fashioned after the dress of the French Revolutionary period, he could not possibly have known that Russia was on the cusp of a revolution of its own. Art indeed reflected life, and *The Nutcracker*, preceded by *Swan Lake* in 1877, and *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1890, was to be Russia's last grand full-length ballet for a long time to come.

By the time *The Nutcracker* premiered on December 18, 1892 at the Mariinsky Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, the whispers of revolution had already begun. Although Czar Alexander III attended this first performance of the ballet hoping to signal that all was as usual, just six years after *The Nutcracker's* premiere, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, based on the doctrines of Marxism, was formed at a secret congress in Minsk. By 1901, the Socialist Revolutionary Party was formed, and since the Russian bourgeoisie was too weak to lead its own revolution, the proletarians and peasants united to overthrow the czarist regime and establish a dictatorship.

The Revolution changed Imperial Russia and the new ballet created almost upon its beginning forever. Although rich in the historical classical tradition of the Russian ballet, *The Nutcracker* also accurately reflected the lifestyle of the Russian aristocracy now so despised. Petipa's ballet was a complete failure, and was not well received either by critical reviewers or audiences. The production's extravagance served as a painful reminder to the Russian populace, who had never lived in a Silberhaus or House of Silver, that their poverty was extreme.

In 1905, aging and in ill health, Petipa finished his tenure as Premiere Ballet Master of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theater. His absence and the ballet's premiere failure presented opportunity and certainly inspired succeeding Russian choreographers to restructure *The Nutcracker*. Determined that the old production's extravagance would absolutely not stand in political or popular favor, the new choreographers prepared it so that it would appeal to a modern post-revolutionary audience. Unfortunately, their vast digressions from the original libretto, choreography, sets, and costumes left ample room for future choreographers from all over the world to reinterpret and create their own versions of *The Nutcracker*. After all, *The Nutcracker* had lost the purity of its origin, and had become the sacrificial lamb of the Revolution.



Czar Peter The Great

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 4: WHO WAS IVAN ALEXANDROVICH VSEVOLOZHISKY?

Ivan Alexandrovich Vsevolozhsky (1835-1909) was the Director or Impresario of the Imperial Theatres in Russia from 1881-1898. He ran the Imperial Theatres with an extraordinarily high standard for excellence and was instrumental in creating elaborate productions.

In 1886, Vsevolozhsky relocated the Imperial Ballet from the Bolshoi Theatre that had been deemed unsafe in 1886 to the Maryinsky Theatre. Savvy to the fact that his audiences dearly loved ballets and beautiful music, Vsevolozhsky decided to create some new productions to ensure that his audiences felt secure about the Imperial Ballet's move. Being very astute, Vsevolozhsky decided to employ the services of the most famous Russian composer at that time, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, and immediately commissioned the great composer to write several ballet scores. At the same time, he also instructed the Imperial Ballet Master, Marius Petipa, to choreograph some full-length ballets.

Historically, the Executive Director, who is the Chief Officer in charge of all theatrical operations, did not only financially manage the theater and select the programming, but he created new productions for his theater as well. On a theater's staff were artisans capable of producing elaborate productions from top to bottom, and often, the Executive Director was an artist in his own right as well. In order to secure such a grand position, one truly had to be deeply connected not only with the presentation of the arts, but with their production as well. Vsevolozhsky was a brilliant playwright, essayist, and costume designer in his own right. In fact, he was a prolific costume designer and sketched at least 1,087 drawings for numerous productions during his illustrious career. He is credited with writing the libretto for the ballet *The Sleeping Beauty*, and designing the costumes for both *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), and *The Nutcracker* (1892). In fact, when *The Sleeping Beauty* premiered in 1890 it was said to have had the most expensive and elaborate scenery and costumes ever seen on the theatrical stage.

In 1892, this visionary commissioned *Iolanta*, the opera, and *The Nutcracker*, the ballet, to be performed for his double production gala evening. While *The Nutcracker* was not well received by the Russian audience, Vsevolozhsky's costumes were one of the most highly praised components of the ballet.



Ivan Alexandrovich Vsevolozhsky

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 5: HOW MANY NAMES DOES THAT LITTLE GIRL HAVE?

Ernst Theodor Wilhelm (Amadeus) Hoffmann (1776-1882) was a German Romantic author of fantasy and Gothic horror, and is considered one of the major authors of the Romantic movement. He was also an artist, composer, and music critic, but since his art could not pay the bills he was educated and worked as a lawyer, and a judge.

Hoffmann wrote his novella, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, in 1816, and it was first published in a children's collection, *Kindermärchen*, along with other stories by CW Contessa and Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouque. Even though *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* achieved popularity as a children's story, it still contained dark psychological themes and social commentary on the issues of the day.

Hoffman's novella was not only popular in German-speaking countries, but beyond their borders, due to a French adaptation written by Alexandre Dumas titled *The Nutcracker of Nuremberg*. This was the version that Vsevolozhsky and Petipa knew and used to write the libretto for their new ballet. As they say, somethings are lost in translation and unfortunately this proved to be the case with Dumas' version of Hoffmann's novella.

For instance, in Hoffmann's version Drosselmeyer is short, the family name is Stahlbaum or Steel Tree, the heroine's name is Marie, and her doll's name is Clara; while in Dumas' version Drosselmeyer is tall, the family name is Silberhaus or House of Silver, the heroine's name is Clara, and her doll's name is Marie. Dumas mistakenly reversed the names of the little girl and her doll in his translation, and since that is the version that Petipa used for *The Nutcracker* libretto, our heroine's name in the ballet was Clara from the very beginning.

After the Russian Revolution, the Communists staged their own *The Nutcracker* in 1919 in Moscow. This is why the present day touring American Moscow Ballet's version is what is commonly referred to as the "Soviet" version in the ballet world. The Soviet version is very different from the original Russian version, and introduces many different characters, like Father Christmas, who were never in Hoffmann's novella or Dumas' translation. However, once again, our heroine gets yet another name. In the Soviet version, Clara's name is changed to Masha.

So, Marie is the literary little girl, Clara is the original Russian *The Nutcracker* ballet's little girl, and Masha is the Soviet/Communist *The Nutcracker's* little girl. One little girl with so many names!



Ernst Theodor Wilhelm (Amadeus) Hoffmann



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Clara and Her Father

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 6: MADAME PREO

Those who are familiar with classical ballet have often heard the term “Foot-to-Foot” which simply means that the teaching of the classical ballet technique and its vast repertoire are passed from one generation to the next by human. Dancer, taught by the previous generation of dancers, who had been taught by the previous generation of dancers, are all related in a sort of familial line, if you will.

It is important to note that a child cannot be taught classical ballet technique by a book, or as in these modern times, a technological device of any kind. Classical ballet, in and of its very essence, demands that student acquires supreme control of their physical anatomy within the artistic parameters of the technique, and that can only be applied to one physical body by another who has experienced the technique.

What does this have to do with *The Nutcracker*? Well, the answer is very close to my heart. In the original Russian production, there are four Dancing Dolls brought to the party by Godfather Drosselmeyer. The dolls in the first variation are a Sutler (Canteen Keeper) and a Cavalry Soldier, and the dolls in the second variation are Harlequin and Columbine. The very first Columbine Doll was Olga Preobrajenska. As with all new productions, some critics were complimentary of *The Nutcracker* while others were not. For example, Madam Preobrajenska's performance as the Columbine Doll was panned by one critic as being “completely insipid” and praised as “charming” by another.

