



Kalmus Masterworks Library

PETER ILYITCH

TCHAIKOVSKY

THE NUTCRACKER

Fairy Ballet in Two Acts

Scored for small orchestra by William McDermott

Revised and edited by R. Mark Rogers

Op. 71

FULL SCORE - ACT I

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INSTRUMENTATION

Flute (d. Piccolo)

Oboe (d. English Horn)

2 Clarinets in A/ B flat

(Cl. 1 d. Flute [opt.]; Cl. 2 d. Bass Cl., Flute [opt.]
Alternate complete B flat parts provided)

Bassoon

2 Horns in F

2 Trumpets in B flat (1 d. Flug., opt.)

Bass Trombone

Timpani/ Percussion (1 player)

Harp

Celesta

Strings
(5.4.3.2.2)

ACT I

Overture	7
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Tableau I

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EDITOR'S NOTE

It is assumed that parties interested in information concerning Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's masterful fairy ballet *The Nutcracker* have many sources from which to seek out information, so this discussion will focus on what is known about William S. McDermott's reduction for small orchestra of this wonderful score. To begin, it is known that McDermott, who made this reduction, was born August 20, 1916 (location not known) and died a few months short of his 101st birthday on June 26, 2017. At the time of his death, he resided in Naples, Florida. There is some indication that he had lived previously in Tucson, AZ and other locations in Florida. Jean Quick Snyder, a dancer with the *Marquis de Cuevas Ballet*, recalls that McDermott had been a conductor for the company in the 1950s before he embarked on further activities in Japan. Another acquaintance recalled that the *Marquis de Cuevas Ballet* was a manifestation of the original *Ballet Russes* and that McDermott had served as a conductor of that company during tours of Latin America. An unpublished memoir by McDermott is mentioned, which leads one to believe that a lifetime of touring and conducting might have produced quite an interesting document. McDermott must have been a conductor of some stature as he conducted performances of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* in Tokyo. He made numerous arrangements of major 19th century ballet scores for small orchestra (needed for touring companies of limited means) such as *La Fille mal Gardée*, *Giselle*, *Diana et Acteon*, *Don Quixote*, *Harlequin*, and *Sylvia*. Many of these can still be found among the major publishers.

Much information can be gleaned from an examination of the parts to McDermott's reduction for small orchestra of *The Nutcracker*. There is NO score among these performance materials. The copyright date of 1969 indicates that the arrangement dates from McDermott's 53rd year or before. The orchestra is extremely modest, calling for flute, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, two F horns, two trumpets, trombone, percussion (one player), harp, celesta and strings. If one assumes single players on winds, percussion, harp and celesta (13 total), and a minimal string section 5/4/3/2/2, then a touring orchestra of fewer than 30 players might have been used (or even smaller if fewer strings were present) - perhaps only a third the size of the original (depending upon the size of the string section). No doublings were required from any of the winds (alternating between clarinet/trumpet in A and B-flat is not considered doubling), so many of the color instruments have been lost (piccolo, English horn, bass clarinet, tuba), as well as the felicitous trio of flutes heard in *Mirlitons* and the dark and ominous low reeds in the magical portions of the score.

Ballet and "Grand" opera share many things in common, among these being the propensity for these forms of entertainment to be given in the largest of venues, with audiences numbering in the hundreds if not thousands, and having lavish budgets, often subsidized by the state. Few fans of *The Nutcracker* know that this ballet was originally part of a double-bill, with Tchaikovsky's one-act opera *Iolanta* opening the evening on December 18, 1892 (modern performances of the opera are about an hour and forty minutes duration), followed by the two-act ballet *Nutcracker*. Of course, the orchestra used for both parts of the evening's entertainment was nearly identical: *Nutcracker* is scored for three flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet (bass clarinet does not appear in the opera), two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and percussion, two harps, and strings. The celesta only appears in the ballet.

The double-bill of *Iolanta* and *The Nutcracker* was not a success. Many reasons might be offered as to why, as modern critics find both works filled with great genius, but the reason for the initial failure of the evening's entertainment may be quite simple. Opera and ballet audiences are NOT alike. While ballet has often found its way into opera scores, the opposite (singing in a ballet) is almost unheard of. Die-hard ballet fans had to wait the better part of three hours before seeing the prima ballerina perform her solo dance (*The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*). Finally, the uneasy combination of the contemporary dress and mannerisms of the first portion of *Nutcracker* Act I dissolving into the make-believe world of fairy tale may have strained the tolerance of the audience in 1892 St. Petersburg. *The Nutcracker* was rarely performed until more than fifty years later. The first complete performance of *Nutcracker* took place in San Francisco in 1944, and the ballet did not become the world-wide staple of ballet companies during holiday season until the celebrated production of the New York City Ballet featuring George Ballanchine's choreography in 1954.

