



Pyotr Tchaikovsky

1840-1893



Who was Pyotr Tchaikovsky?



Tchaikovsky was a Russian musician and composer. A composer is someone who writes music.

He wrote music for different occasions including for ballets, operas and symphonies. A symphony is a long piece of music which is played by an orchestra.

He is most famous for his three ballets: 'The Sleeping Beauty' 'Swan Lake' and 'The Nutcracker'.

He was the first Russian composer to be famous outside of his home country.

What was his life like?

Growing up in Russia, Tchaikovsky had a big family. He had four brothers and two sisters.

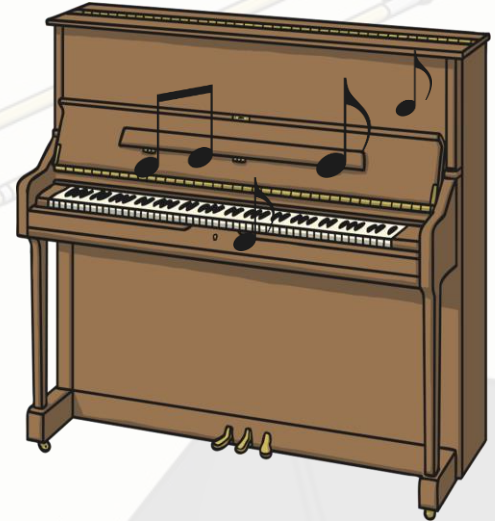
Both his parents were musical; however, his father worked as an engineer.

Tchaikovsky started playing the piano at the age of 5 and could play as well as his teacher in just three years!

At the time musicians were not very well thought of. Therefore, instead of continuing his musical study, Tchaikovsky was sent away to boarding school at the age of 10 so he could become a civil servant.

Being away from home at a young age made him very sad.

He started playing music again and was inspired to compose his own music after the tragic loss of his mother in 1854.



What was his life like?

He gave up his job as a civil servant in order to study music, which led to him becoming a professor of music theory. It was then he was able to teach and compose music full time.

He had a very short marriage in 1877 to a lady called Antonina Miliukova. This ended very unhappily two and a half months later.

From this time until he died of cholera in 1893 his popularity steadily rose and spread.

Though he kept in contact with many close friends and some of his family he never had any children himself.

After their separation, he travelled around Europe composing new music. At this time his music was more popular in the West than in Russia. Though this changed in 1880 when Russians were encouraged to get along with the West more.



The Nutcracker

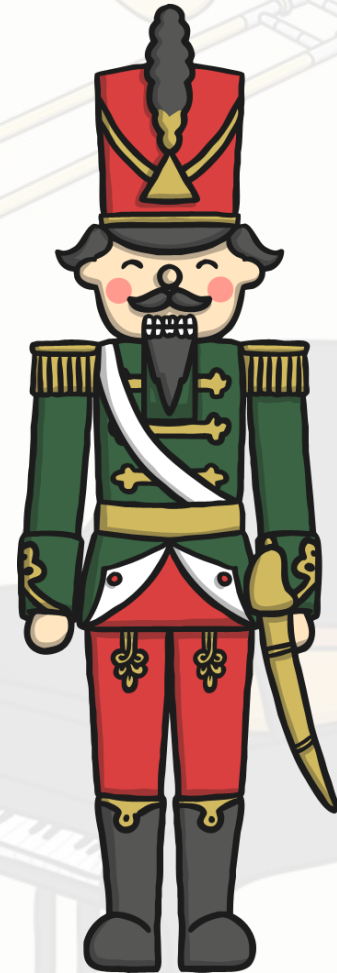
Alongside 'Swan Lake', 'The Nutcracker' is arguably the most well known work by Tchaikovsky.

It is a ballet written and performed in 1892, later on in Tchaikovsky's life.

The story of the ballet is set on Christmas Eve and so is a popular performance around Christmas time.