In the early 1920s, to escape the results of the Russian Revolution, Madam Preobrajenska immigrated to Paris where she established her own ballet school. Her instruction was so phenomenal that the students from the Paris Opera Ballet School would sneak over to take Madam's classes. She was fondly called “Madam Preo” by her students.

In her elder years, Madam Preobrajenska became recognized as one of the most influential ballet teachers in history. Her own physical shortcoming, a hunched back, which nearly prevented her from entering the Imperial Ballet School in 1879, inspired her to be persistent with all her pupils, not just the ones who exuded natural talent for the classical technique. She was legendary for creating ballerinas, and my very first ballet teacher was amongst them. I remember hearing stories about how Madame Preo was so short that she had to stand on a wooden box so all the dancers could see her, and that she soaked the wooden floor with water from her watering can so the dancers would not slip. Rosin was very scarce during World War I and II. Madam was also quite notorious for spouting countless directions in exactly how to execute the classical technique properly.

My Miss Correll explained to me that Madam Preo was my “Grandmother in the Ballet” which makes her “Great Grandmother in the Ballet” to all of my students. It is lovely to think that Madam Preo will live on through multiple generations of ballet dancers, and ladies and gentlemen that is “Foot-to-Foot.”



The Nutcracker (1892)
Olga Preobrajenska As The Columbine Doll



Olga Preobrajenska, Master Teacher

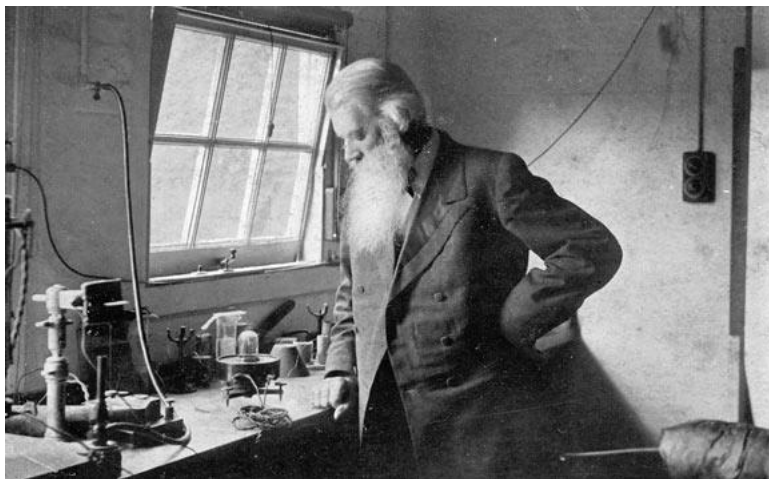
Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 7: ELECTRIC LIGHTS FOR THE NUTCRACKER

Since 1816 the Gas Stage Lighting System had been used in all theaters, and had proven many times to be very dangerous indeed. Not only did each single gas burner consume as much oxygen as a human, but exuded foul the air, and a tremendous amount of heat. They were dangerous to both the performers on the stage and the audience members. Emma Livry, one of the last ballerinas of the Romantic Era and a protégée of Marie Taglioni, died after her costume caught fire during a rehearsal.

Finally, Joseph Wilson Swan (1829-1914), a British inventor, patented the world's first incandescent electric lamp in 1878. By 1881, London's Savoy Theatre installed the world's first Electric Lighting System with 824 Sixteen Candle Power Swan Lamps installed on the Stage, and an additional 334 in the House.

Fortunately, by the end of the 19th century, most theaters had switched from gas lights to the much safer electric lights. What does all this have to do with *The Nutcracker*? Interestingly enough, Mr. Petipa addresses the use of electric light in his libretto, and the very first "Fir Forest in Winter" was lit by the very first electric lights in 1892. The words of his libretto recall the historic scene for us: "Suddenly a snow-storm occurs. Light white snow-flakes blow about (60 dancers). They circle everlastingly to a $\frac{3}{4}$ valse. They form snow-balls, a snow-drift, but at a strong gust of wind, the drift breaks up and becomes a circle of dancers. The snow-flakes fall, larger and larger and are lit by electric light."



Joseph Wilson Swan



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Snowflake

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 8: THE VERY FIRST NUTCRACKER WAS A GIRL!

The Nutcracker that has been and continues to be presented to audiences throughout the world is an incomplete story. Marius Petipa, the mastermind of the ballet, did not have enough stage time allocated to the ballet to produce the entire story for the original production when it first premiered in 1892. The ballet was slated to appear alongside *Iolanta*, Tchaikovsky's last opera, and there was no time to include a third act. *The Tale of The Hard Nut*, the story within the story that explained how the Nutcracker came to be, was sacrificed. Unfortunately, the ballet did not make sense without this crucial piece of the story, and Russian audiences were left trying to figure out what *The Nutcracker* was actually about.

It all begins with sausage thievery and ends with the "Curse of Ugliness." Does this sound like the all too familiar and cozy Act I Party Scene? *The Tale of The Hard Nut* reveals that the Mouse Queen, angry with the King for beheading her seven sons, avenges their execution by biting the King's little daughter, Princess Pirlipat. The "Curse of Ugliness" can only be inflicted upon one by the bite of the Mouse Queen. It is her bite and her bite alone that turns one into a Nutcracker. This terrible curse actually causes the personification of the Nutcracker who is described as a "hideous monster with a thick, deformed head...green, gaping, gawking eyes, and little lips pulled from one ear to the other...the ugliness of the face was increased by a white cotton beard around the mouth and chin."

That first Russian audience had no idea that the Mouse Queen even existed, and that the first person she bit was Princess Pirlipat, not the young man who would become Clara's Prince. If only they had known that the Mouse Queen, who only appears in *The Tale of The Hard Nut*, was the mother of the Mouse King.



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Princess Pirlipat

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson
Lesson Number 9: WHY DOES THE MOUSE KING HAVE SEVEN HEADS?

Have you ever wondered why the Mouse King has seven heads? We must look to *The Tale of The Hard Nut* for the answer. It all begins with a Royal Feast for which the King requests that the Queen make his favorite dish, sausage. The Mouse King's seven older brothers, the Mouse Princes, steal all the sausage from the Royal Kitchen at the beckoning of their Mother, the Mouse Queen.

Since all of the sausage was stolen, the King's elaborate Royal Feast was ruined because his Royal Guests had nothing to eat. When his Royal Guests went home hungry, he was extremely humiliated. Turning to the Queen for an explanation, the King discovers that the Mouse Queen came up to the Royal Kitchen from Mousolia, her kingdom under the castle, and begged the Queen for a morsel of sausage. After the tasty treat, she summoned her sons to steal the remainder of the feast. Much to the Queen's dismay, the Mouse Queen and her seven raided the kitchen and stole all the sausage.

Upon hearing this news, the King was very angry and decided to summon Herr Drosselmeyer who was the Adept Court Magician. He commanded Drosselmeyer to catch all the pesky rodents roaming the Marzipan Palace so that he could dispose of them. When Herr Drosselmeyer, who is credited with the invention of the mousetrap, caught the Mouse Princes the King ordered them "shamefully executed" or beheaded. Now, the Mouse Queen only had one son left. He was the eighth and littlest mouse brother who grew up to be the Mouse King. He sported the seven heads of his deceased brothers and vowed revenge!



