

Annotated Bibliography

Mahiet, Damien. "The First Nutcracker, the Enchantment of International Relations, and the Franco-Russian Alliance." *Dance Research*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2016, pp. 119–149., doi:10.3366/drs.2016.0156.

This paper by lecturer Damien Mahiet explores the important historical and political events that shaped the creation of *The Nutcracker*. It also explores the significance of music and dance in international relations, specifically the Franco-Russian Alliance. He posits that the first act of the ballet has numerous references to Revolution Era France, such as the clothing of the soldiers and party guests. This is then contrasted with the second act, whose divertissement functions as a "pageant of nations", a common Russian Imperial spectacle where different nations are paraded to provide a "visual reminder of Russian Might". The Russian Trepak is the "nationalist counterpart to the Orientalizing Arabian dance and the infantilizing 'Mother Ginger'" and emphasizes "qualities that Alexander III [the reigning leader of Russia] wished associated with the national character". Mahiet posits that the references to the French first Republic as benign rather than antagonistic influences, could have been inspired by eventuality of alliance between Russia and France. This source provides an interesting look into the potential political inspiration for *The Nutcracker* and is useful for understanding the significance of world events on creative mediums.

Cheney, Alexandra. "Outfitting 'The Nutcracker'." *Wall Street Journal*, 15 Nov. 2011, search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/docview/903815905?pq-origsite=summon

This article is an interview with costume designer Sylvia Nolan, who designed the costumes for Keith Michael's 2011 production of *The Nutcracker*. This production was intended for young children and Nolan wanted to create bright and colourful costumes that

would appeal to them, without being childish or talking down to them. The show is set on the top of a mantelpiece, with some characters being real people and others inspired by figurines and statues. Many of the characters were inspired by 18th century porcelain figurines, while others suit the early 20th century setting. This source provides a decent example of how a classic story can be adapted for different audiences and how perceived unrelated inspiration, like figurines and sculptures, can inspire the designs for costumes.

Mahiet, Damien. "The Aesthetics and Politics of Wonder in the First Nutcracker."

19th-Century Music, vol. 40, no. 2, 2016, pp.131–158.,doi:10.1525/ncm.2016.40.2.131.

This paper is a companion to Mahiet's piece in the Dance Research journal. It posits that *The Nutcracker* was designed as a "spectacle of wonder" by placing the audience "in a position of awe and reverent obedience". The show references late-nineteenth century imperial rituals through music, choreography and production design in order to forge a "representation of imperial power in late-nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia". Clara, who in Act 1 plays an important part in the plot, is relegated to a spectator in Act 2, modelling for the audience "a potential mode of reception". Mahiet believes that the Sugar Plum Fairy was a way to portray the "imperial subject in a position of reverence" and "conflated traditional representations of the absolutist monarch as a force for good and of the female sovereign as an agent of civilization". The Nutcracker Prince then functions as Clara's escort, the conduit through which awe and spectacle are delivered. This source is similar to Mahiet's previous article, in that it provides an interesting theory on the creative decisions made in *The Nutcracker*; alluding to potential political and historical inspirations for the story and design. It is helpful for understanding how ballet can be used as political commentary and propaganda and will be used to influence the overall design choices for the inquiry project creation.

Additional Citations

Bernstein, Leilah. "These Candy-Colored Nutcracker Costumes Are Almost Too Gorgeous For Words." Los Angeles Magazine, 7 Dec. 2017, www.lamag.com/culturefiles/gorgeous-nutcracker-costumes/.

Sidell, Misty White. "Behind the Seams: Costumes for New York City Ballet's 'The Nutcracker.'" Women's Wear Daily, 11 Dec. 2019, p. 38.

Muther, Christopher. "Final Act for Some Favorite Costumes: 'Nutcracker' Outfits from '95 to Be Retired." Boston Globe, 24 Nov. 2011.