Since that time, *The Nutcracker* has achieved the status of being the world's most popular and most often performed ballet. Many companies desire to take the show on the road and fledgling ballet companies in smaller cities with more modest venues want to mount their own production in hopes of solidifying the company's

financial status. To that end, a performance edition of *The Nutcracker* for smaller orchestra became essential. The version at hand, produced by William McDermott, calling for an orchestra of 30 players or less, is well-suited for this use. While a 30-piece orchestra can never produce the colorful opulence of Tchaikovsky's original orchestration calling for 90 players or more, there is still a lot of sound and color that can be generated by a well-chosen ensemble of 30 or so pieces, as every audience member who might have attended an original Broadway production of *Oklahoma* or *The King and I* can attest. And this statement bears more discussion, since this reduction of *The Nutcracker* is just that – a rendition of this score for a typical Broadway pit orchestra of the 1940s or 1950s.

From all appearances, the parts were copied by McDermott himself as they are all in the same hand. It must be surmised that the parts were copied from the full orchestral score in which notations would have been made as reminders to copy as much essential material as possible into the instruments that were available. The rehearsal numbers are the same as in the original published full score, but the copyist has utilized every imaginable manner of repeats and musical shorthand in producing the parts – resulting in a terrifyingly confusing situation for the players. The harp and celesta parts are in the same hand and show no changes from the original. The string parts incorporate many pages pasted-in from the well-known engraved string parts in the German edition of the suite from *The Nutcracker*. The remainder of the string parts (once again, manuscript in the same hand) show no revisions from the original whatsoever, despite the many instances in which it might have been useful to ask strings to fill in for some of the missing winds. Most confounding, no full score to this orchestration has ever existed. Although this was known in 2000 when William McDermott's edition of "The Nutcracker" for 30-piece orchestra came into the Kalmus catalog, conductors working from this edition had no options other than to work from the original full score, knowing that when an essential English horn or bass clarinet passage occurred, it would sound forth from the pit being played by one instrument or another, and then the conductor would then annotate the score to that effect.

It seems curious that none of the winds are asked to "double," by which we mean that the single flute player is never asked to play piccolo, nor the oboe player to play English horn, nor either of the clarinet players to play bass clarinet. Skilled Broadway players are often called upon to play four or more instruments of widely divergent character, though the woodwind players are asked to do this much more often than the brass. When in the fall of 2020 Mark Rogers was given the assignment to create a full score to the 30-piece McDermott reduction of *The Nutcracker*, it was seen early on that a new edition might well benefit from extensive revision in addition to the creation of a full score. Nearly every professional flute player known to this writer owns a piccolo, so why not include that sound in the new edition? The English horn is found to be owned by professional oboe players nearly as often as the piccolo is owned by flutists, so every effort was made to restore this exotic sound to the pit wherever possible – but with the English horn still cued in other instruments if it is not available. Fewer clarinetists own a bass clarinet and play the instrument at a professional level, but why not include it as well, always cueing those passages elsewhere if the instrument is not to be had? The bassoons in Tchaikovsky's scoring are used in a manner that is always graceful and idiomatic, but the players are never called upon to double on any other instrument.

The 2021 revised edition of *The Nutcracker* in McDermott's reduced orchestration includes a special set of parts for B-flat clarinet throughout (nothing notated for Clarinet in A). These should only be used when absolutely necessary since a handful of passages in the 2nd clarinet part descend to low E, which note is impossible on a B-flat clarinet. More to the point, however, *The Nutcracker* is composed more in sharp keys than in flats, and much of the writing for the clarinets verges on virtuosic. Players on B-flat clarinet will struggle mightily to reach the demands of this score if the clarinet in A is not available.