Though it's first performance was not that well thought of, many people still enjoyed the music.

It has become incredibly famous and has been performed in many different styles all over the world.



The Story

The story is set on Christmas eve where a family decorates a huge Christmas tree.

When the dolls are taken away the children are sad, but Drosselmeyer leaves them with a Nutcracker toy. Clara loves the doll but Fritz deliberately breaks it.

The families children, Clara and Fritz enter, delighted by the tree and are shown wonderful dolls by the toy maker Drosselmeyer.

He and a heartbroken Clara go to bed

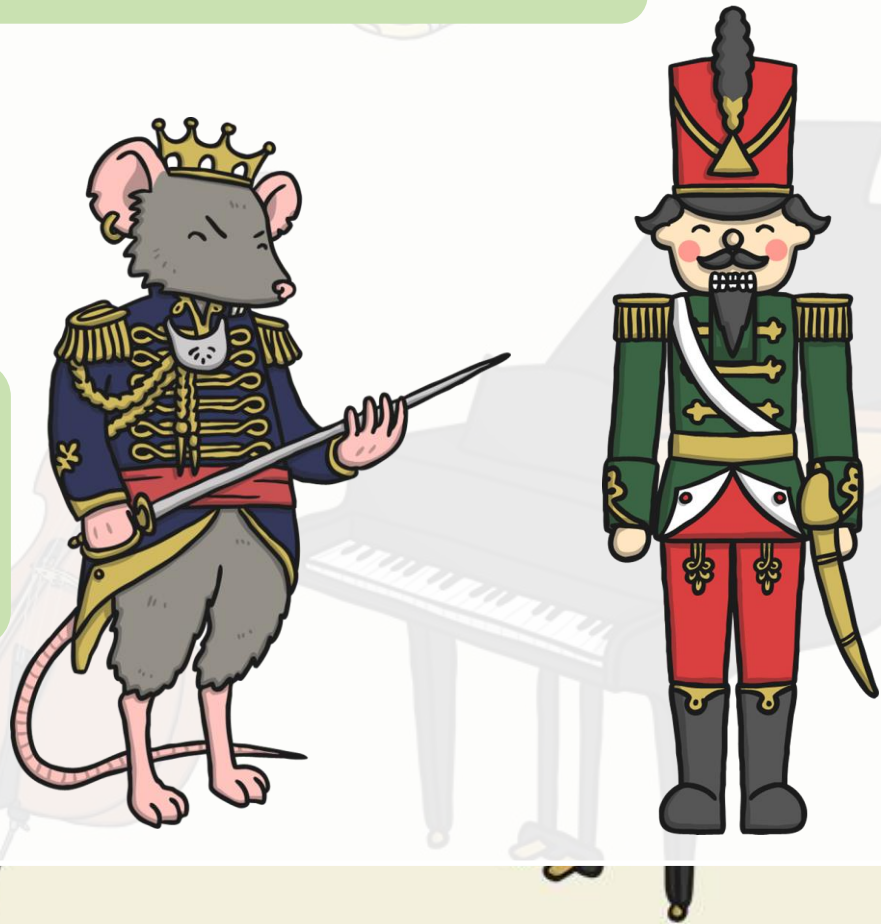


The Story

Later that night, Clara returns to check on the wounded nutcracker only to find him and some tin soldiers alive and fighting a battle with the mice king and his army of mice.

With Clara's help the tin soldiers win. The nutcracker is turned into a prince!

He leads Clara away through a pine forest covered in snow to his kingdom; The Land of Sweets.





The Story

On their arrival the Prince explains how Clara had saved him and his subjects hold a celebration of sweets in her honour.

Many different sweets from all over the world perform different dances, before the Sugar Plum Fairy, who has ruled the land whilst the prince was away, performs a dance with her Cavalier.

In the end all the sweets dance a waltz together and Clara and the Prince are crowned rulers of the Land of Sweets.

