



# The Nutcracker

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Queensland Ballet Principal Artist Mia Heathcote. Photography David Kelly.

## From the Artistic Director

Watching the theatre transform into a wintery wonderland of enchanted toys, midnight escapades, and fluttering snowflakes – a stark contrast to the Brisbane heat outside – is still one of my favourite times of the year.

There is something wonderful about preparing this festive favourite for audiences each December; it signals the beginning of that magical period where families and friends come together in reflection and celebration.

When I first introduced Ben Stevenson OBE's *The Nutcracker* to Brisbane 11 years ago, I had a feeling that audiences would love this version as much as I do! Ben is a master storyteller, weaving magic through his characters and choreography to transport us to a world of enchantment one snowy Christmas Eve. The charm in this production transcends generations, and instilling it as a holiday tradition in Queensland Ballet's repertoire is one of my proudest legacies.

It takes a very talented team on and off the stage to pull it together so beautifully, and it would not shimmer quite so brightly without the beautiful costume designs by Desmond Heeley, assisted by our own Resident Costume Designer Noelene Hill. Thomas Boyd's stunning set designs further enchant us, sparkling under the ambient lighting designs of David Walters, revived by the talented Cameron Goerg. Tchaikovsky's score is truly iconic, and Queensland Symphony Orchestra, under the experienced baton of our Music Director and Principal Conductor Nigel Gaynor, performs it exquisitely. A huge thank you to these talented musicians for joining us once again for

I wish to thank everyone who has supported my vision for an annual *Nutcracker* performance, in particular Valmai Pidgeon AM and Amanda Talbot who enabled this dream with their generous giving and support. Thank you also to Sealy Australia and Simon Dyer and his family who support the magic of this Christmas production for families through their partnership and legacy.

A further heartfelt thanks to all our partners and supporters, including the State and Federal Governments, who make our productions possible. We continue to look to a future that puts artistic excellence, cultural connectivity, community health, and wellness at the heart of everything

As my final *Nutcracker* program note for my tenure at Queensland Ballet, I want to take a moment to thank every single person who came to a show, took a class, collaborated with us, and supported us. We wouldn't be the world-class ballet company we are today without all of you. The past 11 years have been one of the most rewarding and enjoyable periods of my life, and I'm so proud of everything we have achieved. Mary and I look forward to supporting this beloved company with you as it continues on its beautiful and aspirational journey.

Li Cunxin AO
Artistic Director



## Credits

Choreographer Ben Stevenson OBE

Composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Music Arranger and Conductor Nigel Gaynor Costume Designer
Desmond Heeley

Associate Costume Designer Noelene Hill

Set Designer
Thomas Boyd

Lighting Designer
David Walters

Revival Lighting Designer Cameron Goerg

Music Performed by Queensland Symphony Orchestra

Duration: Approximately two hours, including a 20-minute interval.

Matinee performances on 3, 6, 8, 14 and 15 December are performed to recorded music. Recording by Queensland Symphony Orchestra and Voices of Birralee, conducted by Nigel Gaynor.

A classical ballet in two acts, based on ETA Hoffmann's tale of *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* (1816). First produced on 18 December 1892 by the Imperial Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, Russia. Choreographed by Ben Stevenson OBE in 1976, this production of *The Nutcracker* was first performed in 1987 by Houston Ballet in the Wortham Theater, Houston, Texas. Queensland Ballet's first performance of this production was on 5 December 2013.

This production has been enabled by the generous support of Valmai Pidgeon AM and Amanda Talbot.

Every effort was made to ensure program details were correct at the time of printing, however details are subject to change where necessary and without notice. Please check **queenslandballet.com.au** for updates.



