

Nutcracker Fact Sheet



Choreographer: Matthew Bourne

Designer: Anthony Ward

Lighting: Howard Harrison

1992 - First production of Nutcracker was for Opera North, Bourne re-choreographed this for the centenary celebration. Premiered in Sadlers Wells.

2002 - New Adventures set up by Matthew Bourne and a revised version of Nutcracker premiered at Sadlers Wells. It was later televised and then a DVD recording produced.

The ballet 'The Nutcracker' was choreographed originally by lev Ivanov, for the Imperial Ballet, based at the Marnisky Theatre in St Petersburg.

The ballet 'The Nutcracker' was based on a story by E.T.A. Hoffman: 'Der Nussknacker und der Mousekonig'

This was the first full-length story Ballet for Matthew Bourne. It was not in 2 Acts as the evening included first the ballet and the interval was followed by an opera. AMP only had 6 dancers, but with funding from Opera North, Kobler trust and Arts Council they were able to employ 20 dancers.

ACT ONE

1. Intro
2. Preparations for a visit
3. Presents and Party pieces
4. Time for bed
5. The Revolt
6. The Frozen Lake

ACT TWO

7. The road to Sweetieland
8. By Invitation Only
 - a. Liquorice Allsort
 - b. Knickerbocker Glory
 - c. Marshmallows
 - d. Gobstoppers
9. The Wedding Party

The Story

In a traditional 'Nutcracker' Victorian scenario, both adults and children inhabit a world of innocence, bathed in the glow of a Christmas community of nurturing, charity and 'family values' Bourne does away with all that kind of Christmas. Instead of a cosy Victorian home, Bourne gives us a Dickenson Third Reich where the ballet's only family embodies not holiday charity but greed and exploitation. Instead of a middle-class home Clara is an inmate of Dr. Dross' Orphanage for Waifs and Strays run by Dr. Dross himself and the matron, his wife. Bourne chose to use an orphanage as he felt this represented a fantasy in itself, therefore when the audience is transported into Clara's fantasy world they would really have just gone from one idyllic fantasy to another.

As the story begins, the orphans are preparing for the holiday visit of Orphanage's Governors. The entire Orphanage scene is in the tradition a musical where the feature production is a kind of gala performance for the Governors. In this performance of homely orphans, the Dross' children Sugar and Fritz are the principle dancers for whom the orphans merely serve as an anonymous corps. However the Matron and Dr. Dross get their own moment of fame, a Cruella de Vil number for the Matron and a barbells and hoops for Drosss. However all too soon the performance is over and the Governors depart. Dross and his wife drop their festive marks and soon the toys and holiday decorations are rounded up and taken away including Clara's beloved Nutcracker Doll.

Note: Perhaps Bourne is commenting on the fictive, performative nature of Christmas - that just as the holiday season passes, the good behaviour and kindness of the season also soon passes.

Night time at the Orphanage brings the Nutcracker Doll to life as a somewhat creepy manikin. Instead of the battle of the mice and toy soldiers, Bourne gives us 'The Revolt' of the orphans who bundle the whole Dross family from the stage. Soon the Nutcracker transforms from a life sized puppet into the object of young Clara's daytime infatuation, a fellow orphan but now a pumped up muscle god, bare chested, strapping and studly. Instead of the traditional choreography, Bourne crates a 'Mr Universe - rejecting familiar models of balletic masculine.

In the next section, Bourne continues to re-work cultural material changing the Waltz of the Snowflakes into an ice skating wonderland. Bourne uses the falling snow to show the childlike pleasure everyone feels when it begins to snow. The Dross children re-appear as Princess Sugar and Prince Bon-Bon, who scheme to romance the Nutcracker away from Clara, and as the curtain falls, the Nutcracker and Princess Sugar are the stars of their own ice follies while the abandoned Clara retreats to an enormous pillow at the back of the stage.

ACT TWO

After a quick 'mini-extreme Makeover' with the help of the obliging Cupids, Clara sheds her drab, formless orphan dress for a bright blue, summer dress with polka dots

and proceeds to Sweetieland in search for love. Will she get into Sweetieland in time to prevent the marriage of the Nutcracker and Princess Sugar?

