

THE STORY OF THE NUTCRACKER

ACT 1

In a townhouse in 19th century Germany, the Stahlbaum family is hosting a Christmas party. Frau and Herr Stahlbaum and their 2 children, Clara and Fritz, await the arrival of their guests, and in particular Herr Drosselmeier, Clara's godfather, who is a magician and maker of mechanical dolls. Herr Drosselmeier is very fond of his goddaughter, Clara, who is a kind-hearted young woman, with fascination for far away countries she has never seen.

Drosselmeier brings a special gift for Clara – a Nutcracker doll. Unbeknown to Clara, this doll is, in fact, Drosselmeier's nephew, Nathaniel, who is trapped within the Nutcracker doll by a curse placed on their family by the Rat King. The curse can only be lifted – and Nathaniel set free – if a young woman loves and cares for the doll, despite his ugly appearance. Drosselmeier hopes that Clara will be the one to break the curse.

Later that night, after the guests have left, rats scurry out to steal the leftover crumbs from the party. Drosselmeier uses his magical powers to transform the Stahlbaum's drawing room ready for a battle between the Nutcracker with his troops of toy soldiers, and the Rat King with his swarm of rats. Clara can't bear to see her Nutcracker in danger and so intervenes to help him defeat the Rat King. In doing so, she has shown her love for the Nutcracker and the curse is lifted.

Drosselmeier is overjoyed. To celebrate the victory and the lifting of the curse, he takes Clara and his nephew on a magical journey to lands they have never visited before. They travel first through the Christmas Wood, a scene full of swirling snowflakes.

ACT 2

Leaving the Christmas Wood behind them, Clara and Nathaniel follow the enticing sights and smells of delicious confectionary, which leads them to the Kingdom of Sweets. This colourful city full of delicacies and treats from around the world is ruled over by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. Clara and Nathaniel are welcomed and they recount the story of their victory over the Rat King. The Kingdom rejoices and rewards the young couple for their bravery. A party is held in their honour, with delicacies offered to them from countries all over the world, which Clara selects from a globe presented to her by the citizens.

The highlight of the celebrations is the dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy with her Cavalier. After this, Drosselmeier uses his magical powers to return the young couple to the Stahlbaums' home. Clara finds that, in the very place where the Nutcracker doll stood just 24 hours ago, there now stands her new love, Nathaniel.