Inquiry Project: Imagery

This is an image of the original sugar plum fairy costume from the St Petersburg premiere run of *The Nutcracker*. The Sugar Plum Fairy's outfit features an embellished short sleeved bodice and a short, bell-shaped tutu. The bell tutu was a popular style during the late 1800's and was a transition between the Romantic tutu and the iconic pancake tutu of the 20th century. One can see from later iterations of *The Nutcracker* that the popularization of the pancake tutu has led to it becoming characteristic of the Sugar Plum Fairy, rather than the original bell tutu seen here.



Varvara Nikitina as the Sugar Plum Fairy in a later performance in the original run of *The Nutcracker*. 1892.

This tutu was designed by artist Robert Perdziola and made for the Boston Ballet. It has a brocade bodice, a pancake tutu made of packed layers of white, pink and sheer net and tulle and is decorated with a number of handmade appliqués and jewels. The pink, white and gold pancake tutu has become the standard for the Sugar Plum Fairy's tutu and almost codified, with her costume rarely differing throughout productions.



Misa Kunaraga as The Sugar Plum Fairy for *The Nutcracker*. Designed by Robert Perdziola. The Boston Ballet, Boston. 2012.

The 2018 hollywood film *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms* is a reimaged version of *The Nutcracker* ballet and the original story by E. T. A. Hoffmann. This interpretation of the story differs from the ballet as it has a central plot that is continued throughout the film, rather than shifting to a divertissement in the second act. In this story, Clara is thrust into a fantasy-adventure story where she must travel to different realms. The Sugar Plum Fairy, leader of the "fourth realm", is the villain of this film. Her costume is a large departure from the traditional pancake tutu and is a reflection of how a ballet costume can be reinterpreted for a different medium. It is made from hundreds of fan shaped pieces of tulle layered on top of one another to resemble a flower or cotton candy. The medici-style collar is a common detail seen on many Disney villains, like The Queen of Hearts from *Alice in Wonderland*.



Sugar Plum gown for Keira Knightley in *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms*. Designed by Jenny Beavan. 2018.



Stanislava Belinskaya as Clara in the original production of *The Nutcracker*. Imperial Mariinsky Theatre, Saint Petersburg. 1892

The original production of *The Nutcracker* featured children playing the roles of Clara, Marianna and Fritz. The costumes and setting are situated in the regency era, characterized by light colours, high busts, square necklines and long, flowing ankle-length skirts. Clara's dress is white, has a square neckline with trim, a high bust, puffed sleeves and a ribbon under the bust. The costume for Clara is geared more towards realism than danceability, as her character does not do as many complicated solos as other principals in the show. Clara's outfit has seen many variations from production to production, but the longer skirts, pale colours and ribbon under the bust or on the waist, are considered important characteristics



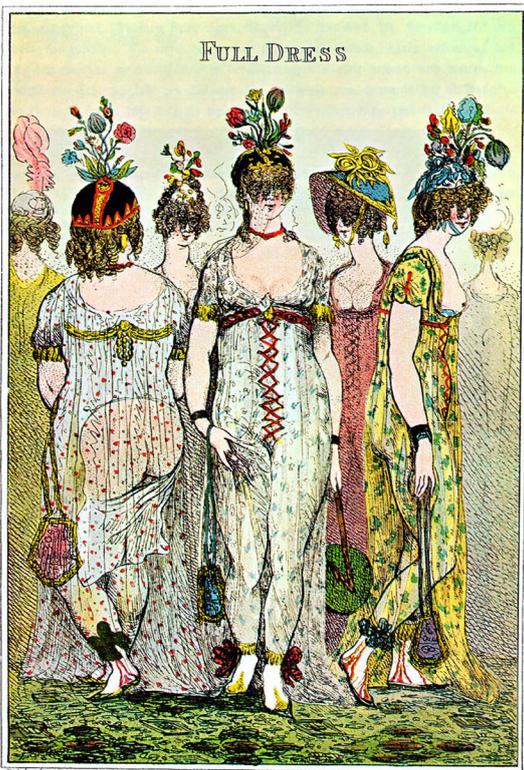
Madeleine Eastoe as Clara in *The Nutcracker*. Designed by John F Macfarlane. The Australian Ballet, Melbourne. 2019.

