



# TCHAIKOVSKY

The Nutcracker  
arranged for Brass Septet

## SEPTURA



Narrated by Derek Jacobi

Pyotr Il'yich  
**TCHAIKOVSKY**

(1840–1893)

**The Nutcracker (1892)**

arr. Matthew Knight and Simon Cox (2017/19)

Text: Matthew Knight, based on Alexandre Dumas' adaptation of  
E.T.A Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*

1	Miniature Overture	3:05
2	Narration: 'Now, at the time of this story ...'	0:58
3	March	2:21
4	Narration: 'The children's joy knew no bounds ...'	0:23
5	Children's Galop and Entry of the Parents	1:23
6	Narration: 'The Christmas Eve party having assembled ...'	5:17
7	Dance (Allegro)	1:00
8	Narration: 'Suddenly the children both exclaimed ...'	1:14
9	Arrival of Drosselmeyer (Andantino)	1:31
10	Narration: 'The children were reassured ...'	0:22
11	Cabbage and Pâté (Andantino)	1:17
12	Narration: 'Drosselmeyer smiled ...'	0:17
13	Drosselmeyer's Gifts (Allegro molto vivace)	0:34
14	Narration: 'To everyone's delight ...'	0:10
15	Doll's Waltz (Tempo di valse)	1:01
16	Narration: 'Then Drosselmeyer wound up Fritz's soldier ...'	0:12
17	Toy Soldier (Presto)	1:07
18	Narration: 'Clara and Fritz were delighted ...'	2:25
19	Berceuse (Andante)	1:55
20	Narration: 'Eventually, unable to stand this commotion ...'	0:13
21	Grandfather's Dance (Tempo di Grossvater)	0:49
22	Narration: 'The evening wore away ...'	0:24
23	The Moonlit Living Room (Allegro giusto)	0:30
24	Narration: 'The clock struck midnight ...'	0:56
25	The Mice and the Christmas Tree (Più allegro)	3:15

26	Narration: 'Clara heard a shot ring out ...'	2:03
27	The Battle	3:00
28	Narration: 'But Clara could no longer bear to watch ...'	1:12
29	A Forest of Fir Trees in Winter	3:56
30	Narration: 'The Prince led Clara ...'	0:41
31	The Palace of Confituremburg (Allegro brillante)	0:47
32	Narration: 'Chocolate began, a little immodestly ...'	0:17
33	Chocolate: Spanish Dance	1:12
34	Narration: 'Coffee told of the nomadic life ...'	0:10
35	Coffee: Arabian Dance	4:14
36	Narration: 'Russian candy canes ...'	0:11
37	Trepak: Russian Dance	1:06
38	Narration: 'Shy Danish shepherdesses ...'	0:13
39	Dance of the Mirlitons	2:37
40	Narration: 'Suddenly all of the exotic flowers ...'	0:13
41	Waltz of the Flowers	3:44
42	Narration: 'And then the Sugar Plum Fairy herself ...'	0:25
43	Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy	1:54
44	Narration: 'The Sugar Plum Fairy's Cavalier stepped forward ...'	0:12
45	Pas de Deux	5:03
46	Narration: 'Finally the Prince knelt on one knee ...'	0:48
47	Final Waltz	4:00

**Derek Jacobi, Narrator**

**Septura**

**Huw Morgan, Trumpet in E flat**

**Alan Thomas, Simon Cox (Artistic Director), Trumpets in B flat**

**Matthew Gee, Matthew Knight (Artistic Director), Trombones**

**Daniel West, Bass Trombone • Peter Smith, Tuba**

**Scott Lumsdaine, Percussion**

## Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

### The Nutcracker

Brass instruments are a vital part of the festive fabric of Christmas, the seasonal celebration that has inspired some of the greatest musical masterpieces. Perhaps the most iconic secular work is **Tchaikovsky's** ballet *The Nutcracker*, and so we continue our counterfactual journey with a recording devoted, for the first time in our series, to just one piece. This is Christmas in a crucible, with Tchaikovsky's wonderfully colourful score illuminated anew through the unique sound of the brass septet.