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Mouse King

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 10: NUTCRACKER IS REALLY ALL ABOUT FOOD

In honor of the Thanksgiving Holiday, let's talk about food. *The Nutcracker* is really all about food. It begins with Sausage and ends with Chocolate, Coffee, Tea, Marzipan, and Sugar Plums. This assortment of delectable goodies, or edible scenery, if you will, is especially concocted for the Royal Wedding of Clara and the Prince.

It all begins when the Mouse Queen and her sons, the Seven Mouse Princes, steal all the King's sausage so arduously prepared by the Queen for their upcoming Royal Feast. Anger, beheadings, revenge, magical curses, long voyages to exotic lands, mysterious potions, boys who have never shaved and only worn boots, true love, mystical transformations, a journey through a winter wonderland, and a beautiful wedding feast, complete with all the delicacies, in a glistening Kingdom all come about because of that single sausage caper!

Here's the rest of the dish... In *The Nutcracker* chocolate is represented by the Spanish Pas de Deux or Dance of Two, and quite rightfully so. Chocolate, which originated in Mexico, was introduced to Europe in 1519 by the Spaniards following their conquest of the New World. Its use spread rapidly across the continent, and by the 17th century Chocolate Houses had almost replaced the already common Coffee Houses. Drinking chocolate had become very trendy, but like all passing fads, the drinking of chocolate eventually went out of fashion, leaving coffee to reign as the universal drink of Western Europe. Coffee is represented by the Arabian Pas De Deux, Tea is represented by the Chinese Pas de Deux, and Flutes, a Mirliton du Pont-Audemer is a French pastry that is rolled into a tube, filled with chocolate praline mousse creating a flute of candy or the Mirliton de Rouen, almond-topped puff pastries, tarts or cakes sometimes filled with almond paste or marzipan, a popular Christmas treat.



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Mouse Queen With Her Sausage * Spanish Chocolate



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Arabian Coffee * Chinese Tea * Marzipan

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 11: THE ACT II DIVERTISSEMENT WITH SO MANY NAMES

So is it a Mirliton, Dance of The Reed Pipes, Flutes, Dance of The Shepherdess or Marzipan? Let's dive into this and see what we discover about the Divertissement with so many names. A Mirliton is a simple tube-shaped instrument, sometimes known as a eunuch flute or onion flute. Humming through the tube causes a thin membrane of an animal skin, onion skin, or paper to vibrate. These little flutes have been popular children's toys for centuries.

Now we have the Mirliton, Dance of The Reed Pipes, and Flutes covered, but what about the Shepherdess and the Marzipan candy? A Mirliton du Pont-Audemer is a French pastry that is rolled into a tube, filled with chocolate praline mousse creating a flute of candy or the Mirliton de Rouen, almond-topped puff pastries, tarts or cakes sometimes filled with almond paste or marzipan, a popular Christmas treat. Petipa, our choreographer, was certain to have tasted these little goodies. The Shepherdess

is usually depicted in folklore as playing a flute to her flock, and that is why the historic Marzipan costume was decorated with a pan flute!



**The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Marzipan**

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 12: WHO ARE THE SILVER SOLDIERS?

Nutcracker aficionados are very familiar with the *Act I - Battle Scene* where the Nutcracker and his Army of Soldiers fight the Mouse King and his Mouse Army. In most versions of the ballet, the Nutcracker's army is portrayed as Wooden Toy Soldiers, but in the original *The Nutcracker*, they are Gingerbread Cookie Soldiers. Although they fight bravely, they are defeated and eaten by the mice. It is much easier for a mouse to eat a cookie than a hunk of wood!

However, most audiences have never heard of the Silver Soldiers who make their appearance, first in *The Tale of The Hard Nut*, and then once again in *Act II - The Sugar Plum Kingdom*. In some recent versions of *The Nutcracker*, Angels appear at the beginning of Act II, but in the original Russian production, there were no Angels.

So, who are these tiny little Silver Soldiers? According to Petipa's libretto, the Silver Soldiers are the sentries who guard the Marzipan Palace. They, like Drosselmeyer, are present at the beginning of the story and at the end. They are first seen attentively guarding the Marzipan Palace when Drosselmeyer returns from his world travels and presents the Krakatuk Nut to the King. As the Prince and his new bride make their entrance into the Sugar Plum Kingdom, they are greeted by the Sugar Plum Fairy along with the silver-coated little soldiers who present arms.

Here is Petipa's description of these little sentries who guard the Marzipan Palace, as quoted from the original libretto. "In the Palace of The Sugar-Plum Kingdom...In the middle of these fountains, on a river of rose-colored water, is seen a Pavilion of sugar-candy with transparent columns, where the Sugar-Plum Fairy and her retinue are seen. At the rising of the curtain, caramels, marzipan, ginger-bread, cinnamon, nut-cakes, sugar-plums, barley-sugar, peppermints, lollipops, almonds, raisins, pistachios, almond cakes and little silver-coated soldiers (the Palace sentries), are found on the stage."



**The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Silver Soldiers**

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 13: THE ORCHESTRA

Back in the "old days" all ballets were performed with live music because recorded music did not yet exist. Today, most assuredly, if you attend *The Nutcracker* in a theatrical venue housed in a major metropolitan city you will most certainly hear a live orchestra. However, whether or not your local ballet company has live music depends on the size of its budget, and ballet companies that tour *The Nutcracker* usually never have live music because it is very expensive to pay a touring orchestra.

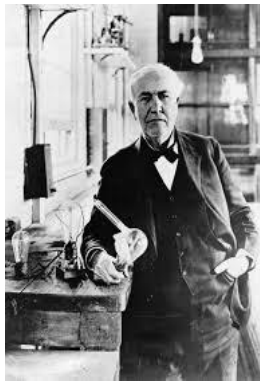
Did the original Russian production of *The Nutcracker* have a live orchestra to play Tchaikovsky's score? While Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) had invented a method to record sound in 1877, the first musical recordings did not truly succeed until 1901. In light of this date, *The Nutcracker*, premiering in 1892, would definitely have needed a live orchestra.

Enter Riccardo Eugenio Drigo (1846-1930). Drigo was an Italian pianist, composer, and theatrical orchestra conductor. He was noted for his original full-length compositions, as well as his large catalog of supplemental music, and he composed for the ballet and the opera. Maestro Drigo had a very long and illustrious career as the Director of Music of the Imperial Ballet of St. Petersburg, and Chief Conductor of the orchestra for Italian opera performances at the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre. Russia.

Tchaikovsky developed a close friendship with Maestro Drigo while he was composing the score for *The Sleeping Beauty*. On one of the rehearsal evenings, Maestro fell ill and asked Tchaikovsky to conduct the orchestra. Tchaikovsky refused insisting he would ruin his own score if he conducted. Needless to say, the show must go on and Maestro Drigo went to work ill. Eventually, Maestro Drigo conducted 300 performances of *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Mariinsky Theatre.

Two years later, the two friends had the opportunity to work together again when Maestro Drigo conducted the premiere of Tchaikovsky's next ballet, *The Nutcracker* in 1892.

In remaining true to the original Russian *The Nutcracker*, it is imperative that Tacoma City Ballet always perform with a live orchestra. So, if you don't want to listen to the "canned" version, as we say in show biz, come and meet our Maestro Bernard Kwiram and experience the wonderful Tacoma City Ballet Orchestra. What a difference live music really does make!



