

TEACHER'S RESOURCE PACK

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1. USING THIS RESOURCE PACK

This pack aims to give teachers and students further understanding of *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker!*

- It contains information and materials about the production that can be used as a stimulus for discussion and practical activities.
- There are worksheets containing information and resources that can be used to help build your own lesson plans and schemes of work based on *Nutcracker!*

This pack contains subject material for Dance, Drama, English, Design and Music.

	DISCUSSION
	PRACTICAL EXERCISES
	WRITTEN WORK

The symbols above are to guide you through this pack easily and will enable you to use this guide as a quick reference when required. They will appear through the pack as symbols highlighting further work that can be done.

There are also a number of related activities, practical exercises and discussion ideas that can be used to develop ideas, workshops and as a starting point on which to use for your own course requirements.

2. INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW BOURNE'S *NUTCRACKER!*

a) PLOT SYNOPSIS

Director and Choreographer	Matthew Bourne
Designer	Anthony Ward
Lighting Designer	Howard Harrison
Sound Designer	Paul Groothuis
Music by	Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Orchestral Arrangements	Rowland Lee
Original Scenario	Matthew Bourne, Martin Duncan

Nutcracker! is a dance in two acts, and it begins on Christmas Eve at Dr Dross's Orphanage, through a shimmering ice-skating wonderland to the spectacular candy folk of Sweetieland.

The story centres around:

Clara

Nutcracker

Matron	who becomes	Queen Candy
Dr Dross	who becomes	King Sherbet
Sugar	who becomes	Princess Sherbet
Fritz	who becomes	Prince Bon Bon

ACT ONE

It begins on Christmas Eve at Dr Dross's Orphanage. Dr Dross and Matron are preparing for a visit from the Governors of the Orphanage, decorations are put up, the orphans are each given a party hat and the visitors' hand out gifts. Fritz and Sugar, the children of Dr. Dross and Matron try to steal the toys they want from the orphans. Clara gets a male toy soldier, she dances with him and plays with Nutcracker, a boy she is in love with.

When the visitors leave Dr Dross and Matron take down all the decorations and lock away all the toys, including Clara's much-loved toy soldier.

The orphans go to bed but Clara cannot sleep. Sugar enters and opens the locked cupboard, standing there is the toy soldier, only now he is alive and the size of a real-life man. Sugar screams and runs out, the orphans are scared of him but they realise that he is there to help them. The room starts to crack open, and a large Christmas tree rises up outside the Orphanage. Matron, Dr Dross, Fritz and Sugar run in to see what the commotion is, the orphans turn on them, tie them up and run away.

Clara is left alone when the soldier appears, he removes his mask and they dance together whilst behind them the walls melt away and a beautiful sparkling frozen lake is revealed. Clara and the Nutcracker skate happily with the orphans in this winter wonderland until Princess Sugar and Prince Bon-Bon arrive. Prince Bon-Bon throws a snowball at Nutcracker and when he comes around Princess Sugar takes him away.

The snow starts to fall and Clara is alone.

ACT TWO

Clara is as we left her, alone and not sure what to do or which way to go. Her friends, the twins from the Orphanage are now Cupids and they arrive to help her find her way. They take her to the entrance of Sweetieland where she sees the Nutcracker and Princess Sugar walk into the tasty land of sweets accompanied by Queen Candy and King Sherbet. Clara tries to follow them but she doesn't have a ticket, the Humbug bouncer refuses her entry.

Clara watches the Dance of the Liquorice Allsorts, the Dance of the Knickerbocker Glory, the Dance of the Marshmallows and finally the Dance of the Gobstoppers. As the Gobstoppers start fighting with each other the bouncer is distracted and Clara uses this opportunity to sneak inside.

Inside Sweetieland Princess Sugar is getting ready with the 5 marshmallow girls. She joins the Nutcracker and the King and Queen reveal a giant wedding cake adorned by the characters Clara met earlier. They eat, lick and devour the cake. The crowds disperse and Princess Sugar and the Nutcracker dance together. The characters of Sweetieland dance and the snow starts falling, suddenly Clara is dancing with the Nutcracker. As the snow falls faster everyone disappears until Clara is left alone holding her toy soldier. She throws him aside in frustration and curls up on the floor. When she awakes she is back in the Orphanage, the boy Nutcracker embraces her and together they escape out of the Orphanage window.