Composed in 1892 with a libretto based on Alexandre Dumas' adaptation of E.T.A. Hoffmann's story, *The Nutcracker* is set on Christmas Eve in the town of Nuremberg, and tells the story of a young girl, Clara, whose favourite present – a nutcracker shaped like a little man – turns into a handsome prince at midnight. With the fairy-tale story narrated by Derek Jacobi, we perform a selection of movements from the ballet, starting with the energetic *Miniature Overture*, which with its restless *moto perpetuo* rhythms conjures all of the excitement of Christmas Eve. As night falls the children burst into the living room, and Fritz (Clara's brother) performs a *March* with his squadron of toy soldiers, with crisp rhythmic trumpets eventually succumbing to the chaotic bellowing of the low brass. The children enthusiastically *Galop* around the room (our trumpets fly around acrobatically), before their parents and the guests from the town enter with a little more grandeur (the trombones take the tune). All gathered together, they begin a rustic *Dance*.

The festivities are interrupted by angular music, very low in the trumpet range, heralding the *Arrival of Drosselmeyer*, an eccentric magician and toymaker, and Clara's godfather. He has brought presents: for Clara, a large doll, which dances a graceful waltz, to the tune of a low trumpet; and for Fritz, a soldier which, once wound up, springs into a crazed mechanical dance of its own. Drosselmeyer then reveals a final gift: a wooden nutcracker, carved into the shape of a little man. Clara loves it, but Fritz tries to crack too big a nut, and breaks it. Clara tries to console the broken little man with a

*Berceuse* ('lullaby'), played gently by the E flat trumpet, but Fritz and his friends keep interrupting with a din of toy trumpets and drums – here we have had to expand our forces to include a piccolo 'toy' trumpet, ratchet, and mouth siren. The commotion only ends when everyone joins together to dance a hefty German folk dance, the *Grandfather's Dance*.

The guests depart and the family go to bed, but in the middle of the night Clara wakes and nervously tiptoes downstairs to tend to her beloved nutcracker. As the clock strikes midnight, the Christmas tree grows ever larger in front of Clara and the Nutcracker. An almost Wagnerian endless melody grows through the trumpets, accompanied by restless movement in the trombones, reaching a massive climax that unleashes the full force of the septet as the Nutcracker grows to become a life-size Prince.

Suddenly there is a pattering of tiny feet, as an army of mice appear from under the floorboards and arrange themselves for *The Battle*. A shot is fired and Tchaikovsky's score vividly conjures the chaos of the battlefield: calls to arms ring out through the septet; the rhythmic scampering of mice is heard above a commanding virtuosic tuba solo; and the mechanical legions of Fritz's hussars are reinforced by howling harlequins, clowns and jumping jacks. Unable to bear it any longer, Clara throws her slipper with all her might at the King of the Mice, and with a ferocious *sforzando* he is knocked unconscious. With dizzying semiquavers the whole room begins to swirl, and Clara faints.

As she awakes, Tchaikovsky introduces the most beautiful music of the entire ballet, with another rapturous endless melody played first by the lowest trumpet. Clara finds herself in *A Forest of Fir Trees in Winter*, brightly lit by gnomes carrying flaming torches. The music builds to a glorious climax as she looks around to see the Nutcracker standing beside her, now transformed into a charming Prince.

Clara and the Prince travel through the Land of Sweets, to the enchanted palace of Confituremburg. A

fanfare heralds their arrival, and the Sugar Plum Fairy, ruling in the Prince's absence, commands exotic sweets to dance in honour of the couple. *Chocolate* is first, with a flamboyant Spanish trumpet melody giving way to graceful duetting trombones with castanet accompaniment. *Coffee* evokes the dusky Arabian desert, with relentless low brass rhythms underpinning mysterious shifting harmonies below the trumpet melody. In contrast, the *Trepak* is an energetic Cossack candy cane dance, featuring virtuosic agility in the bass trombone and tuba. The septet is muted to depict the delicate marzipan flutes of the shy Mirlitons. Suddenly the flowers adorning the marzipan house spring to life, petals pirouetting as they dance the increasingly energetic *Waltz of the Flowers*.

Then the Sugar Plum Fairy herself takes to the stage. Her surprisingly graceful dance calls for a uniquely ethereal sound – Tchaikovsky's original uses the celeste, and here we adopt three harmon-muted trumpets. Her Cavalier steps forward to join her in the passionate *Pas de Deux*, with the famous cello melody here played first by a solo trombone, and growing to an epic climax.

