

MY FIRST NUTCRACKER

Direction and Choreography by Melissa Riker

Adapted for young audiences by Barbara Zinn Krieger*

Music by Tchaikovsky, from his Nutcracker Ballet

CAST

Clara Marie/Sugar Plum Fairy-Female actor/dancer

Nutcracker/Prince/Fritz- Male actor/dancer

Drosselmeyer/Snow Flake/Cavalier -Male actor/dancer

Mother/Mouse King/Snow Flake/Dewdrop Fairy-Female actor/dancer

Director/Choreographer's Notes

There are elements of "My First Nutcracker" that are integral to performing a Nutcracker for the future. We have purposely explored Clara Marie's adventurous spirit and woven her power as an individual throughout the play. These elements should be reflected in costume, action, and choreography. *Notes are reflected throughout the script in italics.*

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February 12, 2020

When they purchase tickets, the audience is informed that they're invited to a holiday party at Clara Marie's home, and to dress up, or wear dance clothes if they wish.

PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

In the lobby, the kids create winter-themed decorations to take home with them. They also write their names on stick-on labels which they decorate with flowers.

PROLOGUE

(Music- #1-Overture)

(The set, a cozy living room, features a comfortable chair and a tree half decorated with ornaments. There are presents arranged under the tree on a cloth. One of the presents is a sword.)

(When the audience is seated and announcements have ended, Clara Marie and her mother enter and move down both aisles to the stage, greeting the audience by name, and welcoming them to their holiday party. Mother has a small basket of ornaments for the tree.)

(Drosselmeyer, Clara Marie's Godfather, a toymaker, is onstage showing the audience toys and puppets he's made.)

CLARA MARIE

Good morning (or good afternoon), CHILD'S NAME. I'm Clara Marie. You can call me Clara Marie, or Clara, or Marie, whichever you like best.

MOTHER

Hello CHILD'S NAME. I'm Clara Marie's mother. Welcome to our holiday party.

CLARA MARIE

I like your dress, CHILD'S NAME.

(To another child.)

CHILD'S NAME, you're wearing my favorite color. CHILD'S NAME, what's your favorite color?

MOTHER

CHILDREN'S NAMES. We're so glad you've come to our party.

DROSSELMAYER

(He brings a basket of toys onstage.)

Good morning! I'm Clara Marie's Godfather, Herr Drosselmeyer. Would you like to see a toy?

(Pulls out a dragon puppet from his cloak.)

This is my friend, Daria the Dragon.

(The dragon whispers in Drosselmeyer's ear. Drosselmeyer, to the child.)

What school do you go to?

(The dragon nods to the child's response. Drosselmeyer, to the child.)

Would you like to see a different toy? Yes?

(Retrieves a package with a wooden sword handle poking out of it, letting the audience peek at the sword.)

Do you like it? Would you like to see another?

(Puts the sword away, retrieves a small mouse king hand puppet.)

Do you know who this is?

(The mouse appears to bicker with Drosselmeyer. Drosselmeyer, to the mouse.)

I know, yes I know—well fine then, it's all MY fault, isn't it?

(The mouse turns to the audience, back to Drosselmeyer. Back to the audience, back to Drosselmeyer. Drosselmeyer puts the mouse puppet away. He keeps showing toys until Mother and Clara Marie move onstage.)

SCENE ONE

(Music-Act 1 #3-March)

(Mother and Drosselmeyer move upstage and trim the tree with ornaments.)

Clara Marie dances around the stage. Her movement is joyful, waltzing, excited.

CLARA MARIE

(To the audience.)

I love parties, don't you?

(Audience responds. Clara Marie swirls to the ground to be at audience level.)

You never know what's going to happen, especially when Godfather Drosselmeyer comes to our house. I hope he brought me a present. They're the best because he makes them himself.

(Drosselmeyer approaches. He is concealing something under his cape. Clara Marie twirls around him. She points to the bulge in his cape.)

Godfather! What are you hiding? Can I see?

DROSSELMAYER

(Holding her off.)

So, you think I brought you a present, do you?

CLARA MARIE

YES! Didn't you?

(They lean back to back, Clara Marie dreaming of a Drosselmeyer gift, enjoying the cliff hanger.)

DROSSELMAYER

(Laughing.)

Perhaps. Where's your brother Fritz?

CLARA MARIE

He's somewhere, probably making trouble!

(Fritz enters at the back of the theater and makes his way down to the stage through the audience. When he sees the Nutcracker, he thinks it's funny that Clara Marie is making such a fuss over him. The actors onstage hear Fritz talking to the audience.)

(Music-Act 1 #5-Gifts)

DROSSELMAYER

(Reveals the Nutcracker with a flourish.)

Clara Marie, your present.

FRITZ

(To the Audience.)

A Nutcracker! What kind of present is that?