The characters of Sweetieland

b) TCHAIKOVSKY'S *NUTCRACKER*

Original Story by E.T.A. Hoffman

Music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

ACT ONE

The curtain opens to reveal the Stahlbaum's house where a Christmas Eve party is underway. Clara, her little brother Fritz, and their mother and father are celebrating with friends and family when Clara's Godfather, Herr Drosselmeier, arrives. He produces a bag of gifts for all of the children, these include three life-sized dolls who each dance for the assembled guests. After the dances Clara is yet to receive a present and Herr Drosselmeier doesn't seem to have any left. Clara bursts into tears but suddenly Herr Drosselmeier conjures up a toy Nutcracker in the shape of a soldier. Clara is overjoyed but Fritz is jealous and breaks the Nutcracker, but luckily Drosselmeier mends the toy.

The party ends and everyone goes to bed but Clara cannot sleep, she ventures to the Christmas tree where the Nutcracker lies and falls asleep with him in her arms. The clock strikes midnight and Clara hears the sound of mice, she tries to run away but the mice will not let her go, the Christmas tree starts to grow in size filling the room. The Nutcracker comes to life and he and his band of soldiers rise to defend Clara as the Mouse King leads his mice into battle. Clara helps by throwing her slipper at the Mouse King, the Nutcracker uses this opportunity to stab him and the Mouse King dies, his mice carry their dead leader away. The Nutcracker is then transformed into a prince.

Clara and the Prince travel to a world where dancing snow flakes greet them and fairies and queens dance welcoming Clara and the Prince into their world.

ACT TWO

Clara and the Prince arrive at the Land of the Sugar Plum Fairy where she and the people of the Land of Sweets dance for Clara and the Prince in the dances of the Dew Drop Fairy, the Spanish Dancers (chocolate), the Chinese Dancers (Tea), the Arabian Dancers (Coffee), the Russian Dancers (Candy-canes), Mother Ginger and her Polinchinelles (Taffy Clowns), the Reed Flutes (Marzipan shepherds), the Sugar Plum Fairy, and the Waltz of the Flowers.

After the festivities, Clara wakes up under the Christmas tree with the Nutcracker toy in her arms the curtain closes.

There are a number of different endings for example, in Balanchine's version she is never shown waking up. Instead after the dances in the Kingdom of Sweets have concluded she rides off with the Prince on a flying sleigh. This gives the impression that Clara's dream is actually a reality as in Hoffman's original story.

In Baryshnikov's version the roles of the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier are omitted and the dances are given to Clara and the Prince.

In the 1985 Royal Ballet version, Drosselmeier's nephew who has been transformed into a nutcracker reappears in human form, this also suggests a reality rather than a dream.

c) THE ORIGINAL STORY

Hoffman's original story written in 1816 portrayed a bleak view of humanity and relationships, and he never intended for his story about childhood to be for children. His plot centres around Marie, a German girl who lives in a loveless house. Clara is the name of her favourite doll and has now been adopted as the main protagonist in the popular version of *The Nutcracker*. Marie's godfather, Herr Drosselmeier gives her a nutcracker doll for Christmas but at night, the vicious seven-headed Mouse King and his mouse soldiers appear and try and destroy her dolls. The Nutcracker comes to life and battles in Marie's defence but the Mouse King beats him. Marie faints and the battle is unresolved.

Marie is found by her family lying in a pool of blood, her family scold her and send her to her room. Herr Drosselmeier visits her and tells her the story behind the Nutcracker and the Mouse King; the beautiful princess Pirlipat is cursed to be forever ugly by the Mouse King's mother. The only way to stop the curse is for a brave and handsome man to find the hardest nut in the world, crack it with his teeth and deliver it to the princess for her to eat. The king promises his daughter's hand in marriage to the man who breaks the spell.

Drosselmeier's nephew succeeds in cracking the nut and delivers the kernel to the princess. As soon as she eats it she becomes very beautiful however, the nephew inherits the curse and becomes a wooden-faced nutcracker. The princess is disgusted and he is banished but in the confusion of everything Drosselmeier steps on the Mouse King's mother and kills her. It is now that the Mouse King swears vengeance on Drosselmeier and his nephew.

Another battle takes place between the Mouse King and the Nutcracker only this time the Nutcracker is victorious and he takes Marie to a land where he is a prince. After a magical journey they return to Marie's home and Marie meets and marries Drossmeier's nephew.

