MICHAEL PINK'S

THE NUTCRACKER

DROSSELMEYER'S IMAGINARIUM

PRESENTED BY BMO

AUDIENCE GUIDE

Welcome to *The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium*!
More than 100 dancers take the stage in this holiday favorite featuring elaborate sets, lavish costumes, special effects, and magic tricks. The childlike sense of wonder in *The Nutcracker* is underscored by students of Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy who dance onstage with the professional Company.

You may assume every version of *The Nutcracker* is the same, but they're not! Milwaukee Ballet's version was choreographed by Artistic Director Michael Pink, and in December of 2023, *Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium* premiered with new sets designed by Todd Edward Ivins, costumes designed by Gregory A. Poplyk, and lighting designed by David Grill.

Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium elevates imagination above all else as new characters, fresh set pieces, and reimagined choreography update Milwaukee Ballet's previous version, which ran for over 20 years. The narrative journey of Clara, Fritz, and Marie's adventure through the Imaginarium takes center stage alongside themes of family relationships and young love.



On top of Ivins' lavish fantasy set design, *Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium* features repurposed characters made to delight the whole family. Poplyk's elaborate costumes include Mother Ginger reimagined into the fabulous Madame Bon Bon; the Shepherdess transformed into a Mechanical Doll; and a new puppeted character, Maurice the Mouse, all of whom grace the stage among other imaginative modernizations of classic characters.

This production was made possible due to the generosity of over 375 supportive donors over the span of 4 years, completing a $5 million Capital Campaign. The build took nearly a year, with 57 set pieces, 170 costumes, and countless props being handmade for the premiere.

Join us and let your festive imagination run wild!

Raven Loan.
All Photos Rachel Malehorn unless otherwise noted.

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A Short History

The Nutcracker was originally based on a story by German writer E. T. A. Hoffmann that was reimagined by Alexandre Dumas. The legendary choreographer Marius Petipa, first Ballet Master and principal choreographer of the Imperial Ballet (known today as the Mariinsky Ballet), worked with renowned composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky to bring the child's tale to life as a ballet. Petipa later became ill and the choreographic work was assumed by his assistant, Lev Ivanov.

The Nutcracker debuted on December 17, 1892, in the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre, which is still the home of the Kirov Ballet. The original cast included students, just as most productions do today. Although popular in Russia, *The Nutcracker* was not performed outside of Russia until 1934, when Nicholas Sergeyev staged it at the Sadler Wells Theatre in England.

The Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo debuted a shortened version of *The Nutcracker* in the United States in 1940. It was this production that George Balanchine and Alexandra Danilova remembered and "danced out" for San Francisco Ballet's William Christensen. Because of this, the US got its first full-length version in 1944, even though the director had never seen it. This version gave birth to the American holiday tradition.



The Soundtrack of the Holidays

Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write the music in 1891 by the Imperial Theatre of St. Petersburg in Russia. Petipa presented Tchaikovsky with the exact scenario he wanted, including the rhythm, tempo, and number of measures for each dance.

Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium features some unique twists to Tchaikovsky's original score, including sound effects designed by Barry G. Funderburg, additional music and transitions composed by Music Director Andrews Sill, and a new variation for the Harlequin dancer never before seen in *The Nutcracker*. Of course, the most famous suites remain the same, such as "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy," "Waltz of the Flowers," and "March of The Nutcracker."

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SYNOPSIS

Act I

In Drosselmeyer's magical workshop, all is not quite what it seems. There, **Drosselmeyer**, a toymaker, and **Karl**, his nephew, prepare extra-special gifts for the Tannenbaum children and their friends. Outside, the city prepares for Christmas Eve.



The Tannenbaums' annual Christmas party is bubbling over with festive cheer. **Clara**, **Fritz**, and especially their eldest sister **Marie** eagerly await the entrance of Drosselmeyer and Karl. Upon their arrival, the two delight and surprise the guests with an array of magic tricks and dancing dolls. The last gift Drosselmeyer saves for Clara: a wonderful Nutcracker doll.



