

SCOTTISH  
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# The Nutcracker

3-5 December 2025

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# The Nutcracker

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**Wednesday 3 December, 7.30pm** Perth Concert Hall  
**Thursday 4 December, 7.30pm** Usher Hall, Edinburgh  
**Friday 5 December, 7.30pm** City Halls, Glasgow

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**TCHAIKOVSKY** The Nutcracker

*Interval of 20 minutes after Act One*

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**Maxim Emelyanychev** conductor  
Introduced by **Jay Capperauld**  
**SCO Chorus** (Sopranos and Altos)



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*Information correct at the time of going to print*

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Aisling O'Dea  
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Sarah Bevan Baker  
Esther Kim  
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Hatty Haynes  
Michelle Dierx  
Rachel Smith  
Kristin Deeken  
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Christine Anderson  
Steve King  
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# What You Are About To Hear

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## TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

### The Nutcracker (1892)

#### ACT ONE

Miniature Overture  
The Christmas Tree  
March of the Toy Soldiers  
Children's Gallop and Dance of the Parents  
Arrival of Drosselmeyer  
Scene and Grandfather Waltz  
Clara and the Nutcracker  
The Battle  
A Pine Forest in Winter  
Waltz of the Snowflakes

*Interval of 20 minutes*

#### ACT TWO

The Magic Castle in the Land of Sweets  
Clara and the Nutcracker Prince  
Divertissement  
    Chocolate (Spanish Dance)  
    Coffee (Arabian Dance)  
    Tea (Chinese Dance)  
    Trepak (Russian Dance)  
    Dance of the Reed Flutes  
    Mother Ginger and the Polichinelles  
Waltz of the Flowers  
Pas de Deux  
    The Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier  
    Tarantella  
    Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy  
    Coda  
Final Waltz  
Apotheosis

The first doors of Advent calendars will have been cracked open just a few days ago, so we can safely say that the Christmas season is upon us. And what better way to celebrate than with the music that more than any other captures all the excitement, joy and wonder of Yuletide?

Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* has been an indelible seasonal favourite for generations – it's as Christmassy as bulging stockings, mince pies and turkey – whether in its original form as a staged ballet, or simply with its ravishing score brought to life in the concert hall. But that wasn't always the case. Even at the ballet's premiere – on 18 December 1892, in St Petersburg's Imperial Mariinsky Theatre – it wasn't exactly a glowing success. Critics loved Tchaikovsky's music: one called it "astonishingly rich in detailed inspiration", another said it was "from beginning to end, beautiful, melodious, original and characteristic". But the audience seemed less impressed – they were perhaps unconvinced by the show's mix of real-world and fantasy storylines, or by the choreography that some found a bit disappointing. "*The Nutcracker* was staged quite well," Tchaikovsky himself later remembered. "It was lavishly produced and everything went off perfectly, but nevertheless, it seemed to me that the public did not like it. They were bored."

Maybe bored, or maybe simply exhausted. At its first performance, the audience had had an entire opera to digest before the ballet had even started, with the result that *The Nutcracker's* second act didn't get going until almost midnight. It was a lot for a single evening. The whole opera-ballet idea had been dreamt up by impresario Ivan Vsevolozhsky, director of St Petersburg's Imperial Theatres, and also the man behind



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

**Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* has been an indelible seasonal favourite for generations – it's as Christmassy as bulging stockings, mince pies and turkey.**

Tchaikovsky's earlier hit ballet, 1890's *The Sleeping Beauty*. That previous work and its slumbering princess had been such an overwhelming success that even Tsar Alexander III summoned its composer to the Mariinsky Theatre's Imperial box to reward him with the terse compliment "very nice". The notoriously sensitive Tchaikovsky was wounded by the faint praise – but far happier at the substantial cash payment the Tsar later sent his way in recognition of his achievement.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Vsevolozhsky was keen to repeat *The Sleeping Beauty's* success, but on an even bigger scale. Tchaikovsky's operatic part of the evening – the one-act *Iolanta*, which would prove his final opera – still receives occasional performances. The long performance's ballet segment, however – tonight's *The Nutcracker* – has gone on to become one

of the world's most adored pieces of music (even if that took until the mid-20th century).

