

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **SUSAN JAFFE** PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE



Act 1

Tonight's story is about a very special Christmas Eve in Pittsburgh many years ago. This is no ordinary Christmas Eve. This is a night full of magic.

The Stahlbaums are having their annual Christmas Eve party. Everyone looks forward to the festivities each year – especially the Stahlbaum children. Marie, the Stahlbaum's daughter, has grown into a lovely young lady, and her little brother, Fritz, is as mischievous as ever.



Tonight, Marie receives two special gifts from her parents: a beautiful blue scarf from her father and, from her mother, her very first pair of pointe shoes. These shoes are extra special, because they mean that Marie is growing up.

Herr Drosselmeyer, Marie and Fritz's godfather, is a watchmaker and magician. Each year, he dazzles and delights party guests with his magic, leaving everyone in wonder.

This year, Herr Drosselmeyer brings a guest: his nephew, who hides his face behind a mask to conceal an evil curse cast upon him by a vengeful Mouse Queen.

Herr Drosselmeyer feels responsible for this curse. You see, long ago, while living in Germany, the king ordered him to hunt down the mice living beneath the palace floors and trap them! The clever Mouse Queen was able to escape the traps with one of her sons.

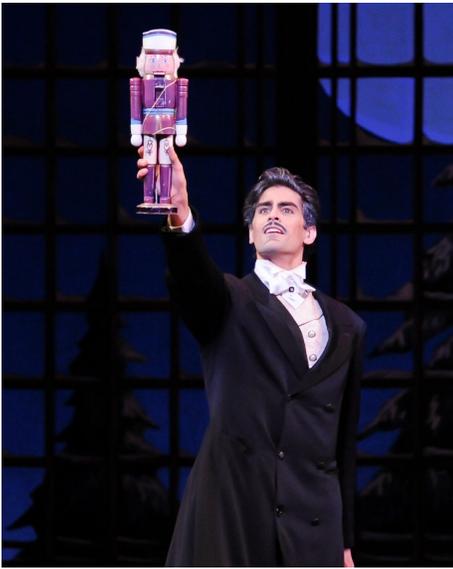
Later, when Drosselmeyer and his nephew were visiting the castle, the Mouse Queen popped up through the boards of the floor! This startled the nephew, causing him to step on her.

With her dying breath, she cursed him. She told him her son would grow up to be the mighty Mouse King, and he would find the nephew to enact his revenge. The only way to break the curse is for a young maiden to fall in love with the nephew, despite the curse. With that, she marred his handsome appearance, knowing that finding such a girl would be nearly impossible.

And now we're off to the Stahlbaum's party, where the children of the neighborhood dance and play while the adults enjoy holiday drinks and share stories with one another.

Marie has put on her pointe shoes and cannot wait to show them off at the party.

The party becomes even more lively and festive as the guests laugh and dance the night away. One guest wears a kilt made from the traditional tartan of the famous Carnegie family and dances with his son to everyone's delight.



Drosselmeyer and his nephew arrive at the party. He has special plans for the evening. He has brought an extraordinary gift that he has hidden from the guests. It is a small wooden soldier with a large head, striking teeth and shiny boots.

Now the magic begins.

Marie is drawn to the small wooden soldier and asks Godfather Drosselmeyer about the mysterious gift.

"Aha!" He tells her. "It is a nutcracker! He will protect your home and bring good luck."

Marie is captivated by the little soldier and vows to be the Nutcracker's protector.

The nephew's kind and gentle soul, his compassion and respectful manner, go straight to Marie's heart, and a great love is born.

As the evening comes to a close, the Stahlbaum's guests say their goodbyes and wish one another happy holidays.

Marie sees that the nephew has vanished and Godfather Drosselmeyer won't reveal where he went. Drosselmeyer's plan is unfolding just as he had hoped.

Marie cannot stop thinking about Godfather Drosselmeyer's nephew. Realizing she has forgotten the Nutcracker, she runs downstairs to find it. But something is happening. The house is changing before her eyes.

Marie is not alone - as the clock strikes midnight, giant mice skitter after her! Everything has grown bigger. Marie's book of Christmas stories opens and characters from the stories come out of the

book; toy soldiers come out of the book too to help the Nutcracker. Then the mice come back with the Mouse King to battle the Nutcracker and the toy soldiers! The Mouse King knocks the Nutcracker to the floor, but Marie takes off her shoe and knocks the Mouse King to the ground.

Marie's unwavering love for the Nephew and her courage in helping the Nutcracker vanquish the Mouse King has broken the spell. Marie is now able to see that the Nephew and the Nutcracker are one in the same.

The radiant Winter Fairy guides Marie and the Nephew through the glistening realm of the Snow King and Queen.

Snowflakes float from the sky and all of Marie's worries melt away. She and her Nutcracker prince are whisked away on a magical journey.

Act 2

The Nutcracker Prince takes Marie to the Kingdom of the Sweets, where he introduces her to the queen of the land, the Sugar Plum Fairy. People from different cultures around the world inhabit this magical land and greet Marie and the Prince.

Everyone rejoices and thanks Marie for saving the Nutcracker Prince. Guests from across the land dance to honor Marie and the Prince, and the beautiful flowers of the garden bloom with gratitude.

As Marie's childhood dreams come to life, she is overwhelmed by the generosity of spirit, grace and beauty of the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. They represent everything sweet and wonderful in the world.

It is time for Marie to leave the Kingdom of the Sweets. Suddenly she finds herself drifting back into her bedroom. Was it a dream?

Outside, the Nephew is leaving the house with Drosselmeyer when suddenly he realizes that the spell has been broken. He is finally free from the Mouse Queen's curse!

What a wonderful adventure! The love between Marie and the Nephew's flourishes and the Stahlbaum's Christmas party continues, even to this very day.

And don't be surprised if you have magical dreams where visions of sugar plums dance in your head.

The End



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