



Movie brings magic of 'The Nutcracker' to life



The world's most beloved ballet comes to the big screen this holiday season.

Angels and sugarplums, candy canes and mice, a prince, a young girl, a mysterious old man, and a Christmas tree that grows and grows, all set the stage for "George Balanchine's The Nutcracker."

The film, now showing at metro Detroit movie theaters, combines the grace of the New York City Ballet performance with the bright-eyed innocence of Macaulay Culkin to create an entertaining holiday offering for all ages.

"Taken from the classic E.T.A. Hoffman tale, Balanchine's "The Nutcracker" is, according to Balanchine, "a serious thing wrapped in a fairy tale."

In the story, young Marie Stahlbaum is given a nutcracker doll on Christmas Eve by her

mysterious godfather, Herr Drosselmeier. That night the young girl finds herself in a strange world governed by Herr Drosselmeier. As toys, furniture and the Christmas tree grow, mice creep out of the shadows to haunt her.

The Nutcracker, who has been transformed into a live soldier, wages battle with the Mouse King and carries Marie off to a snow forest where she awakens to find her Nutcracker has become a handsome prince. The two are led to a mystical, magical place.

"The Nutcracker" marked its 100th anniversary in 1992. Originally presented at the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, the ballet is the work of French-born choreographer Marius Petipa and the composer Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky. The ballet received harsh criticism at its beginning, but has lived on as a classic holiday treat.

The New York City Ballet first

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performed "The Nutcracker" in 1954.

Principal dancers of the New York City Ballet head the cast of the movie version. Darc Kistler plays the Sugarplum Fairy, Damien Woetzel as the Cavalier, Kyra Nichols as Dewdrop and Bart Robinson Cook as Herr Drosselmeier.

Jessica Lynn Cohen, 12, makes her debut as Marie. She was tapped for the role after producers watched hundreds of versions of the ballet. A strong athlete, Cohen rejected ballet lessons at the age of three. In 1989, however, she tried out for and was accepted by the School of American Ballet. She is 8 years old. Cohen performed the role of Marie for two seasons with the New York City Ballet and also performed in productions of "The Sleeping Beauty" and "Little Red Riding

Hoed." She attends classes at the School of Ethical Culture in New York.

Culkin, a former student at the School of American Ballet, was the first choice of producers for the part of the Nutcracker Prince. Culkin had performed the ballet twice with the School, but in a different role. His father had performed the role of the Nutcracker Prince in the 1950s. Culkin is best known as the fearless youth in "Home Alone" and "Home Alone 2."

The original choreography, sets and costumes were preserved for this movie version of the ballet. The entire production was filmed on a theater stage at the Performing Arts Center at the State University of New York at Purchase.

The film was completed during a period of 25 days.

"George Balanchine's The Nutcracker," is an Elektra Entertainment/Regency Enterprises production.



Magical film: Bart Robinson Cook (right) as Herr Drosselmeier watches as his nephew, played by Macaulay Culkin, sees Marie, played by Jessica Lynn Cohen, put her beloved Nutcracker to bed.



Send us recipes for 'his' specialty

We have no doubt that men can cook, so in the spirit of the movie, "Mrs. Doubtfire," we're offering oven mitts to the first 50 men who send us a recipe for their specialty.

We're looking for recipes for chili, spaghetti, soup, steak and entrees that are "his specialty," and desserts too.

We'll print the best recipes in the Taste section on Dec. 13. Men who submit the best four recipes of the bunch will also receive a "Mrs. Doubtfire" sweat shirt.

So come on guys, get cooking, and send us those recipes.

We'll print the best recipes in the Taste section on Dec. 13.

Send recipes to: Keely Wygonik, Entertainment editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia MI 48150. If you have any questions, call 953-2105.

"Mrs. Doubtfire," now showing at metro Detroit movie theaters, stars Robin Williams as Daniel Hillard, an out-of-work voiceover actor, who will do anything to be with his three

children.

Unfortunately, the things that his kids love about him — his wild sense of humor, his carefree view of life — are traits which prevent him from being the husband his wife Miranda (Sally Field) needs him to be.

After 14 years of marriage she has asked for a divorce and has been granted temporary custody of the children, in spite of Daniel's emotional protests. So when Miranda advertises for a housekeeper, the clever but desperate Daniel, disguises himself as an elderly British woman, and gets the job.