This costume for The Australian Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker* conveys how interpretations of Clara's character have grown over the last few decades. Many of the original components of Clara's outfit are still seen in this iteration: the pale colour, the square neckline, the puffed sleeves and the long, flowing skirt. The changes are what make this outfit striking. The most significant change in this iteration is that Clara is an adult, which means she is wearing pointe shoes and her outfit will have to accommodate much more complex movements. The skirt is now closer to a romantic tutu, with multiple layers of transparent gauze. The bodice is much lower and has a pointed basque and elbow length sleeves. She also has a matching ribbon in her hair. While the changes evoke a more mature character, she is still recognizable as Clara.



Clara's lavender gown for Mackenzie Foy in *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms*. Designed by Jenny Beavan. 2018.

The interpretation of Clara's outfit for *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms* is a huge departure from the original, similar to Keira Knightley's Sugar Plum dress. This film changes the setting to Victorian era London, somewhere around the late 1870's or early 1880's. This dress features short puffed sleeves, a rounded neckline, a basque waist, bustle silhouette and layers of lavender tulle. The dress also reflects certain elements of the late 19th century artistic dress movement, being simple in design and lacking embellishment, with an emphasis on the beautiful material. She is nearly unrecognizable as the original *Nutcracker* character, likely as a way to differentiate from past interpretations.



PARISIAN LADIES in their WINTER DRESS for 1800

"Parisian Ladies in their Full Winter Dress for 1800",
a satirical caricature print of Parisian women,
by Isaac Cruikshank.1799.

Regency-era France played a key role in the original costume designs for The Nutcracker, with evening guests dressed as “Incroyables” and “Merveilleuses” and many of the soldiers dressing in clothes reminiscent of soldiers of the First consul. The “Incroyables” and “Merveilleuses” were members of a rebellious movement born from the effects of the French Revolution. The clothing of the French Revolution was characterized by a turn from rich and elaborate to more modest and demure. Many young people decided to rebel against the repressed atmosphere of Revolution era Paris by dressing in exaggeratedly decadent styles, mimicking those prior to the Revolution.



“Wooden Soldier Nutcracker”,
manufactured by Clever Creations.

The Nutcracker Prince’s design in the ballet is inspired by the traditional German toys originating from the Erzgebirge region in the late 17th century. The soldier-doll style of nutcracker became a popular gift around the holidays and eventually became a christmas tradition in Europe. The costume for the Nutcracker Prince would be considered codified, having a specific set of requirements that is followed in almost every iteration of the story. The primary design goal is to resemble the nutcracker doll, with colour and details being a secondary consideration.



Image of the Nutcracker Prince costume,
designed by Robert Perdziola.
The Boston Ballet. Boston. 2019

This image is a great example of the typical costume for the Nutcracker Prince. The costumes for male principals are often designed to be elaborate on the top and simplistic on the lower half. This is because ballet places a large focus on lines and form and it's generally preferred to see as much of the leg as possible. The upper half of the Nutcracker outfit is generally a majorette-style jacket with epaulettes in either red, blue or green with gold embellishments, referencing the traditional soldier imagery. The lower half is generally ballet tights with matching slippers, as pictured, or black boots like the traditional nutcracker.

Inquiry Project- Nutcracker Ballet Redesigns

Project Idea

This production of *The Nutcracker* is inspired by the more experimental interpretations like *The Hard Nut*. This interpretation is a queer, burlesque inspired story that takes place on Christmas Eve, in mid-1930's New York. Instead of the original Tchaikovsky score, this production uses the Duke Ellington arrangement, because of the influence of Jazz on the 1930's dance scene.