Thomas Alva Edison



Riccardo Drigo



Maestro Bernard Kwiram
Tacoma City Ballet

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 14: WHAT IS A HOUSE SHIFT?

In order to be deemed a classical ballet, a ballet production must possess certain elements. One of those necessary elements is called the House Shift. So, theater buffs, what exactly is a House Shift? Well, during a House Shift, the scenery changes right in front of the eyes of the audience. The audience is mesmerized by the scenery mysteriously changing while the action of the ballet proceeded without interruption. This is a tremendous move that takes the absolute coordination of the entire Stage Crew, and unlike the movies, there is no Take Two.

In *The Nutcracker*, the House Shift happens right after the Act I - Battle Scene. The Nutcracker has been killed by the Mouse King, the Mouse King has been killed by Clara, and the whole thing is a disaster until Godfather Drosselmeyer appears. Clara's Godfather reveals to her that she broke the "Curse of Ugliness" because she loved the Nutcracker even though he was broken. True love is exactly what was needed to break the horrible curse of the Mouse Queen.

The Nutcracker arises from his mortal wound, and is no longer a wooden soldier, but has been restored to his rightful state of a Prince. After this Awakening, Clara and her Prince are off to the Prince's home, the Marzipan Castle. They begin their voyage in the Act I - The Fir Forest in Winter. Now, we must get the audience from Herr Silberhaus' Parlor to the Fir Forest in Winter without any interruption in the action. Right at this moment is where the House Shift comes in. Godfather Drosselmeyer sends the scenery of the Silberhaus Parlor away, ushers in the Fir Forest in Winter, and beckons the Snowflakes to fall from the heavens. This is a very exciting and beautiful moment in the ballet.



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Godfather Drosselmeyer Performing The House Shift

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 15: IS MOTHER GINGER REALLY FATHER GINGER?

In the classical tradition of the ballet, the roles of certain female characters, either comedic or sinister, are often performed by men. The Widow Ragotte, now known as Widow Simone, in *La Fille Mal Gardée*, Carabosse, the evil fairy, in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and Mère Gigogne or Mother Ginger in *The Nutcracker* to mention a few. Nikolai Yakovlev was the first character dancer to perform the role of Mère Gigogne or Mother Ginger, and he set the precedent that the role should always be danced by a male who assumes the garb and demeanor of a female in a most comedic manner. "The dance of the Polichinelles - led out by their jolly Aunt (Mère Gigogne, Mr. Yakovlev), is a copy of the Children's Harlequinade composed and produced by Balletmaster Petipa during the revival of the ballet 'The Wilful Wife.'"

Since 1875, when both Russia and Britain forced Germany to stop threatening a military attack on France, an unspoken and unwritten coalition developed between these two nations. Not until 1891, did France and Russia enter into a formal pact which was solely inspired by a common desire to preserve peace. The Dual Alliance, also called the Franco-Russian Alliance, was a political and military pact created in reaction to the strengthening German Empire, and the creation of the Triple Alliance, a pact between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. As *The Nutcracker* was being created in 1891, the Dual Alliance was beginning.

France had influenced Russia's artistic, cultural, political, and social ideas since Peter The Great's visit in 1717, and continued this prominent influence throughout the reign of Catherine II. Russia even adopted the French language as their national language of conversation and correspondence. Soon, the Russian nobility's preference for French governesses and tutors for their children contributed to the vast spread of French culture and educational methods throughout Russia. The cultural influence of France upon Russia was quite strong, and while it may have waivered throughout history, it never really disappeared.

Although classical ballet actually began in Italy, it migrated to France with Catherine de Medici when she married Henry II. Afterward, most everything about classical ballet was French. Petipa, himself, was a French dancer who became the Balletmaster of The Court of The Czars. Wishing to reflect French culture, Petipa included some French themes in *The Nutcracker*. To capture the grand lifestyle of the aristocracy for his new ballet, Petipa fashioned the costumes for the Act I - Party Scene after the extravagant dress of the French Court. In Act II, French influence appeared in the sixth Divertissement, *Mère Gigogne and Her Polichinelles*, as Tchaikovsky used an authentic French folk song, *Giroflé-Giroflé*, to inspire his composition of this Divertissement. It is said that Petipa's inspiration came from a popular Russian candy sold in a tin that was shaped like a woman wearing a large skirt. The tin opened at the bottom to reveal the delectable Bonbons inside.

In keeping with the historic tradition established in the original Russian *The Nutcracker*, Tacoma City Ballet's Mère Gigogne or Mother Ginger, is performed by one of our male character dancers, Sal Lucente. Mère Gigogne really is Père Gigogne, and has been from the very beginning!



The Nutcracker (1892)
Mère Gigogne



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Mère Gigogne (Mother Ginger)

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 16: THE NEW MUSICAL INSTRUMENT DEBUTED AT THE NUTCRACKER

That ever familiar magical tinkling sound that is the unmistakable theme of the Sugar Plum Fairy is made by a very special instrument called the celesta. Beginning 1886, a Parisian organ maker, Charles Victor Mustel, and his son Auguste worked side by side to create their new musical instrument which they called the celesta because it had a “heavenly” sound. Although constructed after instruments with a keyboard and thin metal bars, the celesta differed with the addition of wooden resonators and a pedal. It produced a sweeter sound that was more subtle and less metallic than the glockenspiel.

On his way to America to perform a concert, Tchaikovsky, who had stopped in Paris, first heard the celesta while walking in the streets of Paris. Choreographer, Marius Petipa, had indicated to Tchaikovsky that he wanted the Sugar Plum Fairy's music to sound like “drops of water shooting from a fountain,” and Tchaikovsky suddenly felt that he had found the ideal instrument to do the job. Although he had to depart for America immediately, he sent a letter to a close friend in Russia asking him to order a celesta, which cost 1,200 francs. In his letter he instructed his friend saying, “I don't want you to show the celesta to anyone, especially not Rimsky-Korsakov or Glazunov. I am to be the first to use this instrument!”

Indeed, Tchaikovsky composed the “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” for the celesta, and celesta made its first and extremely triumphant appearance in *The Nutcracker* in 1892. Tchaikovsky had fulfilled his wish, and was the first composer to use this beautiful instrument in a public performance.



The Celesta

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 17: THE NUTCRACKER ACT I SCENERY

(THE ORIGINAL 1892 SET OF THE PARLOR OF HERR AND FRAU SILBERHAUS DECORATED FOR CHRISTMAS)

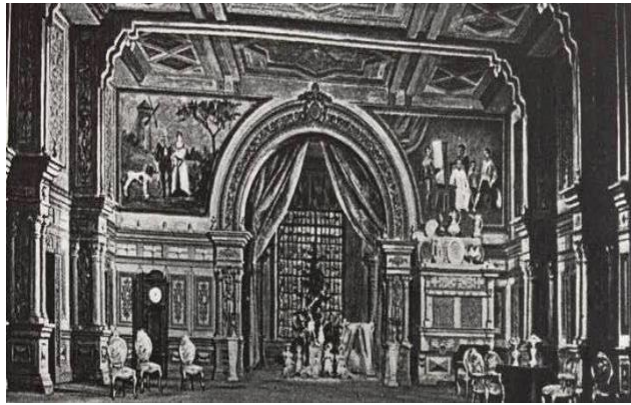
Mikhail Bocharov (1831-1895) was a Russian stage artist and landscape painter. He studied his art at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. He also studied theatrical design in Austria, France, and Germany. Because his work was not only very lavish and intricate, but architecturally accurate as well, he was awarded several Gold Medals for his artistry in Russia.