For the new ballet, Vsevolozhsky was keen to bring together the two men who had generated such success with *The Sleeping Beauty*: Tchaikovsky and the French-born choreographer Marius Petipa, who'd lived in St Petersburg since 1847. Vsevolozhsky also had a clear idea of the tale he felt the two men should tell. He had in mind a story by the renowned German author of fantastical stories, ETA Hoffmann, called *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, which French novelist Alexandre Dumas had later updated as simply *The Nutcracker*.

Initially, Tchaikovsky wasn't sure about the subject matter – he admitted he "liked the plot of *The Nutcracker* very little" – but nonetheless agreed to be involved. Petipa quickly took control, however,

delivering extremely detailed instructions to Tchaikovsky on the type of music he'd require for each scene, its specific tempo, and even the number of bars it should last.

Perhaps worried about losing his star composer, Vsevolozhsky took pains to stress that Tchaikovsky should write such music as he felt would delight and entertain audiences, rather than slavishly following Pepita's demands. For his part, however, Tchaikovsky didn't seem too concerned: he kept to the overall structure and requirements of Pepita's plan. And in the end, ironically, there was even some doubt as to who actually choreographed the first production: Pepita was taken so seriously ill that he had to be removed from the project, leaving his assistant, Lev Ivanov, running the movement side of things.

Nor did Tchaikovsky's process of composition run smoothly. Already working to a tight schedule, he faced further interruptions because of conducting engagements in Paris, Berlin and Rouen – and the small matter of a three-week trip to the United States in spring 1891 to conduct the opening concerts at New York's brand new Carnegie Hall. That summer, he felt rather despairing about the whole thing, writing to a friend: "Remember when you were here I boasted that I had something like five days left to finish the ballet? It turned out that I only just managed it in two weeks. No! The old man is evidently declining. Not only is his hair thinning and turning silver as snow, not only are his teeth falling out and refusing to chew food, not only are his eyes weakening and becoming easily tired, not only are his feet starting to drag rather than walk – but his singular remaining faculty is starting to fade and disappear. The ballet is infinitely worse than *The Sleeping Beauty* – of this I'm sure."

Tchaikovsky was notoriously prone to profound self-doubt, and was fond of what we'd now term catastrophising – but in this case the rather lukewarm public response must have confirmed his own worst fears. Nonetheless, he felt proud of his music, and felt he'd devoted his craftsmanship, his heart and his soul to conjuring the colours and emotions, the charm and the sparkle of the piece (even if he was convinced that few people would want to hear it in the future).

How more wrong could Tchaikovsky have been? *The Nutcracker* is now a cherished Christmas tradition, and for many it epitomises all the child-like enchantment and excitement of the season. Perhaps that's for the simple reason that we see its story through the eyes of a child: Clara, the daughter of a well-to-do family who are making their final Christmas Eve preparations. After a sprightly Overture that bubbles with expectation, the family's adults gather to decorate the Christmas tree, while the children enter to a March, before dancing to a livelier Galop once they've received their presents. As the grandfather clock strikes nine, a mysterious figure makes an appearance: this is Drosselmeyer, a magician and toymaker who is also Clara's godfather. He's brought dolls for the children, who eagerly play with them.

But one more gift remains in his sack: a carved wooden nutcracker. The children are unimpressed – apart from Clara, that is, who's entranced by the strange wooden figure. Her brother Fritz accidentally breaks the nutcracker by attempting to break open a nut too big for its mouth, leaving Clara heartbroken. But Drosselmeyer manages to put the nutcracker back together again.

That night, Clara can't sleep and sneaks back alone to see her beloved nutcracker

**Vsevolozhsky also had a clear idea of the tale he felt the two men should tell. He had in mind a story by the renowned German author of fantastical stories, ETA Hoffmann.**



*ETA Hoffmann*

again, only to discover that the figure seems to be giving off a mysterious light. And as the grandfather clock strikes midnight, the world shifts on its axis. Mice scuttle and scurry from every corner, the Christmas tree suddenly shoots up to enormous proportions and all the toys come alive. That's including the Nutcracker, who now leads an army of gingerbread soldiers against the mice, who have formed a fighting force under the terrifying, seven-headed Mouse King. When the rodent monarch seems about to slay the Nutcracker, Clara finds her courage and hurls a slipper at the Mouse King, killing him. As the mice retreat, the Nutcracker transforms into a human Prince and leads Clara through a snowy pine forest – whose very tumbling crystals seem to dance in the Waltz of the Snowflakes – to his magical Kingdom.

