



ROTTERDAMS  
PHILHARMONISCH  
ORKEST

# Programme Notes

## The Nutcracker

Thu 22 December 2022 · 20.15

Fri 23 December 2022 · 20.15

## PROGRAMME

conductor **Vasily Petrenko**  
choir **National Children's Choir and  
National Boys' Choir**  
chorus conductors **Wilma ten  
Wolde and Irene Verburg**

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** 1840-1893  
The Nutcracker, fairy tale ballet in  
two acts and three tableaux with  
apotheosis, op. 71 (1891-1892)

*Intermission after the first act*

*Einde concert circa 22.15 uur*

**Most recent performances by our  
orchestra:**

*Dec 2010, conductor Yannick  
Nézet-Séguin*

*One hour before the start of the  
concert, Bart de Graaf will give  
an introduction (in Dutch) to the  
programme, admission €5. Tickets  
are available at the hall, payment  
by debit card. The introduction is  
free for Vrienden.*

*Cover: Photo Karine Germain.*

*Illustration:  
Clara and the Nutcracker.  
Illustration by Artuš Schneider  
for a Czech edition of Hoffmann's  
story, 1924.*





# Overnight journey to wonderland

Festive, sparkling, elegant, and with boundless energy: the music of *The Nutcracker* has it all. One could say that Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born to compose this Christmas classic. And yet, at first he felt little enthusiasm for composing this ballet.

## From Paris to St Petersburg

Classical ballet originated in France, at the court of Louis XIV, the dancing Sun King, who founded the first ballet academy in 1661. For a long time, ballet remained a purely French affair. But whereas by the end of the nineteenth century ballet had been reduced to a glorified peep show in Paris, it was reaching its zenith in Russia. Under French choreographer Marius Petipa, the Imperial Ballet of St Petersburg became the most important ballet company in the world. Thanks to the enormous sums provided by Czar Alexander III, the company presented the biggest productions with the most lavish stage sets and costumes. But in musical terms, the situation was less impressive: the music was always completely in the service of the dance. Until Tchaikovsky appeared on the scene. With their rich melodies, orchestral colours, and natural grace of the music, Tchaikovsky's three ballets *Swan Lake* (1876), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1889) and

*The Nutcracker* (1892) are amongst the finest scores ever composed for ballet.

## Extension

Generally speaking, Tchaikovsky had little difficulty in composing ballet music. Despite the strict discipline that a ballet libretto imposed on a composer - 32 bars in a slow three-four time, then 12 bars at a quicker tempo, followed by a march at moderate tempo, etc., etc. - Tchaikovsky kept producing the most beautiful melodies and atmospheric passages. However, Petipa's libretto for *The Nutcracker* left Tchaikovsky completely cold. In fact, he had such difficulty with the composition, that he asked for an extension of time for a full season. But you wouldn't guess this from the quality of the music. With a flowing elegance and a rich tapestry of sound, Tchaikovsky immediately sweeps you into a wonderland.

*The Nutcracker* is now recognised as a highpoint of classical ballet. But for a long time that was far

from the case. There was criticism from all sides: too many children on stage (Noise! Chaos!); the prima ballerina was introduced too late and with too little to do; and the story was too far removed from the original tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann. And since the tale was told from a child's perspective, the audience felt a little patronised.

The irony is that this last complaint is an important element of the modern-day success of *The Nutcracker* - apart, of course, from the brilliance of Tchaikovsky's music - as the perfect family entertainment over the Christmas period. Because it is exactly through the eyes of a child that we see a richly coloured wonderland without the subtext of any darker themes. Although the libretto does not avoid adult themes completely: *The Nutcracker* is also a fairy tale that explores the passage from childhood to adolescence, with all the accompanying feelings and desires.

### A fairy tale

*The Nutcracker* is based on Alexandre Dumas' 1844 reworking of the fairy tale *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* (1816) by E.T.A. Hoffmann, and revels in the fantasy. It is not difficult to regard it as a precursor to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), in which a girl also suddenly finds herself in a fantastical dreamworld. Thanks to Tchaikovsky's genius at creating pictures, the audience at a concert performance of the ballet score - without dancers and staging - can still easily follow the story.