From 1864 to 1895, Bocharov was employed by the Mariinsky Theatre as Set Designer. Although he designed scenery for numerous other productions, he is most recognized for his set design for the “Big Three” ballets, as they have come to be called. *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *The Nutcracker* (1892), and *Swan Lake* (1895).

Marius Petipa, creator and choreographer of *The Nutcracker*, gave extremely detailed instructions to Bocharov concerning the scenic design for Act I of his new ballet. The instructions were so specific that Petipa even requested that the décor on the walls of Herr Silberhaus' Parlor be fashioned into an "M" for Mariinsky.

Bocharov's excellence in architectural design can truly been seen in the lofty coffered ceiling of the Parlor, and the enormous square window placed behind the Parlor's Grand Archway that creates an additional Foyer. This creates the illusion that there are many more rooms in this grand house that the audience cannot see, but yet imagine. Bocharov's attention to even the smallest detail is quite wonderful, as even the panes of the window, although mostly hidden from the view of the audience, are touched with snow. Rumor had it that the people and the dogs in the two paintings, to the right and the left of the Parlor's Grand Archway, were members of Bocharov's family.

Photographs of the historical Act I set and Tacoma City Ballet's reproduction of that set, display the tremendous architectural detail and gorgeous colors seen in that fabulous work of art by Mikhail Bocharov.



The Nutcracker (1892)
Act I - The Parlor of Herr and Frau Silberhaus



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Act I - The Parlor of Herr and Frau Silberhaus



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Act I - The Parlor of Herr and Frau Silberhaus
Specific View of Grand Square Window and "M" At Base of Columns

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 18: THE ROYAL WEDDING FEAST

Unlike every other *Nutcracker* in the world where Clara awakens from her dream snug in her own bed, in the original Russian *The Nutcracker*, Clara and the Prince are married and live happily ever after in the Marzipan Palace in *The Sugar Plum Kingdom*. Clara's adventure was not a dream, but a reconciliation that set the world right again.

However, once again, *The Tale of The Hard Nut* is crucial to understanding Act II. When the "Curse of Ugliness" befalls Princess Pirlipat, Drosselmeyer is commanded by the King to search the world for the remedy to the curse. It is on this journey that he discovers Chocolate in Spain, Coffee in Arabia, Tea in China, the Trepak in Russia, Marzipan in Germany, Mother Ginger and Her Polichinelles in France, loses his eye and has his hair burned off by the Sun. On can assume that he brings all of these exotic things that he has discovered back to the Marzipan Palace where they will be enjoyed in distant future by the Prince and his new bride, Clara.



The Nutcracker (1892)
The Prince & Clara



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Prince and Clara

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 19: THERE IS A MOUSE QUEEN TOO!

Frau Mouserink, the Mouse Queen, is the Queen of Mousolia which is the Mouse Kingdom under the Royal Marzipan Palace in *The Sugar Plum Kingdom*. While she is not a character that appeared in the original Russian *The Nutcracker*, she is very crucial to the storyline because without her, there would be no Nutcracker. Without knowing the story of the Mouse Queen, as told in *The Tale of The Hard Nut*, *The Nutcracker* plot is very obscure.

The Mouse Queen is the one who starts all the trouble when she commands her seven sons, the Mouse Princes, to steal all the sausage the Queen has made for the King's Royal Feast. When the Mouse Princes are caught and "shamefully executed" or beheaded by the King, she takes revenge and bites the King's little daughter, Princess Pirlipat. The Mouse Queen's bite is what causes the "Curse of Ugliness" to fall upon the little Princess.

For fifteen years, Princess Pirlipat has suffered under this terrible curse. She is almost of marrying age, but she is so ugly that no young man wants to marry her. It is not until Drosselmeyer, the Royal Clockmaker and Adept Court Magician to King of The Marzipan Palace, returns from his world travels in which he had been searching for the remedy to break the curse that the Princess will finally be freed.

Drosselmeyer arrives at the Palace with the Krakatuk Nut and his nephew, Nathaniel Drosselmeyer, prepared to free the Princess from the evil curse. Everyone anticipates that at last Princess Pirlipat will be beautiful again, and marry the wonderful boy, who has never shaved and only worn boots, who broke the spell. The Krakatuk Nut is cracked and fed to the Princess which

lifts the curse, but most unfortunately, the Mouse Queen bites Nathaniel and the “Curse of Ugliness” befalls him. It is the Mouse Queen's bite that turns Drosselmeyer's young nephew into the Nutcracker.

Without *The Tale of The Hard Nut*, the ballet was difficult to understand and Russian audiences were very disappointed. Petipa had not been allowed enough time to present the entire story as the usual three-act ballet because *The Nutcracker* was premiering with the opera, *Iolanta*, on the very same evening. A Russian political, economic, and literary newspaper, *Birzhevyie Vedomosti*, published the following about *The Nutcracker* premiere in December of 1892. “First of all *The Nutcracker* can in no event be called a ballet. It does not comply with even one of the demands made of a ballet. Ballet, as a basic genre of art, is mimed drama and consequently must contain all the elements of drama. On the other hand, there must be a place in ballet for plastic attitudes and dances, made up of the entire essence of classical choreography. There is nothing of this in *The Nutcracker*. There is not even a subject.” Perhaps, the Mouse Queen should not have been left out!



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Mouse Queen

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

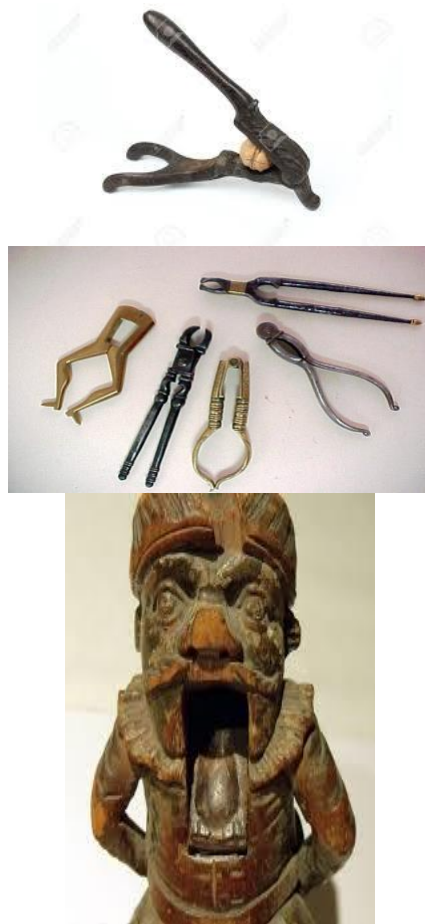
Lesson Number 20: HISTORY OF NUTCRACKERS AND WE DON'T MEAN BALLETS

Nuts have always been a primary food source for the human, and cracking them open presented a challenge requiring some sort of tool. We used to crack the nut open with a hammer and an anvil made of stone. Then came the hinged-lever which dates back to Ancient Greece, and around the 14th century materials such as silver, cast-iron, bronze, and wood were used to fashion this handy tool for cracking the nut. In the 15th century, especially in Germany, France, and Italy, nutcrackers began to be made out of wood that was carved into the forms of humans and animals. Kings, Knights, and Soldiers were very popular designs, and these figurative nutcrackers soon became a good luck symbol in Germany. King Henry VIII gave a pair of nutcrackers to Anne Boleyn, which obviously did not bring her “good luck.”

