

## Mikko Nissinen's *The Nutcracker* Background

Nov 24–Dec 31, 2017

Conducted by Beatrice Affron (Nov 24–Dec 3), Kenneth Hsieh, (Dec 6–19), and Geneviève Leclair (Dec 20–31)

Music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Choreography by Mikko Nissinen

Set and costume design by Robert Perdziola

Lighting design by Mikki Kunttu

Dramaturge by Melia Bensussen

Original Premiere: Dec 18, 1892, Mariinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, Russia

Production World Premiere: Nov 23, 2012, Boston Ballet, Boston Opera House, Boston, Massachusetts

Run Time: Approximately 2 hours, including one intermission

### The Vision

- Mikko Nissinen's *The Nutcracker* is based on the libretto by Alexandre Dumas père titled *The Tale of the Nutcracker*, which is adapted from E. T. A. Hoffmann's story *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*.
- The production is set in the Regency period of the early 1800s, also known as the Jane Austen era.
- Approximately 150 dancers are involved in each performance, including Boston Ballet, Boston Ballet II, and Boston Ballet School students.
- There are 250 children involved in *The Nutcracker*, making up three casts (all are classical ballet students from the Boston, Newton, and North Shore studios).
- Some roles performed by Company members have as many as 12 casts.

### The Costumes

- 182 costumes appear on stage in a single performance, but approximately 350 were made for multiple casts.
- Over 2,000 yards of netting and tulle and over 200,000 jewels were used in the costumes. Sugar Plums and Dew Drop costumes have over 3,600 jewels on their tutus and bodices.
- Perdziola hand-tipped every Sugar Plum and Snow Queen tutu with metallic paint.
- The Boston Ballet Costume Shop imported fabrics from Germany and England, as well as purchased fabric from more than 60 other vendors in the U.S. and Canada.
- On several costumes, including the Nutcracker Prince, Perdziola hand-inked the patterns to correlate with each dancer's individual proportions.
- The Big Mice have gloves and shoes specially made with latex claws and articulated toes.
- The Waltz of the Flowers costumes use approximately 1,000 yards of hand-painted net fabric to create the Flower skirts.

### The Sets

- All of the sets were painted by hand and domestically made, mostly at Mystic Scenic Studio in Norwood.
- Most props were built in Boston Ballet's 40,000-square-foot warehouse in Newburyport.
- For the new production's set changes, Nissinen and Perdziola created a series of reveals where scenes appear to iris out of one another.
- The iconic Christmas tree grows to 42 feet 6 inches tall, with 766 fiber optic points and 600 ornaments. The small tree in the living room is 16 feet 11 inches tall.

## **BIO: MIKKO NISSINEN, Artistic Director**

### *Hart Artistic Director's Chair*

Mikko Nissinen was appointed Artistic Director of Boston Ballet and Boston Ballet School in 2001. Nissinen began his dance training at age 10 with the Finnish National Ballet School, and launched his professional dance career at age 15 with the Finnish National Ballet. He continued his studies at The Kirov Ballet School in St. Petersburg, Russia, graduating in 1980. Nissinen danced professionally for 19 years with the Finnish National Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, Basel Ballet, and as a principal dancer with San Francisco Ballet. His vast repertoire ranged from classical to contemporary works, and he performed as a guest artist with many companies and partners for numerous international galas.

Nissinen directed the Marin Ballet in San Rafael, California from 1996 to 1998, and Alberta Ballet in Calgary, Canada from 1998 to 2001, also serving as Alberta Ballet's Executive Director from 1999 to 2000.

As Artistic Director of Boston Ballet, Nissinen has defined the Company's image, cultivating a dynamic collection of classical, neo-classical, and contemporary repertoire, ranging from full-length classical ballets, to masterworks by George Balanchine, to new works and world premieres by some of the finest contemporary choreographers today. In 2016, Nissinen and Boston Ballet established a long-term partnership with William Forsythe, allowing the Company to cultivate a rich collection of his work. This three-part repertoire balance has established the Company as one of the leading dance organizations in the U.S., acclaimed for its excellence, artistic innovation, and versatility. Under his direction, Boston Ballet has toured to Canada, Finland, London, New York City, South Korea, Spain, and Washington D.C. Under Nissinen's regime, *The Boston Globe* called Boston Ballet's transformation one of the "biggest arts stories of the decade."

For Boston Ballet, Nissinen has choreographed *Raymonda Act III* (2006) and *Swan Lake* (2004), and the Company has performed his *The Nutcracker* since 2004. This award-winning production was re-envisioned and re-choreographed in 2012, receiving critical acclaim.

Nissinen serves as Artistic Director of Boston Ballet School, one of the largest ballet schools in North America. He served as Executive Director of Boston Ballet in 2008 for a year and a half. His broad knowledge of dance, its history, and arts organization business leadership make him a popular presenter at conferences and universities worldwide. He was a fellow at the 2002 Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders in the Arts at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He is a member of the New York Choreographic Institute's Artistic Committee and an advisory board member of The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship. He is the recipient of the 2007 United Nations Association of Greater Boston Leadership Award, the Finlandia Foundation's 2008 Arts and Letters Award, and Boston's Guide for the Arts 2009 Ambassador for the Arts Award.

