

IDEAS FOR PREPARATION AND CURRICULUM LINKS

Here are some ideas for activities you might like to explore with your class before the performance. They can be adapted according to the age and interests of the children, and are intended as starting points for discussion and creativity.

1. Tchaikovsky: Who was he?

What can you find out about Tchaikovsky and his life?

Where and when did he live? What was life like when he was growing up, and what can you find out about his life as a composer?

Tchaikovsky wrote some of the world's best-known ballets. Can you name any of them? Explore *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. What do you think makes his music so memorable?

Can you find and listen to one of his pieces? How would you describe the music?

2. The Nutcracker: The Story

English • Art • Music • Drama

Read *The Nutcracker* together with the children. The story is based on *The Nutcracker and the King of Mice* by E.T.A. Hoffmann.

Who are the main characters? What happens on Christmas Eve when Clara receives her Nutcracker?

What happens when Clara falls asleep? Who does she meet on her magical adventure?

Now why not create your own version of the story?

You could:

- Write your own Christmas story inspired by *The Nutcracker*. It could be a completely new adventure, or perhaps a different journey for Clara and the Nutcracker.
- Draw or paint your own magical Christmas scene. What might Clara see in the Land of Sweets?
- Act out a scene from the story. Who could you play — Clara, the Nutcracker, the Mouse King or one of the magical characters?
- Imagine you are Clara. What would you take with you on a magical adventure? Can you describe what you might see, hear and feel?

3. Listening to the Music

The performance features music from Tchaikovsky's beautiful *The Nutcracker*.

Listen to some of the different pieces from the ballet. Can you hear how Tchaikovsky uses music to bring the characters, places and events of the story to life?

- How would you describe the music? Is it fast or slow, loud or quiet, playful, dramatic, mysterious or peaceful?
- Which instruments can you hear?
- Can you imagine what is happening in the story while you listen?
- Which piece of music would you choose for a magical Christmas scene? Why?
- Can you create your own movements to one of the pieces of music?