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December 2012

The Boston Ballet Nutcracker Gets New Costumes

By Cheryl Fenton

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- DECEMBER 6 Thur 8pm
- DECEMBER 7 Fri 4pm-8pm
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- DECEMBER 9 Sun 11am Kids Concert - 3pm. 7:30pm
- DECEMBER 11 Tues 8pm*
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- DECEMBER 17 Mon 8pm
- DECEMBER 18 Tues 8pm
- DECEMBER 19 Wed 4pm-8pm
- DECEMBER 20 Thur 4pm-8pm
- DECEMBER 21 Fri 4pm-8pm
- DECEMBER 22 Sat 11am Kids Concert - 3pm. 7:30pm
- DECEMBER 23 Sun 11am Kids Concert - 3pm. 7:30pm
- DECEMBER 24 Mon 11am Kids Concert - 3pm

TICKETS: \$29-\$129 . Santa appears during all concerts.
617-266-1200 . bostonpops.org

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Change is good. It allows us to step back and revisit something we've become used to and see it in a new way.

But when told that they're going to change the costumes, set and actual production for one of Boston Ballet's most beloved performances, your hand goes to your forehead, a gasp escapes and a shake of the head is probably your last move before passing out.

Don't worry. The classic performance has remained elegant, dazzling and a true spirit of the holidays, as they have brilliantly executed the first changes to design and dance in 17 years. Renowned costume designer Robert Perdziola made sure of that, when he was asked by The Boston Ballet to bring Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen's new production of *The Nutcracker* to life. Perdziola's dossier is rich with previous costume designs that have graced such stages as the Metropolitan Opera, Opera Boston, and Glimmerglass Opera.

Steadily working since January 2012, there have been drawings, discussions, redrawings, and steady work by 20 people in the Boston shop, as well as New York City, Canada and Pittsburgh to make this dream happen.

If idol hands were the Devil's work, then this would be one heavenly production. Busily painting and dying fabric, beading, and draping cloth, bringing the new costumes to fruition has been a huge undertaking. There are hundreds of thousands of jewels (over 242,000 to be almost exact) and thousands of yards of fabrics. The Dew Drop costume alone has 4,000 gems hand-beaded between bodice and tutu, and the craft team spent the better part of a month hand-painting 1,400 yards of net that have been pleated for *Waltz of the Flowers*. The choreographer and designer worked as a team in what became a dance of sorts, each bowing to the other when the music required. Because as Perdziola says, "choreography and fabric are simultaneous." Sometimes the costume was changed for the dancer's movements, and vice versa.

"You have to make the dress completely to find out what the problems are," says Perdziola. "It might look right standing still, but you won't know until you have someone in it who's moving."

As the timeline of the story shifted back 15 years with Nissinen's new production, so goes back the fashion style of the clothing. The new designs are suggestive of the "*Sense and Sensibility*" era and are reminiscent of the Jane Austen period around 1820. Instead of angelic little babes dancing around the Christmas tree, Nissinen's inspiration came from Princess Diana's wedding ring bearers with Louis the 14th military coats. Herr *Drusselmeir's* costume becomes an array of wools and silks, much more tailored than the heavy costumes of past productions.

"Mikko wanted to be able to see the lines of the body more in the party scene," says Perdziola. "That was one idea to move it to earlier in the 19th century. We reserved most of the color to after the change of the tree for a *Wizard of Oz* effect."

And magical it is.

"When Clara falls asleep, it's game changer," explains Nissinen. "That's when the dream starts. We controlled the color palette until then. And then the contrasts take the audience into the emotional ride."

"It's challenging. When you listen to the music, there's a build up and then surprise," says Perdziola. "With the visual, you need to deliver on that. It can't just end with the tree. It needs to be a present that's constantly opened for the celebration."

And with these breath-taking costumes, thrilling sets and glorious choreography, the Boston Ballet's new *Nutcracker* is truly a gift.

The *Nutcracker's* season goes until December 30 at the Boston Opera House.

Tickets are available at <http://www.bostonballet.org/>