This story was revised considerably by Alexander Dumas père and it was this version that Marius Petipa commissioned Tchaikovsky to write a ballet.

d) ADAPTATION AND INTERPRETATION

Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker! was first created for Opera North in 1992 and whilst retaining key elements and main themes of Tchaikovsky's ballet the bleak beginning of Act One is a nod to the original story by Hoffman. Matthew Bourne created this new scenario with Martin Duncan to re-work the traditional Christmas story.

Bourne explains; 'This version of the Nutcracker story is a touching coming of age story told through the dreams, and nightmares, of a particular young girl, Clara. The classical Nutcracker has become a Christmas tradition, particularly for Mothers and their young daughters; it's often the first ballet that many people see. It can though, be a difficult story to follow and a bore for the men of the family. I've tried to tell a story for all the family. Adults, kids, girls and boys should all find something to thrill them and touch them in Clara's adventure.'

SETTING

Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker! takes place in an awful Dickensian Orphanage at Christmas time. It is Christmas Eve and the orphans are preparing for the annual visit of the Institute's Governors. Once the visitors leave the decorations are torn down and things return to a bleak existence.

Bourne says; 'I have always felt that the Christmas Party that opens most productions of Nutcracker represented a fantasy in itself for most audiences. Therefore, when we are transported into Clara's fantasy world we have really just gone from one idyllic fantasy to another. Martin Duncan and I had an instinct that we would feel the transformation that much more if the Christmas Party that begins the piece was less opulent and more bittersweet. We came up with the notion of a Dickensian Orphanage where Clara is one of the orphans.'



The Nutcracker

	HOFFMAN'S STORY	TCHAIKOVSKY	BOURNE
Setting	A loveless house on Christmas Eve	An opulent party on Christmas Eve	A Dickensian Orphanage on Christmas Eve
The Main Protagonist	Marie, who has a favourite doll called Clara	Clara, the daughter of rich parents	Clara, an orphan
Nutcracker	Herr Drossmeier's nephew who has been cursed by the Mouse King's Mother	A toy who comes to life in Clara's dream	An orphan who is adored by Clara, he becomes the Nutcracker toy who takes Clara to a magical world. They escape from the orphanage together at the end.
Dream World	The battle of the Mouse King and the mice soldiers and the Nutcracker	Dancing snow flakes and the Land of the Sugar Plum Fairy	The Frozen Lake and Sweetieland
The Princess	Princess Pirlipat	Sugar Plum Fairy	Princess Sugar
The Villain	The Mouse King	The Mouse King	Dr. Dross and Matron
Mother Ginger		Mother Ginger	Humbug Bouncer
Spanish		Spanish	Liquorice Allsorts
Arabian		Arabian	Knickerbocker Glory
Chinese		Chinese	Marshmallow
Russian		Russian	Gobstoppers
The Ending	Marie meets Drossmeier's nephew and they fall in love	Clara wakes up under the Christmas tree with the toy Nutcracker in her arms	Clara finds herself back in the orphanage all alone when Nutcracker appears and they escape out of the window together.



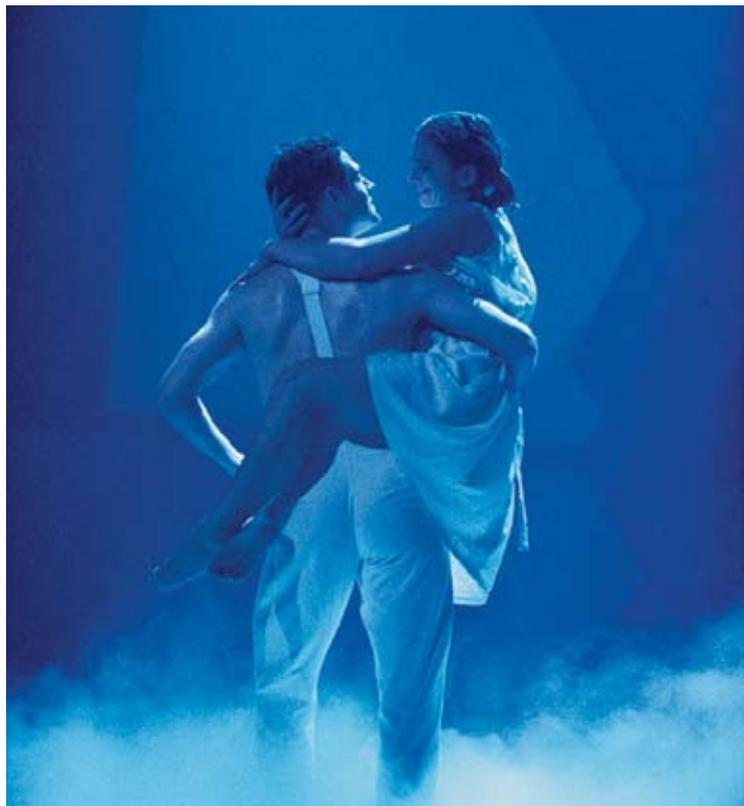
Comparing Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and Matthew Bourne's *Nutcracker*! write down other key similarities and differences you can think of.

