

Listening Lesson 3



The Nutcracker Suite

by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Based on one of the tales of E.T.A. Hoffman, the story of the Nutcracker and the Mouse King, Tchaikovsky's ballet tells the tale of a little girl, Clara, and her Christmas Eve adventures.

As is common with large works such as ballets, Tchaikovsky chose a selection of music from the ballet and created "The Nutcracker Suite" intended for concert performances.

Q. 1 The music you will be listening to is from the second act of the ballet. Summarise the story of the first act of the ballet here. (An act is a section of a large work).

"Dance of the Mirlitons"

In the ballet, this dance is one of many dances grouped together. It is played during a scene where Clara is being entertained at a sumptuous banquet.

The "Dance of the Mirlitons" (also called "Dance of the Reed Pipes" or "Dance of the Reed Flutes") is a light, pastoral dance.



Q. 2 What family of instruments is playing at the very beginning of this excerpt? _____

Q. 3 What technique are they using to play in this manner? _____

Q. 4 What is the time signature? _____ Write this at the start of the rhythm in Q. 17.

Q. 5 What instruments play the melody? _____

Q. 6 What orchestral family do they belong to? _____

Q. 7 What other instruments are in this family? _____

Q. 8

Circle the words below that describe the rhythm of the melody.

Simple Complex Driving Repetitive Relaxed Energetic Clear Unclear

Q. 9

Circle the words below that describe the tempo (speed) of this rhythm.

Fast Slow Very Slow Very Fast Moderate Steady Rapid

Q. 10

Notate the rhythm of the first eight bars of this melody. The first bar is done for you below.

Do not be confused by the glissandi, (very fast runs of notes), and grace notes, (short, quick notes before a main note), that are in this melody for decoration and are not part of the main rhythm.

"Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy"

In the ballet, this music is played during a scene where Clara and the Prince have returned to the Land of Sweets (where the Prince is ruler). The Prince tells the Sugar Plum Fairy how he was saved by Clara from the Mouse King and is transformed back into a Prince.

Q. 11

What family of instruments is playing at the very beginning of this excerpt? _____

Q. 12

What technique are they using to play in this manner? _____

Q. 13

What is the time signature of this melody? _____

Q. 14

What unusual instrument plays the melody? _____

Q. 15

What does this French word mean? _____

Q. 16

What orchestral family does it belong to? _____

Q. 17

Describe the timbre of this instrument? _____