

## The Nutcracker

**Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**  
**Born: May 7, 1840**  
**Died: November 6, 1893**

Piotr (or Peter, as we would say in English) Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Votinsk, a town in Russia's Ural Mountains. When he was 8 years old, his family moved to the capital city of St. Petersburg. Although Tchaikovsky was a good musician as a child, this wasn't considered an "acceptable profession; so his parents made him study law instead. Even in law school, however, the young composer continued to pursue music. Eventually he gave up his legal job to attend the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

After graduation, Tchaikovsky moved to Moscow to teach at the new music conservatory there. It is now named after him. Although he composed music in many different styles, Tchaikovsky is most famous for his ballets. Maybe you've heard or seen some of them; they include *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*.

*The Nutcracker* is a story written by a German, E.T.A. Hoffman. Tchaikovsky was hired in 1891 by the St. Petersburg Opera to write music for a ballet based on this tale. Initially, he did not like the idea of setting the work around a children's Christmas party. Luckily, the choreographers were able to convince him to keep this setting. *The Nutcracker*

debuted on December 17, 1872, in the Mariinsky Theatre, the home of the Kirov Ballet. It was not performed outside of Russia until 1934. Since then, it was been one of the most popular ballets of all time.

*The Nutcracker* is a holiday fairy tale about a young girl Clara, and her favorite Christmas gift, a nutcracker. During her family's holiday party, Clara's brother breaks this toy. Godfather Drosselmeyer uses his special powers to repair it. Later that night, Clara is awakened by the sound of scurrying mice, who have come to attack her and the nutcracker. Magically, the toy comes to life and fights off the animals. Once the Mouse King is defeated, the spell that has been cast over the nutcracker is broken and it is revealed to be a handsome prince.

This prince then takes Clara to his Kingdom of Sweets, where he shows her all of its delights. The "Dance of the Reed Pipes" and the "Russian Dance" are two of the performances seen in this special place. Men in flowing shirts and red breeches most often dance the "Russian Dance." The "Dance of the Reed Pipes" is usually performed by three people dressed as shepherdesses. The trill of the flutes and the music of the woodwinds help create its dainty scene.

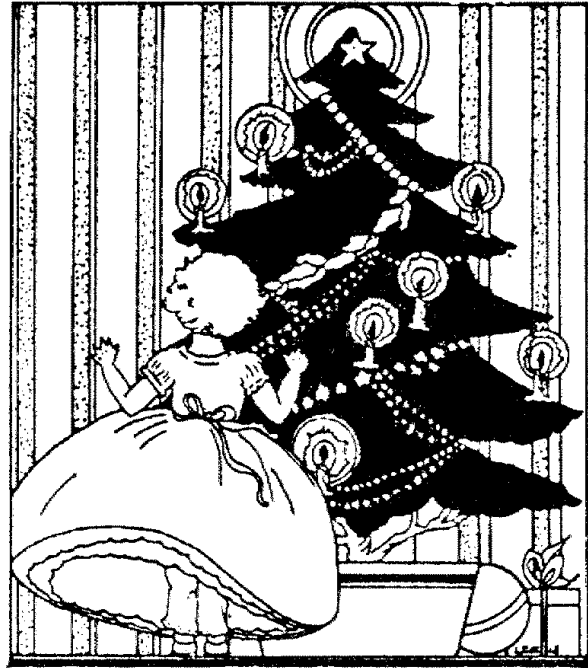
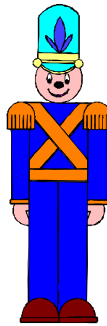
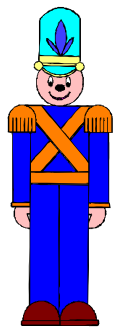
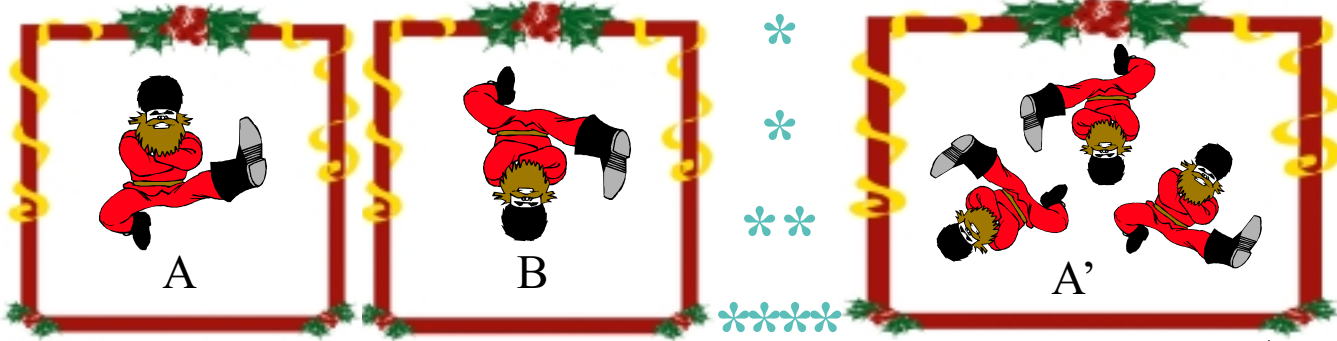
Classics for Kids



Classics for Kids® broadcasts are sponsored in part by **The Kroger Co.**



## “Russian Dance” Listening Map



All of the words below have something to do with the story of *The Nutcracker*. See if you can find them in the puzzle above.

- |             |                 |              |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Ballet      | Nutcracker      | Prince       |
| Chinese Tea | Chocolate Dance | Reeds        |
| Clara       | Fritz           | Drosselmeyer |
| Snowflakes  | Sugar Plums     | Marzipan     |
| Tchaikovsky | Mother Goose    | Toy Soldiers |
| Mouse King  | Waltz           |              |

## “Dance of the Reed Pipes” Listening map