The Prince thanks Clara for saving his life, and to show his gratitude he invites her to reign with him in the Land of Sweets. She accepts, and everyone joins together in an ecstatic waltz – made even more joyful by the brassy brilliance of the septet – to celebrate the new rulers of Confituremburg.

Matthew Knight

### The Nutcracker

Text: Matthew Knight, based on Alexandre Dumas' adaptation of E.T.A Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*

④ Now, at the time of this story, Christmas Eve had arrived, and Herr Stahlbaum was putting the finishing touches to the tree; his children, Fritz and Clara, had not been allowed in the sitting-room all day. Night fell, and almost at once the clock struck nine, the door was thrown open and so strong a light burst forth that the children were dazzled.

They rushed into the sitting-room. A great tree seemed to be growing from the middle of the table, covered with flowers made from sugar, and sugar plums instead of fruit – the whole glittering by the light of a hundred Christmas candles hidden among the branches and leaves. The table was covered in presents, and Fritz found a squadron of hussars with red jackets and gold lace, and he made them march and countermarch across the table.

④ The children's joy knew no bounds when they came to examine the lovely things which covered the table, and they galloped around the sitting-room in their excitement. Their game was interrupted by the arrival of the guests – the great and the good of the town – for Herr Stahlbaum was a man of great respectability in Nuremberg.

⑤ The Christmas Eve party having assembled, they all began to dance.

⑤ Suddenly the children both exclaimed at the same moment: 'Oh, where is godfather Drosselmeyer?' At these words, as if it only waited for them to be said, the door opened, and Doctor Drosselmeyer appeared. Something should be said here about this famous man who held in the town of Nuremberg almost as high a position as that of Herr Stahlbaum himself. Drosselmeyer was a doctor and was not by any means a very good-looking man. He was thin and tall, nearly six feet high, but stooped so badly that in spite of his long legs he could almost pick up his handkerchief if it fell without stooping any further. His face was wrinkled as an apple that has withered and fallen from the tree. Being blind in the right eye he wore a black patch, and being quite bald he wore a shining and frizzled wig which he had made himself from glass. The children huddled nervously near their parents.

<sup>10</sup> The children were reassured when they saw that their godfather came bearing gifts. Drosselmeyer had brought two substantial packages. To the astonishment of the assembled company he pulled out from one a large cabbage, and from the other a sizeable pâté.

<sup>12</sup> Drosselmeyer smiled, and asked that these strange gifts be placed in front of him. Then as if by magic he produced from the cabbage a large doll for Clara, and a soldier for Fritz out of the pâté.

<sup>14</sup> To everyone's delight Drosselmeyer set the dolls to dance: first Clara's doll danced a graceful waltz.

<sup>16</sup> Then Drosselmeyer wound up Fritz's soldier, which accelerated into a crazed mechanical dance of its own, all of its limbs swinging manically to and fro.

<sup>18</sup> Clara and Fritz were delighted with their toys, but Drosselmeyer had one final surprise for them. A little man whose body was too long and big for the miserable little thin legs which supported it, and whose head was so enormous that it was out of all proportion to the rest. He wore a braided frock-coat of violet-coloured velvet, all frogged and covered with buttons, and trousers of the same material, as well as shiny boots.

Clara liked this quaint little man from the first moment she saw him. The more she looked at him the more she was struck by the sweetness and amiability of his face. After examining the little man without daring to touch him, Clara asked her father what he was for. She was then told that this dandified gentleman belonged to that ancient and respectable race of nutcrackers, and that he continued to exercise the honourable calling of his forefathers.

Herr Stahlbaum handed the nutcracker to her. Clara chose the smallest nuts so that he might not have to open his mouth too wide, because if he did so his face assumed a most ridiculous expression. When he heard the crack – crack being so often repeated Fritz felt sure that something new was going on, and he looked up from his hussars. He joined in the fun and, despite his sister's protests, chose the largest and hardest nuts to cram into the nutcracker's mouth. So, at the fifth or sixth c-r-r-ack, out fell three of the poor little fellow's teeth. At the same time his chin fell and became tremulous like that of an old man.

'Oh, my poor nutcracker!' Clara cried. She picked up the little man and rocked him gently in her arms. Fritz kept interrupting with a great din of toy trumpets and drums, but Clara ignored him, consoling her nutcracker with a tender lullaby.