CLARA MARIE

He's beautiful.

(Looks pointedly toward Fritz.)

I love him. Thank you, Godfather!

FRITZ

Beautiful? I don't think so.

(To children as he moves through the audience.)

CHILDS NAME. Do you think it's beautiful?

(Someone says no.)

Me neither.

CHILDS NAME, do you?

(Someone says yes. He laughs.)

You're just as silly as my sister!

(If no one says no, substitute the following line.)

Anyone who thinks a Nutcracker is a good present, is as silly as my sister!

MOTHER

(To Clara Marie.)

A Nutcracker! Very useful for the holiday. There are always lots of nuts to crack.
(She reaches for the Nutcracker.)

DROSSELMEYER

Oh, no! This fine fellow's not meant for work. He's special. Clara Marie will know how to take care of him, won't you my dear?

CLARA MARIE

I'll take very good care of him, I promise.

(Mother and Drosselmeyer exit to look for more ornaments for the tree.)

FRITZ

(To the audience.)

I hope Godfather's brought me a real present, like new skates.

CHILDS NAME, what holiday present do you want?

CHILDS NAME, and you?

(The audience responds, and Fritz repeats what they say. Clara Marie shows the Nutcracker to the audience.)

CLARA MARIE

Isn't Nutcracker beautiful?

Clara Marie dances with Nutcracker

(Fritz jumps onstage. She shows Fritz Nutcracker.)

Fritz, look!

FRITZ

(Makes a grab for Nutcracker.)

Give it here! Girls aren't strong enough to crack nuts. That's a boy's job.

CLARA MARIE

A girl's job is anything she wants it to be!

FRITZ

Oh, really?

CLARA MARIE

Absolutely!

FRITZ

Yeah, right!

CLARA MARIE

Definitely!

FRITZ

No way!

CLARA MARIE

For sure!

FRITZ

Ha!

CLARA MARIE

Ha, yourself. Anyway, Godfather said my Nutcracker's not for cracking nuts.

FRITZ

Then it's good for nothing.

(He makes another grab for Nutcracker. Fritz catches Nutcracker, starting a tug-of-war on the following lines.)

CLARA MARIE

Leave him alone! He's mine and he's special.

(They continue to pull Nutcracker back and forth between them.)

Let go. You'll hurt him.

FRITZ

It's not a HIM, it's an IT.

CLARA

Let go!

(Fritz pulls off Nutcracker's arm.)

CLARA MARIE

(Clara snatches the arm from Fritz. She's very upset.)

You broke him!

FRITZ

I didn't mean...

CLARA MARIE

(She cradles Nutcracker.)

Poor thing.

(To Fritz.)

Go away!

(Mother enters as Fritz runs offstage.)

MOTHER

(Calling after him.)

Fritz!

(To Clara Marie.)

He didn't mean to hurt your Nutcracker.

CLARA MARIE

(To Nutcracker.)

Does it hurt very much?

(Drosselmeyer joins them.)

Godfather, look! Can you fix Nutcracker?

(Clara Marie and Drosselmeyer make a beautiful dance- show of taking care of Nutcracker hoping he will heal.)

DROSSELMEYER

(He takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and hands it to Clara Marie.)

We'll fix him together.

(They put the arm back on Nutcracker and wind the handkerchief around it.)

There! Now all he needs is a good night's sleep.

(Clara Marie puts Nutcracker in his box under the tree. She sits in the chair, prepared to stay with Nutcracker.)

MOTHER

Time for bed, Clara Marie. Say goodnight to your friends.

CLARA MARIE

Nutcracker needs me! I want to stay with him.

MOTHER

He's resting now. You'll see him in the morning. Come.

CLARA MARIE

No! I won't go to bed. I need to stay!

(Mother and Drosselmeyer exchange knowing looks. They silently count to three, as Clara Marie tries to stay awake, but falls asleep in the chair. Mother pulls the chair offstage, and the tree is pulled offstage, as if by magic, by a string attached to the bottom of the platform it rests on.)

SCENE TWO

(Music-Act 1 #9-the Dream)

(The lights change. With a dream-like quality, Mother returns to the stage and she and Drosselmeyer change the set to the large tree. The tree has openings to pop in and out of. Mother exits.)

Drosselmeyer solo, he dances a magic spell.

(There's a flash of light and Nutcracker/Prince enters through a door in the tree.)

(Drosselmeyer/Nutcracker duet - Drosselmeyer removes the bandage. Nutcracker moves stiffly, doll like. Nutcracker slowly gains his balance and footing throughout the duet.)

When Drosselmeyer feels Nutcracker is steady on his feet, with a final flourish of magic, Drosselmeyer exits. When Nutcracker sees Clara Marie in the wings, he gives the audience the "shh" signal and hides in the tree.

--- END PERUSAL SCRIPT EXCERPT ---