

13 May 2009

GRAEME MURPHY'S
NUTCRACKER
The Story of Clara



Rachel Rawlins as Clara. Photograph Tim Richardson

Graeme Murphy's dramatically different re-telling of *Nutcracker* makes a long-awaited return to the stage. Set to Tchaikovsky's immortal score, this is a theatrical experience not to be missed at the Arts Centre from 5-18 June.

In 1992, to mark The Australian Ballet's 30th birthday, Australian choreographic legend Graeme Murphy created a brand-new interpretation of one of the best known and most loved ballets of all time: *Nutcracker*. Murphy's ballet takes audiences deeper into the story of the original child heroine - Clara. *Nutcracker - The Story of Clara* has gone on to become an Australian ballet classic.

In Murphy's hands this classical ballet is given new life with loving respect of the original's intention. *The Story of Clara* is about the classical ballet tradition, not just traditional classical ballet. Murphy is known as both a master storyteller and one of Australia's greatest choreographers.

The Production

Conceived jointly by Murphy, creative associate Janet Vernon and designer Kristian Fredrikson, this ballet unlocks far deeper emotions than a traditional *Nutcracker*. The production retains the luscious dancing, inimitable score and wonderful sense of escapism that makes it such a favourite of children and adults alike. Murphy, Vernon and Fredrikson's close collaboration produced beautifully rich sets and costumes bringing Clara's adventures in the exotic East from the realm of fantasy into reality. *Nutcracker - The Story of Clara*, said *The Australian Financial Review*, is "like a giant babushka doll. Inside one story is another and then another".

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For media enquiries:

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Last performed in 2000, Murphy's *Nutcracker - The Story of Clara* is the perfect counterpoint to Peter Wright's traditional version, which entered The Australian Ballet's repertoire in 2007.

The Story

Nutcracker - The Story of Clara takes audiences deeper into Clara's story and celebrates the strong ties between Russian and Australian ballet. This *Nutcracker* is set on a sweltering Melbourne Christmas Eve in the late 1950s. Clara is a frail former ballerina, reliving her rich and eventful life in one night of feverish dreams. Clara's journey echoes that of many Ballets Russes dancers who toured Australia in the late 1930s, enamouring audiences and helping establish the art form in this country. Many of these dancers would stay here for the rest of their lives. Graeme Murphy illustrates this passage of time by showing Clara at three stages in her life.

The Artists

In 2009, The Australian Ballet is delighted to announce that Australian ballet royalty and former Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet **Marilyn Jones** will join the company as special guest artist in the role of Clara, the Elder. Australian dance veteran **Ai-Gul Gasina** will also join Jones in performing this role.

Making their debuts in the passionate lead roles will be a new generation of stars, **many of who performed in the original production as children.**

The Music

A constant driving force behind the success of *Nutcracker* is the Tchaikovsky score, one of the greatest ever composed for ballet: dramatic, colourful and intensely moving. Tchaikovsky was reluctant to compose the score when he first received the commission in 1891. He did not believe the story lent itself well to theatrical presentation. The score, his last ballet before he died, has since become one of his most treasured works.

IN OTHER NEWS

Creative Australia & the Ballets Russes exhibition at The Arts Centre

In conjunction with The Australian Ballet's performance of *Nutcracker - The Story of Clara* onstage, the Arts Centre will be displaying an exciting exhibition centred on the Ballets Russes.

Creative Australia & the Ballets Russes celebrates the lasting impact made by the Ballets Russes on modern Australian dance, design and visual arts. The exhibition reveals the way leading Australian artists and designers engaged with the Ballets Russes in the 1930s and 40s to help change the cultural landscape of this country. It also explores the legacy of the Ballets Russes and its repertoire through the work of Graeme Murphy and showcases the work of three contemporary visual artists in response to The Australian Ballet's *Firebird and other legends* season.

Creative Australia & the Ballets Russes exhibition
6 June-20 September 2009
Gallery 1, the Arts Centre, St Kilda Road, Melbourne

Credits

NUTCRACKER - THE STORY OF CLARA (1992)
Choreography Graeme Murphy
Creative associate Janet Vernon
Concept Graeme Murphy and Kristian Fredrikson
Music Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Set and costume design Kristian Fredrikson
Lighting design John Drummond Montgomery
Film collage Philippe Charluet

What the critics say

"A delectable treat for the mind as well as the senses." *Sunday Herald Sun*

"A new twist on old magic." *The Australian*

"Pure poetry." *Sunday Herald Sun*

- ends -

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