

# George Balanchine's

# The Nutcracker

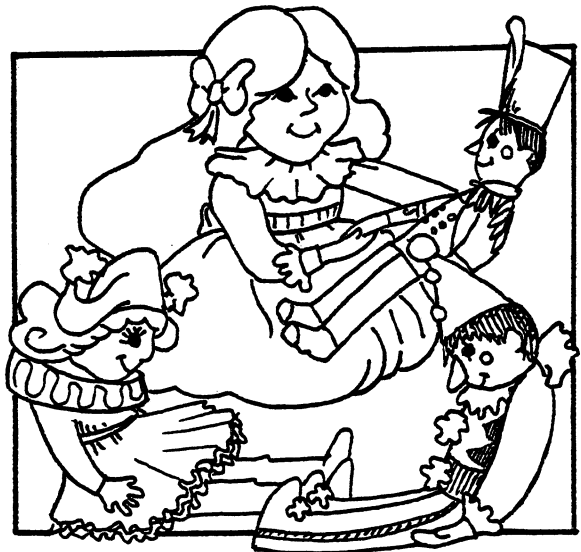
*The original story of The Nutcracker was written in 1816 by a German man named E.T.A. Hoffmann. (His initials stand for Ernst Theodore Amadeus.) Although Hoffmann's story was a fairy tale with characters like the Mouse King in it, it was not a story for children. Eventually a French man named Alexander Dumas rewrote it as a children's story and in 1892 in Russia the choreographer Marius Petipa asked Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky to write music for what was to become one of the most popular ballets in the world. (Illustrations for this workbook were adapted from original drawings by Doris Rice.)*

## Act One

### The Stahlbaum House

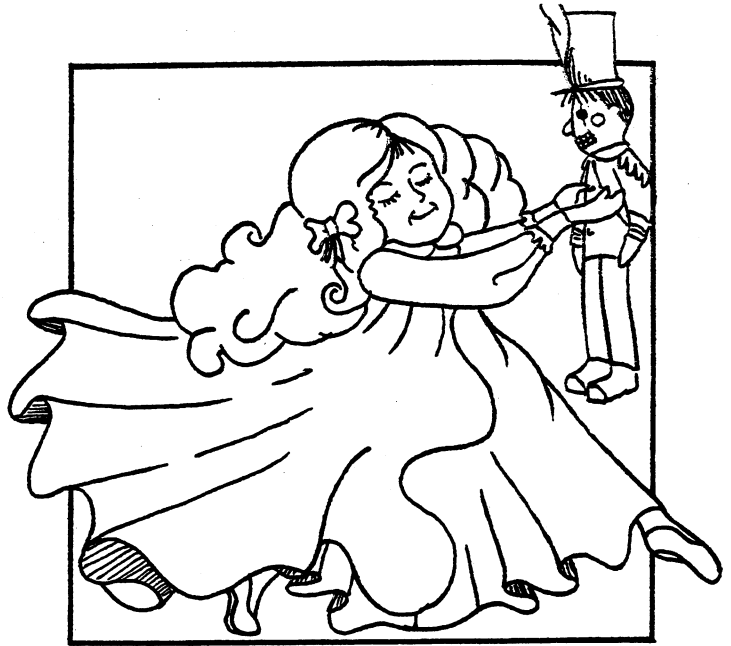
Once upon a time, long, long ago, in a little village in Germany, there was great excitement. It was Christmas eve and all the townspeople were getting ready to go to a party. They put on their finest clothes and started to make their way through the snow to the Stahlbaum house where Marie, her mother and father, her brother Fritz, and all the servants were busy with preparations for the celebration.

Soon the guests arrived and the festivities began. Everyone was having a good time when Marie's godfather, Herr Drosselmeier arrived with his nephew. They brought with them three large boxes, each containing a magical, life-sized doll. Everyone watched in amazement as the Harlequin and Columbine dolls danced together and the Toy Soldier performed a lively dance of leaps and turns.





