



KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER: KEY PIECES OF MUSIC 1

BY PYOTR
TCHAIKOVSKY
1892

DANCE OF THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRY



THE STORY

It is Christmas Eve and the children are busy decorating the tree. Clara is given a Nutcracker shaped like a little man by her Godfather who is a toymaker. At night, he grows to life size and the adventures begin when everyone else is in bed. There is a battle between gingerbread and tin soldiers, mice and the Mouse King. There is a dance of snowflakes in the wood and Clara, and the now Nutcracker Prince, travel to the Land of Sweets. The land is ruled by the Sugar Plum Fairy. There is a party and all the sweets from around the world dance. A reindeer drawn sleigh takes Clara and the Nutcracker Prince back home.

Celesta or celeste	This instrument was developed in 1886. The word 'celeste' means heavenly in French. The instrument looks like a piano but sounds like a glockenspiel.
Timbre	This describes the quality of sounds.
Ballet	A form of dancing to a story with music
Overture	A piece of orchestral music that acts like an introduction to a musical, opera or play

THE MUSIC

- Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy is music from the ballet, The Nutcracker
- Tchaikovsky used the recently invented Celesta. The Celesta looks like a piano but sounds like a glockenspiel. Tchaikovsky said 'It had a divinely, wonderful sound.'
- The timbre of the Celesta can be described as silvery, glistening, sweet, bright, bell-like and shimmering
- John Williams also used the Celesta in Hedwig's Theme from Harry Potter
- **Waltz of the Flowers** is another popular piece of music from The Nutcracker
- The Nutcracker is associated with Christmas so the music from the ballet is often heard in adverts around this time

THE COMPOSER

- Tchaikovsky was a Russian composer
- He also wrote **The Sleeping Beauty** and **Swan Lake** —two other popular ballets
- Essential listening: **Piano Concerto 1 in Bb minor** and the **Romeo and Juliet Overture**