e) KEY THEMES

FIRST LOVE

In all versions of *The Nutcracker* Clara falls in love. In *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker!* Clara has a crush on the boy Nutcracker. Some of the orphans make fun of her. When she is given her toy the Nutcracker soldier she is distraught when he is locked away and tries to get him out. When the cupboard doors fly open her Nutcracker is now a full-size puppet. He helps the orphans escape and when Clara is left alone he reveals himself to be a human young man.

They travel together to the Frozen Lake but it is here that Princess Sugar wants him for herself. Clara follows them to Sweetieland and is accompanied by her two friends the twins who are now cupids and after many failed attempts Clara and her Nutcracker are finally reunited back in the Orphanage where they escape together.



Clara and The Nutcracker

GROWING UP

Clara is forced to fend for herself after she has been deserted by Nutcracker, she is befriended by the two cupids who guide her but it is only she who can make things actually happen.

ADVENTURE

Clara leaves the safety of the Orphanage and visits two different worlds, the Frozen Lake and Sweetieland. She meets characters she could only dream of.



Make a list of all the people Clara meets on her adventures. What does she learn or observe from each one, if anything? You should include the people in the Orphanage as this will also inform choices she makes further on in her journey.



For further exercises and practical tasks on the subject of CHARACTERS go to Worksheet A

DREAMS

The magical worlds in the *Nutcracker* have sometimes been portrayed as dreams and sometimes we are led to believe it may well have been a reality. This is certainly the case for Hoffman's original story. In *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker!* Clara dreams about a world a million miles away from her home at the Orphanage.



For further exercises and practical tasks on the subject of DREAMS go to Worksheet C



In small groups look at the main themes in *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker!*

FIRST LOVE

GROWING UP

ADVENTURES

DREAMS

Think about what images these words conjure up. Use these words to communicate these themes to an audience using your existing skills and dance training.

3. PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

A) SET

The designer, Anthony Ward worked with Matthew Bourne to create two contrasting worlds. The first world is Christmas Eve in an Orphanage and the second world is one of dreams and fantasy.



What is the main thing Ward uses to differentiate between the two worlds?

The production opens in a dilapidated Orphanage, it is a large grey room with an imposing clock that watches every move that the orphans make. It is unwelcoming with cracking plaster on every wall. The misshapen furniture looms over the orphans as they dance and clean the nooks and crannies. When the Nutcracker comes to life the room starts to crack, the walls begin to split open, and the Christmas tree from the earlier celebration grows to an enormous height. The orphans then escape through the cracks to another world.

The next world we enter is a magical frozen lake where the Snowflakes scene from the traditional Nutcracker becomes an ice-skating extravaganza. From here Act Two opens in Sweetieland, where the backdrop is now a glitter-lipped mouth, providing the entrance to Sweetieland itself. The highlight of Act Two is the wedding cake upon which all the characters dance and eat, slurp and lick the cake whilst dancing upon and around each of the three-tiers.

It is an entirely fantastical set and one that conjures up images of candy-canes and Christmas sugar delights.

B) COSTUME

From the grey smocks and shorts of the orphanage to the all-white ice-skating attire, the costumes enhance every moment of the story.



The Frozen Lake



What effect do the all-white costumes have on the ice-skating scene? How does it inform the action? Princess Sugar is dressed in pink. What does this tell us about her character and about her status in the group?

In Sweetieland the costumes are extremely important as this informs the audience of what sweetie each dancer represents.



For each sweetie write down the key elements of the costume that inform that audience. i.e. Humbug bouncer:

- The shape of the costume is in the shape of a humbug sweet
- The material is black and white striped like a humbug

It may be a useful exercise to write down how the costume effects the way in which the dancers move as well. For example, Clara feels much happier in her blue and white spotted dress than she does in her clothes from the orphanage and this could also be perceived to effect her movement and her emotions.