# The Story

## Act I

Herr Stahlbaum and his wife are giving a Christmas party. Clara and Fritz, their children, greet the guests. All the children are given toys by their parents. Suddenly, the mysterious Dr Drosselmeyer arrives and entertains the children with his magical tricks and wind-up dolls. Dr Drosselmeyer brings a special gift for Clara, a wooden Nutcracker. In a jealous fit, Fritz breaks it, but Dr Drosselmeyer quickly repairs the Nutcracker. The party ends, the guests leave and the Stahlbaums retire for the night. Clara awakens, the clock strikes midnight and the room fills with giant mice which attack her! Life-sized toy soldiers, led by the valiant Nutcracker, come to her rescue. The King Rat attacks the Nutcracker, but Clara hits him with her shoe and the Nutcracker wins the battle. After the battle, the Nutcracker turns into a handsome prince. The Nutcracker Prince transforms the Stahlbaum's house into the Land of Snow. The Snow Queen and the Snow Prince dance with the Snowflakes. Clara and the Nutcracker Prince depart for the Kingdom of Sweets in a beautiful, enchanted sleigh.

## Act II

Clara and the Nutcracker Prince continue their journey across the Lemonade Sea. When they arrive in the Kingdom of Sweets, the cooks are preparing delectable treats for their enjoyment, and they are greeted by the Sugar Plum Fairy. In Clara's honour, the Sugar Plum Fairy arranges for the inhabitants of her kingdom to entertain them while they eat by performing a Spanish dance, an Arabian dance and a Chinese dance. Clara is also entertained by the Dance of the Mirlitons, a dance with Mother Ginger and her children, a Russian dance and the Waltz of the Flowers. Then, the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Nutcracker Prince dance a grand pas de deux. As the celebration draws to a close, Clara drifts off to sleep. She awakens from her dreams as the Nutcracker salutes his Princess Clara.

# For Young Audiences

## Act

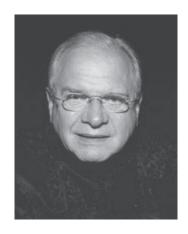
Clara and Fritz are playing with gifts at their parents' Christmas party. In a jealous fit, Fritz breaks Clara's Nutcracker doll, but the mysterious Dr Drosselmeyer repairs it. When the clock strikes midnight, the room fills with giant mice which attack Clara. Life-sized toy soldiers led by the valiant Nutcracker come to her rescue against the King Rat. The Nutcracker turns into a handsome prince and transforms the house into the Land of Snow. Clara and the Nutcracker Prince depart for the Kingdom of Sweets in an enchanted sleigh.

## Act II

When they arrive, the Sugar Plum Fairy and all the kingdom's inhabitants entertain them with beautiful dances. As the celebration closes, Clara drifts off to sleep. She awakens from her dreams as the Nutcracker salutes his Princess Clara.

Queensland Ballet acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we train and perform. Long before we arrived on this land, it played host to the dance expression of our First Nations Peoples. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the valuable contribution they have made and continue to make to the cultural landscape of this country.

# About the Choreographer

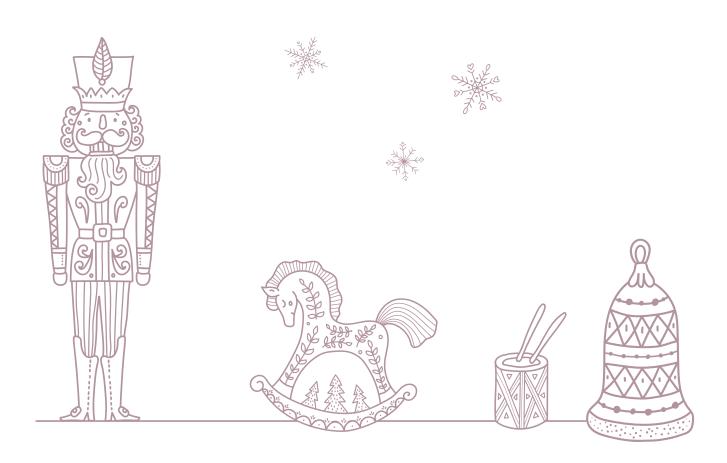


Ben Stevenson OBE Choreographer

Ben Stevenson, a native of Portsmouth, England, received his dance training at the Arts and Educational School in London. He appeared with the Royal Ballet and English National Ballet where, as a principal dancer, he performed lead roles in all the classics.

He has received numerous awards for his choreography, including three gold medals at the International Ballet Competitions. For his contributions to international dance, Mr. Stevenson was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) by Queen Elizabeth II in December 1999. In April 2000, he was presented with the Dance Magazine Award. In 2018, Mr. Stevenson was acknowledged by the Chinese government as one of the most influential Foreign Experts in the past 40 years since China initiated its policy on Reform and Opening Up.