## **BIOS: Guest Conductors for Mikko Nissinen's *The Nutcracker***

### **BEATRICE AFFRON, guest conducting Nov 24–Dec 3, 2017**

Beatrice Jona Affron has been Music Director and Conductor of Pennsylvania Ballet since 1997. She has conducted many Balanchine ballets as well as other classics, such as *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Firebird*. Also in Philadelphia, she led the world premiere performances of Christopher Wheeldon's *Swan Lake*. A graduate of Yale University, Affron studied conducting with Robert Spano and Pascal Verrot at New England Conservatory.

Affron is an active opera conductor, and has led several works by Philip Glass, including *Galileo Galilei* and the national tour of *Les Enfants Terribles*. At Boston Lyric Opera, she has conducted Glass's *Akhmaten* and Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*. She led Argento's *Miss Havisham's Fire* at Opera Theatre Saint Louis and Donizetti's *Lucie de Lammermoor* at Glimmerglass Opera. Recently, Affron has appeared as a guest conductor with the Kennedy Center Orchestra, the National Arts Center of Canada Orchestra, Atlanta Ballet, and Nashville Ballet.

### **KENNETH HSIEH, guest conducting Dec 6–19, 2017**

Award-winning Canadian Conductor Kenneth Hsieh has gained widespread attention for his vibrant performances, making him one of the most exciting and versatile young conductors on the international stage today. The 2017–2018 season marks his 15th year as Music Director of the Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra in addition to his many international guest conducting engagements. A graduate of University of British Columbia and Royal Conservatory, he completed his post-graduate studies in conducting at Toho Gakuen School of Music, and Senzoku College of Music. Winner of several prizes including the Heinz Unger Award and Jean-Marie Beaudet Award in conducting, his teachers and coaches have included Kurt Masur, Kazuyoshi Akiyama, Morihiro Okabe, Yuji Yuasa, Jorma Panula, and Seiji Ozawa. He has held positions with Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Pacific Music Festival, and National Academy Orchestra. Highlights for this season include appearances with many of Japan and Canada's major orchestra, the annual Beethoven 9th Series at Osaka Symphony hall with Nippon Century Orchestra, return engagements with Sichuan Philharmonic, Suzhou Symphony Orchestra, and a return subscription concert and tour with Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra.

## **GENEVIÈVE LECLAIR, guest conducting Dec 20–31, 2017**

Canadian conductor Geneviève Leclair was appointed Music Director of Parkway Concert Orchestra in 2013 and Assistant Professor at Berklee College of Music in 2016. She is also a guest conductor with The National Ballet of Canada and a member of the Board of Directors of the Conductors Guild. Equally at home in the symphony, ballet and opera worlds, she was Assistant Conductor for Boston Ballet from 2010–2016 and has since returned to the Company as Guest Conductor.

Leclair had the privilege of being selected to participate in the 2017 Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's Canadian Conductor Showcase. She has also won the 2016 American Prize in Conducting, college/university division and taken second place in the professional orchestra division. In 2010, she was honored to receive the Sir Ernest MacMillan Memorial Foundation Award in Orchestral Conducting.

In recent years, she has had the opportunity to guest conduct various orchestras in Canada and the United States, including the Winnipeg Symphony, Orchestre symphonique du Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean, McGill Chamber Orchestra, Symphony New Hampshire, and New England Conservatory Chamber and Youth Philharmonic Orchestras. Her performances have been hailed as "impeccable" (*Boston Phoenix*), "ravishing" and of "exemplary pacing and reading" (Hugh Fraser) while her conducting style is praised for its "verve and precision", "confident dynamics and tempos, crisp rhythms, and crystalline phrasing creat[ing] powerful forward momentum" (Carla DeFord).

## Mikko Nissinen's *The Nutcracker* Press Quotes

"Boston Ballet's [The] Nutcracker tinkers and twinkles with youthful joy." (Paul Robicheau, *Improper Bostonian*, November 29, 2015)

"The granddaddy of them all is Boston Ballet's version of the classic." (Karen Campbell, *The Boston Globe*, December 1, 2015)

"Mikko Nissinen's *The Nutcracker*, commendably delivered by Boston Ballet dancers and its artistic collaborators, offered just what it seems like our world could use more of right now – joy, friendship, beauty, and hope in our abilities to put forth the best parts of ourselves." (Kathryn Boland, *Dance Informa*, December 2015)

"Elegant and theatrically striking." (Alastair Macaulay, *The New York Times*, January 1, 2013)

"Through Nissinen's artistic vision we are transported into the Ballet's magical realm and the making of ballet history." (Jared Bowen, *Boston Common*, December 2012)

"Boston Ballet's new *Nutcracker*, with its sleek and bejeweled costumes and spacious, regal sets, brings a softness and light – a wistful knowingness – to the venerable holiday classic." (Thea Singer, *The Boston Globe*, November 26, 2012)

"One of the city's most cherished holiday traditions." (Jill Radsken, *Boston Herald*, November 27, 2012)

"Boston Ballet's *Nutcracker* is that rarest of treats: a sweet that nourishes." (Debra Cash, *Boston Phoenix*, December 4, 2012)

"The smartest Nutcracker I've ever seen." (Alan Helms, *Dance Tabs*, December 15, 2012)

"A true Christmas classic for years to come." (Katrina Lallier, *Metro*, December 4, 2012)

"A production filled with visual delights." (Iris Fanger, *The Patriot Ledger*, November 25, 2012)

"An explosion of color, vibrancy, and fruitful imagination." (Jared Bowen, *WGBH*, November 27, 2012)

"Boston Ballet's version has brought a fresh delicacy and sophistication to the Christmas classic while preserving every ounce of tradition." (Katherine Bowers, *Women's Wear Daily*, November 20, 2012)