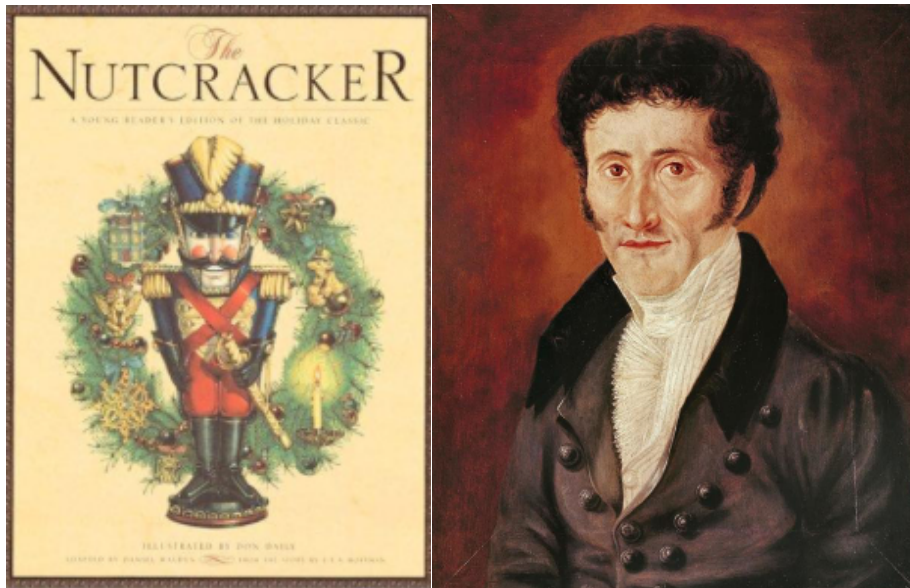


THE NUTCRACKER PROJECT

HISTORY

E.T.A. Hoffman wrote the book, “The Nutcracker,” over 200 years ago in 1816. The original story told how a prince was changed into a nutcracker and featured a battle between the Nutcracker and the Mouse King’s army.



Pyotr Tchaikovsky composed *The Nutcracker Suite* in 1892 for the ballet, but did not feel it was his best work. Today *The Nutcracker* is one of the best known and admired pieces he wrote in his lifetime.





The reason Tchaikovsky was lukewarm about his composition might be that **Marius Petipa**, the choreographer of the ballet, demanded the music be composed to fit the ballet and not the ballet be choreographed to fit the music.



When *The Nutcracker* was first performed in Russia in 1892, critics were not impressed and the future did not look bright for this ballet.

Tchaikovsky died less than a year after the original production of *The Nutcracker Ballet*, never knowing the impact his work would have on audiences around the world. By the late 1960s, *The Nutcracker* established itself as the essential ballet of the holiday season.



[Watch a short video of The Nutcracker Ballet](#)

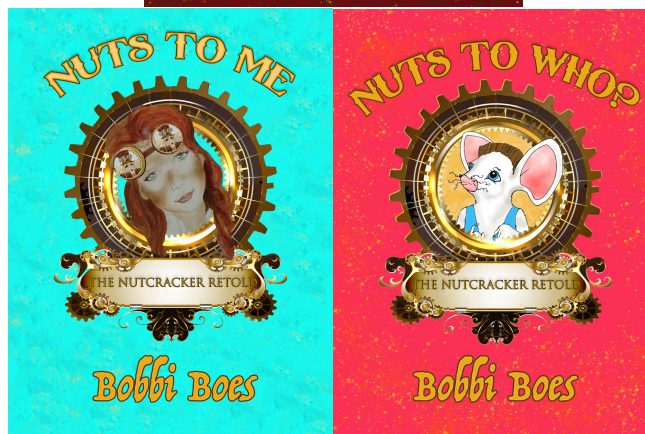
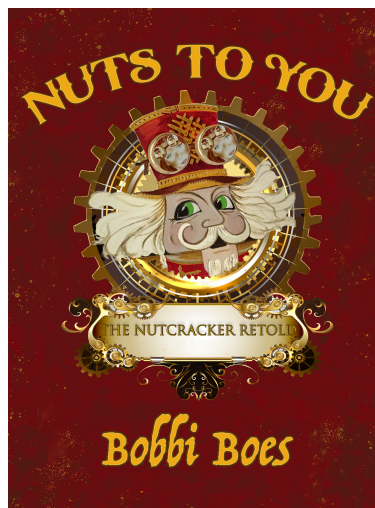
In 1996, **Bobbi Boes** wrote the first version of *The Nutcracker Musical*, in an attempt to weave a story between ballet and book, that would, at last, retell the Nutcracker story in full. A CD soon followed.