Mr. Stevenson assumed the artistic directorship of Texas Ballet Theater in July 2003. In 2022, Mr. Stevenson was named Artistic Director Laureate in recognition of his lengthy tenure. Previously he served as Artistic Director of Houston Ballet (1976-2003), elevating the company from a regional troupe to an internationally acclaimed ensemble.



## About the Music



Nigel Gaynor
Music Arranger, Conductor
and Music Director

Tchaikovsky composed *The Nutcracker* in 1893; an extraordinary achievement towards the end of his life. During this year, he had spent much of his time touring the United States, where he conducted many of his orchestral works.

The instrumentation of this ballet is remarkable. In particular, Tchaikovsky engaged a large woodwind section, which brings many orchestral colours to the score. Among the woodwinds, he included piccolo, cor anglais and bass clarinet. Tchaikovsky innovatively included the ethereal sounding celeste to the orchestra, which he had found in Paris some years earlier. He first used this instrument in the previous year for his symphonic poem *The Voyevoda*. This instrument now famously characterises the Sugar Plum Fairy solo in Act II.

Another treasured element of the score is the children's chorus, during the climactic Snow Flakes dance at the conclusion of Act I. We welcome back the choirs of St Peters' Lutheran College and Voices of Birralee as they bring their beautiful gift to our performances.

The magic of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* reflects much of his genius as a composer. Harmonically, he takes us on a journey, much the way the story on stage does. The ballet begins at the Stahlbaums' home and moves to the Land of Snow, the Kingdom of Sweets, and then ends up back in the family home. In terms of the harmony, we begin in the key of B Flat, eventually making our way to E major at the conclusion of Act I — the farthest key away from B flat. Clara's journey from home to the far away Kingdom of Sweets is just as distant!

The Nutcracker is one of Tchaikovsky's most loved works, filled with many of the most famous tunes in all ballet repertoire. Its joyful yet dramatic tale is one that has become synonymous with the Christmas yuletide. For me, my earliest memory of the beauty of classical music is the theme from the Arabian dance. It is still a personal favourite of mine.



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Lucy Green



Mia Heathcote



Alexander Idaszak



Yanela Piñera



Patricio Revé



Joel Woellner



Neneka Yoshida

## Senior Soloists



Chiara Gonzalez



Kohei Iwamoto

## Soloists



Vito Bernasconi



Lina Kim



Georgia Swan



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Ari Thompson



Kayla Van Den Bogert

## Jette Parker Young Artists



Shanti Barlow



Indi Drew



Josh Fagan



Sean Ferenczi



Taron Geyl



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Joseph Moss



Hana Nonaka Aillon



Alisa Pukkinen



Tom Umseher



Eliza Wenham



Mia Zanardo

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Kai Burrows
Carlotta Casseus
Olivia Chung
Malcom Doyle
Eloise Ferguson
Carter Gibson

Chelsea Henderson Ebayi Escher Kenzler Inka Kenzler Maddie Kluger Jude Males Charles Matheson Grace Mattner Florence Nason Annabelle Nozic Oscar Peet Sophie Pryce Dean Round Lucy Sadler Amelia Samorody Charlie Small Reggie Smith Ellyse Stanford
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Mary Li Ballet Mistress & Principal Répétiteur



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Ballet Master



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Natalie Weir Resident Choreographer



Jack Lister Associate Choreographer



Nigel Gaynor Music Director & Principal Conductor

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Eliza Scott Ben Spiers Iona Tache Steven Tooke

Claire Tyrell Sonia Wilson

Violin 2

Wayne Brennan ~ Gail Aitken ~ Sarah Dietz

Faina Dobrenko Simon Dobrenko

Kevin Hsu Ceridwen Jones Delia Kinmont Natalie Low

Nicholas Thin Helen Travers Harold Wilson Viola

Charlotte Burbrook de Vere =

Raquel Bastos Ella Beard Patrick Brearley Lucy Carrigy-Ryan Gregory Daniel Karen Gordon

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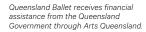
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# Queensland

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LI CUNXIN AO



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