<sup>20</sup> Eventually, unable to stand this commotion any longer, Herr Stahlbaum invited all the guests to dance together, the traditional Grandfather's Dance.

<sup>22</sup> The evening wore away, the guests departed, and the Stahlbaums retired to bed; but Clara could not sleep, worrying about her nutcracker, and so in the silence of the night she crept downstairs and back into the moonlit living room.

<sup>24</sup> The clock struck midnight, and she could have sworn that she saw godfather Drosselmeyer perched on top of it, fixed on her with a mocking grin. All of a sudden Clara heard numberless little feet treading behind the walls; next she saw tiny lights through cracks in the skirting boards – but the lights were little eyes. In the course of five minutes what seemed to be hundreds of mice had made their appearance and ranged themselves in battle order just as Fritz liked to

draw up his toy soldiers. Rooted to the spot in fear, Clara looked round to see the Christmas tree reaching dizzying heights as it grew more and more immense.

<sup>26</sup> Clara heard a shot ring out, and a cry, 'To arms! To arms!' At the same time a floorboard was lifted by some power underneath – and the king of the mice, with seven heads each wearing a golden crown, appeared at her very feet. Finally the nutcracker jumped up. 'Miserable king of the mice!' he exclaimed. 'It is you then. Come, let this night decide between us. Trumpets, sound the charge! Drums, beat the alarm!'

And at once the trumpets of Fritz's hussars rang forth, while the drums of his infantry began to beat, and the rumbling of cannon wheels was also heard. At the same time a military band was somehow formed and their music doubtless roused the peaceably-minded toys, for a kind of home-guard assembled made up of harlequins, clowns and jumping jacks. Arming themselves with anything they could lay their hands on they were soon ready for the fight.

Battle commenced, but all this courage was useless against such numbers of mice, and soon the nutcracker thought only of beating an honourable retreat. The gingerbread men, however, descended from the cupboard and gave battle in their turn. They were certainly fresh, but inexperienced troops, and hitting right and left, they did as much injury to friends as foes.

Two of the mice seized the nutcracker's wooden cloak, and at the same time the king of the mice cried out: 'On your heads, take him alive! His punishment must serve as an example to all future nutcrackers!' And with these words the king rushed upon the prisoner.

<sup>28</sup> But Clara could no longer bear to watch. 'Oh, my poor nutcracker!' she exclaimed. 'I love you with all my heart and cannot bear to see you die!' And at that very moment, instinctively, and without knowing what she was doing, Clara took off one of her slippers and threw it with all her strength. Her aim was so good that the slipper hit the king of the mice and made him roll over unconscious in the dust. Then the king and army, conquerors and conquered, all vanished as if by magic. Clara looked round for the nutcracker, and found herself no longer in the sitting-room, but in a forest of Christmas trees, brightly lit by gnomes bearing flaming torches. And standing beside her, the nutcracker, now transformed into a charming Prince.

<sup>30</sup> The Prince led Clara to the enchanted palace of Confituremburg, in the Land of Sweets. There they were received by the Sugar Plum Fairy, ruling in the Prince's absence, and the Prince recounted how Clara had saved him from the king of the mice, and thus transformed him from a lowly nutcracker back into his true self. The Sugar Plum Fairy clicked her fingers, and exotic sweets from around the world assembled, ready to take it in turns to tell tales from their homelands in honour of the young heroine.

<sup>32</sup> Chocolate began, a little immodestly, by recounting how he was once the greatest lover in all of Spain, famed for his power of seduction, and the insatiable desire that he inspired.

<sup>34</sup> Coffee told of the nomadic life he had lived, wandering the mysterious shifting sands of the dusky Arabian desert.

<sup>36</sup> Russian candy canes danced an energetic Cossack dance, the Trepak, blowing their horns with such fervour that their faces became quite flushed.

☞ Shy Danish shepherdesses played a sweet melody on their marzipan flutes, beguiling Clara and the Prince with an enchanting and hypnotic display.

☞ Suddenly all of the exotic flowers that adorned the Marzipan House sprung into life, petals pirouetting as they danced a sumptuous waltz.

