

British Theatre Guide

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The Nutcracker

Music by Pyotor Tchaikovsky

St Petersburg Ballet Theatre

Derngate Theatre, Northampton, and touring
(2008)

A fantastic orchestra helps a troupe of classical dancers to skillfully tell the fairytale-like dream of Clara in the *Nutcracker* at the Derngate in Northampton from Monday 21st to Saturday 26th January.

The well-known Tchaikovsky composed music is beautifully arranged and conducted by Aleksandr Kantorov, rising to crescendos and pitter-pattering magical little accompaniments to the extravagant images being created on stage.

There is a definite sense of opulence with the design of the show - with stunning costumes and extensive backdrops - the Christmas tree magically growing to accompany the depth of 'the dream' stands out.

The dancing itself ebbed and flowed. There were moments of imaginative movement - choreographed by Konstantin Tachkin The *corps de ballet* pieces, in particular were exciting and energetic. The snowflakes, heralded on to stage by the lighting of the tree, created beautiful shapes, straights and contours.

Despite the little touches - the clock changing with time, the effortless lifts and the elegance of the Eastern dance - there did seem to be something missing that prevented this good ballet from becoming a great one. The difficulty is in finding out what that something is.

Perhaps the youthful company, who are no-doubt skillful and talented, yet lack the years of experience of some Prima Ballerinas are a contributing factor. There were little mistakes from some, yet it was more moments of dropped passion than dropped steps that mattered. This was a shame, as there were obvious inspirational flashes in the production. The Dolls at the beginning of the show were well executed, the finale to the sugar plum fairies was a great company dance and the Spanis' piece sparked the Ballet to life.

There are many who will benefit from seeing this version of the *Nutcracker*. It has a traditionalist's touch with the stunning orchestra, decorative design and elegant choreography. Olga Ovchinnikova portrays the role of Clara with a subtle but convincing allure. There are also visual moments, typified by the company on a variety of levels at the finale of the land of sweets section.

Therefore, if it's a traditional, visual *Nutcracker* you seek, you can't really go wrong than taking a trip to the Derngate. However, if it's a completely polished Ballet or a step of perfection you are after, you may do well to look elsewhere.

Reviewer: [John Johnson](#)