To get past the Humbug Bouncer, Clara tries to sneak in with the wedding guests.
Liquorice Allsorts - Brill cream and butt slapping
Knickerbocker Glory - puffing away at a cigarette holder, thrusting pelvic actions over the floor.
Marshmellow girls - ditzzy girls that resembling clipped poodles in fluffy pink.
Gobstoppers - bounding madly about like monkey's in a mosh pit

Sweetieland presided over by King Sherbert and Queen Candy has a Willy Wonka feel.

At one time or another (but mostly continuously) Sweetieland's inhabitants indulge in licking, kissing, tasting, mouthing, lapping, slurping and other orally erotic behaviours. Sugar and Nutcracker taste each other, King Sherbert and Queen Candy taste the Nutcracker, the Knickerbocker Glory tastes Clara, the Gobstopper's taste the Marshmellow girls, everybody tastes everybody else and even themselves. It becomes a rollicking, sugar shack lip smacking orgy.

Everything is edible in Sweetieland and its inhabitants are judged not on how they look but how they taste!!

Clara emerges from behind the Wedding cake and briefly distracts the Nutcracker but is hustled out of Sweetieland by the Humbug Bouncer. The wedding of the Nutcracker and Princess Sugar set to the Sugar Plum Fairy goes ahead creating the sense that the 'wrong' girl has gotten the guy. Fortunately for those weak hearted who insist on a happy ending, the evening ends with Clara's awakening and eventual escape from the orphanage with the boy who is the real life model for the Nutcracker.

Differences between Bourne & Ballet

Ballet / Original Version

Huge Victorian xmas party with large tree
Party games, toys alive
Guests Leave
Toys V's mice
Snowflake scene
Celebration
Chocolate *Spanish Dance*
Coffee *Arabian Dance*
Tea *Chinese Dance*
Trepak *Russian Dance*
Dance of the Flutes
Waltz of the Flowers
Pas de deux and ensemble

Bourne 2002

Orphanage with a twig
Games, keep fit
Governors leave
Dross family V's Orphans pillow fight
Frozen Lake
Wedding
Liquorice Allsorts
Knickerbocker Glory
Marshmellow Girls
Gobstoppers Dance
Mirlitons
Invitation to the party
Wedding cake: licking dance: party

The Characters

Clara

Act One (Orphanage) = Clara

Act One (Frozen Lake) = Clara

Act Two (Sweetieland) = Clara

In Act one we see Clara trying to get attention off the Nutcracker but ends up embarrassing herself by accidentally spilling water on him. Clara's character is conservative, but has a simple purity and innocence



Nutcracker

Act One in Orphanage = Nutcracker orphan

Act One Frozen Lake = Doll and man

Act Two Sweetieland = Nutcracker man

In act one we see the Nutcracker - the boy who Clara has a crush on.

Sugar

Act One in Orphanage = Sugar as a child

Act One Frozen Lake = Sugar (pink dress)

Act Two Sweetieland = Princess Sugar

Sugar is a typical spoilt brat who wants everything her own way all of the time. In Act one we see her gorge herself with sweets that the Governors bring and selfishly plays with the doll they gave to the orphan children, We then see her try and take the Nutcracker away from Clara as she wants everything and thinks that Clara's toy is better than her own. After fighting over it and breaking it she walks away picking up her own doll. Act one we also see that she likes the Nutcracker boy and gives him a number of suggestive looks. At the frozen lake she conjures up a plot to steal the



Nutcracker mans attention away from Clara and gets Fritz to throw a large snowball at him knocking him over and Sugar comes to his aid.

In Act two we see her become the glamorous Princess sugar who becomes so obsessed with herself that she has a large mirror as her background so that she can watch herself dance.

Fritz

Exaggerated facial expressions portray a spoilt brat

The Twins

Act One in Orphanage = friends of Clara's with glasses

Act One Frozen Lake = 1st Skater's on stage

Act Two = Cupid's in blue and white pyjamas



Everyone in Sweetieland is vain about how sweet they are!!

The Liquorice Allsorts



2 male dancers and 1 female. Vain up-themselves characters. Quite camp in both their appearance and also their movements, they use a lot of bum shaking and slapping. Also has a sexual feel.

The

Act One in

Act One

Act Two =



Knickerbocker Glory

Orphanage = Smoking orphan

Frozen Lake = Skater

Knickerbocker Glory (smoking)

Lewd and sticky he tries to lure Clara in to his clutches. He uses movements that resemble that of a snake charmer, he tries to seduce Clara, wraps around her with his arms and legs. He wants her to belong to him.