C) MUSIC

The music is written by Tchaikovsky and belongs to the Romantic period. The most recognisable pieces of music from Tchaikovsky's ballet is the *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*, the *Trepak* (Russian dance) and *The Waltz of the Flowers*.

The ballet contains some very advanced harmonies and a wealth of melodic invention that had not been seen in ballet music before. Influences of late 18th century music can be heard in the *Overture*, the *Entrée des parents* and *Tempo di Grossvater* all in Act One.

Tchaikovsky used the celesta in the *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*. The sound of the celesta is similar to that of the glockenspiel but with a much softer timbre. This informed the instruments name, celeste meaning 'heavenly' in French.

He also uses toy instruments during the Christmas Party scene.

Tchaikovsky's score is extremely engaging and the music tells amazing stories with wonderful melodies.



Listen to the music of the Christmas Party scene and see if you can identify the use of toy instruments in this piece.

What effect do these instruments have on the piece of storytelling and on the music?



All of the production elements combine to tell a fantastical and wonderful story, of which music plays an extremely large part.

For each scene in *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker!* write down five words to describe the music. Try to listen to the music in isolation from the action.

Once you have completed this task for each scene look at what journey the music has taken the listener on. How does this reflect what happens on stage?

Comment on this and discuss how the other production elements; dance, costume, set and lighting work together to inform the story.

D) LIGHTING

Lighting and colour play a significant role in expressing the different worlds, indicating a change of world similar to the use of black and white and colour in *The Wizard of Oz*.



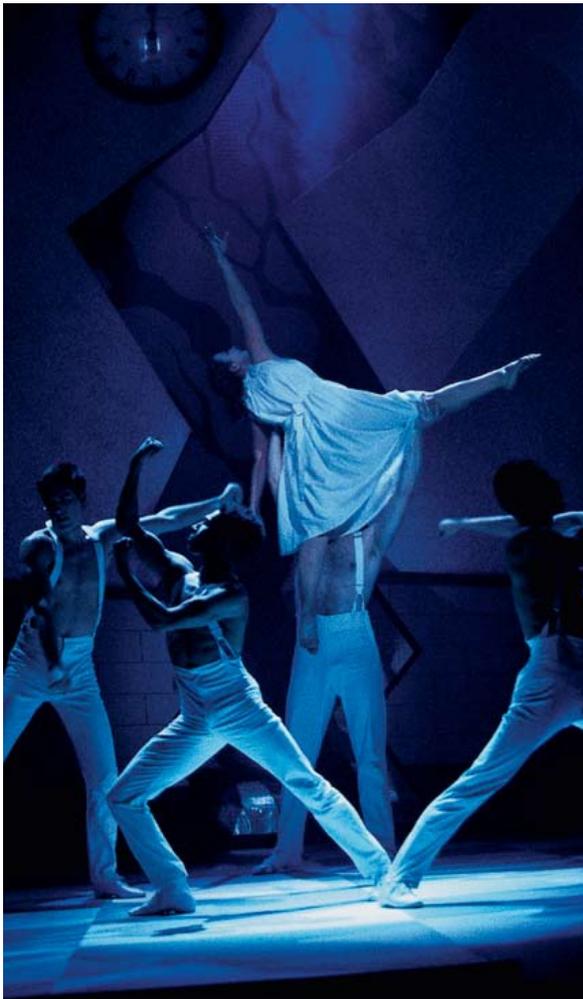
Choose two completely different points of the production. Describe what is happening in each of your chosen scenarios and comment why they are different and how lighting, sound, set and costumes contribute towards this.