Even one of the most famous inventors in history, Leonardo da Vinci, created a large horse-powered press to crack nuts, but wood actually became the most popular material used to fashion nutcrackers. In the late 17th century, German woodworkers in the Erzgebirge region began carving the earliest version of that distinctive Soldier-Doll nutcracker we are most familiar with today. Portraying a human face with a very large mouth, these wooden nutcrackers were used to crack open nuts by lifting a lever that was hinged to the back of the figurine. As the lever was lifted, the big-toothed mouth would open so the nut could be inserted, and then the lever was pressed down firmly which cracked the nut.

Nutcrackers were not specifically made for Christmas, but because nuts were such a significant part of any holiday celebration they began to be given as gifts. The tradition of giving fruits and nuts to children during the holidays became especially popular at Christmas, as these tiny delectable tidbits fit perfectly into Christmas stockings. Halloween also joined the Christmas tradition of giving fruits and nuts, and in regions of Britain and Scotland Halloween was traditionally known as “Nutcrack Night.” Since little children were the ones receiving the nuts, they needed a simple way to crack them open. So, along with the nuts, the nutcracker became a traditional and practical Christmas gift that even doubled as a doll.

It is of interest to note that the production and sales of nutcrackers increased tremendously in 1892 after the premiere of *The Nutcracker*.



Assortment of Historic Nutcrackers

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 21: THE POLICHINELLES

What on earth is a Polichinelle? One might think it is some sort of exotic dessert, as Act II is filled with all sorts delightful things to eat. However, a Polichinelle is a “Little Puppet Clown” who is part of the grand entertainment for the Royal Wedding Feast of Clara and the Prince.

In Act II of *The Nutcracker*, Mother Ginger (Mere Gigogne) and Her Polichinelles provide adorable and humorous entertainment for Clara and the Prince. The Polichinelles, who are meant to be a complete surprise, hide under Mother Ginger’s enormous skirt as she parades around the stage. Eventually, the Polichinelles make their appearance two at a time, and cause absolute mayhem for poor Mother Ginger.

A historic photograph of one of the Polichinelles performing in the original Russian *The Nutcracker* that first premiered in St. Petersburg in 1892, and two photographs of Tacoma City Ballet's Polichinelles show the careful accuracy that was taken in replicating the costumes of this historic production. Since drawings, lithographs, and photographs were not in color, the most difficult part of reproducing the scenery and costumes was the determination of the colors. Researching artistic notes, audience memoirs, and critical reviews written at the time of the ballet’s premiere became imperative to the process of discovering colors. Due to the wide-spread destruction the arts suffered during the Russian Revolution, not only were they scarce and difficult to find, but were written in Russian. Fortunately, Tacoma City Ballet employed a Russian Piano Accompanist at the time who translated all the research documents.



The Nutcracker (1892)
Polichinelle



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Polichinelles

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 22: THE NUTCRACKER ACT II SCENERY

(THE ORIGINAL 1892 SET OF THE PALACE OF THE SUGAR PLUM KINGDOM)

Mikhail Bocharov (1831-1895) was a Russian stage artist and landscape painter. He studied his art at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. He also studied theatrical design in Austria, France, and Germany. Because his work was not only very lavish and intricate, but architecturally accurate as well, he was awarded several Gold Medals for his artistry in Russia.

From 1864 to 1895, Bocharov was employed by the Mariinsky Theatre as Set Designer. Although he designed scenery for numerous other productions, he is most recognized for his set design for the "Big Three" ballets, as they have come to be called. *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *The Nutcracker* (1892), and *Swan Lake* (1895).

Marius Petipa, creator and choreographer of *The Nutcracker*, ordered "very fantastic décor" for *The Sugar Plum Kingdom*. Having worked with Bocharov on his most recent and very triumphant production, *The Sleeping Beauty*, Petipa had complete confidence that the descriptions of the scenery he had given to Bocharov for *The Nutcracker* would be precisely what he requested.

Petipa's libretto contains the specific description for the scenery for *The Sugar Plum Kingdom* given to Bocharov: "In the middle of these fountains, on a river of rose-colored water, is seen a Pavilion of sugar-candy with transparent columns, where the Sugar-Plum Fairy and her retinue are seen. At the rising of the curtain, caramels, marzipan, ginger-bread, cinnamon, nut-cakes, sugar-plums, barley-sugar, peppermints, lollipops, almonds, raisins, pistachios, almond cakes and little silver-coated soldiers (the Palace sentries), are found on the stage."

Photographs of the historical Act II set and Tacoma City Ballet's reproduction of that set, display the tremendous architectural detail and gorgeous colors seen in that fabulous work of art by Mikhail Bocharov.



The Nutcracker (1892)
Act II - The Palace of The Sugar Plum Kingdom



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Act II - The Palace of The Sugar Plum Kingdom

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 23: GODFATHER DROSSELMAYER THE MAGICIAN

Who is Godfather Drosselmeyer anyway? In the original Russian *The Nutcracker*, Godfather Drosselmeyer was portrayed as a whimsical, yet wise, eccentric old gentleman who had travelled the world. Timofei Alekseyevich Stukolkin (1829-1894) was the famous Russian ballet dancer who danced the role of kindly Godfather Drosselmeyer in the premiere of *The Nutcracker* in 1892. The Oxford Dictionary of Dance has called him “one of the greatest character dancers” to ever take the stage. Nowadays, how Godfather Drosselmeyer is portrayed depends on the particular version of *The Nutcracker* being presented. However, we must look to *The Tale of The Hard Nut* to discover his real identity. Christian Elias Drosselmeyer, his full name, was the Royal Clockmaker and Adept Court Magician to King of The Marzipan Palace. Being the Adept Court Magician, he was able to transcend time, as well as perform impossible feats.

We first meet Drosselmeyer when he is summoned by the King and asked to trap the Mouse Queen and her seven sons, the Mouse Princes, who had stolen all of the King's sausage. Drosselmeyer, who is actually credited with inventing the first mousetrap, successfully captures all the Mouse Princes, but fails to capture the Mouse Queen. This is most unfortunate because when the King beheads all the Mouse Princes, the Mouse Queen exacts revenge by biting the King's only daughter, Princess Pirlipat. The bite inflicts the “Curse of Ugliness” on Princess Pirlipat and turns her into the very first Nutcracker.

Now, the King must send Drosselmeyer off to search the world for the remedy to this horrible curse, and tells him not to return to the Marzipan Palace until he has found the solution. Finally, after 15 years, 8 months, and 28 days, Drosselmeyer discovers the secret that will break the curse! It is the meat of the Krakatuk Nut, which must be fed to the Princess by a young man who has never shaved and has only worn boots. At last, Drosselmeyer has the Krakatuk Nut and his nephew, Nathaniel Drosselmeyer, who fits the description of the young man perfectly, to crack the nut and feed it to Princess Pirlipat. The Princess, now 16, is of marrying age and the King has vowed that the young man who breaks the curse will wed the Princess.

Just when we think all is going well, Nathaniel steps on the Mouse Queen while taking the required seven steps backward to break the curse. She bites him, and the “Curse of Ugliness” befalls Drosselmeyer's poor young nephew. He becomes the Nutcracker! Princess Pirlipat, having eaten the meat of the Krakatuk Nut, is now beautiful once again and refuses to marry Nathaniel because he is so ugly. The King is beside himself and once again commands Drosselmeyer to fix this problem once and for all.

