

BILLINGS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHORALE

Concert Notes

The Nutcracker

November 24 & 25, 2007

Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*:
November 24, 7:00 p.m. & November 25, 2:00 p.m.

Billings Symphony Orchestra
Anne Harrigan, *Conductor*

Eugene Ballet Company
Toni Pimble, *Artistic Director*

School of Classical Ballet
Betty Loos & Jana Stockton, *Artistic Directors*

Rimrock Opera Chorus for Kids
Amy Logan, *Director*

Sponsored by *Billings Gazette Communications*

PROLOGUE

Herr Drosselmeyer, a well-known toy maker in the town of Kleindorf, prepares to depart for the Stahlbaum's annual Christmas party. His nephew, Hans, assists in the shop serving last minute customers and packing boxes. Drosselmeyer puts the finishing touches to a Nutcracker doll, a gift for the Stahlbaum's daughter, Clara. Meanwhile, out in the street two families are on their way to the party. At the Stahlbaum's, the children's governess helps an excited Clara dress for the Christmas party. Clara receives a fan from her parents as she is now becoming a young woman. Fritz, her younger brother, bursts into the bedroom. He is very excited about his Christmas gift, a hobbyhorse. Drosselmeyer and Hans are on their way to the Stahlbaum party.

ACT I

The Christmas Party

At the Stahlbaum Christmas party the children are given gifts from underneath the tree. Herr Drosselmeyer and Hans arrive in the midst of the festivities. It becomes clear that Hans admires Clara. However, Fritz keeps pestering them. He does not understand

that both Hans and Clara are growing up. Drosselmeyer performs some magic tricks to entertain the children. Clara gives Hans a Christmas gift of a scarf. Then, two mysterious boxes arrive. Each box contains two large mechanical dolls created by Herr Drosselmeyer to entertain the children. After the dolls have been put away, Drosselmeyer gives a nutcracker to Clara, Fritz becomes jealous. He snatches the nutcracker from Clara and breaks it. Clara is upset, but Hans comforts her as Drosselmeyer mends the nutcracker doll. It is time to go home and Hans gives Clara her first kiss as he prepares to depart.

The Dream

Clara goes to bed with her nutcracker tucked under her arm. She “wakes” to discover her bed is being spun by two large mice in the living room. They chase Clara out of her bed and around the room. As Clara tries to escape, the room transforms into a Mouse Kingdom before her eyes. Clara runs to the clock where she hides her nutcracker inside the casement. Mice appear from everywhere and chase her until she falls in front of the clock. The clock explodes and turns into a sentry box with a life-size Nutcracker inside. The mice drag Clara away from him as the Mouse King arrives in a pirate ship. Clara is hauled on board by the nasty rodent while The Nutcracker calls on his troops to fight the mice and rescue Clara. A terrific battle ensues between The Mouse King and The Nutcracker. Just as The Mouse King is about to kill The Nutcracker, Clara hits the Mouse King with her slipper.

The Winter Land

Clara finds herself alone in a winter scene except for The Nutcracker lying where he fell. She runs to him and shakes him. She begins to cry, believing he is dead. He stirs and rises up. Clara sees that he is Hans, Drosselmeyer’s nephew, dressed as a handsome soldier. Hans takes her hand and they begin to dance. A sleigh arrives to take them on their journey. Clara, trusting of Hans, takes his hand and climbs onto a horse. As they travel across the frozen lake, they have a wonderful time watching the friendly skaters.

INTERMISSION

ACT II

The Kingdom of Sweets

Hans takes Clara to the Kingdom of Sweets, her reward for saving The Nutcracker Soldier from the Mouse King. When they arrive, they are greeted by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. The Cavalier gives Hans a gift for coming to Clara’s rescue. Clara is entertained with a festival of dances in her honor. Dancers from Spain, Arabia, China and Russia perform for her. Hans rises and invites Clara to join a group of beautiful women in a waltz. The Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier dance a grand pas de deux just for Clara. All the magical characters joins in a final dance. Clara’s mind races as the dancers whirl about her. Suddenly, she wakes to find herself sitting in her bed clutching her nutcracker doll. To her surprise Clara sees that her little nutcracker doll is now wearing a cloak —and she wonders...was it really a dream?