Story - Act 1

The Stahlbaum family is hosting a big Christmas party for their family and friends, despite Americans going through a massive economic downturn. Clara is now 18 years old and this is the first year she is allowed to stay up late to enjoy the festivities with her parents. Once the younger children have left with their gifts, Clara is allowed to stay and socialize. The group begins a waltz and Clara is invited to dance by a woman (who also plays the Sugar Plum Fairy) and she accepts, despite the social implications. Their pas de deux is interrupted by Clara's older brother, who sends her off to bed. In her room, Clara finds her old Nutcracker, whose beard she cuts in frustration. When Clara falls asleep, the clock strikes midnight and the scene begins to shift, the tree growing to absurd proportions and strange, life-sized rats begin to enter. Her nutcracker comes to life and the two defeat the rats. The nutcracker then invites Clara to follow them, and the two leave Clara's home. The original pine forest is now Central Park, where the two pass by skating couples (snowflakes).

Story - Act 2

Clara and the Nutcracker arrive at their destination, an underground bar. Underground gay bars, or "pansy parlours", were places where the gay community was able to congregate in the 30's and laid the stage for the club subculture. The original divertissement is now an ensemble of burlesque performances, incorporating elements from different dance genres (ex: "The Spanish Dance" is now a queer flamenco performance). The decadent upper class dancing of the first act is now being contrasted with the low-brow, evocative dance in the second act. The Sugar Plum Fairy is the last performer and does an explosive Burlesque inspired number before the final waltz. Clara kisses the Sugar Plum Fairy goodbye before the nutcracker brings her home to go to sleep. Clara assumes it was a dream, before finding a silk glove she had received from the Sugar Plum Fairy, suggesting it was not a dream after all.

Characters

I picked three characters to redesign: Clara, The Nutcracker and the Sugar Plum Fairy. These characters are generally the most memorable from the show and this was an experiment in how different I could make these characters look without losing their recognizability.

Clara

Clara is a young woman, still naive and ignorant to the pressures of 1930's high-society. Her outfits are meant to convey a sense of innocence, but not childishness. Her party dress is inspired by the dresses of French designer Madeleine Vionnet. It is a gown with a circle skirt, high neckline and balloon sleeves in a pale, lightweight blue silk. The hem is horsehair braid, which gives it more structure and the shortened hemline is a hint that she is still somewhat young and a more formal dress is not expected of her. Clara's nightgown is softer and closer to the many versions in previous productions. It's a cream coloured silk chantilly lace dress, with elbow-length balloon sleeves. She is also wearing silk gloves.