Drosselmeyer knows that the curse on Nathaniel can only be broken if the young man can win the true love of a young lady despite his ugliness, and kill the eighth and last Mouse Prince, who is now the Mouse King. Why not just get another Krakatuk Nut? Well, most unfortunately, there aren't any more in the world, and that is why Godfather Drosselmeyer and his Nephew Nathaniel must attend Herr Silberhaus' Christmas Party. Perhaps, there, Nathaniel can find true love and get rid of the Mouse King at the same time!



The Nutcracker (1892)
Herr Drosselmeyer

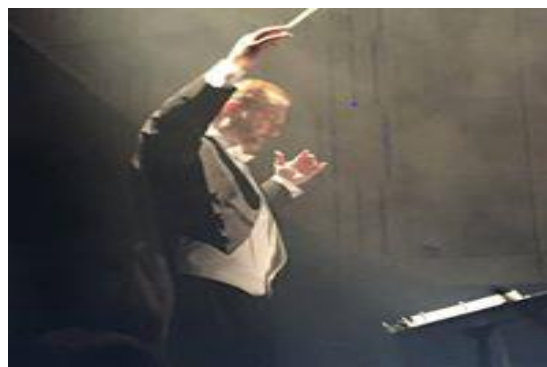
Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 24: THE "WORDLESS CHORUS"

The Nutcracker, like all major theatrical ballet productions, was created to include all the performing arts. Even though it was a ballet production, music and opera were integral parts of the production. In 1892, *The Nutcracker* was called one of the "Big Three" classical Russian ballets joining the roster with *Swan Lake* (1877), and *The Sleeping Beauty* (1889). It boasted having one of the most famous composers in history, P.I. Tchaikovsky, creating a fabulous score, alongside the brilliant choreographer, M. Petipa, who had produced the beloved *The Sleeping Beauty* just three years prior. Great and grand artistic achievements were expected of *The Nutcracker*.

To add an additional touch of mysterious beauty, Tchaikovsky decided to have his score call for a "Wordless Chorus" during The Waltz of The Snowflakes (Act I, No. 9) that would be invisible to the audience. He instructed that "this chorus should comprise 12 sopranos and 12 altos. It is all the more desirable that they should be youths from a choir. But if this is impractical, then this choral part may be performed by 24 voices of an operatic chorus." Indeed, Tchaikovsky was right and the beautiful voices added an ethereal magic to *The Fir Forest in Winter*.

This "Wordless Chorus" has fondly come to be known in the ballet world as the "Ah Chorus." In striving to give our audiences the most original historical Russian *The Nutcracker* experience possible, along with the Tacoma City Ballet Orchestra, we have always had the Tacoma City Ballet Chorus singing the "Ah Chorus." Over these many years, as per Mr. Tchaikovsky's advice, Tacoma City Ballet's "Ah Chorus" has been performed by local Tacoma high school choirs, as well as professional opera singers. The "Wordless Chorus" who is the "Invisible Chorus" as well, truly makes *The Land of Snow* a far more magical and mysterious place!



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Maestro Bernard Kwiram Conducting The "Wordless Chorus"



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Snowflakes

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 25: WHY DID PETIPA LEAVE OUT THE TALE OF THE HARD NUT?

Because the problem with the storyline itself remained unsolved, a multitude of different Nutcracker productions have been staged since 1892. *The Nutcracker* is the only classical ballet production that has suffered such variation in theme and choreography. The problem with *The Nutcracker*, unlike the usual classical ballet productions, was that it only had two acts instead of three. Because Petipa's new ballet premiered with Tchaikovsky's last opera, *Iolanta*, it could only be so long. After all, there is only so much time in one evening, and as it was, the Grand Pas De Deux was not even performed until the stroke of midnight making for an extremely long night at the theater and a very grumpy and complaining audience.

Unfortunately, due to this time constraint, the storyline of the ballet actually began in the middle of the story and not at the beginning. *The Tale of The Hard Nut*, the story within the story that creates the plot, was left out of the new ballet's libretto. Why did Godfather Drosselmeyer give Clara this hideous little wooden Nutcracker for Christmas? How does Godfather Drosselmeyer bring the Nutcracker back to life as a handsome Prince after he was killed by the Mouse King? Who is Godfather Drosselmeyer? Why does the Prince marry Clara at the end of the ballet? Doesn't Clara need to return home to her family? Without the explanation offered by *The Tale of The Hard Nut*, these questions could not be answered, and Russian audiences were confused because they did not have enough information to follow the storyline of the ballet.

For over hundred and twenty years, ballet audiences have simply accepted that *The Nutcracker* really didn't make much sense as a story, but was a lovely holiday ballet. In 2013, Tacoma City Ballet solved the problem of the plotless ballet by producing *The Tale of The Hard Nut* and attaching it to the ever beloved traditional, yet authentically original, *The Nutcracker*. This production was recognized and applauded throughout the ballet world as finally presenting a third act for *The Nutcracker* which explained the whole story. So, if you want to know the whole story and still see your traditional *The Nutcracker* too, Tacoma City Ballet's production is the one for you!



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Nathaniel Cracks The Magical Krakatuk Nut

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 26: THE FIRST SUGAR PLUM FAIRY

Antonietta Dell'Era (1861-1945) was an Italian prima ballerina. However, between 1886 and 1894, she performed exclusively in Russia. At that time, such a huge influx of talented Italian ballet dancers flooded into Russia that this famed migration was called the "Italian Invasion." Dell'Era was part of the "Italian Invasion" along with Enrico Cecchetti who later developed Cecchetti Method or the Italian Technique for Classical Ballet.

Although Dell'Era had a long and successful career at the Berlin Opera, her fame resides in her role as the Sugar Plum Fairy in the premiere of *The Nutcracker* in 1892, which is quite astonishing considering the terrible critical reviews she received.

Even though Dell'Era received five curtain calls at the premiere performance of *The Nutcracker*, the critical reviews of this new ballet, and particularly her performance, were quite dismal. Not only did she suffer disapproval from the pen of the critics, but even worse, from the words of the ballet dancers as well. Nicolai Solyannikov, one of the Russian dancers, thought that her performance in *The Nutcracker* was terrible. He says, "this coarse, ungraceful dancer is much to the German taste." It must be noted that during this time, dance artists were influenced by the rise of Expressionism, and were very opposed to the rigidity of classical ballet. Needless to say, that even then, as now, ballet reflected political and cultural changes. One of the very worst reviews written for *The Nutcracker* was about the Sugar Plum Fairy. The critic, harshly described Dell'Era as "a corpulent and ungraceful dancer." Even Tchaikovsky himself said she was "pudgy and unattractive."

However, these harsh criticisms from the Russians were unsubstantiated by the fact that Dell'Era had a successful career at the Berlin Opera both before and after *The Nutcracker*. From 1879 to 1909, she was constantly adored by numerous critics, including Theodor Fontane, a famed critic and writer.

Before her death in 1945, Dell'Era expressed the wish that her estate should be used solely to help dancers in need. The Dell'Era-Gedächtnis-Stiftung Foundation was established after her death, and provided dancers and their families with financial assistance towards the cost of living, the cost medical expenses, the cost of training and retraining for other positions of employment.