UPCOMING MOVIES

There's something for everyone at the movies. Here's a list of what's in the wings:

- **Opening Friday, Dec. 3:**
 - "A Dangerous Woman" — An emotionally charged love triangle revolving around a woman and her socially awkward niece with an inability to lie. Stars Debra Winger, Barbara Hershey and Gabriel Byrne.
 - "Equinox" — The story of identical twins, separated at birth 30 years earlier, and their individual struggles to survive in the city of Empire. Stars Matthew Modine, Lara Flynn Boyle, and Tya Ferril.
 - "Rescue Me" — A comedy/adventure about a young boy teaming up with a good hearted smuggler to rescue the girl of his dreams. Stars Michael Dudikoff and Ami Dolan.
- **Opening Friday, Dec. 10:**
 - "Household Saints" — Exclusively at AMC Abbey, a mystical fable set in New York's Little Italy in the 1950s spans 22 years in the lives of three women in an Italian-American family. Stars Tracey Ullman, Vincent D'Onofrio.
 - "Wild West" — Exclusively at Main Art Theatre, an outrageous comedy about a Pakistani British country-western band who dreams of becoming the latest rage in Nashville. Stars Sarita Choudhury and Ravi Kapoor.
 - "Sister Act 2" — Sequel to the original reunites lounge singer Deloris VanCartier (Whoopi Goldberg) with her twist n' shout sisters in an effort to form a choir out of a rag tag bunch of street tough kids.
 - "Wayne's World 2" — Our favorite cable access hosts, Wayne and Garth, try to stave off the "Billings" mansion rock concert. Waymestock. Stars Dana Carvey, Christopher Walken, and Tia Carrere.
 - "Geronimo: An American Legend" — Focuses on the final months of the U.S. Army's campaign to capture the Geronimo. The film tells the classic story of the events leading to the surrender of the legendary Apache leader. Stars Jason Patric, Robert Duvall and Gene Hackman.
 - **Opening, Friday, Dec. 17:**
 - "The Pelican Brief" — A suspense thriller based on the best-selling novel of the same name by John Grisham. Stars Julia Roberts, Denzel Washington, and Sam Shepard.

You'll want to hit the road with 'Josh and S.A.M.'

BY AP NEWSFEATURES

From Bing and Bob to Butch and Sundance to Thelma and Louise, movie couples have been hitting the road in search of — whatever. Of all the road pictures, none more bizarre has come along than "Josh and S.A.M."

Boy runaways are nothing new. But what about 7- and 12-year-olds who drive from Texas to Canada? It's a stretch, and along the way believability quotients hit new lows. But two gifted young actors, Jacob Tierney and Noah Fleiss, are so engaging that you're compelled to go along with them.

The first half-hour of "Josh and S.A.M." makes you think you have blundered into some sitcom about disjointed families. Josh and Sam are troubled boys tossed back and forth by their divorced parents. The mother (Joan Allen) lives in California and is more concerned with her French boyfriend (Ronald Outtman) than with her sons.

The Florida father (Stephen

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Tobolowsky) has a new wife and two stepsons who taunt Josh as a "home." Dispatched back to their mother, Josh and Sam have a forced landing in Dallas. After an adventure in which Josh fears he has killed a man, he and his little brother take off for Canada. The movie also takes off.

Josh has convinced Sam that he is, in fact, a S.A.M. (hence the confusing acronym of the title). It stands for Strategically Altered Mutant, a child ionized by his parents to the Pentagon to be programmed as a future warrior. The only way to escape the program is to reach Canada, outside the Pentagon's control.

The pair manage to drive their stolen red sports car, dodging concerned adults and suspicious cops along the way. They encounter a hitchhiking runaway (Martha Plimpton) who becomes their unwilling accomplice in the trek.



If you've seen a new movie lately, either good or bad, we want to hear from you. Call Keely Wygonik, Entertainment editor, 953-2105, to comment on newly released movies. If you reach her voice mail, leave your comments, name, city and day-time phone number. To fax comments, dial 591-7279. Or write: Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

The end of the journey comes as no surprise, but it's suitably heartwarming.

With his soulful dark eyes and expressive face, Canadian Jacob Tierney carries the film with a wide range of emotion. He has real star-quality. Newcomer Noah Fleiss acts like a veteran, without the precociousness of some child performers. Martha Plimpton affords an ideal counterpoint to the bickering brothers.

Frank Deese's script menders like the country roads the boys travel, but he has written two believable roles for the young actors. Film editor Billy Weber in his directing debut handles the youngsters with understanding. Credit also should go to Don Burgess for his photography of the West's scenic beauty.

"Josh and S.A.M." was produced by Castle Rock Entertainment for Columbia Pictures. The producer was Martin Brest.

"Josh and S.A.M." is now showing at these suburban movie theaters: AMC Abbey, AMC Southfield City, AMC Wonderland, New Town Centre and United Artists Fairlane.

The story of a woman no one noticed until it was too late.

Debra Winger
Barbara Hershey
Gabriel Byrne

A Dangerous Woman

STARTS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3

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