Then Drosselmeier gave Marie the most special doll of all, the Nutcracker! Marie loved it at once. Fritz, seeing how much she enjoyed the special gift, got very jealous. He grabbed the Nutcracker away from Marie and broke it! The nephew chased Fritz away but it was too late. Drosselmeier tried to comfort Marie by tying the pieces back together. His nephew gave her a little bed so the hurt Nutcracker could rest.



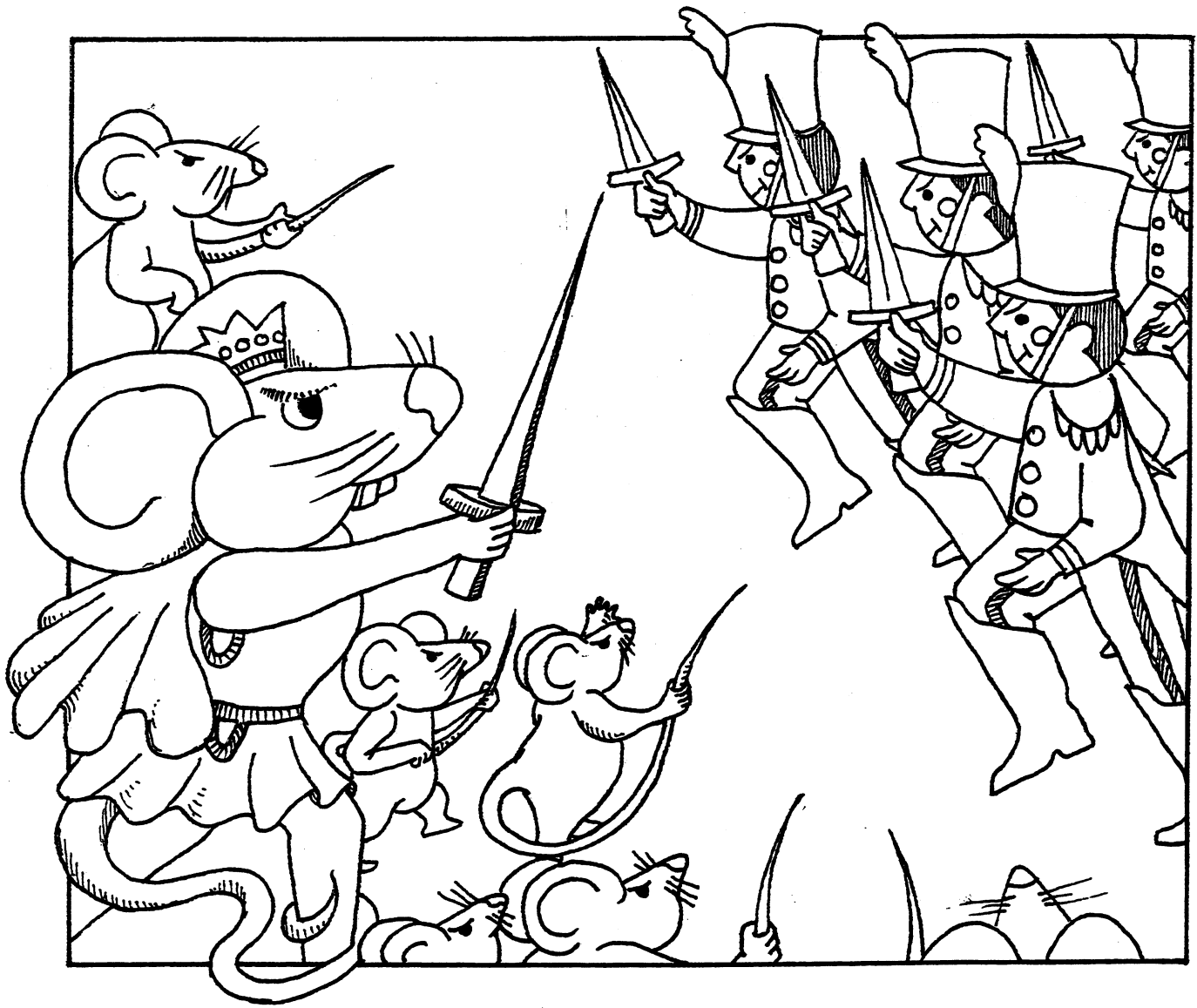
Before long, it was time for all the guests to leave. Marie reluctantly said good night to the nephew and went to bed. But she couldn't sleep. She kept thinking about her Nutcracker doll. She slipped out of bed and tiptoed downstairs where the Nutcracker was still resting on his little bed. She cradled the Nutcracker in her arms and fell asleep on the sofa in the parlor.

