

TEACHER'S RESOURCE



THE NUTCRACKER

BALLET & MUSIC



PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Queensland
Ballet

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LI CUNXIN

THE NUTCRACKER MUSIC RESOURCE



APPRECIATION ACTIVITY

Watch Queensland Ballet's video, [Ballet & Music: The Nutcracker](#), and answer the following questions relating to the Company's production of *The Nutcracker*:

- 1) Queensland Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker* uses the original score composed by the famous composer, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

Research and write a short, 250-word biography about Tchaikovsky, including:

- Important dates in his lifetime
- His nationality
- A list of his most famous works, including ballets and symphonies
- A short description of his composition style

- 2) Ben Stevenson OBE (choreographer of Queensland Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker*) claims in the video, "For me, the music comes first...and it is the music that drives the choreography."

With your classmates, line up in a continuum across the room. Imagine that one side strongly agrees that music comes first and the other side strongly disagrees, arguing that the movement/dance comes first. Explain and justify your position in the continuum.

- 3) In the clip, Music Director Andrew Mogrelia discusses his responsibility to maintain the tempo, which is the speed or pace of the music. In modern Western music, tempo is usually indicated in beats per minute – the more beats per minute, the faster the speed of the piece.

How can the music's tempo affect the movement's spatial elements (e.g. size and levels) and movement qualities (e.g. sustained and percussive)? Describe what would happen to the movement if the music increased or decreased in speed.

Queensland Ballet's *The Nutcracker* is performed with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. Within this orchestra there are four families of instruments, including strings, woodwind, brass and percussion. Visit [DSO Kids](#) and explore the website to find out more about the four instrument families. Compile a list of instruments that belong to each.

- 4) *The Nutcracker* is one of Tchaikovsky's best known and most endearing scores. He composed the music just a few years before his death in 1893.

The most famous instrument he included in the orchestration is the celesta, which has its own unique timbre, or tone colour. He used the celesta to characterise the Sugar Plum Fairy in her Act 2 variation. The celesta is an instrument similar to a piano, but instead of hammers striking metal strings, they strike a set of metal plates.

a) Every instrument has its own distinct timbre. For example, a trumpet sound is often bright, as opposed to the clarinet sound, which is often mellow. Using this information, listen to the music sample on the video and brainstorm words that could be used to describe the tone colour of the celesta.

b) How does the celesta help to convey the character of the Sugar Plum Fairy?



PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

In the video, Andrew Mogrelia also discusses the impact of timbre and tempo on movement.

Learn a small phrase of choreography and perform this to different pieces of music (try a range of music, including instrumental, vocal and popular music).

REFLECTION

- How did the change in tempo affect the force and movement qualities of your performance?
- How did the change in timbre affect the force and movement qualities of your performance?

WEB REFERENCES

Ballet & Music: The Nutcracker
www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2FeFqobBmw&list=UUFYlRqFtn7DzKyBZqse4cA

DSO Kids
www.dsokids.com/visit-the-symphony/orchestra-seating-chart.aspx

Dancers: Meng Ningning and Hao Bin
Creative Direction: Designfront
Photographer: Harold David