Once the guests have departed, the sisters retire to Clara's bedroom to reflect on the thrilling events of the evening, in particular Karl's gift to Marie. Suddenly, the bedroom floor comes to life with unusually dressed mice, frightening the two girls. In the distance, the conservatory clock begins to chime midnight but then seems to become confused as to the actual time. Clara and Marie return to the conservatory, followed by Fritz, where they find the Nutcracker marching along the mantelpiece, as if he were guarding it.

Drosselmeyer appears on the mantelpiece next to the Nutcracker. He sprinkles his enchanted magic dust over the children, and so begins their adventure in the Imaginarium.



The Christmas tree grows so tall that it lifts the ceiling of the conservatory up high into the stars. A battle begins between the Rat King and his mouse army and the toy soldiers, who are led by Karl the Nutcracker Prince. After their triumph, Karl and the family meet the Snow Queen; she leads them through the magical land of snow, and onwards into the Imaginarium.

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Act II

Beautiful swans swim on the Lemonade Lake near the Capital City. The mayor and his wife greet the family; there is another encounter with the Rat King and Karl is victorious. The mayor proclaims him to be the prince of the Kingdom.

Drosselmeyer guides Clara, Fritz, Marie, and Karl onwards through the Imaginarium. They are welcomed by a trumpet fanfare before being captivated at the Mystical Oasis and enthralled with the **Lion** and the **Phoenix Bird**. Upon their arrival in Fun Town, they are surprised to see Karl as a **Harlequin** dancing with the **Jacks**. In the Balloon Meadow, the **Mechanical Doll** invites Clara to dance with her, and then the delightful **Madame Bon Bon** welcomes them to Confectionville, where the sweetest of the sweets is Marie the Sugar Plum Fairy. Their journey continues through the Field of Dancing **Flowers** before arriving back at the Capital for the celebration of Prince Karl and Princess Marie.

By now, both Clara and Fritz are beginning to feel rather tired, so everyone in the Imaginarium bids them and Marie goodbye as they drift back to the conservatory. Oh, what stories they will tell their parents! But did it all really happen, or was it just their imagination?

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THE CHARACTERS



Marie (Sugar Plum)

The eldest Tannenbaum daughter. In the Imaginarium, she ends the night as the Sugar Plum Fairy.



Clara

The middle Tannenbaum child. She is presented with a Nutcracker for Christmas and dreams that he comes to life.



Fritz

The youngest son of the Tannenbaum family. Playful and mischievous, he and Clara delight in the Imaginarium.



Karl (Nutcracker Prince & Harlequin)

The assistant of Drosselmeyer and, as the night's magic ensues, the Nutcracker Prince and Harlequin.



Drosselmeyer

The children's mysterious godfather. He presents Clara with her Nutcracker doll and is the architect of the Imaginarium.



Rat King

The dastardly leader of the rat army. King Rat declares war on the Nutcracker Prince and his soldiers.

Marie Harrison-Collins Alana Griffith. Flynn Stelfox. Randy Crespo. Garrett Glassman.

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Snow Queen

Beautiful and icy, the monarch of the snowflakes. She is the first to welcome the children to the Imaginarium.



Mechanical Doll

Another of Drosselmeyer's toys and the leader of the Balloon Meadow. She encourages Clara and Fritz's adventures."



Madam Bon Bon

The greatest baker in all the Imaginarium. She and her Chefs preside over their Sweets Machine to produce the most delicious - and best dancing - sweets around!



Jack Doll

One of Drosselmeyer's fantastical toys. He and his acrobatic friends are a source of color and great delight in Fun Town..



Maurice

This fun-loving puppet is always somewhere he shouldn't be! He's sure to get the Tannenbaum kids into some trouble.



Lion

This magical creature inhabits the Mystical Oasis. Alongside the Phoenix, his larger-than-life presence entrances all who pass by.

Kristen Marshall. Marie Harrison-Collins. Eric Figueredo. Maurice the Mouse. Emery Meroni.