Following a miniature overture, during which the curtain remains closed, the ballet can properly begin. The scene is set on Christmas Eve at the home of the Stahlbaum family. The Christmas

tree is being decorated, and family and friends place presents beneath its branches. The children, including Clara and Fritz Stahlbaum, are entranced by the splendid atmosphere. Then the party begins. It includes the famous *March of the Tin Soldiers*. Gifts are handed round. As the clock strikes nine-thirty, Clara's godfather, Drosselmeyer, arrives at the house. In the absence of any chimes - those belong to the staging - you can recognise this scene from the rising runs of the viola section, supported by trombones and muted horn. Drosselmeyer has brought along four big dolls, which can dance by themselves. Much to the disappointment of the children, he then puts them away in a safe place. However, there is one more doll that he has also brought: a wooden nutcracker in the form of a small soldier. Clara is immediately taken with this little man. And she is inconsolable when Fritz breaks the nutcracker. The guests dance one final dance before everyone retires to bed. During the night, Clara wakes and gets out of bed to check on the nutcracker downstairs. The clock strikes twelve. The magic begins. Everything in the room grows to gigantic proportions! The Christmas tree, the nutcracker, but also an army of mice that launch an attack on the gingerbread men. The nutcracker leads an army of toys into battle against the mice. When the Mouse King targets the nutcracker, Clara throws her shoe at him. The Mouse King is distracted for long enough for the nutcracker to stab him. The mice retreat, and the nutcracker transforms into a handsome prince. The prince leads Clara through a forest of pines towards the moonlight, and a magical adventure.

It is snowing. In this *Dance of the*

*Snowflakes* we hear Tchaikovsky at his best. He signposts the music of the Sugar Plum Fairy that will return later in the story, but in a different guise. The dance rhythm is ambivalent: it is only when the children's choir joins in that we hear that the music has been a waltz in three-four time all along. With this enchanting music to close Act I, Clara and the Prince leave the forest, and journey into a magical wonderland.

In Act II the Prince takes Clara to the Land of Sweets, ruled by the Sugar Plum Fairy. As reward for saving the Prince's life, Clara is presented with a whole procession of sweet delicacies: Spanish chocolate (characterised by a trumpet solo and, of course, castanets); coffee from Arabia (slow and mysterious music, with Arabic sounds created by the strings, clarinets, cor anglais, bassoon and tambourine); tea from China (piccolo and pizzicato strings); and candy canes from Russia (the famous Trepak dance involving full orchestra and starring role for the tambourine). The reed pipes dance (flutes), the harlequins hop, and the flowers are introduced by a harp solo to dance their famous waltz. The Sugar Plum Fairy and her knight then dance a pas de deux, again introduced by the harps, with a beautiful solo for cellos, which is subsequently taken up in triumph by the entire orchestra. Then comes the dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy, which Tchaikovsky scores for the very first time for the celesta, an enchanting keyboard instrument with the sound of tingling bells. Finally, Clara is magically transported back home, where she wakes to wonder whether it had all been a dream...

### Alexander Klapwijk

## Vasily Petrenko - conductor

**Born:** St-Petersburg, Russia

**Current position:** Music Director Royal Philharmonic Orchestra London, Chief Conductor European Union Youth Orchestra, Conductor Laureate Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Associate Conductor Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León

**Education:** Conservatory St-Petersburg; masterclasses with Ilya Musin, Mariss Jansons, Yuri Temirkanov

**Awards:** Gramophone Artist of the Year 2017; Prokofiev Conducting Competition St-Petersburg (2003); Cadaqués Orchestra International Conducting Competition (2002)

**Guest appearances:** Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia, Russian National Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, NHK Symphony Tokyo, Sydney Symphony Orchestra Opera: Metropolitan Opera of New York/Pique Dame, Glyndebourne Festival Opera/Macbeth, Mikhailovsky Theatre/Eugene Onegin, La Bohème, Carmen Opera Zürich/Carmen

**Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic:** 2006



Foto: Svetlana Tarlova

## National Children's Choir and National Boys' Choir

**Founded:** 1989 (children's choir) and 2006 (boys' choir), both belonging to the National Choirs of the Dutch Vocal Talent Foundation

**Conductor:** Wilma ten Wolde (children's choir) and Irene Verburg (boys' choir)

**Singers:** Enthusiastic children from all over the Netherlands with a remarkable voice and musicality

**Repertoire:** classical choral music

**Co-operations:** Berlin Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Dutch National Opera, LUDWIG, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra with conductors such as Gustavo Dudamel, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Valery Gergiev, Bernard Haitink, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Sir Simon Rattle, Yannick Nézet-Séguin. In 2021-2022 the National Choirs were Ensemble in Residence at TivoliVredenburg.

**Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic:** 1999



Foto: Jan Hordijk

# Agenda

**Sun 8 January 2023 • 10.30**

*Music for Breakfast No. 2*

with **Ron Tjhuis** (Cor Anglais), **Carla**

**Schrijner** (Cello), and colleagues  
from the orchestra

Chamber Music by **Honegger**,

**M. Haydn**, **Onslow**, **Broemel**, and

**Vaughan Williams**

**Thu 12 January 2023 • 20.15**

**Fri 13 January 2023 • 20.15**

**Sun 15 January 2023 • 14.15**

conductor **Lahav Shani**

piano **Daniil Trifonov**

**Beethoven** Piano Concerto No. 1

**Strauss** Ein Heldenleben

**Sun 12 February 2023 • 10.30**

*Music for Breakfast No. 3*

with **Charlotte Sprenkels** (Harp),

**Veronika Lénártová** (Viola), and

colleagues from the orchestra

Chamber Music by **Mozart**,

**Takemitsu**, **Ibert** and **Debussy**

**Thu 24 February 2023 • 20.15**

**Sun 26 February 2023 • 14.15**

conductor **Lahav Shani**

mezzosoprano (Judith) **Claudia**

**Mahnke**

baritone (Bluebeard) **Johannes**

**Martin Kränzle**

**Ligeti** Atmosphères

**Bartók** Duke Bluebeard's Castle

**Thu 9 March 2023 • 20.15**

**Fri 10 March 2023 • 20.15**

**Sun 12 March 2023 • 14.15**

conductor **Jordi Savall**

**Rebel** Les éléments

**Marais** Airs pour les Matelots et les

Tritons

**Händel** Water Music

**Rameau** Selection from Les Indes

Galantes and Hippolyte et Aricie

**Fri 17 March 2023 • 20.15**

**Sun 19 March 2023 • 14.15**

conductor **Timur Zangiev**

violin **Kristóf Baráti**

**Gubaidulina** Fairytale Poem

**Prokofiev** Violin Concerto No. 1

**Rachmaninoff** Symphony No. 2

# Musicians

## Chief Conductor

Lahav Shani

## Honorary Conductor

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

## Principal Assistant Conductor

Bertie Baigent

## First Violin

Igor Gruppman,

leader

Marieke Blankestijn,

leader

Quirine Scheffers

Hed Yaron Meyerson

Saskia Otto

Arno Bons

Mireille van der Wart

Cor van der Linden

Rachel Browne

Maria Dingjan

Marie-José Schrijner

Noëmi Bodden

Petra Visser

Sophia Torrenza

Hadewijch Hofland

Annerien Stuker

Alexandra van

Beveren

Koen Stapert

## Second Violin

Charlotte Potgieter

Cecilia Ziano

Frank de Groot

Laurens van Vliet

Tomoko Hara

Elina Staphorsius

Jun Yí Dou

Bob Bruyn

Letizia Sciarone

Eefje Habraken

Maija Reinikainen

Wim Ruitenbeek

Babette van den Berg

Melanie Broers

## Viola

Anne Huser

Roman Spitzer

Galahad Samson

Kerstin Bonk

Lex Prummel

Janine Baller

Francis Saunders

Veronika Lénártová

Rosalinde Kluck

León van den Berg

Olffe van der Klein

## Cello

Emanuele Silvestri

Joanna Pachucka

Daniel Petrovitsch

Mario Rio

Gé van Leeuwen

Eelco Beinema

Carla Schrijner

Pepijn Meeuws

Yí-Ting Fang

## Double Bass

Matthew Midgley

Ying Lai Green

Jonathan Focquaert

Robert Franenberg

Harke Wiersma

Arjen Leendertz

Ricardo Neto

## Flute

Juliette Hurel

Joséphine Olech

Désirée Woudenberg

## Flute/Piccolo

Beatriz Da Baíão

## Oboe

Remco de Vries

Karel Schoofs

Anja van der Maten

## Oboe/Cor Anglais

Ron Tjhuis

## Clarinet

Julien Hervé

Bruno Bonansea

## Clarinet/ Bass Clarinet

Romke-Jan Wijmenga

## Bassoon

Pieter Nuytten

Lola Descours

Marianne Prommel

## Bassoon/ Contrabassoon

Hans Wisse

## Horn

David Fernández

Alonso

Wendy Leliveld

Richard Speetjens

Laurens Otto

Pierre Buizer

## Trumpet

Alex Elia

Simon Wierenga

Jos Verspagen

## Trombone

Pierre Volders

Alexander Verbeek

Remko de Jager

## Bass Trombone

Rommert Groenhof

## Tuba

Hendrik-Jan Renes

## Timpani

Danny van de Wal

## Percussion

Ronald Ent

Martijn Boom

Adriaan Feyaerts

## Harp

Charlotte Sprenkels