E) SOUND

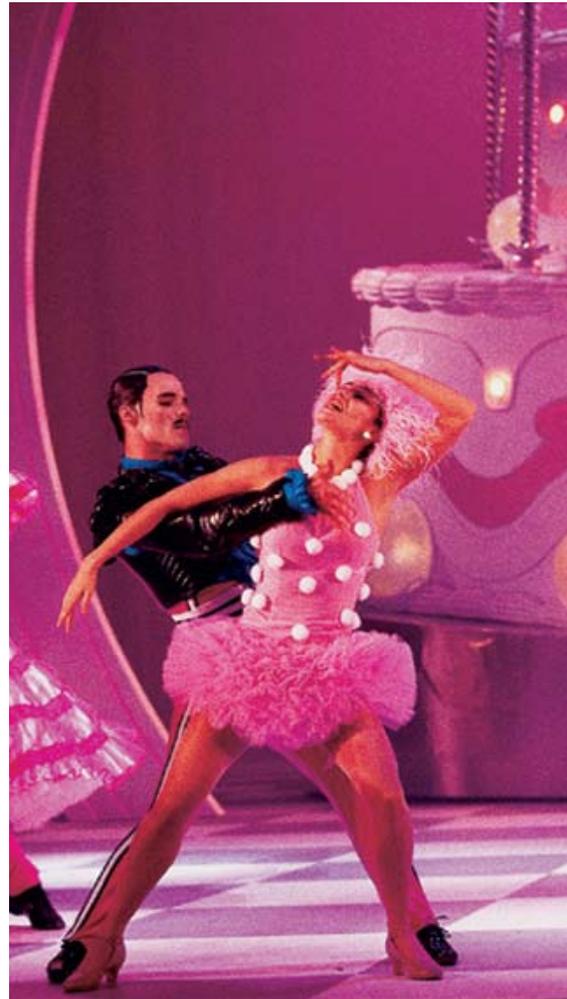
Sound helps to create the atmosphere of the production. In particular additional sound effects are used when the orphans receive their toys. When Fritz plays with his toy gun additional sound effects are used to create a bigger sound and more dramatic effect.



Think of other moments throughout the production where sound is used to enhance or create atmosphere.



Clara and the nutcracker boys



A Liquorice allsort and a marshmallow girl

WORKSHEET A: CHARACTERS

The characters in Matthew Bourne's *Nutcracker!* are all much larger than life in both worlds and every character is unique, even the orphans in their grey smocks and shorts.

Bourne says; 'one of the pleasures of creating these characters was to link them with their orphanage counterparts. In Clara's imagination her friends become the fluffy Marshmallow girls, the yobby Gobstopper boys, the vain Liquorice Allsort trio and the lewd and sticky Knickerbocker Glory.

Her best friends, the twins, become her heavenly helpers, The Cupids.

Dr and Mrs Dross transform into the gluttonous rulers of Sweetieland, King Sherbet and Queen Candy, and their bratish children, Sugar and Fritz, grow up into the glamorous Princess Sugar and saucy Prince Bon Bon.

Everything is edible in Sweetieland and its inhabitants are judged not by how they look but by how they taste.'

EXCERISE 1



This exercise links into a written task in 3b)

Start by writing down all of the characters we meet in *Nutcracker!* Next to each character write down a description of their movement.

- How do they walk and communicate with other characters
- Do they jump, and if so how? Is it fast, high energy, brusque or graceful, fluid, travelling in unison?
- Look at their action, dynamic and spatial content and how this contributes to the audience's understanding of the characters.

How does Matthew Bourne illustrate the different characters through his choreography?



The Nutcracker



The Gobstoppers

THE NUTCRACKER

The Nutcracker full-size puppet is an interesting and challenging character to portray because of his strong physicality. His movements are stilted, his gaze fixed and his joints are stiff.

THE GOBSTOPPERS

This trio of boys come on stage wearing doc martens and crash helmets. Their outfits enhance their actions and movements.

EXERCISE 2



Choose 5 characters from the list you have made above.

- In a group of 5 you should each choose one of the characters.
- Decide on a short sequence in your group. This sequence should include
 - o Travelling steps
 - o One or more turns (you should decide how many as a group)
 - o A change in level
 - o One or more jump (you should decide how many as a group)
- Decide how many counts each movement will take.
- Individually work on each of these movements thinking about the words written in the previous exercise.
- In unison you should perform each movement as a group
- Rehearse and experiment in both canon and unison. Vary how the sequence is performed so that some members of the group jump whilst the rest of the group are changing levels.
- Think about how the characters might interact with each other and how their physical attributes affect the speed and type of movement.
- Perform in groups and evaluate each other's work. Think about the following:
 - o How clearly was each character portrayed?
 - o Did the physicality of the character come across clearly through the style of movement?
 - o Can the audience guess which characters were portrayed in the sequence? If there were any characters that were not clear, discuss why and what can be done to ensure clarity.

WORKSHEET B: TABLEAUX

In Act Two Princess Sugar is getting ready helped by the Marshmallow Girls. This sequence is made up of a series of tableaux. Princess Sugar is at the centre of this tableaux and the Marshmallow girls are set around her.