The Marshmellow Girls - 5 dancers all female. Ditzzy girls running and posing, miming gestures suggesting they are lost. Forgetful characters. They all follow the leader. They use the invitation as a prop and keep refereeing to it throughout their section as if looking at the address for the party.

The Gobstoppers

Yobby boys, who have a punk / biker persona. They have leather waistcoats on with a tight t-shirt underneath that has a target in the centre of their chest. They also wear helmets that are very smooth and shiny and that resemble a gobstopper. They are each a different colour - yellow, blue and pink.

They use crude gestures and dance in a harsh rough manner, they throw themselves on the floor, they throw each other in the air, big jumps. They also fight (kick, lurch, slap, bite) each other as if in competition for Clara only they get so carried away in their fighting they don't realise that she is no longer there.

Types of Dance

Broad classification of dance is generally quite simple, like music or any other art we accept terms such as classical, modern, ethnic, jazz, pop.

Commonly accepted terms are also used when describing types of dance composition more specifically. These include pure, abstract, comic, and dramatic dance/drama - drama

Pure Dance

Pure dance has usually originated from a kinaesthetic stimulus and deals exclusively with movement itself. It usually has no limitations of movement range. In fact it may have several sections in it, each of which has different movement emphasis. Examples of Pure Dance include those where the movement itself, as interpretation of the music, becomes the basis for formed works of art.

ABSTRACT DANCE

An abstract dance implies that the composer has abstracted some thought about one or several stimuli and identifies these through movement images which bear fairly close resemblance to them.

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‘something (movement) that concentrates in itself the essential qualities of an idea’ - Webster’s Dictionary 1966

Comic Dance

Movement material requires a certain kind of handling if it is to be comic. Comic movement might be achieved by making body parts in peculiarly co-ordinated ways taking them out of their normal space zones. Inverting in stance, performing movements which are usually taken on the vertical plane on a horizontal plane, stressing the use of the face and small body parts like the fingers and toes, could make comic movement. Perhaps also the choreographer could try for unpredictable movement.

Very often comic dance is mimetic in nature or have parts of mime. The movement content can be very representational of real life or, perhaps have deviations or exaggerations of certain elements which may cause comedy

Dramatic Dance and Dance-Drama

Dramatic dance implies that the idea to be communicated is powerful and exciting, dynamic and tense, and probably involves a conflict between people or within the individual. The dramatic dance will concentrate on a happening or mood which does not unfold a story.

Dance drama on the other hand, has a story to tell and does so by the means of several scenes sequentially arranged. Because dramatic dance and dance-drama are concerned with emotions and happenings related to people, characterisation is a prominent feature

Example: a dance depicting Lady Macbeth’s agony of the mind would be dramatic dance, but the portrayal of the actual story of Macbeth would be dance-drama

Dramatic dance implies that the idea to be communicated is powerful and exciting, dynamic and tense, and probably involves conflict between people or within the individual. The dramatic dance will concentrate upon a happening or mood, which does not unfold a story. Dance-drama, on the other hand, has a story to tell and does so by means of several dramatic dance episodes, or scenes sequentially arranged.

Because dramatic dance and dance-drama are concerned with emotions and happenings related to people, characterisation is a prominent feature. The composer has to carefully study character and mood in reality, and understand how to dramatise the movement content for dance. This, he learns, is done through exaggeration of the action, dynamics or space characteristics, particular development of the rhythmic patterns and emphasis on body shape and stance.

Stress on the dynamic content in movement always tends to give dramatic impact. Also, in a dramatic dance there is nearly always relationship between people, or between an individual and an object and these relationships are always emotive. However, orientation of the relationship must not remain strictly between dancers and the confines of their space. The composer should take care that the audience also can identify with the dramatic relationships within the dance. Projection of dramatic involvement is a difficult technique in dance composition. The composer must try many ways of putting this across. Perhaps spatial placement, directional alignment and the use of focus are of paramount importance.

Physical Setting

The proscenium Stage

This picture frame *proscenium* stage is the traditional set up. Used for most classical ballets it can offer many possibilities if used correctly. Many modern choreographers now choose to work in very different types of venue (Lea Anderson - Cross Channel). Placement of dancers is important on this type of stage as if there is a key moment in the piece it is often performed to the front of the stage.

In-The-Round

Can be difficult for an audience to decide what to watch and when. As the choreographer you must alternate the placing and fronts of the dancers