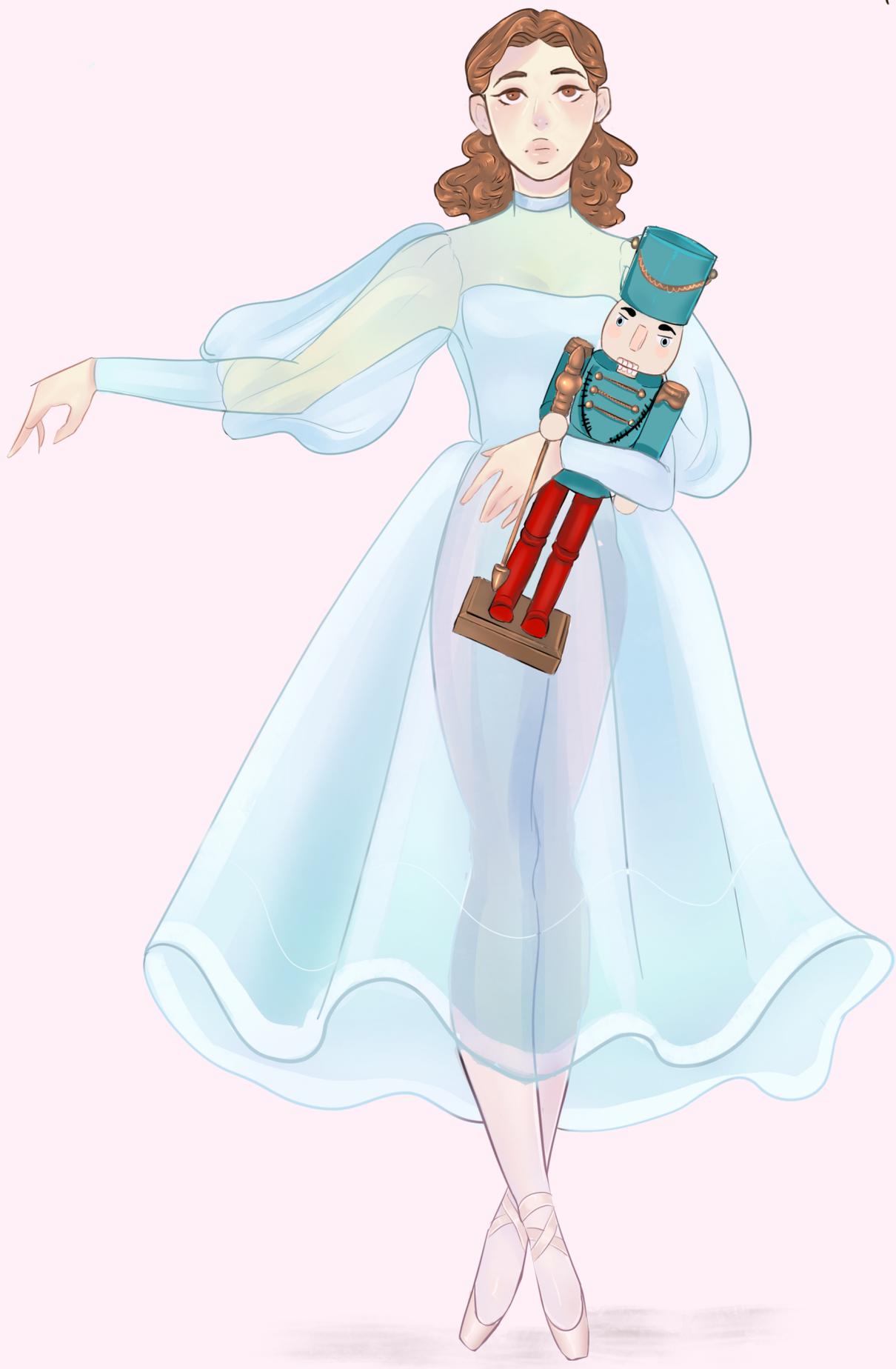
The Nutcracker

This Nutcracker is a departure from the codified outfit from previous productions. It is inspired by drag outfits, which often reinterpret symbols of authority or conventionality in interesting ways. This outfit is a turquoise Majorette-style leotard, with gold detailing. It has gold shoulder pads and hip gussets to create a curvier silhouette. They have a matching oversized kepi hat with gold chains. They are also wearing red ballet tights and pointe shoes. The largest departure is that this performer is meant to be more androgynous than masculine, so they can be played by any trained dancer that can dance en pointe. The idea is to break convention by having both Clara and the Nutcracker be able to do their pas de deux en pointe and also give opportunities to a female or non-binary dancer to play this role. The colours are referencing the French WW1 army uniforms as a nod to the many French influences in the original *Nutcracker*.

The Sugar Plum Fairy

The Sugar Plum Fairy is often the dream role for many ballerinas, so I wanted to keep the bright and feminine influences while transforming her character into someone more adult and mysterious. Her party dress is inspired by the famous "Letty Lynton" dress that rocked the early 1930's fashion game. It is a strapless, full length gown with detached cups and princess seams. It has a basque waist, maxi-length circle skirt and is trimmed with double-edged ruffles. She also has Full-length evening gloves with ribbons. Her Burlesque outfit is constructed for easy removability and movement. She has a knee-length circle skirt with double-edged ruffles and an invisible zipper, so that she can remove it during her performance. The bodice is a corset with a hidden zipper and detachable petal-shaped cups that reveal pasties underneath. She is also wearing a matching thong. She has on pointe-shoes because I want to incorporate pointe into her performance.

CLARA
PARTY DRESS



CLARA
NIGHTGOWN



NUTCRACKER



SUGAR PLUM
PARTY GUEST



SUGAR PLUM
BURLESQUE



SUGAR PLUM
BURLESQUE 2