Princess Sugar and the Marshmallow girls

EXERCISE 1



Work in groups of 5 or 6.

- Start by recreating your own version of a group of girls or boys getting ready to go out.
- You should place 1 person at the centre and the others should work around this person.
- Think about different actions you may do whilst you are getting ready.
 - Brushing teeth
 - Brushing and styling hair
 - Painting nails
 - Getting dressed
 - Putting on shoes
 - Doing make-up
- Think about facial expressions and posture
- Look at spacing in the group and how this informs relationships. Explore how relationships can be created and played with by working with spacing of characters.
- Once you have a series of snapshots connect the tableaux together. Each snapshot can be connected by a single movement, or as with the Marshmallow girls, a series of quicker movements to the same number of counts as 1 single movement.
- Hold each snapshot for a series of counts and then decide how many counts you wish the transition to last for.

EXERCISE 2



Work in groups and work through the show from the moment that the curtain rises on the Orphanage to the moment that the curtain goes down on Clara and Nutcracker escaping through the window of the Orphanage.

You should make joint decisions about what moments are the most important to portray in order to ensure that the story is told clearly.

The key chapters in *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker!*

1. Preparations for a visit
2. Presents and party pieces
3. Time For Bed
4. The Revolt
5. The Frozen Lake
6. The Road to Sweetieland
7. By invitation only
8. The Wedding Party

EXERCISE 3



Once you have made this list look through each moment and check that you have covered all elements of the production. Once you are all in agreement you should follow the same process as exercise 1.

- Think about facial expressions and posture
- Look at spacing in the group and how this informs relationships. Explore how relationships can be created and played with by working with spacing of characters.
- Once you have a series of snapshots connect the tableaux together. Each snapshot can be connected by a single movement, or as with the Marshmallow girls, a series of quicker movements to the same number of counts as 1 single movement.
- Hold each snapshot for a series of counts and then decide how many counts you wish the transition to last for.
- Set these series of tableaux to music. Try to find one piece of music from *Nutcracker* that is suitable for every snapshot and transition.
- Once you have chosen the piece of music play around with canon and unison, speed of movement. You may want to use the characters and sequences explored in WORKSHEET A: Characters to inform your work.
- Perform this to the rest of the group and evaluate if the story was clear and concise.
- Perform this to an audience who are not familiar with the material and evaluate the response and effectiveness of the storytelling.

WORKSHEET C: STORYTELLING



Clara in Sweetieland

EXERCISE 1



DREAMS

In groups discuss dreams that you have had, either recently or particularly vivid ones you remember from your past.

Whilst you are discussing your dreams think about how dreams can be different from real life, for example, you might be able to fly in your dream, or walk in mid-air. Perhaps you can make time go backwards.

Make a note of all your discussions for use in the next exercise.



As individuals start walking round the room slowly and start thinking about where you are. Use locations from your dreams to help create your environment .

- Think about the following things:
 - Temperature
 - Smells
 - Atmosphere
 - Is it light or dark?
 - Time of day
- How do you feel in this environment?
 - Scared
 - Joyful
 - Worried
 - Excited



In small groups (between 3–5) discuss the locations you have all been in. Describe to the rest of the group where you have just been and make sure you talk about elements mentioned above.

After you have all shared where you have been agree on a dream world you will portray using ideas and themes that you discussed as a group in the first part of this exercise.



Improvise moving around your dream world, make sure that you remain very aware of the rest of your group.

- From this simple movement start playing with the space and your dream world
- Work on simple improvised movements, think about your body language and your status within the group.
- What kind of character are you? How do you interact with the others in your world
- During your improvisation explore the following movements:
 - Running
 - Jumping
 - Leaping
 - Rolling
 - Hold hands with someone else in the group
 - Travel across the space in a pair
 - Make contact with someone in the group without using your hands
- Decide what techniques work best in your world and use these to create a rehearsed sequence.
- Perform this sequence to the rest of the group and see if the dream world was clearly portrayed.

EXERCISE 2



All of the characters in Nutcracker start as one character and becomes another with the exception of Clara. The orphans become characters in Sweetieland, Matron and Dr. Dross become Queen Candy and King Sherbet, Clara's friends become the Cupids.

Using the notion of change and transformation continue your sequence in your dream world, in your group decide that something is going to happen to your world and how the characters are going to transform into someone or something else.

It is up to you how much changes, and what your dream world becomes.