**The Nutcracker (1892)
The Sugar Plum Fairy**

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 27: SNOW WANDS

Named after the Empress Maria Alexandrovna, wife of Czar Alexander II, the new Mariinsky Theatre opened in 1860 and proceeded to become the most prominent theater in late 19th century Russia. The original building had been destroyed by fire in 1859, and the new reconstruction of the theater included increasing the width of the stage to the same size as that of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, making the proscenium arch wider than that of La Scala Theatre in Milan, and lengthening the auditorium. The stage, alone, was close to 10,000 square feet, and the lavish auditorium boasted of gilt molded decorations, white sculptures, blue velvet chairs, and a splendid three-tiered chandelier. Due to the Russian Revolution, the Mariinsky Theatre's name has been changed five times, but it is presently the Mariinsky Theatre once again.

To any choreographer, the size of the stage is one of the first and foremost things to consider in the creation of a new production. Petipa, who had created for the Mariinsky many times before *The Nutcracker*, faced one interesting problem in having to somehow create snowfall. With its 75 foot proscenium, it would have been impossible to hang and operate the conventionally used Snow Cradle in the Mariinsky, even if it had been invented. So, in order to create the illusion of snowfall, Petipa began with a corps de ballet composed of 60 dancers to fill the immense Mariinsky Stage, and then designed hand-held snow wands that would be extensions of the dancers' arms reaching high above their heads. As they performed their port de bras or carriage of the arms, the snow wands they held in their hands would look like whirling snowflakes falling from the sky.

Necessity demanded ingenuity, and Petipa created one of the most beautiful scenes in all of classical ballet, *The Fir Forest in Winter* or as it has come to be called, *The Land of Snow*.



**The Nutcracker (1892)
The Snowflakes**



**The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
The Snowflakes**

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 28: HOW DOES NATHANIEL BREAK THE CURSE OF UGLINESS?

How will the "Curse of Ugliness" that fell upon Nathaniel when he was bitten by the Mouse Queen be broken? Godfather Drosselmeyer has told Nathaniel that there are two very important things that he must do in order to free himself from this most horrible curse. First, he must find true love. He must find a young lady who will love him no matter what his faults and despite his most awful defects. Then, he must kill the Mouse King who has vowed to avenge the deaths of seven brothers and his mother. He must rid the world of this evil intention.

When Godfather Drosselmeyer brings Nathaniel to Herr and Frau Silberhaus' Christmas Party, his opportunity to achieve both of these prerequisites to freedom is presented. When Clara displays her true love for him, his first task is accomplished. In the darkness of the night, she sneaks down to the Parlor to get her beloved Nutcracker even though he had been broken by her evil little brother, Fritz, at the Christmas Party.

One down and one to go! As Clara falls asleep with her precious Nutcracker in her arms, the Mouse King sneaks into the Parlor with his Mouse Army and prepares to bite her. Fortunately, Godfather Drosselmeyer is there to save her, and turn the little wooden Nutcracker into a tall soldier with a real live army to protect her. The battle ensues, and although Nathaniel puts up a valiant fight, the Mouse King kills him. However, it is Clara who saves the day hitting the Mouse King over the head with her shoe and killing him.

Clara is left broken-hearted crying for her beloved Nutcracker who has died, but suddenly, as if out of thin air, Godfather Drosselmeyer appears at the end of the battle to console her and magically brings the Nutcracker back to life in his true form, a handsome Prince.



The Nutcracker & The Tale of The Hard Nut
Tacoma City Ballet
Clara and The Mouse King

Welcome To: Miss Erin's Daily Nutcracker History Lesson

Lesson Number 29: THE MASTERMIND OF THE NUTCRACKER

Victor Marius Alphonse Petipa (1818-1910) was a French ballet dancer who became one of the most influential figures in the history of classical ballet. Petipa was born in Marseilles, France, to a mother who was a tragic actress and teacher of drama and a father who was among the most renowned ballet masters in Europe. He began under his father's tutelage at the age of nine, and finished his training under the great Balletmaster Auguste Vestris. His professional career spanned many European countries, but also included the United States.

In 1846, while dancing in Spain, he began a love affair with the wife of the Marquis de Chateaubriand who was a prominent member of the French Embassy. When the Marquis learned of the affair, he challenged Petipa to a duel. Rather than keep the fateful appointment, Petipa quickly left Spain returning to France. Unfortunately, Petipa had not learned his lesson and seduced yet another man's wife. Since duels in France were banned, the angry husband threatened Petipa with legal actions and Petipa's family decided it was best for him to leave France. Petipa's brother, Lucien, who was also a dancer, sent an inquiry for Marius to work in St. Petersburg. Fortunately, a strong male dancer was needed to partner one of the leading Russian ballerinas, and Marius found himself beginning his career in St. Petersburg's Imperial Theatre that would turn out to be a most illustrious one.

After a long career as a dancer and choreographer, Petipa was named the Premier Maître de Ballet of the Imperial Theatre in 1871 at the age of fifty-three. When Alexander III was crowned Russian Emperor in 1881, it is said that the "Golden Age of Russian Ballet" began. The treasury of the Russian Emperor, who was the wealthiest person in the world at that time, lavished millions of rubles a year on the Imperial Ballet, Imperial Opera, and Imperial Theatrical School.

Each new season, Petipa was required to create a new grand ballet, stage ballet sections for the opera, and prepare divertissements for court performances and royal nuptials. Although he choreographed countless ballets, three of his ballets have stood the test of time. The first, *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), proved to be Petipa's ultimate choreographic masterpiece. By 1903,

this ballet had been performed over 100 times making it the second most popular work in the Imperial Ballet's repertory. The second, *The Nutcracker* (1892), became the most beloved classical ballet in all the world, and the third *Swan Lake* (1877) (1895 Restaged), became the greatest of all ballets, remaining to this day one of the ultimate tests in virtuosity for the ballerina and the corps de ballet.

From start to finish, for both Petipa and Tchaikovsky, *The Nutcracker* was fraught with problems and personal tragedy. Tchaikovsky was not enthusiastic about composing *The Nutcracker*, but by February of 1891 he began to compose the music for the new ballet after receiving a list of instructions from Petipa. He continued composing while on a concert tour of France and America, but became overtaken by great emotional distress because he was not satisfied with the music he had composed. His torment was only to increase when he learned the devastating news that his sister Alexandra had died which prompted him to request that the new ballet's premiere be postponed until the following season.

When the score was finally completed, it was discovered that the ballet's libretto differed from the instructions Tchaikovsky had received, as well as from Petipa's own plan. The omission of the story about the Mouse Queen and Princess Pirlipat contained within Hoffmann's tale erased any dark tone which left the ballet to be simply a children's tale without any significance or moral.

After all the arguments had ended, Petipa finally began *The Nutcracker* rehearsals. However, in August of 1892, Petipa suffered a terrible tragedy when his 15 year-old daughter, Evgenia, died of cancer. Petipa withdrew as choreographer, and that September he was diagnosis with the severe skin disease, Pemphigus. The constant pain and itching that accompanies this affliction caused him to refrain from choreographing for the rest of the season, and the responsibility of staging *The Nutcracker* fell to Lev Ivanov, Petipa's Second Ballet Master.

Although withdrawn from principal responsibility for *The Nutcracker*, it is highly likely that Petipa managed to communicate his choreographic ideas and stage direction to Ivanov.



Marius Petipa, The Dancer



Marius Petipa