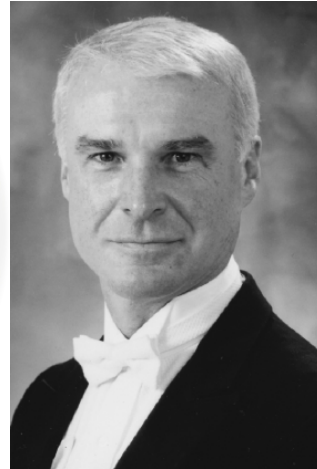
Decades followed of productions and additional lyrics by Bobbi Boes and **Beverly Stephenson**.



During this time, Boes wrote the book, *Nuts to You*, as part of *The Nutcracker Retold* series.



Composer, **Don York**, joined Stephenson and Boes and arranged the music for *In a Nutshell*. The narrated concert premiered in Temecula, CA in 2007.



Stephenson and Boes continue to work on, what has become, *Nutcracker-the Mousical*. This work from 1996 through today, comprises the many facets for The Nutcracker Project.



FUN FACTS

Nutcrackers weren't always so cute...

Nomadic peoples who lived between 4,000 and 8,000 years ago realized that they needed a mechanism beyond their teeth to crack nutshells. Pitted stones, like the one pictured above, are the earliest known nutcrackers identified by archaeologists. The wooden soldier variations like those featured in *The Nutcracker* ballet began showing up in Germany in the early 1800s. In Germany, there is a folklore tradition based on the idea that nutcrackers protect your family and bring your home good luck. For this reason, nutcrackers were often given to children at Christmastime.



...and Clara wasn't always Clara.

The name of the young heroine who saves the nutcracker prince has changed quite a few times. In the original E.T.A. Hoffmann story, she is named Maria or Marie, and Clara is the name of one of her dolls. In Germany, she sometimes goes by Marichen. In Russia, she was given the name Masha. In *The Nutcracker Retold* series, by Bobbi Boes, she is the adventurous Clara, but her mother wants her to be the docile Marie.



The celesta is celestial.



The delightful twinkling you hear in “The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” is made by a relative of the piano called a celesta. In the original production of *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky smuggled this unique instrument into Russia from Paris to add the unique sound.

We now immediately associate the twinkle with the Sugar Plum Fairy.



WORKSHEET

Vocabulary

1. author [*aw-ther*]

noun

A person who writes a novel, poem, essay, etc

2. composer [*kuh m-poh-zer*]

noun

A person who writes music.

3. choreographer [*kawr-ee-og-ruh-fer, kohr-*]

noun

A person who creates dance compositions and plans and arranges dance movements and patterns for dances and especially for ballets.

4. celesta [*suh-les-tuh*]

noun

A musical instrument, similar to a piano, consisting principally of a set of graduated steel plates struck with hammers that are activated by a keyboard.

5. nutcracker

Noun

An instrument or device for cracking the shells of nuts.

VOCABULARY WORKSHEET

Draw a line between the best matches.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| • author | • like a piano |
| • celesta | • cracks nuts |
| • nutcracker | • creates music |
| • composer | • writes books, poems etc |
| • choreographer | • arranges dancers |

READING COMPREHENSION

From the handout, choose the best word for each sentence.

1. Tchaikovsky was the _____ of the music of the *Nutcracker Ballet*.
2. The _____ is a Prince in the ballet and a common gift for children at Christmas.
3. Petipa was the _____ for the *Nutcracker Ballet* and arranged all the dances.
4. The Sugar Plum Fairy music is played on the _____, which Tchaikovsky smuggled into Russia.
5. The original *Nutcracker* book was written by E.T.A. Hoffman, who is joined by another _____, Bobbi Boes, who wrote *Nuts to Me, the Nutcracker Retold*.