You may wish to keep the world the same but to change the people inside the world.

- Think about how you might convey this moment to the audience
- What clear moments of storytelling can you remember of that are used in Nutcracker! to communicate with the audience so that they know what is happening.
- Try and make the moment of change as dramatic and clear as possible. You might want to consider techniques such as:
 - A change in levels, either in canon or unison
 - A change in the speed of movement
 - Tableaux
 - Only 1 person moving at any one time
- Practise and then perform this sequence to the rest of the group



Evaluate the performance and discuss the effectiveness of the storytelling.

5. CRITICAL THINKING

REVIEWING LIVE PERFORMANCE

General Overview:

- Summarise the plot on a side of A4.
- Describe the style of the production
- Did it remind you of any other productions you have seen or know?
- What was your personal response to the production?
- What theatrical devices and conventions were used?

Direction and Choreography:

- What do you think the director/ choreographer was trying to convey through the production?
- Do you think that the choreography, set design and staging supported and conveyed this?
- Was there an interesting and varied use of stage space?

Dancing:

- How would you describe the dancing style?
- What different styles of dance did you recognise?
- Were they all successfully used within the production?
- What can you say about the dancing in comparison with the dancing in other productions you have seen?
- Who gave the most notable performance? Try to be specific about why in your answer.

Design:

- Describe the set, costume, lighting and sound.
- What kind of statement did each of these make?
- How did the design contribute to the production's meaning?
- Give examples of how the lighting enhanced the narrative.



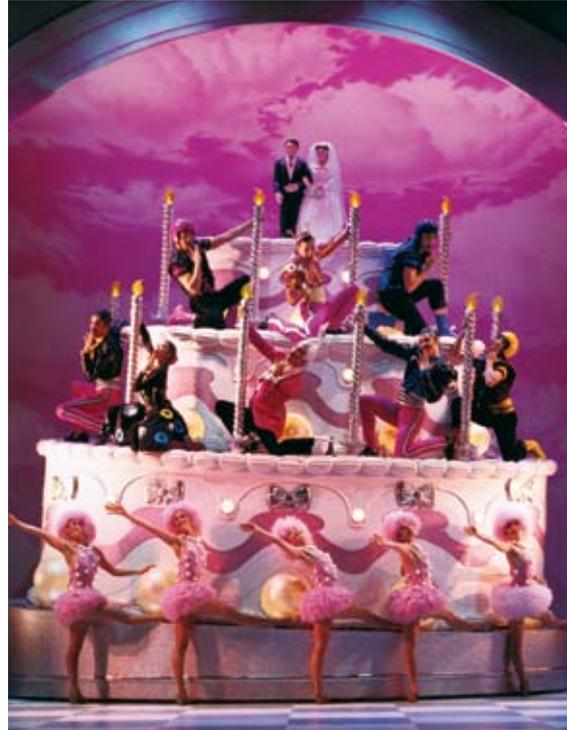
The Cupids

6. ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. There is a strong Busby Berkeley influence that is particularly apparent during the wedding cake dance.



Busby Berkeley



Matthew Bourne

Bourne demonstrates influences of Busby Berkeley in his choreography and some elements from Berkeley's films can be recognised in *Nutmacker*!

Watch one of Berkeley's films and comment on the similarities and differences between the stage and film. Can you find any other examples of filmic influences in *Nutmacker*!

2. Bourne cites the main influence of the frozen lake sequence as Sonja Henie, the 1930's ice-skating legend rather than Torvill and Dean.



Look at the Frozen Lake scene and comment on the different techniques Bourne uses to convey the ice-skating sequence.

Explore other examples on stage where situations are suggested through varying techniques and staging rather than being re-created exactly.

3. Hoffman's original story is very dark and was not originally written for children. However, there was an appeal for children so it was simplified and given a happy ending. Many well-known fairy tales began life as dark tales meant to scare children rather than entertain them. Research some examples of old fairy tales. Compare and contrast the original stories with the stories that are best known today.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker!* DVD (BBC, 2003)
- Busby Berkeley photograph features on www.mindjack/film
- Sonja Henie image features on www.theskatinggallery.com
- www.wikipedia.org
- www.matthewbournesnutchacker.com
- Production photographer: Catherine Ashmore



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Tel: +44 (0) 20 7713 6766 Email: info@new-adventures.net
Website: www.new-adventures.net

Resource Pack written by Imogen Kinchin