☞ And then the Sugar Plum Fairy herself took to the stage. She had not the natural physique of a ballet dancer, being plump and rotund rather than thin and willowy. But she astonished the assembled crowd, who were expecting a rather ungainly display, with the grace and beauty of her light-footed dance.

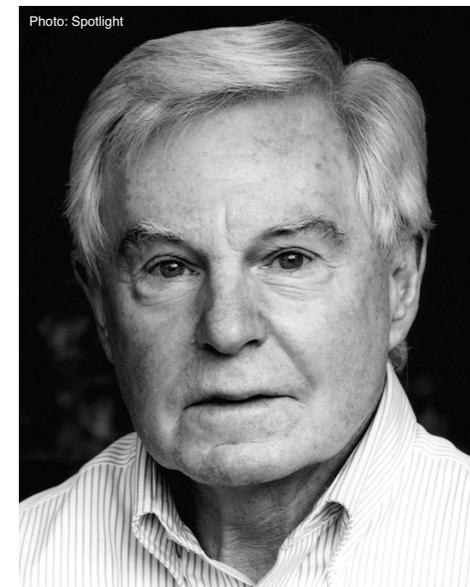
☞ The Sugar Plum Fairy's Cavalier stepped forward and bowed deeply, before taking her hand to join her in a rapturous pas de deux.

☞ Finally the Prince knelt on one knee and spoke to Clara.

'My dear Miss Stahlbaum, you see kneeling before you the happy nutcracker whose life you saved. Now, as the spell which the king of the mice cast upon me has lost its power, I invite you to share my throne and crown, and reign with me forever over the Land of Sweets.'

And hearing this the whole throng joined together in a joyful waltz to celebrate the new rulers of Confituremburg – the Prince, and his saviour, Clara.

## Derek Jacobi



Derek Jacobi is one of Britain's leading actors, having made his mark on stage, film and television – and notably on audiobook. His extensive theatrical credits, from London's West End to Broadway, include numerous roles encompassing the whole range of theatre. His film credits include *Gladiator*, *The King's Speech*, *Cinderella* and *Murder on the Orient Express*, and his television credits include *I, Claudius*, *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Vicious*. He also reads *The History of Theatre*, *The History of English Literature*, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, *The Finest Nonsense of Edward Lear* and *The Compleat Angler* for Naxos AudioBooks.

## Septura

Photo: Bethany Clarke



Septura brings together London's leading players to redefine brass chamber music through the uniquely expressive sound of the brass septet. By creating a canon of transcriptions, arrangements and new commissions for this brand new classical configuration, Septura aims to re-cast the brass ensemble as a serious artistic medium.

Currently ensemble-in-residence at the Royal Academy of Music in London, the group is recording a series of albums for Naxos, each focused on a particular period, genre and set of composers, creating a 'counter-factual history' of brass chamber music.

Weaving this ever-increasing repertoire into captivating live events, Septura is gaining a reputation for engaging audiences with innovative and imaginative programming, built around strong concepts and themes. In recent years the group has toured to the US, New Zealand, Japan, and numerous countries in Europe.

Septura's members are the leading players of the new generation of British brass musicians, holding principal positions in the London Symphony, Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony, Basel Symphony and Aurora Orchestras.

[www.septura.org](http://www.septura.org)

Brass instruments are a vital part of the festive fabric of Christmas, and Tchaikovsky's iconic ballet *The Nutcracker* is made even more joyful with the brassy brilliance of Septura. Narrated by pre-eminent actor Derek Jacobi, *The Nutcracker* is set on Christmas Eve, with music both rapturous and fantastical. It tells the story of how young Clara's favourite present, a nutcracker shaped like a little man, turns into a handsome prince at midnight. Septura has been acclaimed by *Brass Band World* for its 'stylistic perfection' and 'beautifully portrayed artistry' (Music for Brass Septet • 2, Naxos 8.573386).

Pyotr Il'yich  
**TCHAIKOVSKY**  
(1840–1893)

**1–47 The Nutcracker (1892) 65:24**

arr. Matthew Knight and Simon Cox (2017/19)

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**Derek Jacobi, Narrator**

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**Huw Morgan, Trumpet in E flat**

**Alan Thomas, Simon Cox, Trumpets in B flat**

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A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet. The narrated texts are included in the booklet and may also be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/574157.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/574157.htm)

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