

# PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE

## *The Nutcracker Synopsis*

### **Act 1**

It is Christmas Eve in the early years of the 20th century at the Stahlbaum home in the Shadyside neighborhood of Pittsburgh. On the street outside, Godfather Drosselmeyer and his Nephew unload mysterious packages from their carriage. The guests begin to arrive. Drosselmeyer introduces them to his Nephew, who wears a mask because of a curse cast upon him by the evil Rat King.

In her bedroom, Marie, the Stahlbaum's daughter, is reading Kaufmann's Book of Christmas Stories for Boys and Girls. Mr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum enter, and present her with two special gifts – a beautiful scarf and a pair of pointe shoes. These gifts signify that Marie is growing up. Marie



admires her new self in the mirror, and envisions her dreams.

Back on the street, Drosselmeyer and his Nephew finish their preparations for the holiday party. Drosselmeyer tells of the Rat King's 400-year curse on his Nephew, a prince. Then Drosselmeyer unveils the Nutcracker, revealing its role in this night of magic.

The party is underway, and the guests exchange gifts, trim the tree and dance. Drosselmeyer's magic tricks delight the guests – young and old alike – but he has even bigger mysteries in store for Marie. He introduces her to his Nephew and, as Drosselmeyer had hoped, Marie sees the goodness within him. Next, he gives her the Nutcracker, which she adores. The party concludes with Drosselmeyer's magical *pièce-de-résistance*, a trick that makes the Nephew disappear, leaving the toy Nutcracker in his place. Marie becomes upset that she can't find the Nephew, and runs upstairs. The guests say their goodbyes, and the family retires for the night. Drosselmeyer reappears in a swirl of his cape to set the stage for the magic to come.

As midnight approaches, Marie sneaks downstairs to find her beloved Nutcracker. But Marie is not alone; mice and human-sized rats threaten her from every side. Overcome, she faints. When she comes to, she finds herself and the whole house under a spell. Everything is growing, even the Nutcracker, who becomes life-sized. The mice and rats return to terrify her, but the Nutcracker rallies the toy soldiers and storybook characters to rescue Marie. As the



battle reaches its peak, Marie strikes the Rat King with her shoe, and the Nutcracker is able to defeat him.

The Snow Queen and King appear. Marie’s bravery and compassion reveal the Nutcracker is Drosselmeyer’s Nephew, the Prince! He declares his love to Marie. The Prince invites Marie on a journey through the glittering snowy forest to the Land of Enchantment. Guided by the Snow Queen and King, they set off on a magical sleigh ride.

**ACT 2**

Drosselmeyer welcomes Marie and the Prince to the Land of Enchantment. The Sugar Plum Fairy, the vision of Marie’s dreams, and her Cavalier greet the travelers. The Prince relates the tale of the battle, telling how Marie



saved his life by helping to defeat the Rat King. In gratitude, the Sugar Plum Fairy presents Marie with a beautiful tiara. Marie expresses her appreciation in a dance with the Flowers. The grand festival begins. Beautiful dances express the spirit of joy, elegance, jubilation, exuberance, delight and harmony – all found in the Land of Enchantment. The visit culminates with a Grand Pas de deux danced by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.

Christmas Day dawns on the street outside the Stahlbaum home. Drosselmeyer and his Nephew make their way to their carriage, stopping to reflect on the night’s wondrous events. Drosselmeyer rejoices that the 400-year curse has been broken.

Marie awakens in her bedroom, wondering at the amazing adventures she’s had. Was it all a dream? She finds her scarf. Can it be? She rushes to the mirror and there, ever faithful, is her Nutcracker Prince.

Top left: Luca Sbrizzi (The Nutcracker); Ruslan Mukhambetkaliev (Rat King). Top right: Amanda Cochrane; Yoshiaki Nakano. Bottom left: Diana Yohe; Lucius Kirst. Bottom right: Hannah Carter; Alejandro Diaz. Photos also feature Artists of PBT School. Photos by Rich Sofranko.