Special attention should be called to two passages in *The Nutcracker* in which Tchaikovsky called for a trio of flutes – the first appearing in No. 4 Scene beginning in measure 23 (and continuing until m. 35) and the other being the entirety of No. 12e, known by many titles such as *Dance of the Reed Flutes* or *Dance of the Mirlitons*. With only one flute in the 30-piece orchestration of *The Nutcracker* there is no satisfactory solution at hand – does the trio of flute/oboe/clarinet or flute/two clarinets come close to presenting the sound the composer wanted? Obviously, no. In hopes that one or both of the players on clarinet are competent or skilled performers on flute as well as clarinet, the 2nd and 3rd voices in the flute trio appear in those parts, to be played on flute by those players if they can manage to do so. Of course, since these parts are written in concert pitch, the oboe player may be called upon to substitute for or perform on flute by sharing the book with that player. The new edition gives the conductor as many tools to make this magic happen as the publishers can offer.

The horn and trumpet parts in this new edition of McDermott's 30-piece orchestration of *The Nutcracker* are largely unchanged, although some chords have been revoiced, particularly when the weaker bassoon or stronger voiced trumpet or trombone are called upon to substitute for one of the four horn parts in the original. McDermott preserved notation for A trumpet, alternating with B-flat, in his hand-written parts, which seems to be unwise. While clarinets in B-flat and A continue to be manufactured and used in orchestral settings, trumpets in A haven't been used by professionals for at least the last hundred years. All modern performers play on either B-flat or C trumpets (whichever they prefer) and transpose the part as needed. In the new edition (2021) the trumpet parts appear in B-flat throughout.

McDermott's scoring for trombone is curiously inconsistent, often using the trombone to substitute for the missing bassoon, one of the horns, or whatever voice in the trombone/tuba group that he thought most needed to be heard. In the world of opera (Rossini and other Italian composers of that era), there is a long-standing tradition of a single trombone being used, in which the brass section consists of two horns, two trumpets and trombone. In this style of writing, the trombone is used to reinforce the bottom sonorities of the winds and add extra weight to the lower strings. In producing this revised version of *The Nutcracker* for 30-piece orchestra, this model has been followed throughout, to the extent that it is recommended that for best effect the trombone player be an especially skilled and sensitive performer on bass trombone, rather than tenor trombone.

McDermott wrote for only one percussion player, making many decisions about which percussion was to be played and what to be left out. Tchaikovsky's use of percussion was quite restrained – seldom calling for more than two players. The revised score shows everything that was present in the original, and it is left to the conductor to decide what will be played and what left out – or whether the budget and size of the pit will allow more than one performer to be used.

Tchaikovsky called for two harps in the original scoring of *The Nutcracker*, an extravagance that surely will not be possible in a 30-piece orchestra setting. As much as notation made it possible, both harp parts are present in this edition, and the performer will have to make the decision what to play and what to leave out (which they always do anyhow). The celesta part is unchanged, although the part shows the issue that has bedeviled composers since the instrument first appeared – in which octave do you write the notes?

In McDermott's original 30-piece scoring the string parts were left unchanged from the original. This might have been made necessary since the insertion of individual movements from *The Nutcracker* suite made additions to the string parts impractical. Since it was known from the outset that this revision of *The Nutcracker* would involve the creation of new string parts, it was possible to add a few things here and there to the string parts to make for a more secure performance. It should be noted that Tchaikovsky's conception of orchestral sound calls for a large number of strings and a romantic style of playing. A substantial amount of divisi appears in all parts (including string bass!). Within reason, as many string players should be hired as the budget and the size of the pit will allow.

Finally, since this publication, appearing in Autumn 2021, is the first full-score edition of William McDermott's reduction of *The Nutcracker* for 30-piece orchestra, it is certain that some wrong notes, though we hope very few, will have made their way into the score and parts. Conductors and music librarians are encouraged to contact the company at info@keisersouthernmusic.com with corrections and/or suggestions for improvement so that future printings of this edition may be as error-free and user-friendly as fallible humans can manage.

R. Mark Rogers, San Antonio, TX, August 5, 2021

Full Score
A9275

THE NUTCRACKER

Fairy Ballet in Two Acts

Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, Op. 71
scored for small orchestra by William McDermott
revised and edited by R. Mark Rogers

OVERTURE

Allegro giusto

9

Flute

Oboe

B♭ Clarinets 1/2

Bassoon

F Horns 1/2

B♭ Trumpets 1/2

Trombone TACET

Percussion

Allegro giusto

9

Violins 1

Violins 2

Violas

Violoncellos

Basses

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

22