Act Two transports us to the Kingdom of Sweets, where the Sugar Plum Fairy has been

ruling in the spellbound Prince's absence. All are overjoyed at the Prince's return: in celebration – and also to recognise Clara's bravery – a dance extravaganza is swiftly organised, presenting sweets and delicacies from across the world in some of *The Nutcracker's* best-loved music. Chocolate from Spain comes courtesy of the strutting, striding Spanish Dance, complete with solo trumpet, while the sultry Arabian Dance brings us coffee from Arabia. Tea from China comes with the perky Chinese Dance, offering an ornate tune for flutes and piccolo, while the very Russian Trepak, full of seething energy, celebrates Russia's own sweet treats. The Dance of the Mirlitons (or reed-pipes) is an elegant shepherds' dance with a trio of flutes representing the more rustic instrument, while the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe is joined by her children and a troupe of clowns in another rousing dance.



Illustrations from ETA Hoffman's *The Nutcracker and Mouse-King* (1853 edition).

A string of sumptuous blooms perform the Waltz of the Flowers, one of the ballet's stand-out numbers, and to bring the evening to a close, the Sugar Plum Fairy herself dances with the Prince in a *pas de deux* that incorporates the celebrated Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy, with its unmistakable tinkling, twinkling sounds from the bell-like celesta. The instrument was still new at the time Tchaikovsky wrote the ballet score: the composer first encountered it in Paris, and urged his publisher Pyotr Jurgenson to ship one to St Petersburg for the premiere, from its inventor Auguste Mustel. It should all be kept a closely guarded secret, however, the composer urged, lest rival composers (specifically Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov, whom Tchaikovsky singled out for particular warning) got wind of its arrival and decided to write for the celesta before he'd had a

chance to. The ruse worked a treat, and the celesta's delicate, playful but also wistful contributions to the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy form one of *The Nutcracker's* most memorable and distinctive moments.

The Prince bids farewell to Clara as she returns to her own world on a sleigh drawn by reindeer, and a sumptuous, stirring final waltz moves into the ethereal beauty of *The Nutcracker's* closing Apotheosis. In his particularly poignant conclusion, Tchaikovsky replays a melody that opened Act Two with glittering accompaniment from harps and celesta, as though the magical kingdom we've all just inhabited is now receding ever further into the distance.

© David Kettle

Conductor

# Maxim Emelyanychev



Maxim Emelyanychev has been Principal Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra since 2019. He is also Chief Conductor of period-instrument orchestra Il Pomo d'Oro, and from the 2025/26 season he becomes Principal Guest Conductor of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Nizhny Novgorod, Emelyanychev made his conducting debut at the age of 12, and later joined the class of eminent conductor Gennady Rozhdestvensky at the Moscow Conservatoire.

Emelyanychev was initially appointed as the SCO's Principal Conductor until 2022, and the relationship was later extended until 2025 and then until 2028. He has conducted the SCO at the Edinburgh International Festival and the BBC Proms, as well as on several European tours and in concerts right across Scotland. He has also made three recordings with the SCO, of symphonies by Schubert and Mendelssohn (Linn Records).

Emelyanychev has also conducted many international ensembles including the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. In the opera house, Emelyanychev has conducted Handel's *Rinaldo* at Glyndebourne, the same composer's *Agrippina* as well as Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at the Opernhaus Zürich. He has also conducted Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and *Così fan tutte* with the SCO at the Edinburgh International Festival. He has collaborated closely with US soprano Joyce DiDonato, including international touring and several recordings.

Among his other recordings are keyboard sonatas by Mozart, and violin sonatas by Brahms with violinist Aylen Pritchin. He has also launched a project to record Mozart's complete symphonies with Il Pomo d'Oro. In 2019, he won the Critics' Circle Young Talent Award and an International Opera Award in the newcomer category. He received the 2025 Herbert von Karajan Award at the Salzburg Easter Festival.

**For full biography please visit [sco.org.uk](https://sco.org.uk)**

Introduced by

## Jay Capperauld



Born in 1989 in East Ayrshire, Jay Capperauld is one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary Scottish music. In 2022 he was appointed Associate Composer with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra; he has written a large number of new works for the SCO, as well as composing for ensembles within Scotland, the UK and internationally. He has also worked extensively with young composers and in community music-making settings, with the SCO's Creative Learning team and others.