Suddenly, Drosselmeier appeared out of the darkness. He gently took the Nutcracker from Marie and fixed it. Just as he was placing it back in her arms, she started to wake up. The lights on the tree began to flicker and Drosselmeier appeared on top of the grandfather clock, flapping his arms like a giant owl.

Marie was frightened. She ran and hid just as big, fat mice as tall as grown men began to scurry about the room. Lights flashed and everything around her grew larger. The tree with all its lights stretched magically to the ceiling. Fritz's toy soldiers were suddenly as tall as Marie.

The Nutcracker, who had also grown taller, rose from his bed to lead the toy soldiers in battle against the giant mice. The mice advanced, using their long pointy tails as swords. The toy soldiers responded with cannon balls of cheese, which the mice greedily gobbled up.

The Nutcracker and the Mouse King, with gold crowns on each of his seven heads, fought with their swords and just as the Mouse King was about to win the battle, Marie



hit him in the head from behind with one of her slippers. He turned in surprise and approached her with his sword raised. But before the Mouse King could reach her the Nutcracker got up and ran him through with his sword as Marie collapsed onto the bed. The Nutcracker took the Mouse King's crown and held it triumphantly in the air as the sad mice slowly dragged away the body of their King.

Suddenly the Stahlbaum living room changed into a beautiful, wintery forest. The bed, with Marie on it, started to glide gracefully into the snowy night and eventually arrived in the Kingdom of Snow. There Marie was awakened by the Nutcracker, who had changed into a handsome prince who looked very much like Drosselmeier's nephew! Together they began a magical journey into the snowy forest with beautiful dancing snowflakes.

## Act Two

### The Land of Sweets

Marie and the Prince, traveling in a nutshell sailboat, arrived in the Land of Sweets, where they were greet by the beautiful Sugar Plum Fairy and all of her subjects. The Prince told them the story of the fight between the soldiers and the mice and how Marie helped them win the battle. The Sugar Plum Fairy congratulated them both and invited them to stay and be entertained by the citizens of the Land of Sweets.

The first to perform represented hot *chocolate*...five couples in dark, velvety costumes doing an exciting Spanish-style flamenco dance. They were followed by *coffee*...a beautiful Arabian princess dressed in gold performing delicate twists and turns. Next came *tea*...three dancers in colorful costumes of ancient China in a short number featuring difficult mid-air splits. Jumping through hoops, the lead Candy Cane and his eight attendants, all in striped suits, performed an exciting dance to fiery music based on a Ukrainian folk dance.

Marzipan, a sweet candy made from egg whites, sugar and almond paste was represented in the dance by sugary shepherdesses. The huge and comical Mother Ginger made a grand appearance with eight little clowns, her Polichinelles, hidden under her skirt. Next, Dewdrop and her flowers danced to the beautiful "Waltz of the Flowers"

Finally, the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier performed a slow and romantic pas de deux (dance for two). They then led all the dancers in an exciting grand finale to end the festivities. Marie and the Prince were now ready to leave the Land of Sweets and all the sweets and candies gathered together to bid them farewell as they sailed off into the sky in their nutshell sailboat.