Capperauld has worked with a huge range of ensembles and artists; his music has been performed by the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and by almost every professional classical ensemble in Scotland, including the SCO, BBCSSO, RSNO, Hebrides Ensemble and Red Note Ensemble and has been broadcast on BBC television and radio, and on Danish and German radio.

Among numerous commissions from orchestras, ensembles, soloists and festivals across the UK, Capperauld was commissioned by King Charles III for the Honours of Scotland celebrations in St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, in July 2023. The new piece for string orchestra – *Schiehallion!* – brought together three traditional Scottish tunes selected by His Majesty to reflect his personal connections with Scotland, and was broadcast on BBC1 and BBC Radio 3.

The SCO and its Principal Conductor Maxim Emelyanychev premiered Capperauld's Scottish reel-inspired *Whisky Mouth* as part of a USA tour in 2022, and his showpiece *The Origin of Colour* launched the Orchestra's 50th anniversary season across no fewer than ten concerts throughout Scotland in 2023, as well as being the focus of an Immerse education project for secondary school students.

***For full biography please visit [sco.org.uk](http://sco.org.uk)***

# SCO Chorus (Sopranos and Altos)



**Chorus Director** – Gregory Batsleer  
**Associate Chorus Master** – Stuart Hope

## Sopranos

Emma Aitken  
Morven Chisholm  
Emily Gifford  
Alice Higgins  
Lorna Holl  
Steph Humphreys  
Florence Kaiser  
Kathy Miller  
Jenny Nex  
Annike Petin  
Alison Williams

## Altos

Shona Banks  
Dinah Bourne  
Gill Cloke  
Judith Colman  
Jennie Gardner  
Anne Grindley  
Caroline Hahn  
Melissa Humphreys  
Rachel Kemp  
Hilde McKenna  
Linda Ruxton

The SCO Chorus is a group of around 70 singers drawn from all walks of life. The Chorus was formed to perform with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and covers a wide range of repertoire, from baroque to newly-commissioned works. Under the expert leadership of Chorus Director Gregory Batsleer, it has established a reputation as one of the UK's finest orchestral choruses. The Chorus made a critically-acclaimed BBC Proms debut with Handel's *Jephtha* in 2019 and returned to the Royal Albert Hall in July 2023 with Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. For the last three years they have appeared in the Edinburgh International Festival's Mozart opera series under Maxim Emelyanychev.

The SCO Chorus also performs a capella, both digital and live, in music ranging from Tallis and Purcell to new work by Anna Clyne and Jay Capperauld. Its annual Christmas concerts at Edinburgh's Greyfriars Kirk have established themselves as a Season highlight.

# Scottish Chamber Orchestra



© Christopher Bowen

The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive. Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works, each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

Equally at home on and off the concert stage, each one of the SCO's highly talented and creative musicians and staff is passionate about transforming and enhancing lives through the power of music. The SCO's Creative Learning programme engages people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse range of projects, concerts, participatory workshops and resources. The SCO's current five-year Residency in Edinburgh's Craigmillar builds on the area's extraordinary history of Community Arts, connecting the local community with a national cultural resource.

An exciting new chapter for the SCO began in September 2019 with the arrival of dynamic young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. His tenure has recently been extended until 2028. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in 2023, with Schubert Symphonies Nos 5 and 8 following in 2024.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Principal Guest Conductor Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, Lorenza Borrani and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

The Orchestra's current Associate Composer is Jay Capperauld. The SCO enjoys close relationships with numerous leading composers and has commissioned around 200 new works, including pieces by Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Nico Muhly and the late Peter Maxwell Davies.

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Each year, the SCO must fundraise around £1.2 million to bring extraordinary musical performances to the stage and support groundbreaking education and community initiatives beyond it.

If you share our passion for transforming lives through the power of music and want to be part of our ongoing success, we invite you to join our community of regular donors. Your support, no matter the size, has a profound impact on our work – and as a donor, you'll enjoy an even closer connection to the Orchestra.

To learn more and support the SCO from as little as £5 per month, please contact **Hannah** at [hannah.wilkinson@sco.org.uk](mailto:hannah.wilkinson@sco.org.uk) or call **0131 478 8364**.

*The SCO is a charity registered in Scotland No SC015039.*

*Photo: Stuart Armitt*